my husband was presiding as bishop. A young man in the ward used this approach to try to intimidate a young woman out of ending their relationship. Luckily in this case the obvious contradictions in his stories, his noticeable lack of funds, and his inordinate amount of free time proved his undoing before anyone was hurt.

Often, it is the conversion experience that provides a perfect opportunity for the unstable or the devious to create a new and more interesting persona. Pretenders with new names and doctored backgrounds have not been rare in our church; they turn up as fascinating fireside speakers, writers of well-received church books and even as teachers at BYU. If nothing else, this book is a reminder that such self-invention ought not to be easily dismissed.

A more important moral of this story is that faithful members should not assume that their children are safe from harm simply because they are doing the Lord's work in serving a mission. Mormons share a common folk belief that the special service of missionaries, accompanied by the many prayers from home on their behalf, provides a shield against danger or accident. Of course, if this were true then we wouldn't see so many troubled, sick, or injured missionaries return home. Taking this notion literally encourages missionaries to ignore their own common sense and discount the dangerous situations they might encounter, in spite of plenty of evidence that they are not immune from the evils of the world. Perhaps, instead of prayer, they would be better served by a special MTC training course describing how to recognize and avoid the psychopaths, con artists, and worst of all, potential murderers among us.

Ironically, after the disappearance of the murdered missionaries, the police found their abandoned car, easily identified by its bumper sticker, "Happiness is Family Home Evening."

Restless Grace

Leap, by Terry Tempest Williams (New York: Pantheon Books, 2000), 338 pp., $25.00 hardback.

Reviewed by Gail Turley Houston, Associate Professor of English, University of New Mexico.

I first met Terry Tempest Williams in January 1999 at a commemoration in Tucson, Arizona, for my uncle, United States Representative Morris Udall. The beautiful eulogies honoring his many accomplishments, particularly his record on the environment, were given by a host of family, friends, and colleagues, including Richard Gephardt, John Rhodes, John McCain, and M. Scott Momaday. But it was Terry Tempest Williams who, in the most humble and gracious of statements, unified all the kudos to Morris. She did so by exquisitely and gently insisting on the spiritual bedrock (pun intended) of any effort to save the environment. It was astonishing to see how, in the midst of this cosmopolitan group, she envisioned—and, at that moment, she was a prophet—Morris's Mormon heritage (cherished by him but forsaken, nevertheless) as central to his love of nature. At the same time,

she articulated for me the breathtakingly liberal beauty of Mormon theology.

In *Leap*, her most recent book, Williams struggles to maintain the liberality of her religion. Finding herself "caught in the doorway of my religious past," Williams laments that "The place where I was born is now a prison," an explicit reference to the September Six Massacre, the banning of Rodin's "The Kiss" from BYU, and the prohibition of gay clubs at Utah high schools, among other events in the 1990s that illustrated Mormonism's "petrified inheritance of absolutes." Asking, "How do we purge all we have been asked to ingest?" and, "What happens when our institutions no longer serve us?" Williams describes the bizarre setting in which she consciously realizes "that there is no one true church" (pp. 105, 118, 180). At a July 24th extravaganza at Cougar Stadium, she watches as returned missionaries prance like synchronized Rockettes across the field, waving flags of the countries in which they proselyted, while President Hinckley and his two counselors make their dramatic entrances (klieg lights and all) like aging rock stars all in white. Meanwhile, their wives play prom queens as they circle the field in white limousines. At this point, surrounded by family members who weep in ecstatic belief, Williams sheds tears "in the midst of my people. . .because I recognize I no longer believe as I once did" (p. 180).

Williams is made whole again—"restored"—by "wandering through a painting" (p. 266) created during the Spanish Inquisition—Bosch's astonishingly complicated and breathtaking *Garden of Delights*. Identifying with Bosch's ability to create in the midst of religious violence and to retain joy in the body when religious authorities demanded stern asceticism, Williams creates a richly architectonic work that, in its complex ability to see that all things really do connect, pays homage to the Flemish master who "created a community. . .in discovery" (p. 169). Affirming that art and nature teach us that "The world is holy. . . .All life is holy" (p. 147), *Leap* is, then, an act of grace.

Acknowledging vulnerability in attempting a new style, Williams is often bracingly eloquent in capturing the unique this-ness of every discrete element of the heartbreakingly beautiful world: "A thistle is the place where bees rest at night" (p. 170). Fishing: "And when he saw the sweet risings of lips to water [fishing], he entered the current" (p. 171). Death: "My fingers wrap around bone [her grandfather's dying body] and I feel his life blowing through him" (p. 100).

But Williams cannot fully abandon the monolithic, homogenizing tendency of the Mormon church to erase difference. She too often resorts to the royal "we"—as in, "We are all explorers"; "We marry our obsessions"; We are all complicit in the destruction of life" (pp. 86, 173, 174)—to signify her own individual reactions to phenomena. Williams also views Joseph Smith as a true visionary like Bosch and contrasts him with the one-dimensional corporate genius Brigham Young, the model for dry-as-dust current leaders of the church. Does Williams forget that Joseph Smith got us into the mess of polygamy, which only hardened binary views of gender, and that neither Brigham nor Joseph was ready to give up the perquisites of patriarchy?

When she is not, like Neal Maxwell, too self-conscious about her stylistic leap, it is a joy to follow Williams. For *Leap* glories in sharing

her personal, spiritual experience through her visions of the sacredness of the earth, art, the body, and the community of discovery. I have longed to hear such personal spiritual experience from General Authorities—the kind of spiritual witness that Steve Benson wanted to hear from Dallin Oaks and Neal Maxwell when they invited him to Salt Lake City to encourage him not to leave the church. He asked them if they had had any spiritual experiences they could share with him. Benson reported that there was a disappointing lack of response from these ostensible spiritual giants. Either they had no such experiences or, confoundingly, and perhaps worse, they would not share such experiences with others who were seeking God and whom they claimed to lead.

Williams graciously shares her spiritual life, and, by doing so, creates a community of discovery with her reader and with the artist who defied the limited religious paradigm that could only see the world in black and white. Nevertheless, if, as Williams points out, individual restoration follows crisis and restlessness, she, like Bosch, is still framed by the Christian desire for assured endings. In the ending of *Leap*, Williams concludes, "We can obey our own authority through our own agency to choose. I choose to believe in the power of restoration, the restoration of our faith, even within my own Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (p. 264). Here there is not so much a restless leap to endless discovery and community as there is an almost solipsistic need to find a resting place sheltered from the violence of a religion gone astray.

Making Miracles

Parting the Veil: Stories from a Mormon Imagination, by Phyllis Barber (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999), 129 pp., $16.95 paper.

Reviewed by Mary Ellen Robertson, MA, Women's Studies in Religion, The Claremont Graduate School.

When I was twelve, the youth in our ward did baptisms for the dead in the Los Angeles temple. To pique our interest, our leaders told tales of spirits appearing to the living and thanking them for performing ordinances on their behalf. I stayed awake half the night afterward waiting for my visitation; however, the veil did not part as I expected it would.

Phyllis Barber's collection of short stories, *Parting the Veil: Stories from a Mormon Imagination*, illustrates the form our longing for the divine can take. Barber describes a childhood wherein "it was as common to think of an angel appearing by my bed as it was to drink orange juice for breakfast" (p. ix). As a result of being steeped in Mormon culture, Barber says "I can't help telling stories that wrestle with the suspicion of a thin veil fluttering nearby" (p. xi). Her twelve stories are inspired by the Mormon experience—testimony meetings, family history anecdotes, and collections of folklore.

In the stories, unborn spirit children appear in dreams and ask to be made flesh. A fiddler's lullaby tames a hungry wolf pack. Three divine beings inspire a mother to send wild sage to cure her ailing missionary son. An