

The poems of Roger Brien and Clément Marchand are the most important contributions to the survival of the romantic and realistic traditions in French-Canadian poetry. They are written in regular metre. Most poets of the new generation are experimenting in new forms and are trying to free their art from the rigid rules established by the classicists. Alain Grandbois and Saint-Denys Garneau were pioneers in this new trend. They have been followed by two highly gifted poetesses, Rina Lasnier and Anne Hébert. Although they have by no means disappeared from our poetry, the traditional schools seem to be at least for some time, eclipsed by new tendencies inherited from symbolism, Claudel and surrealism.

While most of our poets have expressed clear and easy feelings and ideas, the last four mentioned appeal to voices which are obscure or dormant in us but which ask to be brought to light and to human language. From the surrealists, they have taken the revelations of the unconscious, though rejecting the automatic writing practised by their European confreres.

Alain Grandbois does not, in fact, belong to the new generation of poets. His major poetical work, Les Iles de la nuit, was published only three years ago and is in harmony with the new trends in our native poetry. Alain Grandbois' poems cannot be explained in prose. They are an esoteric expression of the quest for eternity and happiness in an ephemeral and anguished world. They are tragic in essence and obscure in style. They are, if I may say so, voices in the night, while Rina Lasnier's poems are voices in the sunshine.

This poetess summons all beings to appear before her so that she can offer them all to God in a song of joy and thankfulness. Her poems are expressions of a soul filled with admiration at the spectacle of this world of beauty. She sings her exultation at the sight of the creative forces of nature, with which she endeavours to harmonize her voice. Rina Lasnier is essentially a religious poetess as may be seen for example, in her Madones Canadiennes, a series of forty poems inspired by Canadian Madonnas. Her latest poem, Le Chant de la Montée, which is her best achievement to date, is inspired by the love of Jacob and Rachel. She tells this biblical story in a modern style after the pattern of the great biblical poems of Paul Claudel.

Reverend Gustave Lamarche is also a religious poet, who draws many of his themes from the Bible, while François Hertel writes of his inner adventures in lines unfortunately filled with prosy, philosophical words. His poetry, though not lacking in originality, is too abstract and bookish to be deeply moving. Anne Hébert, on the contrary, sings like a bird. Her subtle and light verse is filled with the most charming dreams and games of childhood and she is a true disciple of Saint-Denys Garneau.

Recent French-Canadian poetry is, as one can see, widely diversified, not belonging to a single trend or school. While some of the poets of the new generation are closely connected with traditional French schools, others are experimenting in new directions. Notwithstanding its shortcomings, this brief survey establishes clearly, I hope, that

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