

contest). An educated reader will recognize the high quality of editorial work, yet a less-experienced reader will not find the language difficult or exclusive.

In an effort to broaden its community, the editors have created a website and blog that function both as publicity for the journal and as an additional forum for women to share stories with each other. Often the blog entries are direct responses to specific pieces in the journal, inviting discussion at the same time as increasing readership.

In 2007, production has increased to three issues per year. All back issues are archived and available for reading online at the *Segullah* website. Although Soper feels strongly about continuing to make the entire text of each issue available free through the website, the high quality of the artwork and the way women love to share the issues create a continued demand for printed issues.

From what I can tell, many LDS women will enjoy *Segullah*. I'm convinced that its audience is large and thirsty for it, and that the journal's popularity will grow as fast as it is passed around. Sample articles and information about submissions and guidelines for the essay contest are available at <http://www.Segullah.org>.

Notes

1. Kerry Spencer, "When Life Begins," *Segullah* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 18-19.
2. Heather Harris Bergevin, "An Hour in the Life," *Segullah* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2006): 26-27.
3. Courtney Kendrick, "Downtown Sister Brown and the Department of Defense," *Segullah* 2, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 13-15.

A Novel with a Lot of Way-Out-There Ideas

D. Michael Martindale. *Brother Brigham*. Provo, Utah: Zarahemla Books, 2007. 258 pp., \$15.95.

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Joseph Smith received golden plates, magical translating devices, and

countless visits from heavenly messengers, but a host of cognitive and cultural biases combine to render them almost commonplace in our collective Mormon memory. These supernatural events from Mormon history nestle up against ordinary moments from secular history like so many points on a timeline, one point seemingly no more extraordinary than the next: Andrew Jackson was elected U.S. president in 1828; Joseph Smith met Peter, James, and John in 1830; and so on.

But recast any of these same supernatural events with new characters in present-day Utah and their anomalous, singular qualities are given their proper jaw-dropping or head-scratching weight. This was the thought that occurred to me time and time again while reading D. Michael Martindale's *Brother Brigham*, a novel packed with events that struck me as bizarre and even preposterous, only to be followed by the sobering realization that each event was based on either historical or scriptural precedent—in other words, no more bizarre than the original event itself.

In *Brother Brigham*, C. H. Young, a bright, twenty-something husband and father receives a visit from the not-yet-resurrected spirit of his great-great-grandfather, Brigham Young. Brigham tells C. H. of a cache of money hidden in the Utah desert that C. H. is to retrieve “for a wise purpose.” From there, the plot one-ups itself with each successive chapter as C. H. wages battle against both spiritual and flesh-and-blood opponents, with his eternal soul and the future of the Church at stake.

An author's bio at the end of the novel notes that Martindale grew up with “a taste for science fiction and a love for telling speculative stories.” No kidding! Martindale mines Mormonism for all of the speculative tidbits that never see the light of day in Gospel Doctrine lesson manuals but which endlessly fascinate overzealous missionaries at the MTC or churn out fodder for fanatical bloggers. Take, for example, the “handshake test” found in Doctrine and Covenants 129, where evil spirits can be differentiated from good spirits based on the corporeal condition of the extended hand, a key plot device in the novel. Reading *Brother Brigham* I could imagine Martindale as an animated missionary, leading his fellow missionary roommates in late-night speculative discussions of the arcane and esoteric.

Like a Stephen King novel, perhaps, *Brother Brigham* has no real literary aspirations. Still one does not read a King novel for its prose or rich characterization, but rather for its propulsive, mind-bending plot. Here Martindale succeeds with page-turning gusto. Indeed, though I've never

counted myself a fan of the science-fiction or fantasy genre, I found Martindale's enthusiasm for his subject matter infectious. Speculative fiction fans will certainly embrace *Brother Brigham* as a welcome addition to the growing Mormon SF subgenre.

But non-SF readers need not pass up *Brother Brigham*, for at its heart Martindale's story is also something of a romance novel, albeit from a decidedly male point of view. In that regard, *Brother Brigham* is pretty edgy stuff, if a Deseret Book novel is your primary frame of reference. C. H. is "called" upon by Brother Brigham to get his *Big Love* on, and C. H.'s sexy co-worker Sheila, an aggressive, promiscuous, inactive Mormon, is only too eager to be his mistress, or, what the heck, his second wife. If C. H. needs to rationalize extramarital sex with delusions of polygamous grandeur, who is Sheila to argue if the end result is the same? How C. H. convinces his wife Dani to go along with the plan and how C. H. maneuvers to marry Sheila polygamously in the Salt Lake Temple are two of *Brother Brigham's* more exciting plot threads.

Brother Brigham's handful of descriptive sex scenes (as well as its boundary-pushing speculative theology) seems to be in keeping with Zarahemla Books' stated commitment toward more "frankness and realism, [and] earthier explorations of Mormon culture and experience."¹ In other words, staid *The Work and the Glory* rereads need not apply. That said, *Brother Brigham* is never too steamy or too graphic. Anyone who has read Levi Peterson's *The Backslider* or any number of popular Gentile mystery, crime, spy, science fiction, or romance novels, will not be put off by Martindale's depictions of the "earthier" side of life.

So, if you are looking for something a little different from your typical Mormon novel, something with a little spice and a lotta way-out-there ideas, then *Brother Brigham* is for you. But be forewarned: set foot in Martindale's world and you'd better have your spiritual house in order and be prepared to defend your family by calling on the powers of heaven. Where you're going, you're gonna need it!

Note

1. Statement on Zarahemla Books webpage, <http://zarahemlabooks.com/main.sc> (accessed in August 2007).