

No. 6

November 1964

THE 1964 MEETING

This year's CBCL meeting -- Conference 11 of the Modern Language Association -- is set for the following time and place:

Sunday, December 27th, 2:00 - 3:15 p.m.

Parlor D, Atlantic Hotel, New York City

The 1964 Chairman -- Professor Alan L. McLeod, Lock Haven State College, Pennsylvania -- announces a program in three parts:

1) Papers

G.D. Killam (Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone): "Heart of Darkness: African Images in British Fiction"

J.F. Poney (University of California, Los Angeles): "The 'Exile' Theme in South African Poetry"

2) Report -- prospects for a 1966 international conference on Commonwealth literature:
R.T. Robertson (Virginia Polytechnic Institute)

3) Business

Election of a 1965 Chairman
Report on operations: Newsletter
Other matters

SECOND CONFERENCE AT LEEDS

Number 4 of this newsletter (November 1963) described briefly a conference at the University of Leeds in July, 1963. During September 9th-13th just past a second and larger meeting took place, attended by approximately forty overseas delegates and numerous people from the U.K. (Various portions of the Commonwealth represented: Nigeria, India, Pakistan, New Zealand, the West Indies, Hong Kong, Malaysia. A delegate from South Africa was also present.) Several Canadian members of CBCL attended.

This was a commingling of scholars and creative writers, punctuated by visits to local points of interest and other social activities. Among novelists presenting short papers were R.K. Narayan (India), W.H. Pearson (New Zealand) and Chinua Achebe (Nigeria). "Working parties" reported on academic interchange and research; publishing and bibliography; language, literature, and university courses; mass communications and culture. We have no information, currently, about another conference (possibly for 1965?) but it is assumed that this will not be the last one.

An article written for the YORKSHIRE POST of Sept. 10, 1964, by Professor A. Norman Jeffares (Leeds), Director of the Conference, in explaining the purposes of the meeting, makes (together with other remarks) the following observations:

"A cultural heritage is being transmitted through this [Commonwealth] writing in English, and it is no less important than the utilitarian uses which have given English its present importance as a world language -- as the means of communicating the details, say, of an economic deal, a political pact, or the exchange of scientific or technological information. But language when employed in the service of literature becomes an end in itself: this

is its lasting, significant role.

"This conference, therefore, concentrates upon a vast reservoir of human knowledge, ideas, aspirations and experience; upon a source of energy as well as of dreams. Literature shapes dreams, but it also shapes education, it stimulates thinking. How an African thinks tomorrow, for example, may well be the result of what he reads today as a school-child. . . . An African finds himself by reading what his own authors have to say about Africa. His situation is in part, reflected or interpreted by his author.

"Not only single Africans but the whole country expresses itself through its literary sensibility. . . . The same kind of thing has been happening elsewhere. It happens at different times in the history of nations. . . .

"The new writer can bring to his overseas readers, wherever they may be in the Commonwealth, in the centre or on the perimeter, his new ideas, his own interpretation of life, his new development of the English language (a language that does not develop soon becomes dead), his new nuances, his new style. And he needs, inevitably, new and sympathetic understanding. His readers need to develop comparative judgments.

"The conference will be discussing, among many other problems, various methods of encouraging this comparative view. How is the Canadian going to know what is being written in India, or the African to have a grasp of the literary scene in New Zealand, or the Australian to know how the West Indian writer is handling his material? . . . We need a journal to collect together information about what is being published in all the Commonwealth countries and plans are now maturing for such a journal to be edited in the University of Leeds.

"It will carry bibliographical information in the first instance, so that readers, especially librarians and booksellers, will know what is being

written overseas; then it will provide critical articles on the work of particular authors, tracing their development and estimating their significance; and, as it gets its readership to a large enough figure, it will add a features section which will provide news of personalities and events such as the staging of plays, or forthcoming books, or of lecture tours or visits being made by authors and critics and scholars. . . .

"The standards of judgment are not local nor yet national. Good writing is something which transcends borders, whether local or national, whether of the mind or of the spirit. Good writing is possessed of human and universal qualities, and it is for these lasting qualities we value it, and it is for them that we pay homage to those who create for us this way into an imaginative understanding of ourselves and the world in which we live."

To this we may add the information that a committee of the Conference is deliberating about a conference of some magnitude, along similar lines, to be held in the U.S. perhaps sometime in 1966.

SPECIAL ENCLOSURE

By arrangement with the Royal Commonwealth Society, London, we include with this number a copy of "Shakespeare and the Commonwealth," by D.H. Simpson, Librarian. This item, appearing here as an illustrated booklet, originally formed a supplement to the Society's Library Notes with List of Accessions, New Series No. 88, April, 1964.

As opportunities arise and funds permit, we hope to offer other occasional bonuses as supplements.

AFRICAN LITERATURE AT IBADAN

An announcement from the Department of English, University of Ibadan, describes briefly the introduction of an undergraduate course in African Literature, divided into two sections: Historical and Sociological Background, Study of Present Day African Writers.

"The study of African writers is interpreted in the fairly specialised context of the writings of indigenous black Africans in English -- originals or translations. Some attention is also paid to indigenous white African writers, expatriate writers on Africa, the Caribbean writers, American Negro Literature, and the body of relevant literature in English. . . [It is also hoped that several options for the M.A. by examination will soon be available, including:] (I) 1. Selected author: Cugoana or Equiano, 2. Special subject: The African as seen by non-African writers in English or American literature, with reference to a specified period, 3. Commonwealth literature: Modern African Writing . . . (IV) Special subject: Creative writing in Nigerian periodicals over a specified period, 2. Selected author: Peter Abrahams, 3. Commonwealth literature: West Indian writing with special reference to Africa."

It is stated also, in the same circular, that the Department is "prepared to help in any way we can with supplying on-the-spot information about African and especially West African writing, and our own research activities." [See also Bulletin of the Association for African Literature in English, listed on p. 10 of this number.]

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"African Writing in Germany," a summary-account by D.R. Dathorne of the University of Ibadan, will appear in our next number.

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"Commonwealth Classics" will resume shortly.

"PARTIAL" TO WHOM? "PAROCHIAL" WHERE?

A special number of HARVARD EDUCATION REVIEW (Vol. 34, No. 2, Spring 1964) called "Language and Learning," includes a symposium on "The Use of English in World Literatures." Leading off this series is Ezekiel Mphahlele with "The Language of African Literature," followed by Arthur Delbridge with "The Use of English in Australian Literature," J.L. Dillard with "English in the West Indies, or the West Indies in English?" and P.Lal with "Indian Writing in English." The introductory note puts the case for the new literatures in English in these words:

"To ask what is English literature is to ask, in part, what literature is written in English. As late as twenty-five years ago, an adequate answer to both forms of the question was 'The sum of writings that make up the British-American tradition.' Now the same answer would be regarded as partial and parochial.

"English, long the second major language of the world in political and commercial affairs, has, especially since World War II, assumed a new and significant role: it has become for many of the emerging nations and nations fragmented by dialects, the medium of their common culture, the elected language of their national literatures."

The writer of these paragraphs does not specify where or by whom the cliché of "the British-American tradition" would be regarded as "partial and parochial." By the "representative" English department in the "representative" British or American university? By publishers? Students? Librarians? The reading public? Hardly, we will risk saying as of the present time. In the majority of English departments the partial view still does very nicely. As one result of such attitudes, not many publishers (who of course cater to the trade) are

yet ready to send risk-capital exploring unfamiliar seas. As another result, not many graduate students are eager to swap fifty years of Europe for a cycle of Cathay, and their reluctance is understandable: they know, or think they know, which side their bread is buttered on. What they do not know, nor do many of their professors appear to know it either, is that the last fifty years of Cathay have made giant strides at catching up with the cycle of Europe, of which it is simultaneously part and yet non-part.

The only justifiable reason for needling one's colleagues a bit is to get them to do sooner what they must inevitably do in any event: discover that the world -- the new world of world-English -- is, indeed, round. This we are absolutely certain they must do, and we continue to be fascinated by the issuance of rapidly multiplying invitations from all directions, as for instance the next item.

SOUTHERN REVIEW, which began publication with an annual number in 1963, issues from the Department of English, University of Adelaide (\$1.00 per copy). Its stated general aim is "to publish good criticism of literature in English"; its particular aims are "to promote discussion of the various regional traditions of literature written in English, especially in relation to each other; to explore the relations between literary and other fields of study; and to publish some articles on the literature of languages other than English." There are to be reviews as well, and the occasional poem or short story.

The first number contains articles on subjects as various as Campion, Dryden, Yeats, Shaw, Pasternak and Tolstoy, and the reviews and comments are similarly eclectic. Perhaps the single most significant portion, for readers of this NEWSLETTER, is contained in the opening editorial. Here it is stated: "There seems to be a current need to assemble the eight or nine branches into which literature written in English has divided, if some common norm of judge-

ment is to be attained. Such an assemblage will constitute a new field of criticism -- 'Literature in English': a field that should perhaps be replacing 'English Literature' in university syllabuses." Further:

"The change of substantial content indicated by the change of term may not be great: it is just here that the necessary adjustment of critical balance lies. The balance is between those who think that traditions other than the English tradition have nothing at all worth inclusion, and those who would make a separate field (or department) of American, or Australian, Literature. From 800 to 1700 the terms 'English Literature' and 'Literature in English' mean the same thing. As far as 1900 they perhaps mean very much the same. How much of a university course in Literature in English (planning syllabuses points up the relation of quantity to quality) should 19th century American, or Australian, literature occupy? Does the unmanageability of some courses in American or Australian Literature indicate the need for a more 'central' evaluative selection?" etc.

We think this is well said, and that it needs to be said numerous times in numerous places besides Adelaide. Whether we are possibly, or all but certainly, on the verge of a radical reconstruction of categories is matter for lively debate; and we are indebted to the South Australians for dropping a rock in the billabong.

NEWS & NOTES

In response to the editorial on "terminology troubles" last spring a South African correspondent suggests we change our name to "Conference on the Literature in English of the Non-British and Non-American Peoples," in order to include the South African Republic and other anomalous English-speaking countries.

Professor Lionel Stevenson, Chairman of the Department of English at Duke University, has presented to the Duke University Library his collection of Canadian literature, consisting of 480 titles, a large number of the volumes containing autograph inscriptions by the authors. The collection is particularly strong in poetry, but contains representative examples of fiction, history, travel, drama, and criticism.

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"African Writers of Today," a six-program survey of a number of significant authors, was presented by National Educational Television Network beginning in late April of this year.

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Mr. C. Hartley Grattan has joined the staff of The University of Texas as Lecturer in History, and the University Library is acquiring the Grattan collection of Australiana and South Pacific materials. This collection, comprising several thousand items, quite substantially increases Commonwealth holdings at Texas and takes another step towards establishing a center for Australian studies there.

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It is reported that at West Point the English departmental reading list (from which cadets must select a book for long treatment) includes Butler's EREWHON and EREWHON REVISITED, Paton's CRY, THE BELOVED COUNTRY, and Van der Post's THE LOST WORLD OF THE KALAHARI.

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"The Lost Tribes of English; or, Literary History in 1984," dealing with the new literatures in English, was given as a Graduate Lecture at Texas A&M University by Joseph Jones, University of Texas, on Oct. 13, 1964, and subsequently videotaped for closed-circuit viewing on the Texas Educational Microwave Project.

ITEMS RECEIVED

The BULLETIN OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR AFRICAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH carries no date, number, or place of issue; internal evidence, however, shows it to be No. 1, published at Freetown, Sierra Leone (Fourah Bay College), in latter 1964. The Introduction is by T.R.M. Creighton; then follows a detailed descriptive and critical account of "University Syllabuses and 'African Literature'" by Arthur Ravenscroft. Dr. Eldred Jones contributes "Glimpses from a Nigerian Tour," related especially to literature and the fine arts; and Desmond Graham reviews Moore and Beier's Penguin anthology, MODERN POETRY FROM AFRICA. There are several pages of notes, from Makerere College, Kenya, Central Africa, South Africa, Nigeria, Sierra Leone -- 13 folio pages in all. We hope to see this new venture appearing regularly.

CREATIVE AFRICAN WRITING IN THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGES: A PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHY COMPILED BY MARGARET AMOSU. Ibadan: Institute of African Studies, 1964. 35 pp. A special supplement to the Institute's BULLETIN, by the Institute's librarian, this list covers Africa all the way from Algeria to Zanzibar, alphabetically speaking, with chief emphasis upon the emergent literatures in English, French, and other languages. There are 251 writers represented, with probably 500 titles or more. Comparatively few titles before 1950 appear, suggesting the truly furious accelerations of the past fifteen years or so. Names such as Butler, Campbell, Henshaw, Packer, and Stein mingle with Chraibi, Dhlomo, Kayombo, Mbotela, Okigbo, Soyinka, Tutuola, etc., in the extensive and useful index.

Enkvist, Nils Erik, BRITISH AND AMERICAN LITERARY LETTERS IN SCANDINAVIAN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS. Åbo: Åbo Akademi, 1964. 110 pp. (Twenty-five libraries included, with a resultant list of letters, pp. 30-72, of several hundred authors; selected letters

printed, pp. 73-110. Only a few authors' names are related to the Commonwealth -- Sir Richard Burton, Sir H. Rider Haggard, William Howitt, David Livingstone, Sarojini Naidu, Henry Handel Richardson, Rabindranath Tagore -- but the British and American holdings are significant in toto and the project itself suggests the desirability of a survey, some time, to determine what manuscript materials by non-British-American writers of English exist in European and other libraries. This would be a task not lightly to be undertaken but its final usefulness is self-evident. This volume, sensibly and attractively printed, is No. XXVII [Humaniora] of the "Acta Academiae Aboensis."

Mulgan, Alan, GOLDEN WEDDING AND OTHER POEMS. Christchurch: Caxton, 1964. 56 pp.

QUARRY 13. Kingston: Queen's University, 1964. 55 pp. (A collection of student writing, 1963-64: poems, stories, reviews. French material appears for the first time.)

Hadgraft, Cecil and Wilson, Richard, eds., A CENTURY OF AUSTRALIAN SHORT STORIES. Melbourne, etc.: Heinemann, 1963. 336 pp. (Contains thirty-five stories, from John Lang's mid-19th version of the Fisher's Ghost legend to Hal Porter and Patrick White; introduction; biographical notes. This collection should be welcome not only to Australianists but to students of the short story in English everywhere.)

The National Book League of 7 Albemarle Street, London, W.1, announces sale of a new catalogue of Commonwealth Books for 5s. 0d. post free. Included are those titles featured in an exhibition at Marlborough House, "Commonwealth in Books," from September 16 to October 16 of this year.

CBCL NEWSLETTER

Address: English Building 118, University of Texas, Austin, Texas 78712.

Editor: Joseph Jones.

Advisory Board: Northrop Frye (University of Toronto), Carl F. Klinck (University of Western Ontario), Lionel Stevenson (Duke University).

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