

## Love and brutality on the tundra: Agaguk

AGAGUK, by Yves Theriault; translated from the French by Miriam Chapin. Ryerson, 329 pp., \$2.95.

Stories and novels about the Eskimos seem to be enjoying a real vogue these days. Many of them, unfortunately, fall into the class of "storybooks", or call them what you will, consisting of quaint retellings of Eskimo legends or cute little stories about How Young Nanook Learned to be a Man.

Agaguk, however, is an adult book. It is an intense human drama, set in the Eskimo society of some twenty years ago, and it may fairly be said about Theriault that he is not writing only about Eskimos, but about individual human beings.

Agaguk is a young Eskimo who sunders his relationships with his tribe, takes a wife, and sets up housekeeping at a remote spot on the tundra. Cheated by a dishonest trader, he commits murder; and in the subsequent police investigation a constable is shot and cruelly mutilated by the villagers whom he is questioning. Ramook, Agaguk's father and chief of the tribe, is duly punished for his part in the second murder, but Agaguk is never brought to justice for having killed the trader.

Theriault uses these dramatic events as a starting point for a careful examination of the Eskimo mind in general but, more important, for the examination of the way of thinking of Agaguk and his wife Iriook.

It immediately becomes clear that Agaguk is not just any old Eskimo. To break the firm bonds of the tribe, to set out on his own, is the act of an individualist. But it is also clear that these tribal bonds are no longer as strong as they once were—the coming of the white man, the passing of time, have weakened them and made individualism possible.

Iriook represents another aspect of social change—unlike most Eskimo women, she is not afraid to "talk loud", or take an active part in the administration of the family. This, of course, constitutes an active threat to Agaguk's masculinity, and the psychological repercussions of this are rather interesting to follow.

One of the most disturbing things about the novel is the way

in which the author treats the psychology of Agaguk. Agaguk is supposedly the archetypal primitive man—the descriptions of his sexual encounters and his kinship with the wilderness point towards this—and yet his thought patterns are often very like those of a Virginia Woolf character.

Theriault cannot quite make up his mind whether or not the Eskimo thinks like the white man; he is quite insistent at times that he does not, and yet he makes Agaguk into a hero because he

and his wife finally settle down into a "civilized" relationship, where emotions are more important than the pride and sexual release of the man.

Theriault writes with a forcefulness that in itself makes reading the book a tolerable experience. Too often, however, he relies on brutality for effect; and he never quite solves the problem of how to describe his characters in terms that are meaningful to a non-Eskimo readership.

—Terry Donnelly

## Woodwinds in a gentle light — Baroque Trio at Chamber Music

The Montreal Baroque Trio played an evening of woodwind music to those assembled in Convocation Hall last week in a pleasant, homely atmosphere created largely by the use of a table lamp. The glaring modern floodlights of the hall were not turned on, and although there was an indication now and then that the table lamp was barely adequate for its task, this difficulty was in no way reflected in the playing.

A grand piano stood in readiness for the pieces which made too much demand on the harpsichord; one wishes that the Trio had confined itself to pieces which did not require an annoying plink, plink of accompaniment to disturb the mellifluity of the wind music.

A joyful and lovely piece by Carl Stamitz set the tone for the evening, followed by three sonatas for harpsichord, gay but inconsequential works by Scarlatti. Kelsey Jones' fluid playing on a rather non-fluid instrument was notable here.

The next piece was Jones' own *Sonata da Chiesa*, in which the piano played it first part. The opening Adagio was sad, rather

beautiful, but ominous, as if trying to escape from pervading mechanism—an impression which was strengthened by the two harsh, driving fast movements in the work. It is a pity that most modern artists make their work ugly; there is much more to life, and of more worth, than mechanism and despair.

Telemann's *Partita for Oboe* was a bit refrained, though quite nice; but the spirit of baroque was not restored until Handel's *Sonata in G for Recorder*. (Marie Duschenes played both the flute and the recorder.) This instrument, with its greater body of tone than the flute, was well suited to echo the pleasure in life which must generally be enjoyed if creativity and works of art are to be enriching things.

Some of all this must have filtered through to the Trio, for the "Largo" of Bach's *C Major Trio*—their final work—was taken faster than I have heard many Andantes. But the work was immensely enjoyable; the Trio were at their best; and the evening ended in the tunefulness and optimism with which it had begun.

—Kevin Lees

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## leftovers

Recent comments by a columnist in the Edmonton Journal have inspired fears that the Students' Union Theatre is intended for use by non-university groups. We are happy to report that these fears are unfounded.

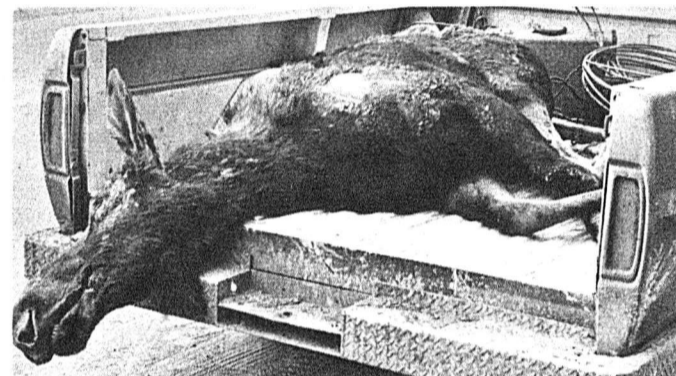
While certain off-campus groups such as the Civic Musical Association will be using the theatre, preference is at all times given to registered Students' Union organizations.

Mr. Cecil Pretty, the theatre manager, has informed us that student groups are accommodated first with bookings, then any remaining times are rented out to other groups. Registered Students' Union groups are not charged for use of the facilities unless they are charging an admission price.

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We herewith present for your perusal a picture of a dead moose, taken by our roving photographer Bob Humphries.

How the moose died is something of a mystery, but rumour has it that he laughed himself to death



reading the Moose Jokes in a last year's Casserole, carelessly left in the woods by a student-turned-hunter.

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John Thompson writes:

The first meeting of the SCM/English Club "Poetry Now" seminar came off not too badly—a bit too academic, perhaps, but then everybody's still slightly shy.

In case it hasn't come to your attention: the seminar is a free, open, hopefully exciting series of alternate-Thursday-evening meetings for everyone interested in the poetry of today, that odd blend of ballad, confession, gnomic treatise and sheer chaos.

At next Thursday's bash (8 p.m. at SCM House: 11120-83 Avenue), Lola Maltais and I will be throwing a program of Robert Creeley, Robert Duncan and Charles Olson at the defenseless poetry-lovers there assembled.

If you want to look at the poems we'll be reading beforehand, they'll be available outside Professor Blodgett's office on the second floor of Assiniboia Hall.

Do come if you care to—preferably to throw yourself into the goings-on.

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The showing of the old silent film *Phantom of the Opera* at Film Society last Monday reminds us of the tremendous possibilities that the new Students' Union building has in this department.

The new building has a veritable surfeit of corridors, underground caverns, and secret passageways that would keep any skulker happy for years.

It's possible that some clandestine and shadowy figure has already taken up residence in some dark recess of the building; voices are known to have come out of the walls at times, along with eerie music that may or may not be emanating from U of A Radio.

Perhaps it's the Garneau Grabber, finding nothing to do in the devastation that was his old stamping (or grabbing) grounds; or perhaps it's the wasted body of one of the Student Council politicians who helped plan the building.

If this vague figure ever comes to light, it will doubtless be through the efforts of the Gateway staff; for these diligent souls work long into the night, and partake of the early-morning essence of the building. Sooner or later they are bound to apprehend the rascal if indeed he does exist.

They thought they had him the other night when a sinister-looking character ducked in and out of the news room—but it turned out to be a building superintendent.