

## Editorial

**B**Y THE time this issue reaches our readers, the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies will have held its second triennial conference at Jamaica. The first one was held at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, jointly planned and administered in Leeds and Brisbane; the second has been planned and administered in Ottawa and Jamaica. At the time of writing the venue of the third is not yet known. This double-headed method of organization had a good deal to commend it: it gave extra dimensions. And extra dimensions are exactly what this Association was founded to recognize and foster.

The obvious expansion is of the older British literary tradition through newer literatures written in English into exploration of new sensibilities, new uses indeed of a flexible, pliant, responsive language. But another no less important expansion which the Association has encouraged is that of widening the views of writers and critics beyond both old and new local horizons into larger and exciting comparative vistas. To follow this up it has pursued a policy of introducing into its conferences both critics and creative writers. Scholars, authors and literary journalists mix well; the Association's past conferences have been valuable because they have created an opportunity for different attitudes of mind to coalesce, to contradict, to stimulate.

In America today many rush into new studies of Afro-American or Black literature. In East Africa the output of novels is increasing rapidly, though still behind the meteoric growth of, in particular, Nigerian writing in English. In South East Asia more and more writing in English emerges, as can be seen in the journals such as *Tenggara* (its joint editor, Lloyd Fernando, contributes an article to this issue).

In the West Indies *Bim* continues to supply readers with surprise and delight. In Madagascar, Azize Asgarally writes his plays (which have been listed in our *Books Received* page). In Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, there are, of course, long-established literary traditions, the past histories of which are now

being written with unchauvinistic detachment while their current writing holds increasing attention throughout the world.

While we may suffer from too much criticism of an academic career-orientated kind today we do, none the less, often need guidance through the mazes of this proliferating literature in English. For instance, we are indebted to Mr Kenneth Ramchand for his general account of the work of West Indian novelists,<sup>1</sup> and equally so to Mr J. P. Clark for a particular study of Chinua Achebe's use of English,<sup>2</sup> while something of the oral, innate traditionalism of Amos Tutuola is explored by Bernth Lindfors in this issue. We need criticism written both by the local man and by the non-local; from it we get a richer, more complex assessment and guidance against which we can test our own attitudes and judgments.

Conferences can encourage a certain flexibility of mind: new aspects of authorship can emerge and new moral points occur. What is an author's attitude to the fact that he may be read by twenty thousand schoolchildren in his country every year? Does he have one? Is he not shaping the minds of future generations? Or does he think of the *Times Literary Supplement* or the *New York Review of Books* or has he an eye on the Black Studies or the Yellow Studies or even the Brown Studies programmes? It was encouraging to find that whereas ten years ago Leeds was the only university in the United Kingdom to teach Commonwealth literature there are now about a dozen British universities involved in extending the dimensions. Soon there will be more. And countries where the local literature in English only was read now have courses in Commonwealth literature. A welcome sign of the international readership is demonstrated by the West Indies number of *The Literary Half-Yearly*, an Indian critical journal very stimulatingly edited by H. H. Anniah Gowda (and in the case of this number, aided by Arthur D. Drayton as guest-editor). Only connect, said E. M. Forster; and, we might add, compare.

A.N.J.

<sup>1</sup> *The West Indian Novel and its Background*. London: Faber & Faber, 1970, pp. xii + 295. 50s.

<sup>2</sup> J. P. Clark, 'The Legacy of Caliban', *Black Orpheus*, 11, 1, 1968, pp. 16-39.