nant organization as a comparative analytical structure allows him to indicate that particular historical developments are facets of general patterns that religious organizations follow.

The one disturbing feature of Cooper's work is his insistence on placing the Mormons and Puritans in a purely heuristic relationship, and his refusal to indicate the historical relationship between the two religions. Although this disinclination to discuss the implications of a historical relationship does not lead to significant distortions, it does create a notable gap in his work. It seems as if he is dodging an obvious genealogical linkage. Such a failure is difficult to understand given that Cooper is, on the other hand, willing to indicate genealogical linkages between some nineteenth-century Church beliefs and nineteenth-century American culture: societal and Church understandings of "genetics and culture" (p. 117), the place of women (p. 124), and "kinship amity and domestic order" (p. 168). Ignoring the influence of historical associations would not in any way take away from his analysis, while referring to the associations could have provided another helpful hermeneutical plane.

Nevertheless, this criticism does not take away from the insightful anthropological assertions that Cooper does derive from his analysis, nor does it in any way invalidate the interpretations which he gleans from the paralleling of the two covenant systems.

Delusion as an Exceedingly Fine Art

Bones by Franklin Fisher (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990), 225 pp., $17.95.

Reviewed by Lavina Fielding Anderson, editor of the *Journal of Mormon History*, past president of the Association for Mormon Letters, and former associate editor of DIALOGUE.

ABOUT FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, Maureen Ursenbach Beecher invited Franklin Fisher, a young and aesthetically bearded professor of English at the University of Utah, to read from his novel in progress at a gathering of the Association of Mormon Letters. The manuscript was "Bones," and the scene he selected was comic: his protagonist, a missionary, was one of several priesthood holders called upon to cast the evil spirit out of a woman lying in bed. The problem was one of logistics. How could they all get their hands on her head at the same time? While the uncooperative woman lay hissing at them faintly, they gathered around, leaning precariously far and bracing themselves against, and even on, the sagging bed. Amazingly enough, in this scene waiting for a disaster, the young protagonist had a spiritual experience and the exorcism worked.

I did not know Franklin Fisher and have not seen him or any of his works since then, but I remembered the title of the manuscript and that great comic scene. When I saw *Bones* listed in the University of Utah Press catalogue, I could hardly wait to read the book.

It was a good thing I remembered that scene. I didn't like the first section and dragged myself with increasing reluctance through the sexual obsessions and social ineptitudes of Lorin Hood. Lorin is an artist of sorts in Los Angeles, who is painting grotesque still lifes, waiting on tables in a coffeehouse, and passively observing his doomed and unraveling relationship with his girlfriend, Yvonne, and her brief successor, Gloriana. When Yvonne moves him out, he goes ungracefully, unrolling his sleeping bag on a succession of increasingly inhospitable floors and leaving socks, toothbrushes, and clothes trailing behind him.

When there is nowhere else to go, he ends up back in Utah where, within the space of a page and with absolutely no explanation of why he would do such a

thing, we find him on a mission. He seems, furthermore, to be a zealous elder, who sits up "late poring over texts and supplements and reference guides until his eyes hurt, the better to have at his fingers' ends the riposte to every challenge" (p. 76). In flashbacks, he recalls his interview with his bishop (he "lied as little as possible," p. 78), reports the temple ceremony in offensively explicit detail, and remains sexually obsessed, which leads to an inevitable sexual encounter and excommunication. (The woman is a raunchily unlikely convert who is most attracted to the supernatural incidents in the First Vision and stories about the Three Nephites.)

Lorin returns first to his grieving parents, then to Los Angeles where he climbs slowly off the bottom rung of urban poverty, gets a bank job that feeds and clothes him, and discovers an obsession with the lines, shapes, and textures of art that propels him in a new direction. He is also, by this point, as nutty as a fruitcake, a condition of which we have had ample warning and thorough documentation in the course of the novel.

Bones, which won first prize in the 1984 Utah Arts Council Original Writing Competition, is beautifully designed and produced. It is also apparent from early in the book that Fisher is a technically gifted writer and a brilliant craftsman. No commentary from the writer intrudes into Lorin's earnestly serious and even, in some respects, naive consciousness, which makes the whole novel an exquisitely balanced satire that plays one level of ironies against another. For example, when he sees his haggard mother and father in the airport after his return in disgrace from the mission field, Fisher expresses Lorin's guilt and remorse this way:

> Lorin noticed his father now had a pronounced stoop, his mother a brave erectness. He pulled out a pistol and shot himself behind the ear. He helped the skycap load his bags into the back of his father's station wagon. He opened a clasp knife and slit through veins and cartilage in his wrist and died on the curb before his mother's weeping face and his father's heavy shaking of the head and the skycap's sullen stare; and devils crept out of the storm sewer and drew a bag over his head and body and pulled it shut, tying the string in difficult knots. (p. 181)

I cheerfully admit that, although I freely admire Fisher's impressive writing ability, I don't like Lorin Hood, and I don't like the way Mormonism is treated throughout the novel—as a combination of a bizarre culture and a set of fantastic beliefs. I am not prepared to equate faith with lunacy, however brilliant the execution of that lunacy. Nor am I willing, with Harold Bloom, to see Judeo-Christian religion, including God, as literary inventions, stemming from a brilliant imagination—whether it be J's or Joseph Smith's. (See *The Book of J*, translated from the Hebrew by David Rosenberg, interpreted by Harold Bloom [New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990], esp. 317–22.)

Having said so much, I admit, with equal cheerfulness, that Franklin Fisher displays a very high order of religious imagination. The high points of the novel for me are precisely those scenes in which Lorin Hood's particular brand of religious fantasy propels him into the mind of Joseph Smith with a concreteness and vividness that, whatever we may think of Lorin Hood, make us renew the effort to imaginatively capture Joseph Smith:

> He imagined himself as Joseph sitting on a kitchen chair beside the blanket with a black felt hat upside down in his lap and a small table with the plates on it within easy reach. He also imagined himself as Oliver Cowdery facing the other direction on the other side of the blanket. What he had in mind was a kind of double self-portrait, something like what Noel used to do but not exactly. The gold plates were battered at the corners and badly scratched and grooved. . . . The rings that bound them together in an irregular stack were twisted and bent, so that turning a plate over required both hands to jockey the margins without pulling the holes larger, since the metal was thin and soft. Little streams of dirt ran out onto the table whenever he turned a plate, and dried insects, leaves,

and even twigs with desiccated buds turned up every few plates.

. . . Sweat trickled down through his hair and onto his thumb inside the hat. It was dark inside the hat, and stuffy, and smelled of someone else's head.

The stone in the bottom of the hat glowed faintly, brightening or fading as he moved his hand one way or the other across the place. . . . With patience he could make out the figure at the center of the glow—a numeral 3 connected to a fishbowl with four upright candles, each with a dot under it—with the word "accomplish" printed in square letters beneath the figure.

"Accomplish," he said.

"What?" said the Oliver Lorin from the other side of the blanket.

The Joseph Lorin took his face out of the hat and said "Accomplish," and waited until he heard the scrattle of the other Lorin's quill before he bent over again. He hated having to repeat things. (pp. 120–21)

The other scene, even more powerful because it comes when Lorin, back in California, has stepped across the line of dissociation, involves the First Vision. He reels along the beach holding his head, only the physical activity preventing "something inside his head" that was racing "out of control" from bursting open "an important vessel." Meanwhile, he is simultaneously back in his room, lying on his bed eating corn chips. There he imagines "a spring setting" and sees

a long white tube of light dipping into the branches, making brittle silhouettes, and drawing back up. He could see it was moving closer, feeling its way among branches. . . . It came directly at him with appalling speed, and his last thought . . . was that no one but himself knew that death was a tube of light from another dimension that sucked you from the earth . . . .

Out of the corner of his eye he saw that the grass he lay in looked like white flamelets, moving slightly, as though the light had set up a small wind. On his left the dead stump stood bleached, ringed with flowers that had small spectral petals. Directly above him two men in white robes stood looking at him. Bark had been peeled from the dead stump and lay in rags among the wildflowers. . . .

The older man pointed to the younger one and said something about a son or the sun. Lorin wondered if he was going to mention any of this when he got home. They were talking about abominations and false prophets, and Lorin reflected that he could no longer feel the pains in his back and sides, in fact could not feel his back and sides at all, or his feet or hands. He suspected this meant your kinesthetic responses shut off during visions. It meant your nerve endings picked up other signals, your senses fine-tuned to other frequencies. It explained why, now that he thought about it, he was not hearing the chirp of birds or the buzz and click of insects or for that matter the rustling made by the wind in the white flamelets besides his ears. All he could hear was the mild voice of the younger man explaining dreadful things to him, and he worried that he wasn't going to remember them all. He strained to listen very closely, but . . . the most he was able to do was cause a roaring in both ears, and that created interference. Still, he enjoyed watching the shadows ripple across the robes of both men as the wind gently caught the folds. He experienced a mild pang as the younger man's voice began to fade out, and presently he was aware of colors separating into unstable bands around them both, and he saw the claw of a dead branch through the face and chest of the older man. (pp. 220–21)

I respect the craftsmanship of this imaginative recreation of a possible First Vision. I am still waiting, however, for an author with equal literary skill but a different religious imagination. I want another explanation than delusion for the First Vision, a version that qualifies as spiritual realism.

And yes, the exorcism scene is still in the book. And it's even funnier than I remembered.

P.S. In January 1991, the Association for Mormon Letters awarded its novel prize to Franklin Fisher, still aesthetically bearded, for *Bones*. In accepting the prize, Fisher expressed amazement at receiving "a prize for *this* novel from *this* association" and added, "And the first thing I did was call my eighty-nine-year-old mother in California and tell her." I heartily applauded the award and asked Fisher privately why Lorin Hood had gone on a mission. "Guilt," explained Fisher. I sug-

gested that he underestimated the carrying capacity of most Mormons for unexpiated guilt, and we left it for readers to decide.

Clawson and the Mormon Experience

The Making of a Mormon Apostle: The Story of Rudger Clawson by David S. Hoopes and Roy Hoopes (Lanham, Maryland: Madison Books, 1990), illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, xvii, 330 pp., $24.95.

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IN 1879 A YOUNG MORMON missionary named Rudger Clawson watched as an anti-Mormon mob in Georgia killed his companion. Through bluff and bravado Clawson survived the assault and brought his companion's body back to church and family in Utah. The murdered Joseph Standing became another in a long line of Mormon martyrs, while Clawson received a hero's welcome and lived with that distinction his entire life. In this dramatically written biography, journalists David and Roy Hoopes trace their grandfather's early life and emergence as an apostle against the backdrop of the Mormon experience.

Rudger Clawson (1857–1943) was the son of Hiram B. Clawson, friend and son-in-law to Brigham Young and manager of Young's personal estate, and Margaret Judd, the second of Hiram's four wives. Raised near the heart of the Church and schooled in shorthand and accounting, Rudger worked for John Young and for ZCMI before his mission and rendezvous with fame.

Following his mission, Clawson entered into polygamy despite warning clouds building on the national horizon. In 1882 he married Florence Dinwoody for status and to please his mother; seven months later he married Lydia Spencer, a poor, semi-literate but attractive woman, for love. Never particularly subtle in keeping his polygamous relationship secret, Clawson became one of the first prosecuted and convicted under the Edmunds Act of 1882. He received the maximum sentence and served over three years in the state penitentiary. Florence divorced him while he was in prison, but Lydia stood by him as she would years later when he took another younger wife.

While in prison, Clawson met and became friends with apostle Lorenzo Snow, who was impressed with Clawson's bookkeeping and teaching abilities. After Clawson's release, Snow took charge of the young man's Church career, appointing him president of the Box Elder Stake—Snow's old domain. When Snow became Church President in 1898, he ordained the forty-one-year-old Clawson as an apostle, and three days before his death in 1901 he called Clawson to the First Presidency as second counselor.

Such illumination of the internal dynamics of the Church hierarchy and the issue of advancement and succession is perhaps the book's most interesting contribution. There is little doubt that Clawson advanced as Snow's personal protégé. Snow brought Clawson into the Council at a crucial period of fiscal stress and insolvency following the Edmunds-Tucker Act. Clawson's ordination, his bookkeeping abilities, and Snow's campaign to collect a full tithe from Church members form a calculated strategy (prophetic or otherwise) to control and solve the problems of Church indebtedness. Clawson was, in fact, more bookkeeper than apostle for several years, drawing an accountant's wage and overseeing until 1910 the closing of Church accounts. By rights Clawson should have remained in the First Presidency when President Snow died, but Joseph F. Smith broke with tradition and chose two new counselors. Smith created his own hierarchy and promoted his own protégés, including a twenty-nine-year-old son whom he