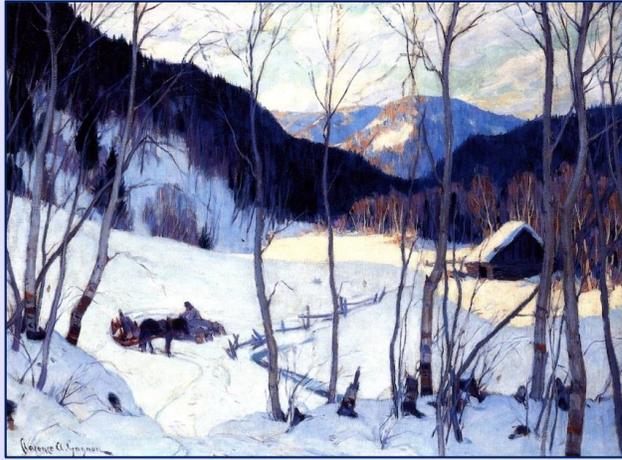


### Northern Voices: Révolution



*In the Woods*  
Clarence  
Gagnon, 1913

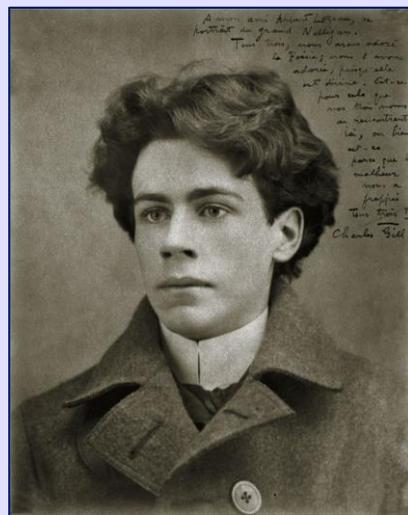
We open this session with Clarence Gagnon (1881-1942), painter of the Laurentians and illustrator of *Maria Chapdelaine*, the 1913 novel by Louis Hémon (1880-1913), a French writer who had grown to love the country of Quebec and the passions of its *habitants*.

This session will deal with the poetry of French Canada. It is necessarily limited. We shall begin with Émile Nelligan in 1899, and finish with *La Nuit de la Poésie* in 1970. I am not as familiar with modern francophone poets as I should be.

I am not completely fluent in French. I can read reasonably well. Many of the poems that will be presented will be recited by their authors. Others will be spoken or sung by those who have French as their mother tongue.

### Émile Nelligan (1879-1941)

Nelligan was born in Montreal, to a father who had immigrated from Ireland and a French-Canadian mother. He published his first poems at the age of 16, quit school and worked briefly as a sailor and a clerk. At the age of 19 he began to suffer hallucinations, and he was hospitalized with a diagnosis of dementia praecox (schizophrenia). He remained in hospital until his death.



Nelligan was the most famous of the *Poètes québécois*. Nelligan recited many of his poems at meetings of *l'École littéraire de Montréal* (1895-1900) where he met other young poets. His

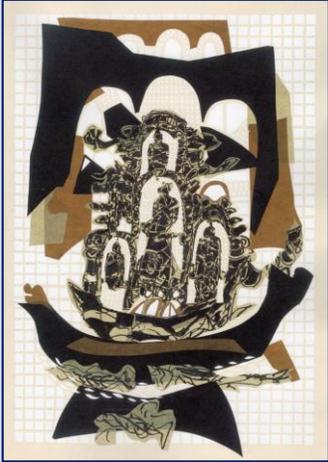
recitations there were passionate, particularly his last – *La Romance du Vin*. Nelligan considered as his mentors the symbolist poets of France – Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Rodenbach. He is often considered the Canadian Baudelaire.

The 1899 photograph of Nelligan was given by his friend (and fellow-poet) Charles Gill to Albert Lozeau. The dedication states

À mon ami Albert Lozeau, ce portrait du grand Nelligan. Tous trois, nous avons adoré la Poésie ; nous l'avons adorée, puisqu'elle est divine. Est-ce pour cela que nos trois noms se rencontrent là, ou bien est-ce parce que le malheur nous a frappés tous trois ?

(To my friend Albert Lozeau, this portrait of the great Nelligan. We three all adored Poetry; we adored it because it was divine. Is that why our three names come together, or is it because misfortune has affected all three of us?)

Various myths have grown up around Nelligan. One is that he was hospitalized because he was gay, homosexuality being considered a type of insanity in those days. No one knows whether or not this is true.



### Le Vaisseau d'Or

Ce fut un grand Vaisseau taillé dans  
l'or massif:  
Ses mâts touchaient l'azur, sur des mers  
inconnues;  
La Cyprine d'amour, cheveux épars,  
chairs nues  
S'étalait à sa proue, au soleil excessif.

Monique Leyrac

René Derouin, 2007

Nelligan's most famous poem is *Le Vaisseau d'Or*.

There was a mighty ship, of solid gold 'twas wrought:  
Its masts reached to the sky, over oceans unknown;  
The goddess Love herself, flesh bare and hair wind-blown,  
Stood sculpted at its bow, in sunshine desert hot.  
(Leroux translation).

There have been various interpretations. Perhaps the ship of gold is the mind of man afloat on the sea of life but ultimately doomed to be wrecked because of Hate, Disgust and Madness. Some have suggested that the poem came after Nelligan had experienced sex with a prostitute and was

disgusted and ashamed. Others have said that the shipwreck represents Nelligan's descent into madness.

Ce fut un grand Vaisseau taillé dans l'or massif:  
 Ses mâts touchaient l'azur, sur des mers inconnues;  
 La Cyprine d'amour, cheveux épars, chairs nues,  
 S'étalait à sa proue, au soleil excessif.  
 Mais il vint une nuit frapper le grand écueil  
 Dans l'Océan trompeur où chantait la Sirène,  
 Et le naufrage horrible inclina sa carène  
 Aux profondeurs du Gouffre, immuable cercueil.  
 Ce fut un Vaisseau d'Or, dont les flancs diaphanes  
 Révélaient des trésors que les marins profanes  
 Dégoût, Haine et Névrose, entre eux ont disputés.  
 Que reste-t-il de lui dans la tempête brève?  
 Qu'est devenu mon cœur, navire déserté?  
 Hélas! Il a sombré dans l'abîme du Rêve !

### Translations

me parece que el traducir de una lengua en otra .... es como quien mira los tapices flamencos por el revés: que aunque se ven las figuras, son llenas de hilos que las oscurecen, y no se ven con la lisura y tez de la haz.  
 (Cervantes, 1615)

it seems to me that a translation from one language into another ... is like looking at the back of a Flemish tapestry: although the faces are visible, they are covered with threads which obscure them, and they have not the smooth complexions seen from the front.



**Poetry is what is lost in translation. It is also what is lost in interpretation (Robert Frost, 1964).**

**Rhythm:** French is not a stressed language like German or English. The rhythm of the poetic line is based on the lengths of the sounds. A common French line is the alexandrine which has 12 syllables. The classical alexandrine has a break (caesura) at the centre of the line.

Ce fut un grand Vaisseau II taillé dans l'or massif

The most common English rhythm is iambic (unstressed-stressed) and most English poetry uses a line of 10 syllables (iambic pentameter):

There was a gallant vessel wrought of gold

**Rhyme:** It is easier to rhyme in French than in English. French poetry uses strict rhyme and also *rime riche* (exact rhyme: the same CVC) – “massif/excessif.” In compensation, English poetry can use other rhyming devices such as consonance (CVC) – “become/dream,” assonance (CVC) alliteration (CVC) and slant rhymes (CVC).

The text provides four different translations of the Nelligan poem.

*Rhythm:* The Leroux translation uses an alexandrine (12 syllable) line. The Heighton translation uses a variable line. Also his lines carry on from one to the next, something that is far more modern in style than that of the original even though the technique is known by the French word *enjambment*.

*Rhyme:*

All the translations use rhyme, although only the Widdoes and Leroux translations follow the exact sequence of the original abba cddc eefgfg. Smith gives up in the second half of the poem. Blank verse would not be appropriate in such a short poem and free verse would not fit the cultural context of the original. The words “massif” and “excessif” rhyme the last three sounds “sif.” A better example of *rime riche* would be “doit” and “doigt” where one word is a homophone of another completely different word.

The Heighton translation occasionally substitutes consonance for strict rhyme.

**The Alchemy of Words**

A literal translation that pays no regard to rhythm or rhyme still runs into difficulties because the words in one language do not mean exactly the same as those in another. The usual criticism of a translation is that the chosen words seem inappropriate or unnatural.

In the translations of *Le Vaisseau d'Or* the following words are difficult:

*étalait* means “spread out, displayed, showed off.” to translate it as “spreadeagled” (with arms outspread and legs apart) is incorrect for the ship’s figurehead

*azur* in French means “blue” as well as “sky” and often symbolizes the ideal. To translate as “clouds” loses both the colour and the meaning.

*diaphane* the words “translucent” and “diaphanous” are far better than “glassy” or “ghostly”

*immuable cercueil* – “immutable coffin” sounds completely wrong, but “shroud” is incorrect; “unrelenting tomb” is not bad.

It is easy to be critical. Much more difficult to come up with the “mot juste”

Paul Leroux presents notes on his translation on the government website:

[http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tpv2guides/guides/favart/index-eng.html?lang=eng&lettr=indx\\_titls&page=9jVqFuj8LOuo.html](http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/tpv2guides/guides/favart/index-eng.html?lang=eng&lettr=indx_titls&page=9jVqFuj8LOuo.html)

La Ciprine – an unusual name for Venus who was alleged to have been born (or come ashore) in Cyprus.



Painting is by Ivan Aivazovsky Morning at Sea (1849)

Nelligan’s life was the basis of the 1988 opera/musical by André Gagnon and Michel Tremblay. The singer is Daniel Lavoie.



Ah! comme la neige a neigé!  
 Ma vitre est un jardin de givre.  
 Ah! comme la neige a neigé!  
 Qu'est-ce que le spasme de vivre  
 A la douleur que j'ai, que j'ai.



Claude Léveillée

### La Romance du Vin

Tout se mêle en un vif éclat de gâité verte.  
 Ô le beau soir de mai! Tous les oiseaux en chœur,  
 Ainsi que les espoirs naguères à mon cœur,  
 Modulent leur prélude à ma croisée ouverte.

🔊 Anonymous

🔊 Monique Leyrac and André Gagnon

Les cloches ont chanté; le vent du soir odore...  
 Et pendant que le vin ruisselle à joyeux flots,  
 Je suis si gai, si gai, dans mon rire sonore,  
 Oh! si gai, que j'ai peur d'éclater en sanglots!



The pinot noir grapes are from a vineyard in Rigaud which calls itself *Romance du Vin*.

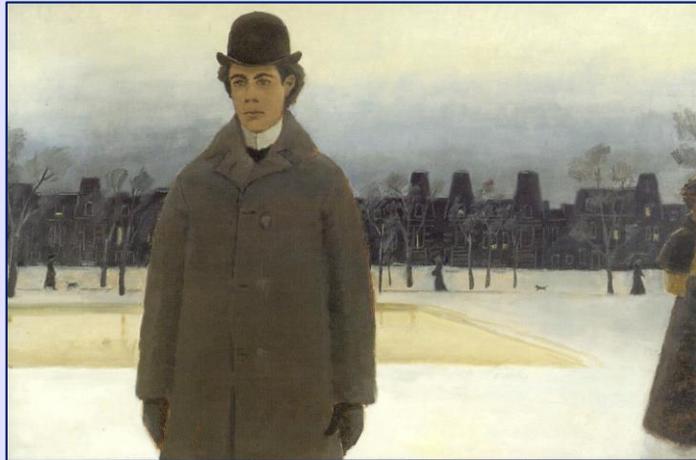
This poem was the last that Nelligan recited prior to being hospitalized.

The innocent recitation is by an unknown reader on the Canadian Archives website.  
[http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/films-videos-sound-recordings/poetry-audio-archives/Pages/list.aspx?FileType=AUDIO&&p\\_ID=30](http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/films-videos-sound-recordings/poetry-audio-archives/Pages/list.aspx?FileType=AUDIO&&p_ID=30)

The last two verses are also provided in the rendition by Monique Leyrac, who gives a sense of Nelligan's incipient insanity



This is a photograph of Nelligan at the l'Asile Saint Benoît-Joseph Labre (at Longue Pointe in the eastern part of Montreal island) in 1920



*Hommage à Nelligan, Jean Paul Lemieux, 1971*

This painting is by Jean-Paul Lemieux (1904-1990).



### **Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau (1912- 1943)**

Garneau was born in Montreal to a rich and aristocratic family. At the age of 16 years he contracted rheumatic fever, which left him with chronic heart disease. He studied art at l'École des beaux-arts de Montréal. In 1937, he published *Regards et jeux dans l'espace*, a compilation of his poems. The critical response was subdued and Garneau retired from public life to paint and enjoy nature. He suffered a heart attack while canoeing.

There is an impressive website (in French) on the poetry and paintings of Saint-Denys-Garneau:  
<http://www.saintdenysgarneau.com/catalogue-poesie/>

Many of the poems are recited by Pierre Auger and these recordings can be downloaded from the website.

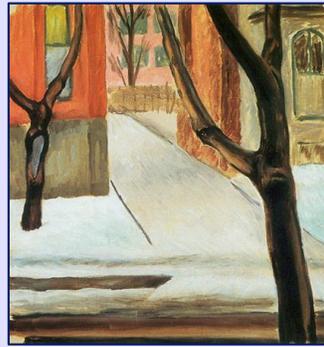
Garneau's free verse and modernist sensibilities were unfortunately ahead of his time in the province of Quebec.

## Accompaniment

Je marche à côté d'une joie  
 D'une joie qui n'est pas à moi  
 D'une joie à moi que je ne puis pas prendre



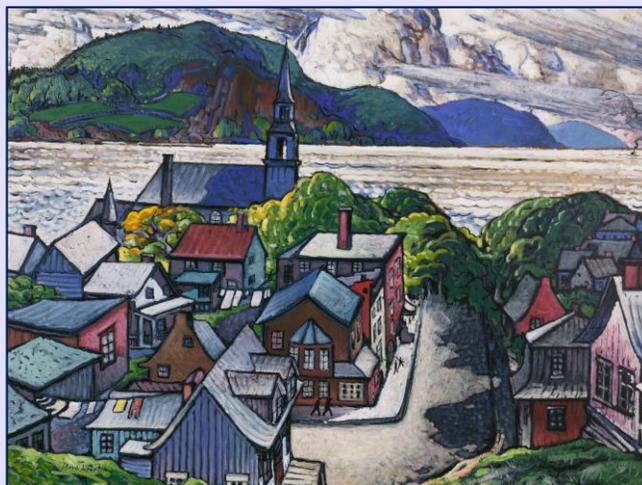
I walk beside a joy  
 Beside a joy that is not mine  
 A joy of mine which I cannot take



Oil painting of Hector  
 de Saint-Denys-Garneau

This poem by Garneau describes a state of mind wherein the poet senses that he could be happy, perhaps should be happy, but for some unknown reason he cannot enjoy this happiness, which walks beside him but not within. He hopes that somehow someday he might be able to exchange himself with the happy one beside him and escape from his unhappy self.

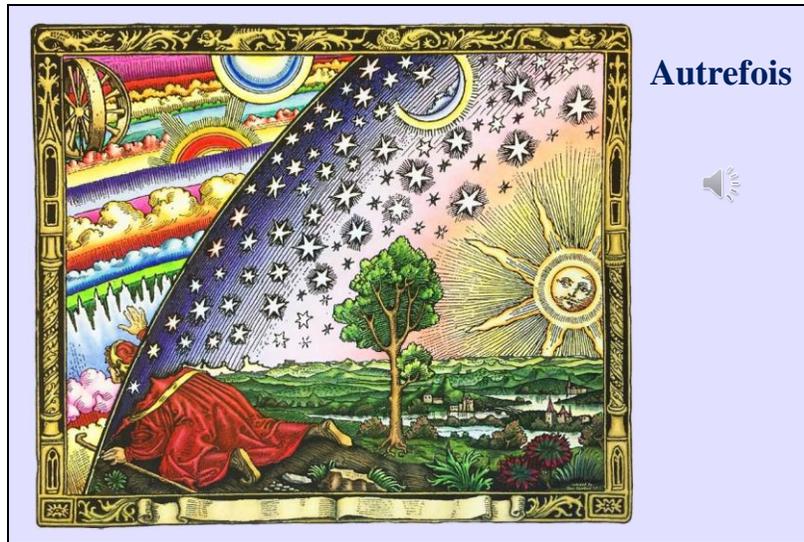
So that one day, transposed,  
 I may be carried along by the dance of those steps of joy  
 With the noise of my footsteps dying away beside me  
 With the fall of my own lost step  
 fading to my left  
 Under the feet of a stranger  
 who turns down a side street.



*Bagotville*  
 Marc-Aurèle  
 Fortin, 1945

Bagotville (also known as La Baie) is on the Saguenay River near Chicoutimi. This is a casein-painting. Fortin (1888-1970) loved the Quebec countryside which he visited by bicycle. His skies are wildly passionate, his towns suffused with joy.

This painting illustrates the joy that Garneau so dearly wished for and provides the sidestreets down which he might lose himself.



This anonymous engraving was published in the 1888 book *L'atmosphère: météorologie populaire* by Camille Flammarion. It was meant to illustrate the medieval view of the universe – with a flat earth and a finite sky. The original is in black and white. This colouring was done by Olen Rambow

This is the world view described in the beginning of Garneau's poem. The glory of this conception was the idea that beyond the sky was heaven. One could imagine someday piercing through the sky to burst into the infinite.

The more we know about the universe the less our wonder at what we do not know. This place for the imagination – between the chord and the arc of a circle – becomes smaller and smaller.

Tel un homme  
 Sur le chemin trop court par la crainte du port  
 Raccourcit l'enjambée et s'attarde à venir  
 Il me faut devenir subtil  
 Afin de, divisant à l'infini l'infime distance  
 De la corde à l'arc,  
 Créer par ingéniosité un espace analogue à l' Au-delà  
 Et trouver dans ce réduit matière  
 Pour vivre et l'art.

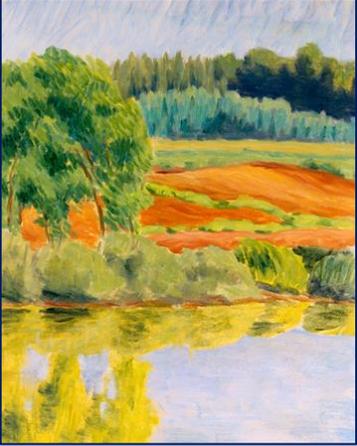
Just like a man  
 Who taking too short a road, dreading his destination,  
 Shortens his stride and so defers his goal,  
 I must learn subtlety  
 Must infinitely divide the infinitesimal distance  
 Between chord and arc  
 To create a space a little like what is beyond  
 And find in it a hiding-place  
 A reason for my life and art.

As a scientist I am not sure that I agree with Garneau, but I can understand how he might feel the loss of wonder. This is a little like the idea of science's unweaving of the rainbow. (cf the 1998 Dawkins book)

**Saules**

Les saules au bord de l'onde  
 La tête penchée  
 Le vent peigne leurs chevelures longues  
 Les agite au-dessus de l'eau  
 Pendant qu'ils songent  
 Et se plaisent indéfiniment  
 Aux jeux du soleil dans leur feuillage  
 froid  
 Ou quand la nuit emmêle ses  
 ruissellements.





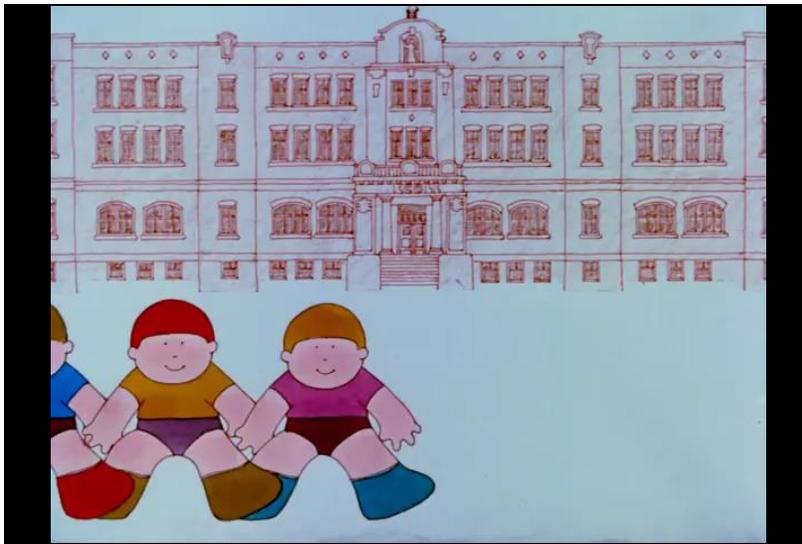
*Les Saules près de la Rivière*  
 Hector de Saint-Denis-Garneau

The French word for willow (*saule*) comes down in English to “sally,” which is used for the tree or its wood. In poetry, the word is famous for W. B. Yeats’ *Down by the Sally Gardens* (1889).

Down by the salley gardens  
 my love and I did meet;  
 She passed the salley gardens  
 with little snow-white feet.  
 She bid me take love easy,  
 as the leaves grow on the tree;  
 But I, being young and foolish,  
 with her would not agree.

In a field by the river  
my love and I did stand,  
And on my leaning shoulder  
she laid her snow-white hand.  
She bid me take life easy,  
as the grass grows on the weirs;  
But I was young and foolish,  
and now am full of tears.

Garneau's poem simply gives the image of the willows and how they are happy in the sunshine of the day and in winds of the night. It takes no moral from the trees.

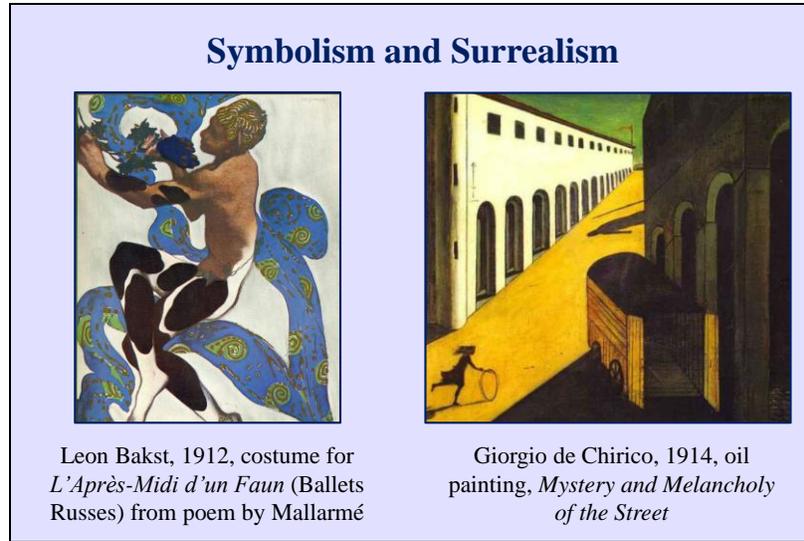


This is an NFB film *Mon École* (1977) based on the 1950 poem by Sylvain Garneau. The poem is recited by François Tassé and the animation is by Françoise Hartmann.

[https://www.nfb.ca/film/poets\\_on\\_film\\_no\\_3/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/poets_on_film_no_3/)

Sylvain Garneau (1930-53) was born in Montreal. He was not related to Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau. He worked as a sailor, journalist and announcer for Radio Canada. He published a small book of poems *Objets Trouvés*. He committed suicide in 1953. His formalist poetry was not much noticed, but has recently been reconsidered and republished.

The poem *Mon École* introduces us to the poet's imaginary friends – the four do-nothing kings who wait while the poet is in school until he can come out again to play.



Two important movements in French poetry were Symbolism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and Surrealism in the early 20<sup>th</sup>. Both affected the poetry of Quebec. We have seen how Symbolism affected the poetry of Nelligan. Surrealism was adopted by painters of *les Automatistes* and by poets such as Anne Hébert.

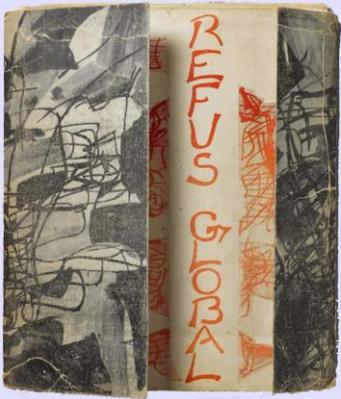
Both Symbolism and Surrealism were concerned with evoking emotional responses. Symbolism began as a literary movement with the French poets of the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> Century such as Baudelaire and Verlaine. Stéphane Mallarmé provided the basic ideas of the movement. The goal was to evoke the emotions through the connotations of what was described. Symbols were like metaphors but had more intense emotional impact. Thus the idea of the faun brought up the emotions associated with awakening sexuality.

Surrealism began around the time of the first world war. Its first protagonist was André Breton. Its main goal was to portray subconscious experiences. This was done through the depictions of dreams, and by *automatisme* (writing or painting without conscious control). Surrealism was preceded by Dada. Both were similarly disillusioned by Western civilization, which had led to the Great War. Both were opposed to logic though the surrealists wanted to create a new society and the Dadaists were reconciled to nonsense.

	Symbolism	Surrealism
Sources	myth	dreams
Reference	allusion	juxtaposition
Associations	learned	bizarre
Reality	sensuous	impossible
Politics	none	revolutionary

There is much overlap between the two. In a way surrealism is symbolism powered by Freud and Jung. The surrealists were much more politically active – part of their program was continual revolution.

Surrealism had much greater impact on the poetry of Quebec than on the poetry of English Canada.



### Le Refus Global

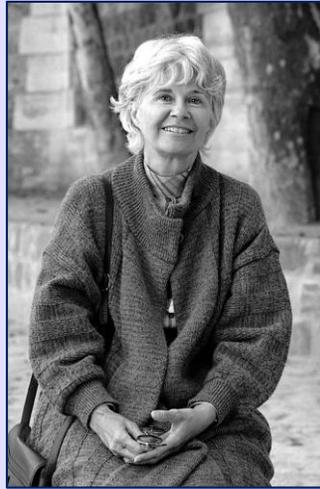
In the 1940s a group of Quebec artists and intellectuals gathered together under the leadership of the painter Paul-Émile Borduas. They followed the ideas of surrealism, produced abstract art, and became known as *Les Automatistes*. They felt highly constrained by the conservatism of Quebec society, founded on the twin powers of the Catholic Church and the Union Nationale party (under Maurice Duplessis).

The Automatistes published their manifesto *Le Refus Global* in 1948. It urged Quebec to liberate itself from the Church and the Past and to seek “resplendent anarchy.”

Those in power were angered by the manifesto. Borduas lost his teaching position, and was ostracized. He found little support in Quebec and ultimately exiled himself to Paris. Nevertheless *Le Refus Global* was one of the first sparks of what was to become *La Révolution Tranquille* in 1960.



This slide shows Borduas' *Black Star*. The painting is in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts. <http://expositionvirtuelle.ca/multimedia/916-eng>  
It was painted almost ten years after the *Total Refusal* manifesto and three years before Quebec's Quiet Revolution. Quebec society then became no longer determined by its past and began to look to the future. Borduas died in Paris several months before the Liberal government of Jean Lesage came to power in 1960.

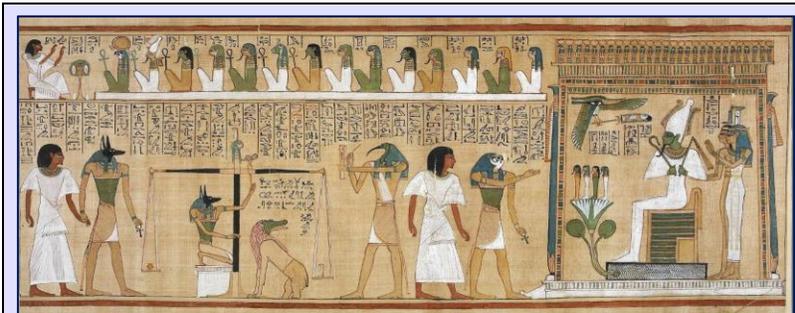


### Anne Hébert (1916-2000)

Born near Lac Joseph, north of Quebec City, Hébert was a cousin and childhood friend of Hector de Saint-Denys Garneau. She published at her own expense her most important book of poems, entitled *Le Tombeau des Rois* (1953). Her most famous novel, *Kamouraska* (1970) was an imaginative and passionate retelling of a true story of love and murder in 18<sup>th</sup> Century Quebec.

1986 Portrait  
Harry Palmer

There is an excellent website (in French) dealing with Anne Hébert's life and work:  
<http://www.anne-hebert.com/index.php>



### The Book of the Dead

At his death, Hunefer is conducted by Anubis, the dog-headed guardian of the underworld, to where his heart is weighed against a feather on the scales of Maat (Justice). If his heart is heavy, the Demon Ammut will devour it. If the heart is light, ibis-headed Thoth records the judgment, and falcon-headed Horus brings Hunefer to Osiris, king of the underworld.

One of the most famous archeological sites in the world is the Valley of the Kings near Thebes in Egypt. Here from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> Century BCE were buried the royal families of Egypt. Their tombs were cut into the limestone rock. The walls of the tombs were painted with scenes from the lives and afterlives of the kings and queens of Egypt.

Human beings have long believed in Judgment.

This papyrus dates to 1275 BCE.

The upper section shows that Hunefer worshipped the Gods during his life.

Ammut is a combination of crocodile, lion and hippopotamus. Horus is the son of Osiris. Osiris carries the crook (authority) and flail (regeneration). He is flanked by the goddesses Isis and Nephthys.

**Le Tombeau des Rois**

J'ai mon coeur au poing.  
Comme un faucon aveugle.

Le taciturne oiseau pris à mes doigts  
Lampe gonflée de vin et de sang,  
Je descends  
Vers les tombeaux des rois  
Étonnée  
À peine née.



*Peregrine Falcon*  
Robert Bateman, 1988



This poem imagines the poet descending into one of these Egyptian tombs, her heart as anxious as a falcon on the wrist of his handler

I carry my heart on my fist  
Like a blind falcon.

The taciturn bird gripping my fingers  
A swollen lamp of wine and blood  
I go down  
Toward the tombs of the kings  
Astonished  
Scarcely born.

In the dream like sequence that follows the poet is laid down on the tombs and the ghosts of the long dead drink her blood – seeking the source of evil in her. At the end she feels strangely exorcized, and her heart/falcon seeks the morning.



Quel reflet d'aube s'égare ici?  
 D'où vient donc que cet oiseau frémit  
 Et tourne vers le matin  
 Ses prunelles crevées?



Livid and satiated with the horrible dream  
 My limbs freed  
 And the dead thrust out of me, assassinated,  
 What glimmer of dawn strays in here?  
 Wherefore does this bird quiver  
 And turn toward morning  
 Its blinded eyes?



Betty Goodwin  
 1986

Il y a certainement quelqu'un  
 Qui m'a tuée  
 Puis s'en est allé  
 Sur la pointe des pieds  
 Sans rompre sa danse parfaite.



Betty Goodwin (1923-2008) was a printmaker, sculptor and painter. The illustration shows a painted free-standing structure that was based on Hébert's poem.

There is certainly someone  
 Who once killed me

And then walked away  
 On the tip of his toes  
 Without breaking his perfect dance

The poem describes the feeling of being apart from the world. The poet sees what is going on but is somehow unable to participate.



### La Fille Maigre

Je suis une fille maigre  
 Et j'ai de beaux os.  
 J'ai pour eux des soins attentifs  
 Et d'étranges pitié

Je les polis sans cesse  
 Comme de vieux métaux.

Les bijoux et les fleurs  
 Sont hors de saison.

Un jour je saisisrai mon amant  
 Pour m'en faire un reliquaire d'argent.

Je me pendrai  
 À la place de son cœur absent.

This intricate poem presents the idea that the poet has taken the place of her lover's heart and is encased within his bones like a holy relic in its reliquary.

I am a thin girl  
 With fine bones.

I care for them with cares  
 And strange sorts of pity.

I polish them unceasingly  
 Like ancient metals.

Jewels and flowers  
 Are out of season.

Some day I'll snatch away my lover  
 And make a silver reliquary of him.

I'll hang myself  
 In the place of his absent heart.



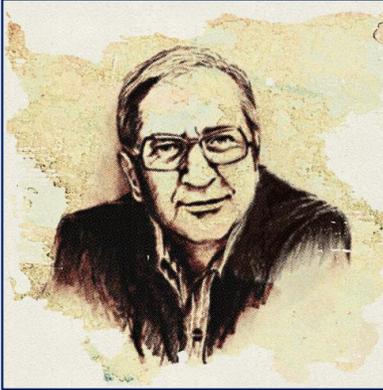
This shows *Vent du Nord* (1953) by Jean-Paul Riopelle (1923-2002). This has the honour of being the 2<sup>nd</sup> most expensive Canadian painting at auction – over 7 million CAD in 2017. (Lawren Harris' *Mountain Forms* sold for over 9 million CAD in 2016).

The painting embodies the winds of change that were about to sweep over Quebec.

Riopelle had studied under Borduas and was a member of the *Automatistes*. He was one of the signatories of *Le Refus Global*. He moved to France in 1947 and did not return permanently to Canada until 1989.

<p><b>MAINTENANT OU JAMAIS!</b></p>  <p><b>MAÎTRES CHEZ NOUS</b></p>	<p><b>La Révolution Tranquille</b></p> <p>In the election of 1960 the Quebec Liberal Party defeated the Union National. The Liberals were led by Jean Lesage. Their goals were to stop corruption, to prevent the exploitation of Quebec by non-resident capitalists, to decrease the Church's control of health and education, and to promote French culture and language.</p>
<p>A major step toward this was the nationalization of the hydro companies in the province. This was carried out under the direction of René Levesque who served as Minister of Natural Resources. Soon various movements for and against Quebec independence began. In 1968 Pierre Elliott Trudeau became the Prime Minister of Canada and the Parti Québécois was founded.</p>	

Another liberal slogan of the 1960 election was “Il faut que ça change!”



**Gaston Miron  
(1928–1996)**

Born in the Laurentians, Miron studied in a seminary with the intention of entering the priesthood, but instead became a poet. He founded the publishing house, *Les Éditions de l'Hexagone* in 1953. His most famous book of poetry *L'Homme Rapailé* was published in 1970. He supported independence for Quebec and was jailed, along with many other intellectuals and artists, during the October Crisis of 1970.

from the cover of an album *Douze Hommes Rapailés* devoted to songs based on Miron's poems

*L'Homme Rapailé* is difficult to translate into English. Rapailier is used in Quebec to mean “bring together, gather, collect, regroup” (In France one might say “ramasser” or “rassembler”). *L'Homme Rapailé* is thus someone who has got it all together.

Gilles Carle and  
Chloé Sainte-Marie,  
photograph by  
Pierre Drury, 2009



je marche à toi, je titube à toi, je meurs de toi  
lentement je m'affale de tout mon long dans l'âme  
je marche à toi, je titube à toi, je bois  
à la gourde vide du sens de la vie  
à ces pas semés dans les rues sans nord ni sud  
à ces taloches de vent sans queue et sans tête



The chanteuse Chloé Sainte-Marie (1962- ) was the long-time companion and muse of Gilles Carle (1928-2009), the Quebec filmmaker (*La mort du Bûcheron*). For the last 18 years of his life Carle suffered from Parkinson's disease.

I stride to you  
reel to you  
die for you even to the point of complete inanition  
slowly I sink the whole length of my shaft  
I stride to you, reel to you, drink

from the gourd emptied of meaning  
with these steps sown in the street without north or south  
with these cuffs of the wind without heads or tails

**Le Temps de Toi**



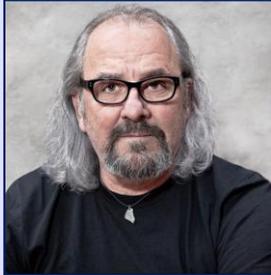
Il fait un temps fou de soleil carrousel  
la végétation de l'ombre partout palpitante  
le jour qui promène les calèches du bonheur  
le ciel est en marche sur des visages d'escale  
d'un coup le vent s'éprend d'un arbre seul  
il allume tous les rêves de son feuillage

The weather is a crazy carousel sun  
the shadow's vegetation palpitating pole to pole  
the day strutting its goodtime carriages  
the sky is on the march over the port's faces  
then suddenly the wind falls for a single tree  
lighting all the dreams of its foliage



**Douze Hommes Rapailés**

Parle-moi parle-moi de toi parle-moi de nous  
j'ai le dos large je t'emporterai dans mes bras  
j'ai compris beaucoup de choses dans cette époque  
les visages et les chagrins dans l'éloignement  
la peur et l'angoisse et les périls de l'esprit  
je te parlerai de nous de moi des camarades  
et tu m'emporteras comblée dans le don de toi



Gilles Bélanger

ainsi sommes-nous un couple  
toi s'échappant de moi  
moi s'échappant de toi  
pour à nouveau nous confondre d'attirance  
ainsi nous sommes ce couple ininterrompu  
tour à tour désassemblé et réuni à jamais



Gilles Bélanger, set many of Miron's poems to music

talk to me talk to me of you talk to me of us  
I have broad shoulders I shall to carry you away  
I have understood many things about this time  
the outer face and inner pain of separation  
the fear and anxiety and the spiritual danger

I shall tell you about us about myself about my friends  
and you will fill me with the gift of yourself

even to the very edge of things  
in the lost shadows of the fringe  
in the everyday sound of our steps  
when I rage like a dishonest boor  
and your fierce silence whips me  
in the exhilaration of happiness  
and in the occasional ruptures  
thus are we a couple  
you escaping from me  
me escaping from you  
in order to renew our attraction  
thus are we this couple interrupted  
in turn separate and together always

**Pour Saluer les  
Nouveaux Poètes**

J'ai dit, je n'ai pas dit  
Quand il fallait le faire ou ne pas le faire  
Saurai-je la vérité et si j'advins en elle  
La poésie a changé  
Adieu métaphore dont j'ai fait le tour  
Du fond des mots de nouveaux poètes  
me parlent  
Des narratives du monde enchevêtré  
Dans ce qui n'avance qu'avec peine  
L'homme



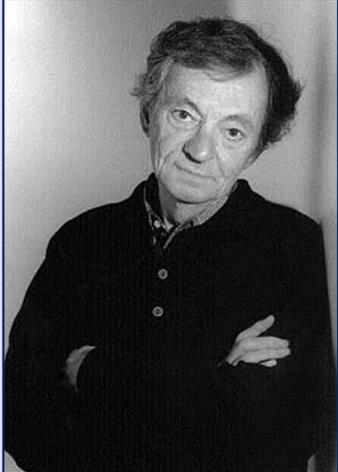
Marie-Josée Hudon, 2013

This is one of Miron's last poems. In it he greets the young poets of Quebec.

I said, I said not  
When one must or must not  
Shall I know the truth and did I come upon it  
Poetry has changed  
Farewell the metaphor that I explored  
From the depths of words new poets tell me  
Stories of a raveled world  
Wherein humanity progresses  
But only with sorrow.

enchevêtrer is to entangle.

The posthumous painting of Miron is from the Musée des Grands Québécois  
<https://www.mdgq.ca/>



**Roland Giguère  
(1929-2003)**

Born in Montreal, Giguère studied graphic arts in Montreal and in France. He became an excellent printmaker, becoming particularly adept with silkscreen techniques. He published his first book of poems *L'Âge de la Parole* in 1965 with Gaston Miron's *Éditions de l'Hexagone*. He is the only person to have received both the Prix Athanase-David (Quebec's main literary prize) and the Prix Paul-Émile-Borduas (Quebec's main prize for visual arts).



**La Main Passe**

Le vol hésitant des oiseaux  
 autour d'une statue de sel brisée  
 trajectoire obscure des moments passés  
 qui battent de l'aile

derniers éclats de souvenirs pénibles  
 sur quelques images froissées déchirées  
 il faudra bientôt dessiner d'autres images  
 aux reflets plus humains.

  
 Thomas  
 Hellman  
 2012

*L'Ombre de l'Orme*  
 Roland Giguère, 1968

Thomas Hellman (1975- ) is a French-Canadian singer-songwriter.

The wavering flight of birds  
 around a shattered pillar of salt  
 moments passing with unknown destination  
 their wings losing force

the last flashes of painful memories  
 upon torn and crumpled pictures  
 we must soon create new images  
 to better reflect our human selves.

The poem alludes to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah when Lot's wife was changed into a pillar of salt.

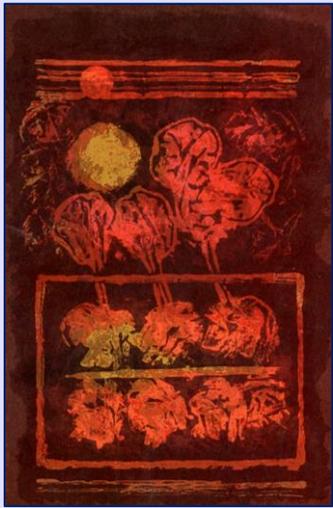
We must create ourselves a new. The illustration shows the leaves in the shadow of an elm – life dying and beginning. .

**Rose et Ronce**

Rosace rosace les roses  
 roule mon cœur au flanc de la falaise  
 la plus dure paroi de la vie s'écroule  
 et du haut des minarets jaillissent  
 les cris blancs et aigus des sinistrés

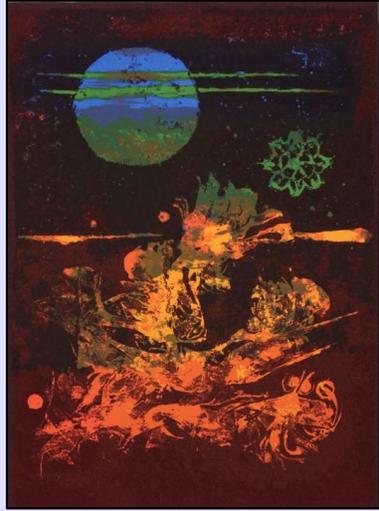
du plus rouge au plus noir feu d'artifice  
 se ferment les plus beaux yeux du monde

rosace les roses les roses et les ronces  
 et mille et mille épines  
 dans la main où la perle se pose

Red rose red rose the rose  
 roll my heart on the cut of the cliff  
 life's hardest buttresses crumble  
 and from high in the minarets  
 blossom forth the victims' shrill white cries

the most beautiful eyes in the world are closed  
 to the red black bursts of fire in the sky  
 red rose the rose the rose and the thorns  
 a thousand a thousand spines  
 in the palm of the hand the pearl calls home



**La Nuit Humiliée**

Il fait jour sans nuages cette fois  
il fait clair dans tes yeux  
où la rivière sauvage se noie

aujourd'hui tous les paliers seront gravés  
les ardoises gravées de signes nouveaux  
l'ombre et la pénombre abolies

aujourd'hui se déploient mes vaisseaux  
sur une mer étale et conquise les figures  
de proue ouvertes au soleil

*Si Vous Rêvez*  
Roland Giguère, 1974



This time the dawn comes without cloud  
Lighting up your eyes  
Where the wild river drowns

Today all the steps have been mounted  
The slates engraved with ne\*w signs  
Darkness and shadow abolished

Today my ships set sail  
On a sea calm and subdued  
Their figureheads open to the sky

I voyage back and forth from you  
My mooring buoy safe and constant  
I regain you like the sacred light  
At the entrance to my estuary

Today night is vanquished.

### Gilles Vigneault (1928- )

Born in Natashquan on the North Shore of the St Lawrence, Vigneault studied at Laval University and worked as a teacher and radio announcer. He published his first poems and songs in the 1950s. In the 1960s and 1970s he gave many popular folk-concerts across the province of Quebec, either by himself or together with other chansonniers such as Robert Charlebois and Felix Leclerc. He was a strong supporter of Quebec independence during the October Crisis and during the referenda of 1980 and 1995.



Mon pays ce n'est pas un pays c'est l'hiver  
 Mon jardin ce n'est pas un jardin c'est la plaine  
 Mon chemin ce n'est pas un chemin c'est la neige  
 Mon pays ce n'est pas un pays c'est l'hiver

*Le Rapide*, 1968  
 Jean Paul Lemieux



*Mon Pays* was originally written for an NFB film *La Neige a Fondu sur la Manicouagan* (1965). A young woman from Montreal takes a position with Quebec Hydro at the large dam in Manicouagan. She longs to get away to Mexico, but ultimately learns to love the north. The film can be seen on the NFB website:

[https://www.nfb.ca/film/neige\\_a\\_fondu\\_sur\\_la\\_manicouagan/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/neige_a_fondu_sur_la_manicouagan/)

My country it's not a country it's winter  
 My garden it's not a garden it's the plain  
 My road it's not a road it's the snow  
 My country it's not a country it's winter

In the Colombo translation “rafale” as “rain” is not correct. Its primary meaning is gust (as of wind) or burst (as of gunfire). In the context of the song it is better translated as “blizzard” or “wind” (although there is a nice internal rhyme with “refrain”)



The song became famous when sung by Monique Leyrac at the International Festival of Song in Sopot, Poland, in 1965. It won first prize and is now the unofficial anthem of the province of Quebec.

The YouTube recording of Leyrac’s performance, though the sound is not perfect, is more thrilling than all her later renditions of the song.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwCA8eGEjCc>

### **Michèle Lalonde (1937- )**

Born in Montreal, Lalonde graduated in philosophy from the Université de Montréal. She wrote several volumes of poetry, two plays and numerous essays. She recited her most famous poem, *Speak White* (1968), at *La Nuit de la Poésie* in Montreal in March, 1970, a gathering to support Québécois political prisoners.



The political prisoners were members of the *Front de libération du Québec* who between 1963 and 1970 had carried out a campaign of bombing in Quebec to bring attention to the idea of separation. This culminated in the murder of Pierre Lapointe on October 17, 1970, and the invocation of the War Measures Act by Trudeau – the October Crisis.

*Speak White* is a powerful poem that defies the right of any one culture or language to dominate another.



Lalonde's recitation of *Speak White* at *La Nuit de la Poésie* 1970  
Film was recorded by Jean-Claude Labrecque and Jean-Marie Masse  
Available on YouTube:

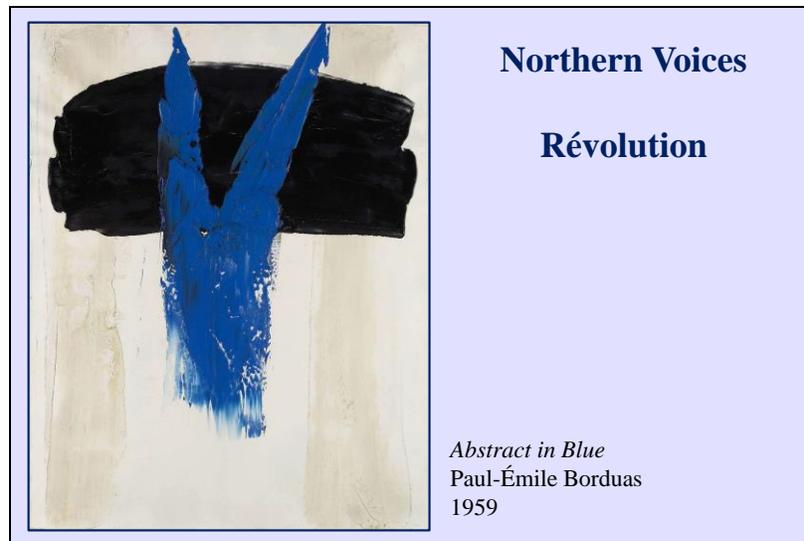
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCBCy8OXp7I>

Speak white  
Il est si beau de vous entendre  
Parler de Paradise Lost  
Ou du profil gracieux et anonyme qui tremble  
Dans les sonnets de Shakespeare  
Nous sommes un peuple inculte et bègue  
Mais ne sommes pas sourds au génie d'une langue  
Parlez avec l'accent de Milton et Byron et Shelley et Keats  
Speak white  
Et pardonnez-nous de n'avoir pour réponse  
Que les chants rauques de nos ancêtres  
Et le chagrin de Nelligan

Speak white  
It sounds so good when you  
Speak of Paradise Lost  
And of the gracious and anonymous profile that trembles  
In Shakespeare's sonnets

We're an uncultured stammering race  
But we are not deaf to the genius of a language  
Speak with the accent of Milton and Byron and Shelley and Keats  
Speak white  
And forgive us our only answer  
Being the raucous songs of our ancestors  
And the sorrows of Nelligan

Lalonde's reference to Nelligan brings us back to where we were at the start of this session.



This is one of Borduas' last paintings. Though it was painted before Lesage was elected it seems to portray the success of Quebec's Quiet Revolution. The blue breaks through the dark.