

The chapters on Thomas Kearns, the colorful mining entrepreneur and owner (after 1901) of the *Tribune*, will give many readers a more flattering portrait of this man than they may have had before; his lack of formal education and misuse of the English language have generated a body of folklore depicting him as a one-dimensional, rich, ignorant millionaire. Although Malmquist does not add a great deal of previously unknown information about Kearns' political career, he does improve Kearns' image.

The story of the key figure in the newspaper's later history, J. F. Fitzpatrick, is told as perhaps only Malmquist could tell it. This man, whose passion for anonymity was his trademark, was a key figure in the "power structure" of Salt Lake City and Utah for many years. His role as close friend and confidant of Church presidents Heber J. Grant, George Albert Smith, and David O. McKay is recounted. (Heber J. Grant once told Malmquist, "One of my best friends, inside or outside the Church, is your publisher, John Fitzpatrick.") It is clear that Fitzpatrick set the newspaper firmly on the only sensible course it could pursue in the long run, turning it away from issues that divided Mormons and non-Mormons and strengthening it for the years when many newspapers across the nation had to combine or die.

The chapters on the latter decades of the *Tribune's* life are filled with the struggle for survival. They are valuable for their history of the rivalry between the *Deseret News* and the *Tribune*, as well as for accounts of the rise and fall of several now long-departed Salt Lake dailies. These chapters may be a bit controversial for those who regret the establishment of a joint publishing agency and who see the *Tribune* publishers' involvements in other business enterprises as a mixed blessing for the community.

For the past sixty years, Malmquist observes, the *Tribune* has sought "to accept the responsibilities of public watchdog but to avoid the role of public gadfly." One can approve the transformation of the *Tribune* into a watchdog while at the same time regretting, in some ways, the passing of the gadfly.

Symbolic Jawbone

JOHN B. HARRIS

The Jawbone of an Ass. By Glenna Wood, New York: Vantage Press, 1970. 396 pp. \$6.50.

To pass public judgment upon a work after a relatively cursory perusal seems, at best, a bit unfair, for each work, to the author, is more than the final product; and perhaps the reader can only comprehend and appreciate a given work after he too has partaken of some of the anguish that lies behind the final publication. Unfortunately, such empathetic participation is impossible, and author and reader are forced to view a work from separate vantage points.

Then, too, regardless of the ease or the difficulty of the artistic birth process, a book is written to be read. In the final analysis, it is only the reading that really counts. No matter what the author's intentions, the real question always is, how does the book reach the reader? Is it stimulating and convincing? Does it have within it an *élan* that makes the reading an important part of the reader's

life? Only when a book meets these requirements can it be considered successful. There are a few books that come very close to being completely successful. Many books fail utterly. Most books — good books — both fail and succeed.

Such is the case with Glenna Wood's *The Jawbone of an Ass*. As the author herself admits, the book was doomed to partial failure at the outset because she had tried to do too much, to cover too much ground. Ms. Wood makes the reader conscious of too much history and geography and theology and psychology and symbolism and sociology and so on and so on. Her effort and desire are more than praiseworthy: surely we have too many Mormon authors who are content to tell little homelitic tales in saccharin prose, and it is refreshing to find a writer like Ms. Wood who wants to produce something of greater emotional, artistic, and intellectual significance. She warns the reader of her intent at the outset: the title page of the novel reads: *The Jawbone of an Ass: A Symbolic Novel with an Historical Setting*. I would have been happier had it read (and had the novel followed this pattern): *The Jawbone of an Ass — A Story with Symbolic and Historical Overtones*. In other words, I think that the symbolism and history and theology and all other such things that Ms. Wood brings into the novel too often get in the way of a basically good story. The plot, the characterization, the action all suffer in varying degrees because they seem to be dependent upon a symbolic and historic core rather than vice versa. In my opinion, these intellectual elements were naturally — even unavoidably — a part of the story Ms. Wood had to tell, and she did not need to raise them to the dominance that she did. After all, a novel set in a Mormon colony in Arizona at the end of the last century, a novel which deals with the inner and outer conflicts of a young girl struggling to adjust her life and conscience to the conflicting demands and attractions of her religion, her acting career, and her gentile boy friend could hardly avoid these intellectual questions. But they could have been presented in a lower key, in a lesser light, if you please, and they would then have fused with the story more happily.

All critics are not heralds of the new. Some are elegant connoisseurs of that which has arrived, and when they approve of something it is likely to be long past its creative period. Like Hermes conducting the souls of the dead to Hades, they usher ideas and art forms into the mausoleums of 'the accepted.'

— JOHN GARDNER
