

books

ASHINI and N'TSUK

(by Yves Theriault, translated by Gwendolyn Moore.

Harvest House, 1972)

Last week I read two very new books—new because I'd never encountered the same quiet power in Canadian literature. The novels were written in French in the Sixties but Harvest House is now releasing translations as part of a series of French Canadian writers. I don't know if the translations are Theriault but they are both lyric and intense, supple and subtle. Theriault has an uncanny ability to assume a persona. In these novels he speaks the death speeches of the last Indians of the old way. By the exact perspectives of N'Tsuk and Ashini the reader is given a three-dimensional image of a people we have refused to recognize except politely and superficially through anthro or social problems courses, or maybe by dabbling in native handicrafts. Any reading material I've previously seen tended toward a liberal indignancy. The basic opposition between the white world and the Indian world has been romanticized into a noble savage-civilized man concept. The pop version of Marcuse's pop version of Freud. But however you modify the word 'savage' the pejorative meaning remains.

The narrators, N'Tsuk and Ashini, turn this confrontation back on us. We are the one's who do not understand. We are the fools in artifices, cities planned to self-destruct. Impermanence is glorified as happening or process art. Their world is mutable too, but natural. N'Tsuk accepts that she is to be one hundred tomorrow. She has accepted a lot in her life, simply and with none of the fuss we would make. The deceptively simple prose style of her tale reveals that her acceptance of the vagaries of life is not a resignation but an ability to adapt. "My name is that of the agile and gambolling otter. Is this a symbol? Am I also made of blood and muscle? And what would you know about it?" N'Tsuk keeps asking her reader this. "And you? And what does it matter?" Indeed. How much have we cared that the land was divided and they were left "only rivers without sources and without visible horizons." Although there are some political vituperations among the speeches of this dying woman they do not seem out of place. Her voice builds up slowly and her rhetoric is not obtrusive—it is plain and absolutely fitted to her final message. It is a celebration of "the amplitude of my role as a woman." Her role as wife has none of the prerogative of the housewife status of a white woman. She is free and one gets the impression that she is stronger than her husband. She is the one that kills seven wolves to protect her family. She is not subservient to him. The main problem in realizing one's self as a woman in our world is the total lack of human freedom: "Where are you going white woman, with your imitations of men?"

Though 'Ashini,' the earlier of the two novels, is not as well realized there is the same amazing simplicity. The language is one that employs only the plain and elemental stylistic devices. Like N'Tsuk, Ashini eclipses the less important

passages of his story. This device ("I will perhaps tell you later") gives N'Tsuk's speech a sense of calm timelessness. The same concentration on the essentials makes Ashini's story more dramatic and more tragic: Ashini, the rock, the last real Montagnais Indian free in the Ungava region. He realizes his role as leader and decides he would confer with the Prime Minister. The reader knows his confidence is naive and futile yet Ashini never looks ridiculous. He never loses his dignity. His life centres in the freedom of the Montagnais. When Ottawa dissolves this he must, of course, fight Ottawa. And of course it is suicidal, but it involves no loss of his real sense of himself, his

honor. In 'Ashini' Theriault makes explicit references to white imperialism but the novel is not simply a political tract. It is a dramatization of a political fact—and one more pervasive than the Indian vs. the Indian Affairs Office. One gets an uncomfortable feeling that Theriault extends it to the French-English question or the American-Canadian one. Anyone who is taking an anthro or a sociology course is well advised to read, relax and get into 'Ashini' and 'N'Tsuk'. Anyone who reads novels will want to read these for their precision and simplicity of story and style. You close these novels and sit, alone in the dark, listening for echoes.

Terri Moore

music

wishbone ash was here

The Kinsmen Fieldhouse was a third full Saturday night, and the only reason for that much seemed to be a lack of anything better to do on the audience's part. No one left the Fieldhouse disappointed though, as Wishbone Ash took the audience completely by surprise.

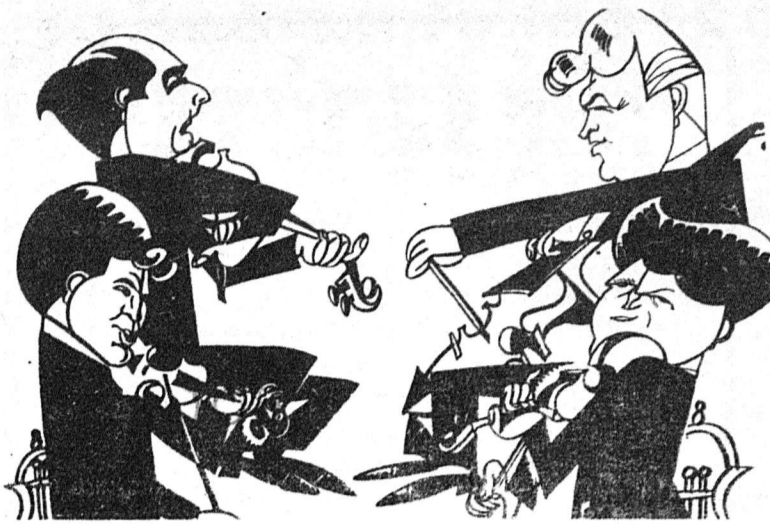
Before Wishbone Ash hit the stage, the audience had to go through a two hour wait disguised as a bar band. Surely we deserved better. Through a most meticulous and painstakingly rehearsed set though, Wishbone Ash more than dissipated any bad feelings. Through almost telepathic lead changes involving Andy Powell and Ted Turner, Wishbone Ash became the tightest band ever to hit Edmonton. Individually, neither guitarist is a flash; coupled they are the greatest lead team today.

In a backstage chat before the show, Turner said his main influence was Peter Green, and this was easily evident during the show, as his guitar soared, distortionless and clean, in contrast to Powell's Townshend-like chordal thrusts.

Providing solid foundation for the band was Martin Turner on bass, seemingly pounding the body of his bass to a pulp, and Steve Upton on explosive drums (he destroyed his bass drum in the process) complete with comic interjections.

The highlight of the evening was "Phoenix" from the first album, which was almost ruined by, as Upton might have put it, "redneck" antics (such as screaming and shouting) during a most quiet passage.

Wishbone carried on, though, to the sound of most appreciative applause. They returned for two encores, and having conquered the audience, really loosened up with "Blind Owl" and "Lady Whiskey",



chamber music

The Edmonton Chamber Music Society concert series continues on Wednesday November 1 with the Smetana Quartet from Czechoslovakia playing Beethoven's Quartet in F minor, Op. 95, Janacek's Quartet No. 1, and Smetana's Quartet in E minor, "From my Life," at 8:30 p.m. in Convocation Hall.

Founded at the Prague Conservatory of Music in 1943

the Smetana Quartet soon became one of Czechoslovakia's most respected cultural institutions and since 1950 has gradually expanded its itinerary until it now has performed in more than thirty countries and is renowned the world over for its performance of the great quartet music of Beethoven and Mozart as well as that of its countrymen Smetana, Janacek, and Dvorak.

Violinist Lubomir Kostecy and cellist Antonik Kohout have been with the Smetana Quartet since its founding in 1945. Jiri Novak became first violinist in 1947, and violist Milan Skampa joined the Quartet in 1956. The Smetana Quartet currently record for Supraphone, Westminster, and Columbia record companies. Admission to the concert on Wednesday night is by season membership in the Chamber Music Society; there are no single admissions. A few season memberships will still be available at the door before the concert.

dollar concerts

As part of the Edmonton Symphony Society's policy of bringing its orchestra in closer contact with the community, two special concerts will be presented by the Students' Council of the University of Alberta in the Students' Union Building Theatre on Wednesday, November 1. Assistant Conductor Ted Kardash will conduct the first concert at 3:30 p.m., while Maestro Lawrence Leonard will step up to the podium to lead the orchestra in its 7:30 performance.

The keynote of both concerts is informality. There will be no program notes, no reserved seats, and no starched collars—just uninhibited, easy listening.

The student price is \$1.00; the general public \$2.00, for each concert.



symphony

Water Music, gave the ESO a chance to show themselves off. The piece was wellselected for the orchestra's sensibility. The Suite was well done and fortunately well rewarded by the audience's enthusiasm.

The third piece, Bruch's Concerto in G minor, was a little disappointing. The orchestra failed to capture the romance of the composition leaving Tregor at a point verging on exasperation. None the less, Tregor was far more suited to the temperament of the G minor Concerto and the audience was noticeably moved.

Brahms' Serenade in D Major concluded the evening. There were faults to be found in the Scherzo No. 1. The Rhondo was superb with Mr. Leonard leading the orchestra through accurate and sensitive nuance after nuance.

The evening went very well, I hope we will see more of Charles Tregor, and hear his artistry. See you at the Symphony in November.

John Shearer

The Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, under maestro Lawrence Leonard, hosted guest solo violinist, Charles Tregor. The works performed were: Haydn's C Major Concerto, Handel's Suite from the Royal Water Music, Bruch's Concerto in G minor, and Brahms' Serenade in D Major.

The first work, Haydn's Concerto in C Major, went very well. The youth and exuberance of soloist and orchestra was indeed the 'life-source' of the work. Mr. Tregor's artistry with the violin displayed his virile, almost 'gut' attack in the cadenza and throughout the remainder of the evening. The simplicity of the composition allowed the orchestra to display its suitability to works of this type.

Second on the program, Handel's Suite from the Royal

geronimo black

The former, employing two flutes and acoustic guitar, is the more successful of the two. Tracks 3 are typical guitar-raunch written by Leavey and Walley (Other Man and Gone). Finally each side closes with the "message" songs. On side one there's "L.A. County Jail '59 C/S" and "Let Us Live." Both are overproduced and overdone. "L.A. County Jail" is slow and heavily arranged while "Let Us Live" has intermittent reed squealing to mirror such words uttered as "hate and pain".

The best thing on the LP is the message song that closes side two. Composed by Jimmy Carl Black, an American national anthem concerns the obvious bigotry and prejudice the white man exercises over the red. Since no band can carry on without a leader with this song, Jimmy Carl Black is not only the Indian of the group, but is also its leader.

T. Townshend