

## Technology no solution in Calgarian's SF thriller

Jakober, Marie *The Mind Gods* Macmillan of Canada, 1976. 165 pp. \$7.95. Runner-up in the *Search-For-A-New-Alberta-Novelist Competition*.

Science fiction is often not considered 'serious' writing because it presents the world in a stereotyped, black-and-white fashion.

The best thing about Marie Jakober's novel, *The Mind Gods*, is that she avoids the "good-guys versus the bad-guys" cliché.

In *The Mind Gods*, the "guys" are the Caronites and the Hala-ites; two warring worlds in the year 2350 A.D. Hala is the USA of the universe; the rich centre of a whirling galaxy of colonies. One day Hala's benign imperialism is shaken by the arrival of a space ship full of dead (Hala-ite) crew members. The ship bears the message *We serve the Mind Sendus no more of your ships!*

And the war is on. The primitive Caronites, led by a religious leader named Roger Caron, launch their stealthy, sinister war against the cultured Hala-ites.

*The Mind Gods* bears the weight of numerous analogies to our modern society. The Hala-ites, with their ultra-progress and super-technology, condemn the 'backward' Caronites for their desire to retain the spirituality of man, through serving the Mind. This conflict is a timely one in a world where machines do everything but pray, these days.

Author Jakober has not written a treatise for or against technology, nor has she set herself up as an ardent defender of the "spirit of man." She has merely constructed the arena, and described the strength of each of the two battling ideologies. And fortunately, for the reader, it is not a fixed fight. We are forced to think our way through the conflict - and it is not an easy task.



Author Marie Jakober.

In fact, Jakober makes it a little too difficult for us. A computing science student, she obviously knows her stuff when it comes to machines and technology. No doubt she finds it a fascinating field of study. But she seems to assume that her reading audience will be equally interested in complex descriptions of technical detail. We are not. Such description is not essential to the plot, and we shouldn't be required to wade through it.

There is a similar problem in Jakober's attempt to describe the ideological clash between the two warring planets. Instead of showing us how such a conflict would manifest itself between the technologically sophisticated Hala and the

primitive, telepathic people of the Caronite movement - she tells us, at great length.

The main body of the novel is the story of the punitive expedition sent from Hala to quell the revolting Caronites, told from the point of view of one of the expedition officers: Colonel Tanya Rastov. The author uses this intelligent and thoughtful character to inform us of the depth of such an ideological dispute. And Colonel Rastov does tell us - there are pages and pages of her thoughts on the Machines vs. Mind, Spiritualism vs. Materialism problem that is the central core of the book. In these sections, the book reads like a term paper, which will make it unpopular with students

right away. And fiction-lovers will soon discover that they are reading a philosophy text-book, not a story.

When the author ceases lecturing to us, and resumes the telling of the story - our interest is re-engaged, and the going is smooth. Jakober has written seven (unpublished) novel manuscripts prior to this one, and it is obvious that this writing

has served her well. The language is smooth and professional, framing some fine imagery.

Science fiction buffs will enjoy this book; but it is not limited to that strange breed alone. Anyone who wonders just where this planet is headed will be interested in Marie Jakober's consideration of the matter.

by Lindsay Brown

## The arts

### Macbeth replaced

Due to technical difficulties, Theatre 3 will not present *Macbeth* as the final production of its current season.

In its place, the theatre has obtained the rights to stage *Kennedy's Children* by Robert Patrick, to open April 20 in the Centennial Library Theatre.

Recently hailed in both London and New York as one of the most important plays of the 70's, *Kennedy's Children* is a graphic postscript to the Sixties, as they are remembered by the late afternoon patrons of a New York City bar.

Their recollections, presented in a series of lonely, interspersed monologues, are variously bitter and bemused, and collectively as explosive as the decade itself. The *London Times* called the play "an enthralling spiritual graph of the decade," while *The New York Times*' Clive Barnes termed *Kennedy's Children* "a corrosive threnody for the sixties, in which the wit is as hard as nails

and as sharp.

Playwright Robert Patrick maintains "the play's theme is the loss of heroes. And it's not just about the sixties, it's about now, why we have become what we are. The people I'm writing about are Martin Luther King's children too, and Marilyn Monroe's and John Lennon's."

Artistic director Mark Schoenberg terms *Kennedy's Children* "one of the most challenging pieces I've ever worked on." He has gathered an outstanding ensemble for this production, featuring Susan Andre, Richard Gishler, Judith Mabey, Elliot McIver, Sheelah Megill, and Andy Thomson. Designer is Randy Maertz.

*Kennedy's Children* runs April 20 through May 1 in the Centennial Library Theatre. Tickets are now available at all Bay outlets, or by phoning Theatre 3 at 426-6870. Reservations for the Theatre 3-Edmonton Plaza Dinner-Theatre "Affair" can also be made through the Theatre 3 box office.

## No preconceived coffee-table notions

Foster, Janet and Foster, John. *To The Wild Places*. Van Nostrand Reinhold Ltd. 1975. 155 pp. \$19.95.

If England is the land of poets, Canada must surely be the land of photographers. Every time you look around, you see published another collection of photographs by a Canadian photographer about the Canadian wilds. And always the photographs include some vivid sunsets, some colorful wildlife, some untamed and virtually untouched wilderness landscapes.

Often those "vivid" sunsets and landscapes are merely decorative, coffee-table art. They are attractive, pleasing to the eye and show people something of this country they might otherwise be unable to see.

But they are also often trite. Too often the scene they represent is a preconceived image of the photographer which he/she has waited to "capture" and refuses to interpret for the viewer. Not so with John and Janet Foster's work, *To The Wild Country*.

*To The Wild Country* is a collection of photographs bound together by a written, interpretive text. It concerns six areas of Canada: Kluane National Park in the Yukon,

Pacific Rim Park on the West Coast of Vancouver Island, Dinosaur Provincial Park in Alberta, Algonquin Provincial Park in Ontario, the parks of the Gaspé in Quebec, Gros Montre Park in Newfoundland and Aujuitq National Park on Baffin Island.

For anyone who might be going out to spend \$7.95 on a new hardcover (or even \$4.95 for a paperback - it's happening these days, unbelievably enough), I'd recommend that you forego three of these hardcovers or four of these paperbacks and buy yourself *To The Wild Country*.

It does what I consider good photography must do - it presents the world around us and reveals something of ourselves and our images of the world instead of merely showing aimless meanderings through the lens and ektachrome of a photographer without a purpose.

The Fosters have a purpose in their text and photography. Their purpose is to go to the frontier, "uncivilized" areas of Canada and find and record something of their wild, pristine beauty. The Fosters never pretend to know the areas they visit; they go only as human visitors who manage to glimpse and record, rightly or wrongly, something of nature, in a state unmodified by the touch of human hands.

Because they visit the wild

places with some understanding of nature, the Fosters are very concerned about man's impact on nature. For example, they relate this one story from their time on Baffin Island, the delicate Arctic environment:

"We unexpectedly discover a tent among the rocks and are amazed to see a small child. He belongs to one of the geologists who has brought his family with him. We share a cup of tea and talk. They have been here three weeks but now are anxious to move out, to stand under a hot shower and forget about the ten days of rain and snow and damp sleeping bags. Two weeks later we learn that they left all their garbage behind, sitting on the tundra in cardboard boxes. It is said that in the Arctic a piece of paper lasts for years, a wooden crate for decades. How can scientists, who should understand these Arctic realities, simply walk away from their own garbage?"

This is an isolated example but it illustrates the concerns of the Fosters and their understanding of man's role in entering the wilderness, knowing that as humans they become partners in a very delicate relationship with nature, knowing that as photographers their purpose is only to observe and ensure the wilderness is left as untouched as possible when they leave.

To find something com-

parable to *To The Wild Country*. I think you would have to go back to the end of Centennial year, 1967, when the National Film Board photographers published the magnificent volume of color plates entitled *A Year Of The Land*. *To The Wild Country* has comparable

photography of fine technical and artistic merit. When joined with the lucid and thoughtful text, it becomes a necessary work for people who will never venture to the wildest of areas of Canada but yet wish to discover and know something of them.

by Kevin Gilless

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