

It is less in imitating others than in developing to their maximum our own values, in being deeply conscious of our own problems and in approaching them in our own way that our writers will create a literature authentically ours and, if I may say so, taken from our flesh, blood and soil. The enthusiasm which greeted the recent publication in Canada, in France and in the United States of some of our best novels clearly proves that, with themes and approaches distinctly Canadian, our writers can attain a universality of appeal which is the distinctive mark of all truly great works of art. The time has come for us to stand on our own feet and to speak for ourselves.

Let us now come to the second part of this survey. I wish to say right away that I cannot, in the time allotted to me, do more than glance at the most representative books published in the past ten years. I will furthermore have to limit my comments to creative writing, which for convenience, will be considered in two separate groups: poetry and prose. Let us start with poetry.

French-Canadian poetry, now a hundred years old, has remained for the most part an offshoot of French poetry. This is, on the whole, a natural phenomenon, for the pioneers of our poetry, unable to rely on any native tradition, obviously had to learn from the French masters how to express their feelings, inspirations and ideals. Unfortunately, their poetic efforts were too closely patterned after the European masterpieces and they too often contented themselves with transplanting to Canadian soil, not only the technique of the French verse, but also the vocabulary, the feelings and the themes. These, which grew up naturally under the sun of France, died from exposure under our northern skies. But more and more of our poets have succeeded in finding personal modes of expression in harmony with our Canadian soul and landscape. Let me quote here from a letter received some years ago from Raïssa Maritain:

"My belief is that Canadian poetry will become more and more different from poetry created in France and will engage in an evolution of its own. I do not mean that it should cut itself from its roots and overlook the immense treasure of poetry created by poets like Villon, Scève, Racine, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Mallarmé and so many wonderful master craftsmen. What I mean is that, having learned from all of them 'the rules of the game', benefiting by the revelation of the nature of poetry and the poet, which cost their predecessors so much, the French-Canadian poets may, from this vantage point, endeavour to turn their own experiences and the joys, knowledge and sufferings which life and history bring forth into the fluid gold of poetry."

Admittedly, French-Canadian poets owe much to their French confreres and French influence is still strong on our poetry. Hugo, Lamartine, Alfred de Musset and Leconte de Lisle have, however, been superseded by Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Rimbaud and, more recently, by Verhaeren, Claudel, Valéry and Eluár. But we must note that this influence is more and more confined to the technical aspects of poetry and that the younger poets are striving to develop a poetry more

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