

involved in the excruciatingly complex and convoluted "Mark Hofmann story," a story of forgery, fraud, and brutal murder. More than a retelling of the incredible events which led to three bombings and two deaths in Salt Lake City on 15 and 16 October 1985, it is a fine piece of literature — deeply moving, cleanly written, and consistently compelling as it builds with high-style crescendo to a disturbing yet cathartic ending.

Linda Sillitoe and Allen D. Roberts faced an onerous task when they set out to give shape in narrative form to this bizarre story. Their joint research, meticulously thorough and virtually flawless, and Sillitoe's masterful sense of storytelling come together perfectly to illuminate a ponderous mass of information. Based on 145 pages of dates, times, and events which they compiled, the chilling saga unfolds; its plethora of characters, at first rather intimidating, becomes a group of well delineated, easily distinguishable individuals.

One of the most impressive features of the book is that it is intelligible to people outside the Mormon culture. Its tone is sophisticated, and the authors add no extraneous details, assumptions, or conjecture. They let the facts speak for themselves, without glossing over anything — including serious mistakes made by some LDS General Authorities. The form of the book is shaped by its content. The chapters are deftly organized so that sections explaining the forgeries are interwoven with sections about the people and events, reflecting while at the same time clarifying the complex and confusing nature of the story.

Signature Books, a regional publisher (one of the few dedicated to Mormon studies), has marketed *Salamander* nationally, and it is now the best-selling non-

fiction book in Utah, according to the Intermountain Booksellers Association.

The photographs in the book are well chosen, and the forensic analysis by George J. Throckmorton which includes the infamous "Salamander letter" is fascinating. The authors provide no formal footnotes because the footnotes are built into the text. One might venture to say that other books on this subject are likely to be, at best, imitations of the real thing. It is amazing that Roberts and Sillitoe have managed in a sensitive and high-toned style to reveal the whole truth while being kind to everyone in the story. They have successfully eschewed whitewashing, and certainly no one's sensibilities should be offended by the truth.

Salamander does leave some questions unanswered. How did Mark Hofmann fool so many people for so long, including members of his family? How did he manage to supply document dealers with all the material they used to authenticate his forgeries? How could someone who would help a neighbor move during a rainstorm (p. 418) premeditate and coldly carry out the heinous crime of murder? Why hasn't someone done an in-depth psychiatric study of this manipulative, soft-spoken man with the sinister, sociopathic personality? Who was the third bomb really meant for?

The process of writing this book must have seemed at times like a protracted nightmare, but the authors knew, as did Shakespeare, that "foul deeds will rise, though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes." It is profoundly satisfying to read *Salamander*, mainly because of the stark contrast between Hofmann's web of lies, deceit, and murder and the way Sillitoe and Roberts unveil the reality behind it all. It somehow makes the losses of Steven Christensen and Kathleen Sheets real for everyone.

Joseph in an Alternate Universe

Seventh Son by Orson Scott Card
(New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1987), paperback, 241 pp., \$3.95.

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THERE IS A TIME-HONORED TRADITION in science fiction and fantasy of the “alternate universe” story, set in a time and place partially familiar to the reader but with carefully chosen differences. Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* is set in a time much like our own *except* that the Axis powers were victorious in 1945; Katherine Kurtz’s *Deryni* books are set in a world rather like medieval Wales, except that magic telepathic powers play a significant role. An author may or may not devise a rationale for the existence of the alternate universe; the story-type has become so commonplace that readers seldom demand one. Certainly Mormons should have no trouble suspending disbelief in such cases: our cosmology embraces “worlds without number,” allowing for infinite variation.

Orson Scott Card’s new fantasy series, of which *Seventh Son* is the first volume, is based on just such an alternate universe. What we have here is the Joseph Smith story, in fair detail, in a universe in which magic — New World folk magic such as hex signs, dowsing, treasure-seeking, Native American magic, and the like — works. It promises to be — dare I say it? — a white salamander story. (The books haven’t gotten that far yet, though; it will be fun to see if the salamander makes it into the series or not.) Much has been changed, of course, including many of the names of the principal players; but there is hardly a well-known episode in the life of the young Joseph Smith that doesn’t somehow make its permuted way into the book.

In Card’s alternate vision, enlightenment and Protestant sentiments in England have resulted in numbers of visionaries and magic-sympathizers being deported to the colonies, where magic is openly fostered. This allows the aging William Blake to be on hand on this continent to tutor the young prophet and Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin to be admired for their skills in wizardry as much as for anything else. As in any other alternate-universe story, much of the delight of the narrative

comes from working out the details of the permutations. Here Card does not disappoint us. Fantasy-reading friends of mine who have had no clue (until I informed them) of the doctrinal punch line that must inevitably come (in book three, I figure: book two, *Red Prophet*, is only out in hardback and so I have not read it, but I have heard that it is not the conclusion) have without exception enjoyed the story hugely thus far, chiefly because of these intriguing permutations.

I can’t help but wonder what will happen to these charmed readers when they get to the First Vision, though. But perhaps Card won’t get around to it. We’ve already had Moroni, or something like him. Some of my gentile friends were alarmed to hear that the other-worldly visitor who advises the Presbyterian minister (sometimes in the form of a dragon — or is it a salamander?) is intended to be The Devil, in capitals: what was he doing in a nice little nature-celebrating story that didn’t seem to be substantially occupied with Christian mythology? (You mean this is going to be a pro-Christian story? What a waste!) Increasingly the story is going to have to take sides, for better or worse, from here on out; in book one it has already begun to do so. For instance, if there are any Presbyterians left who are passionate enough to be offended, this book has offended them; and those same fundamentalist Protestants who have been alienated by a certain section of the temple ceremony will, if they read the book, be alienated again by it. Surely Card knows how delicate his task is: to retell the Mormon sacred story in a way that honors the original but also entertains (without preaching at) the countless fantasy fans for whom our sacred story means nothing.

No book is perfect, of course. For instance, Card has again noted the “soft pink squishy” (his words!) nature of female flesh, an image that I have remarked on in previous reviews. Lithe muscular women do not abound in Card’s universes, but rather pendulous-buttocked and -breasted