

A. J. M. Smith - Poet, Author - Visits Campus

Professor A. J. M. Smith, distinguished Canadian poet, author, editor, and literary critic, will deliver the Founder's Day Address of the University of New Brunswick at the fifth annual Founder's Day celebration to be held in the Memorial Hall on Tuesday, February 19 at eight in the evening. Dr. Smith, who was born in Montreal and is a graduate of McGill and Edinburgh Universities has been in the forefront of the "advance guard" literary movement of Canada for twenty years. Beginning his literary career while an undergraduate he has since risen to the top rank of contemporary Canadian poets. Some of his earliest poems were published in the McGill Fortnightly Review, the Canadian Mercury and the Canadian Forum with all of which he was intimately connected, and each of which has played a significant part in promoting the new movement in poetry.

Dr. Smith who is now Professor of English at Michigan State College, has published poems in such leading periodicals of England and America as the Nation, The Dial, The Adelphi of London, Hound and Horn, Vice-Versa, Contemporary Poetry and Prose, Twentieth Century Verse. His work has appeared also in a number of anthologies, including Thomas Moul's "Best Poems," Gustafson's anthology in the Penguin series, and Grizson's New Verse Anthology published in Great Britain. A fine collection of his poems was published by the Ryerson Press in 1943 under the title "News of the Phoenix."

His poetry has been acclaimed as significant by the most discerning critics. His fellow Canadian poet Dr. E. J. Pratt has written of him: "A. J. M. Smith is one of the most brilliant of the younger writers who comprise the advance guard of contemporary poetry. His work has the quality of intellectual refinement and a challenging economy of language in which the interlinear suggestion is as important as the theory stated." Again, writing of the Montreal group, Professor E. K. Brown has said, "Recognized from the outset as the central figure in the group, A. J. M. Smith has shown the strongest critical interest of all the poets..." Much of his verse is "acutely religious, sometimes in the metaphysical manner, sometimes more in the tone of Hopkins. Some of it is coldly satirical, some politically intense, some politically disillusioned. Little of it has to do with nature, although Mr. Smith has an eye not far inferior to Lamplman's for natural detail. Whatever the theme, the execution is beautifully deliberate, and the feeling or thought fully natural and intense." When Professor W. E. Collin published his studies of Canadian literature "The White Savannas" in 1936 he included an interesting chapter on Smith called

Psst! Comrade

Over here ... 'neath the bust of Caman. We are being watched. Look the other way, toward the freshman reading the Dictionary; pretend not to be talking to me. I am always on guard against assassins and eavesdroppers, spies and informers.

I have a message for you. In an hour, meet me in the stacks, between Voltaire and H. G. Wells, on the History-Biography shelf. We cannot talk here. There is always danger. Farewell!

(Long live the Party!)
Yes, I am a member of this Political Intrigue and Infiltration Organization, Local No. 9, of the Hill-top Branch. Beneath this cloak of Harris Tweed I carry a dagger, a vial of cyanide, a uranium capsule, and membership blanks for the Party.

(Long live the Party!)
Our duty and our destiny is clear. Ours the task to enlighten and free the members of the masses from the members of the classes. This (Continued on Page Seven).

"Difficult, lonely music" which is a phrase in one of the poet's best known short poems.

Dr. Smith is perhaps best known to the public of Canada, the United States, and Great Britain for being the editor and compiler of an anthology called "The Book of Canadian Poetry" published by the University of Chicago press in 1943. Of Smith's anthology, E. J. Pratt wrote that it is "The finest anthology which has been compiled in the course of Canadian literature."

The introduction itself is a brilliant piece of exposition. It is interesting to note how well represented in the anthology are the Fredericton poets, all of whom were graduates or former students at the University of New Brunswick—Sir C. G. D. Roberts, Bliss Carman, Theodora Goodridge Roberts, Francis Sherman, and others. The Old College on the Hill played a crucial part in forming the poetic consciousness of these men, and in providing stimulation to the provincial society out of which the Fredericton School of Poets grew. It is therefore most fitting that they should be the subjects of a Founder's Day Address, and equally fitting that Professor A. J. M. Smith should have been invited to speak on the subject.

Professor Smith is now on leave of absence from his University, and with the aid of fellowships granted by the Rockefeller and Guggenheim Foundations in recognition of the prime importance of his contribution to literature, he is at present engaged in writing a history of Canadian literature, the appearance of which is looked forward to with the keenest anticipation by all who are seriously concerned with the cultural development of the Canadian nation, a development which must, if Canada is to hold a high place among the future nations of the world, at least be commensurate with its status as the leading "middle power" of the twentieth century.

the fiddlehead

What is the Fiddlehead? many have asked, and the answer is that it is what it stands for, or better still, what it aims at. It is somewhat superficial to say that it is a mimeographed magazine of verse written and edited by members of the University of New Brunswick. It might be more accurate to describe it as a community of minds in the making, or a small body of persons engaged in the collective discovery of a myth to banish chaos, who, however, are travelling different converging roads towards a goal that may never be reached if the experience falls short of reality. The personnel of this community is subject to replacement, although a continuity is maintained within itself.

On the other hand, a second question that could be asked, is whether the community of the Poetry Club possesses a dynamic that springs in any way from a sense of continuity with other moments in the history of the University within which it has its being. It might not seem so, for the poetry published in the three numbers of the Fiddlehead, already issued, reveals little, if any, kinship with the work of the last group of undergraduate poets of this University, that is to say, the group of the nineteen-twenties. They were definitely lulled by the cadences of Carman; were conscious, in an imitative way, of the historic tradition of literature to which Carman and Roberts made the major contribution, and which they themselves felt impelled to continue.

And yet it would be a mistake to suppose that cultural phenomena could result entirely from spontaneous generation. The Poetry Club lives at a point of impingement of "streams of influence", and these streams are new and different in many ways from any that informed previous epochs in the literary history of the University of New Brunswick; they are many and various, from Housman to Dylan Thomas and Patrick Anderson. In this sense, and to an extent, the members of the Poetry Club have not followed the dominant literary tradition of the University.

But in another sense they have done so, for, though the problem of twentieth century man differs from that of the nineteenth, and

SYNOPSIS
Love cried, Let me in,
And Heart called, "Come in",
But Mind said, "Wait and be sure".
And while they debated
Love caught a cold and died.
—FRED COGSWELL

though the earlier mood could never be genuinely recaptured (even if it were desirable, which it is not) the Club is contributing to the growth of a University tradition by its very existence which springs from its consciousness of past example. To be more specific, the members write, in part, because Carman wrote, though they may not, and do not, write in the same way that he did.

Although there are two ways, it has been claimed, in which a tradition may be carried on; one by slavish imitation of the past, from which no departures are made (really this is embalming rather than carrying on a tradition); and the other, which is the only true way, since revolt and departure instead of slavish imitation and deference must themselves become traditional if the tradition is to remain alive, is to recognize that those who have contributed anything worthwhile have themselves been the most complete rebels against the modes of their predecessors. It is not even known whether Roberts and Carman, whose poetic consciousness was formed at the University of New Brunswick and its collegiate school in the eighteen-seventies, were affected by the poetry of Odell, Hogg, and Allen. And this very fact that these earlier influences were not present in their work is evidence that they were not in their formative stage looking back into the past of their own immediate community, but were exploring horizons then new to New Brunswick. Knowing this, the people of the Fiddlehead do likewise, for there is no precedent in the history of the University for the lines written by Jack Jeans, a member of the Poetry Club, and published in

A Comedy of Carers

Obelia—Wilt thou, fair Ballskreu, tip with me this casket of wine?
Ballskreu—Aye—I wilt, idol of my daily wantings.
Obelia—And wilt thou, thou thug of Jupiterian man, brighten my two lips with myriads of kisses?
Ballskreu—Nay—I wilt kiss thee no kisses as long as she who bore me, fed me, reared me, rifled me—doth breathe the sweet air of earth.
Obelia—You lug of a thug—You thug of a lug.
(They tiff. Obelia produces a bookkin and stabs Ballskreu through the heart.)
Ballskreu—I am dead.
(Dies)
Enter Meduza, mother to Ballskreu, and Lilylake, cousin to Ballskreu's brother-in-law, thrice removed.
Meduza—My son, my son!
(Weeps and falls dead on her son.)
Lilylake—No more is life worth but a farkle unto me.
(Dies)
Obelia—I ask for an asp. Witches, beggers and courting men—lend me gall to go.
(An atom explodes. All is none.)
THE END.

the Fiddlehead (No. 3) in 1945. (There follows here the nameless poem about the ant by J. Jeans):
Between the floor cracks the dust sifts and settles
From my sky scraper height I watch an ant
Pry his lean body from the collapsed shadows
And with an interplanetary aloofness move
M'lestoned by dustspecks. King minuta is he
Striding Adam-like, his parallel universe
Climbing in visible hills and scaling Micro mountains: Who knows what a garden of delight
Beyond the optic glance may yield him Paradise
Roses perhaps blushing automatically? But now
Across his infinitesimal glance, the cosmic shadow of my boot-toe falls.

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