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| Smith, (James Marshall) Arthur (1902-1980) |
| A.J.M. Smith |
| A.J.M. Smith was a poet, scholar, and anthologist of Canadian literature. As an editor of little magazines and anthologies, Smith was an important figure in the founding of Canadian modernism.  Born on November 8, 1902 to English parents, Smith grew up in Westmont, Quebec. He studied at McGill University (1921-1926), obtaining a B. Sc. (Arts) and an M.A. His Masters thesis was on the poetry of W.B. YEATS. Smith associated with F.R. SCOTT, A.M. KEIN, Leo KENNEDY, and Leon EDEL, the circle of Montreal poets who, influenced by T.S. ELIOT and ANGLO-AMERICAN MODERNISM, sought to establish the practice of modernist poetry in Canada in order to counter the Victorian-style Confederation Poets of the early twentieth century.  As an undergraduate student, Smith founded and edited the *Literary Supplement* of the *McGill Daily*. He continued his editorial efforts as a graduate student, creating, with Scott in 1925, the *McGill Fortnightly Review—*the first journal of modernist writing in Canada. The journal helped initiate the tradition of LITTLE MAGAZINES in Canada, publishing the surge of Canadian modernist poetry in the 1920s and 1930s. After marrying Jeanne Dougall Robins in 1927, he began his PhD at University of Edinburgh and completed his dissertation, “Studies in the Metaphysical Poets of the Anglican Church in the 17th Century,” in 1931. Smith worked as a professor at Michigan State University (1936-1972). |
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While now seen as an achievement in the development of Canadian modernism, the publication suffered poor sales and the publisher rejected Smith’s modernist manifesto preface.  American modernist magazines, *The Dial*, *New Verse*, and *Poetry*, regularly published Smith’s poetry, and he was awarded the Harriet Monroe Memorial Prize by *Poetry* in 1941. Smith established himself as both a poet and a critic in 1943 when he published his first collection of poetry, *News of the Phoenix*, winner of the Governor General’s Literary Award, and the anthology, *The Book of Canadian Poetry*. *The Book* was the first comprehensive collection of Canadian poetry to include modernist poets. In the anthology, Smith distinguishes between two voices—“native” and “cosmopolitan”—in Canadian literature, characterizing the former as concerned with portraits of Canadian life and the latter as focused on international cultural debates.  Smith published his last volume of new poetry, *A Sort of Ecstasy*, in 1954. His prolific critical output and anthologizing projects eclipsed his reputation as a poet, although recent scholarship has begun to re-evaluate his poetry. Smith went on to edit several anthologies, including *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse* (1960), a bilingual compendium of Canadian poetry. He died on November 21, 1980 in East Lansing, Michigan. As a prominent scholar of Canadian literature, Smith contributed to the foundation and recognition of a modernist literary tradition in Canada. Chronology of WorksPoetry *News of the Phoenix* (1943)  *A Sort of Ecstasy* (1954)  *Collected Poems* (1962)  *Poems New and Collected* (1967)  *The Classic Shade* (1978)  *The Complete Poems of A.J.M. Smith* (2007) Books Edited *New Provinces: Poems of Several Authors* with F.R. Scott and Leo Kennedy (1936)  *The Book of Canadian Poetry: A Critical and Historical Anthology* (1943)  *Seven Centuries of Verse, English and American* (1947)  *The Worldly Muse: An Anthology of Serious Light Verse* (1951)  *The Blasted Pine: An Anthology of Satire, Invective and Disrespectful Verse* with F.R. Scott (1967)  *The Oxford Book of Canadian Verse: In English and French* (1960)  *Masks of Fiction: Canadian Critics on Canadian Prose* (1961)  *Masks of Poetry: Canadian Critics on Canadian Prose* (1961)  *The Book of Canadian Prose, Volume I, Early Beginnings to Confederation* (1965)  *100 Poems* (1965)  *Modern Canadian Verse in English and French* (1967)  *The Collected Poems of Anne Wilkinson, and a Prose Memoir* (1968)  *The Colonial Century: English-Canadian Writing Before Confederation* (1973)  *The Canadian Century: English-Canadian Writing Since Confederation* (1973) Non-Fiction Books *The Poetic Process* (1964)  *Essays for College Writing* (1965)  *Towards a View of Canadian Letters: Selected Critical Essays, 1928-1971* (1973)  *On Poetry and Poets* (1977)  *Selected Writings* (2006) Articles ‘Symbolism in Poetry’ *McGill Fortnightly Review* (1925)  ‘Hamlet in Modern Dress’ *McGill Fortnightly Review* (1926)  ‘Contemporary Poetry’ *McGill Fortnightly Review* (1926)  ‘Wanted Canadian Criticism’ *Canadian Forum* (1928)  ‘A Note on Metaphysical Poetry’ *Canadian Mercury* (1929)  ‘On Marianne Moore’ *The Rocking Horse* (1935)  ‘Canadian Poetry—Past and Present’ *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1938)  ‘Canadian Poetry—A Minority Report’ *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1939)  ‘A Poet Young and Old—W.B. Yeats’ *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1939)  ‘Canadian Anthologies, New and Old’ *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1942)  ‘Our Poets—a Sketch of Canadian Poetry in the Nineteenth Century’ *University of Toronto Quarterly* (1942)  ‘Critics and Biographers’ *Canadian Historical Review* (1944)  ‘Nationalism and Canadian Poetry’ *Northern Review* (1944/1945)  ‘Abraham Moses Klein’ *Gants du ciel* (1946)  ‘The Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott’ *Dalhousie Review* (1948)  ‘The Refining Fire: The Meaning and Use of Poetry’ *Queen’s Quarterly* (1954)  ‘The Recent Poetry of Irving Layton’ *Queen’s Quarterly* (1956)  ‘The Poet’ *Writing in Canada* (1956)  ‘A Garland for E.J. Pratt’ *Tamarack Review* (1958)  ‘Duncan Campbell Scott: A Reconsideration’ *Canadian Literature* (1956)  ‘Duncan Campbell Scott’ *Our Living Tradition* (1959)  ‘Graham Greene’s Theological Thrillers’ *Queen’s Quarterly* (1961)  ‘The Critic’s Task: Frye’s Latest Work’ *Canadian Literature* (1964)  ‘The Poet and the Nuclear Crisis’ *English Poetry in Quebec* (1965)  ‘*Canadian Literature*: The First Ten Years’ *Canadian Literature* (1969)  ‘The Poetry of P.K. Page’ *Canadian Literature* (1971)  ‘Confessions of a Compulsive Anthologist’ *Journal of Canadian Studies* (1976) |
| Further reading:  (Canadian Poetry)  (Ferns)  (Norris)  (Smith)  (Stevens)  (Trehearne)  (University of British Columbia) |