and armor-bearers did not survive the daunting trek across the plains, deserts, and mountains from Illinois to Utah, much of the rest of the legion did. This remnant rose again to drill, parade, and occasionally fight, but this time in a quite different way against an eclectic mix of Lamanites and federal troops.

Notes

1. In the interests of full disclosure, I have made this same mistake in print repeatedly until corrected by Gene A. Sessions of Weber State University's history faculty.

2. For a summary description of the checkered backgrounds and careers of the three Generals Bennet/t, see MacKinnon, "Epilogue to the Utah War: Impact and Legacy," *Journal of Mormon History* 29, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 213–14 note 61; Andrew F. Smith, *The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 65, 68–72, 108–9, 115, 126.

Harrell's Mettle

Jack Harrell. *A Sense of Order and Other Stories*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2010. 220 pp. Foreword by Robert Bird. Hardback: $26.95. ISBN 978–1–56085–209–4

Reviewed by Karen Rosenbaum

How do you read a collection of short stories by one author? Do you curl up with the book the same way you would with a novel, reading one story after another until your leg falls asleep or your stomach growls for food or the phone rings? Do you read one story, then close the book to think about it, perhaps reopening the book to reread parts or the whole? Do you expect the stories to be connected by characters or theme or tone and therefore search for universal elements? Do you come to each story afresh, hungry for wonder and new insights?

The way you answer those questions will probably determine how you react to Jack Harrell's *A Sense of Order and Other Stories*, winner of the Association for Mormon Letters' short fiction award for 2010.

With the exception of two Adam and Eve pieces, the sixteen

stories in this collection are not linked, so don't settle in for one long read. Harrell's tales are better explored one by one, with time for appreciation and contemplation between them. Although there are some common themes, there is not a clear "sense of order"—but there isn't a sense of chaos either. Despite the frequent appearance of mystical elements, the stories make sense—even when, as in the final piece, "Calling and Election," the reader can't, with certainty, distinguish between reality and illusion. Harrell's characters are usually estranged from both others and themselves; all are aware of the confusion in their world. What distinguishes them is the way they react to this confusion.

This pattern is probably most easily seen in the six shortest stories. Each of the main characters is profoundly depressed. One's solution is suicide, another's is sleep; a third's is defiance. The three more imaginative depressed characters daydream—although their dreams offer neither escape nor resolution. In the most compassionate of the short-shorts—"Who Would Not?"—a morbidly obese woman sitting on her front porch sees two "bright and blond teenage girls in vivid dresses" (113) and reflects on their giddiness and the burden of her own body and life. Harrell quietly uses both the woman's point of view and an omniscient narrator to tell us, "She glimpses the fountain of the girls' health and color, but she overlooks a truth too simple to see: theirs is a mystery as deep as her own" (114).

In the longer stories, Harrell's characters mature, both despite and because of obstacles, despair, and turmoil. These human beings range in age from a high school senior who attends a heavy metal concert with Jesus to a presumably aged but quirky and independent Mormon prophet who longs to buy a garden hose and an Almond Joy in a Wal-Mart. Harrell's mostly male protagonists include an actuary, a college teacher, a seminary teacher, an electronics repairman, and a forklift operator who makes and sells wishing wells. Four stories feature Mormon characters; three of these and four others feature supernatural elements—visitations, voices, revelations. Sometimes, but not always, the otherworldly might—or might not—be explained by physical phenomena—a brain tumor, a stroke.

For these characters, the external conflicts reflect the internal conflicts. There is what can be called good and evil in the

characters, although there is rarely a clear division between them. At least three of Harrell's characters seem to speak for Satan: the unnamed man with cold, small eyes in "The Trestle," Lucifer in "The Lone and Weary World," and Brother Lucy in "Calling and Election." Each tempts the protagonist to actions that would result in his ultimate destruction, but the satanic character is either clever or confused enough himself to mask the outcome until it is too late. Brother Lucy recalls the devil in the book of Job. In a paper at the Association for Mormon Literature meeting in February of 2009, Harrell argued: "Goodness in fictional characters is deep, rich, and complex; while evil is shallow, paltry, and simple."[1] Yet the three satanic characters do not seem "shallow, paltry, and simple"—Brother Lucy especially seems multi-faceted.

"Calling and Election," in particular, may remind a reader of Nathaniel Hawthorne's tale "Young Goodman Brown." Harrell's protagonist is seminary teacher Jerry Sangood. Though he isn't without goodness (the literal meaning of his surname), he may have an unhealthy craving to have his calling and election made sure; on the other hand, he seems to want no more than what many other devout Mormons have coveted. The seminary director also has an allegorical name—Brother Severe—but he, like the other two seminary teachers, all confess to Jerry his part in their own salvations.

Goodness in Harrell's stories may seem much more than "deep, rich, and complex"; it may make life intolerable. The college teacher Morgan, who has developed "Godsight" in the story of that name, can hardly bear the pain he sees in the lives of those around him, including the woman who lies about him so that she can chair their department.

Harrell does a better job with his male characters than his female ones. Most of his women are nice enough people, but limited in sensitivity and understanding. One of the strongest women is Andie, the librarian in "Jerome and the Ends of the Universe," my own favorite of the stories. Yet Andie's climactic scene, in which she explains a kind of revelation she has had about her relationship with her ex-husband, wasn't persuasive to me. Even here, though, the dialogue works; in fact, the dialogue is convincing in all the stories.

Some of the stories are set in southern Illinois, where Harrell

lived until he was nineteen; others take place in southern Idaho, where Harrell now lives and teaches English at BYU–Idaho. The first Adam and Eve story, "The Lone and Dreary World," takes place in the wilderness into which Adam and Eve were ejected from the Garden of Eden. (From the description of the mountainous landscape, a reader assumes the setting is far from Missouri—but perhaps not far from Idaho.)

Harrell (or an editor?) has not chosen one of the most compelling stories for the title. Perhaps he wanted to avoid the repetition of "story" (*A Prophet's Story and Other Stories*), perhaps he wanted to avoid the repetition of "and" (*Jerome and the Ends of the Universe and Other Stories*; *Calling and Election and Other Stories*). But how about the first story in the collection, the one about a non-Mormon teenager who accompanies Jesus to a Megadeth concert in Idaho Falls? *Tregan's Mettle and Other Stories* would have been a splendid title for this startling and original collection.

Note

1. Jack Harrell, Presidential Address, Association for Mormon Letters annual meeting, February 2009, http://www.jackharrell.net/mormon-conflict-paper.html.

On Vital Questions

Robert L. Millet, ed. *By What Authority? The Vital Question of Religious Authority in Christianity*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2010. x + 200 pp. Paper: $35. ISBN 13: 978–0–88146–201–2

Reviewed by Joseph M. Spencer

Opening his short contribution to this collection of essays, Roger Olson, professor of theology at Baylor University, writes: "One can hardly do justice to the subject of religious authority in a brief reflection essay" (180). Indeed. And while eleven brief reflection essays *might* be able to do justice to what Robert Millet, as the volume's editor, describes as "a, if not *the*, crucial question among re-