

# THE INTERNATIONAL P.E.N. CLUB

A WORLD ASSOCIATION OF WRITERS

JAMAICA CENTRE

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c/o THE INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA,

14-16 East Street,

Kingston,

Jamaica, W.I.

Telephone 4253

Professor John Figueroa, M.A.

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CIRCULAR LETTER

Dec. 29th, 1962.

Dear Member,

INFORMAL MEETING: The first informal literary meeting in the new year will take place on Monday, the 14th of January, in the foyer of the Library, 2 Tom Redcan Avenue, at 8.15 p.m.

The programme on this occasion will be talk by Dr. Cedric Hentschel who has just joined the P.E.N. He will speak on-  
THE POWYS BROTHERS- Some reflections on an unfashionable trio, occasioned by John Cowper Powys's nineteenth birthday.

Please come out and bring your friends to what promises to be an interesting and entertaining talk.

W. ADOLPHE ROBERTS MEMORIAL: Mr. Roberts having been an Hon. Member of the Jamaica P.E.N., we have been asked to subscribe to the Memorial Fund which is to be opened shortly. As you know, the P.E.N. has not got a very large balance from which to draw for such purposes, and you are therefore appealed to to send in a subscription towards this purpose as soon as you can. Please forward your donation direct to our Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. Daisy Myrie, 7 Castle Terrace, #1 Kingston 6., or, if it is more convenient to you, leave it with me at my home address, 7 Linstone Crescent, Kingston 10., and I will see that she gets it.

Yours sincerely,



H.V. Ormsby Marshall.  
Hon. Secretary.



THE DEAN'S HOUSE,  
UNIVERSITY RESIDENCE,  
COTTESLOE,  
JOHANNESBURG.

TELEPHONE 31-2722

June 21st, 1960.

Mr. Peter Abrahams,  
c/o Messrs Faber and Faber,  
24, Russell Square,  
London.

Dear Mr. Abrahams,

<sup>mainly</sup> My name is not known to you; but I am writing to you about matters which, I think, may concern us both.

As an introduction, I am a member of the Executive Committee of the South African Centre of International P.E.N., a writer of school text-books and some minor creative pieces.

I am writing to you, primarily, because our P.E.N. Committee has two projects in view which may interest you. First, we are holding a nationwide short story competition, open to any South African writer in English; and we would like to bring it to the notice of South African writers in English overseas. I have written to Mr. Lewis NKosi in the United States to ask him to publicise it there, and his response was enthusiastic. May I claim on your kindness to let writers in the United Kingdom know about it? I enclose a few notes on the details. We are particularly anxious to have as wide a selection of manuscripts as possible from writers of all races, so that the final selection of stories may be truly representative of the best

work South Africans can produce.

Secondly, we are also planning to hold a Conference of Writers in English, probably next year (if we can get the money!), and I enclose some notes about this too. We should very much appreciate your blessing in this enterprise, which will not be an easy one to carry through. We should much like to get the names of people overseas who would be prepared to send us their good wishes, when the time comes, or who might help us in other ways. We feel that there is an urgent need for writers to discuss mutual problems here in an atmosphere in which race is not the overriding consideration. Our problems as writers are the same; and they are grave in this day and age, and need deep consideration.

Third, and this is adding a personal note, I would like to ask you a favour, if I may. I have recently returned to creative writing, and have a number of manuscripts on hand. Among them are <sup>stories</sup> and verses which are clearly not publishable here. Some of us here feel choked because there is no local market for our writings; and though we are compelled to write because there is so much waiting to be written about South Africa and its peoples, we do so knowing that there is no means of setting our work free. We feel that, with the bulk of material being produced overseas, personal contacts must count in "getting things noticed", and we are cut off from them. When we meet to talk about our craft, even, we talk to echoes. There is little stimulus, and even less chance of publication.

It has, however, been suggested to me that I should <sup>x</sup> submit verses for possible publication to a certain small publisher in England. I have a feeling that this is one of those firms who batten on the unwary by making the poet pay to have his work in print. However, I suppose there is nothing lost by letting

the firm concerned see what I have done, though I should feel happier with a reputable firm. Among the verses which I propose to submit to them are the enclosed. One concerns yourself. You may not feel it is valid; but it does express what I felt, I think, after reading the last part of Return to Goli. Anyway, I feel that it would be rude of me to send it to anyone who might publish it without letting you see it first. If you take strong objection to its being presented for publication, please let me know.

The other verses are experimental - personally, I don't think a middle-aged European female in soft circumstances is entitled to write such poems; but someone had to try, and I felt compelled to. I enclose them for you to see because I think you are one of the writers who may be able to produce vital, "punch-drop" English verse out of Africa. And I think it needs writing - urgently.

Typing costs me a lot so, wryly, I must ask for these carbons back - envelope is enclosed! Unless you think these verses are good enough for a reputable publisher to consider and know one who would consider them. But that's twisting your arm. I only cadge because sending things into the void, £: from a void, with the virtual certainty of a long wait before rejection is a blighting process many of us here are suffering from. It is particularly so for those of us writing short stories. Verse is, after all, a luxury for most professional writer

I hope to be in England in January; and if you are in London, and would care to meet me to discuss some of the problems facing South African

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writers, here and in exile, it would give my husband and myself much pleasure to entertain you. We hope to have a flat in London for a couple of months at least.

May I say in conclusion how much I have been "given furiously to think" by the works of yours which I have read, and how good I think they are.

Yours sincerely,

*Margaret K Black*

Mrs. M. K. Black.

P.E.N. CLUB CONTEST

Entries will be accepted on the understanding that any story selected may be published in the newspapers collaborating with the P.E.N. club in the competition for a fee of R30 and may later be published in book form for a fee of R4 a thousand words.

MANUSCRIPTS

An author may submit any number of manuscripts between 2,000 and 3,000 words each, typed in double spacing and written on one side of the paper only.

A pen name may be used but the real name must be disclosed. In a covering letter, the author must state that the manuscripts are his own original work and must give his usual address.

Manuscripts, which are not returnable, should be sent to:

"South African Short Story Competition",  
P.O. Box 17191,  
Hillbrow,  
Johannesburg.

Copyright will be retained by the author.

Entries for consideration for book publication ONLY, must be marked :

BOOK PUBLICATION ONLY: NOT FOR NEWSPAPER USE

The last date for receiving entries for the Newspaper Talent Search will be :

AUGUST 30th, 1961.

S. A. P. E. N.

DRAFT PROPOSALS FOR A  
SOUTH AFRICAN WRITERS' CONFERENCE

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1. It is proposed that the South African Centre of International P.E.N. should sponsor a conference of writers to be held in Johannesburg in November or December, 1961, or *September 1962.*
2. The object of the Conference will be to discuss the theme:  
THE WRITER'S PROBLEMS IN THE CURRENT AFRICAN CONTEXT

It is felt very strongly that there is an urgent need for writers in English to formulate and clarify their role in Africa today. World interest is focussed on Africa, and will be so focussed for some time. Writers present Africa to the world; and they play a large part in shaping and expressing thought here. They must know what their responsibilities are; how far they will be able to express themselves freely; and what part they can play in shaping our future.

English-speaking writers have a particularly important part to play because English is a major world language; and also because English, with French, is likely to become Africa's lingua franca. A new, vital English is being created in Africa which, as the written word, will have a world-wide impact; the implications of its growth are important and should be examined.

ORGANISATION AND GOING

1. It is suggested that the Conference be held over a week-end, in Johannesburg, possibly at the University.
2. Four topics will be discussed, at four separate sessions. At each, 3 or 4 short, 15-minute papers presenting different aspects of the topic will be read, followed by discussions and the Chairman's summing-up. Different Chairmen will handle each topic. Eminent authors will be asked to undertake this task and to present papers.
3. It is suggested that the organisation of the Conference be in the hands of a Steering Committee composed of members of the South African P.E.N. Executive Committee and others whose specialist aid may help them. Administrative sub-committees will handle matters such as accommodation, transport, publicity and finance.
4. It is hoped that a means may be found of publishing the papers read and the conclusions reached by the Conference because this is a research project of value to writers everywhere.
5. It is hoped to invite delegates from territories outside the Union, certainly from the Rhodesias and High Commission Territories. It is also hoped to invite distinguished observers from overseas. The international Secretary of P.E.N., Mr. David Carver, will be asked to attend, to represent the international organisation. A number of well known writers and literary figures will also be asked.

6. The Conference will be held under the terms of the Charter of International P.E.N. It will be non-political, though writers and speakers will be free to express their views within the terms of reference laid down for each topic. It will be open to any writer in English.
7. The main costs of the Conference are expected to be:
  - a) rail and other fares for specially invited delegates and observers who cannot afford to come otherwise
  - b) accomodation and food where necessary
  - c) printing and publishing
  - d) clerical expenses and publicity
8. Of these costs, the first and third will be heaviest. A detailed estimate cannot be made until it is known who will accept invitations to attend, from overseas and from here. Rail travel, even within the Republic, is beyond the means of many well-known South African authors. It is hoped to invite about 200 persons as delegates and observers, in their private capacity or as representing organisations.

Printing of papers will be a heavy item, as will transcripts from recordings.

A current rough estimate of costs shows that approximately £1,000 will have to be found, apart from small amounts collected from private donors. Organisers of the Conference will be voluntary workers.

GENERAL

1. It is hoped that functions at the Conference will include the induction of South African P.E.N.'s new President, Miss MARY TREVAULT whose works have received world acclaim as both books and films.
2. It is hoped that the S.A. Society of Journalists and the N.P.U. will co-operate in the enterprise.
3. It is hoped that the Conference will receive full publicity here and overseas, and will make a valuable contribution to the study of African (particularly South African) affairs as far as writers and journalists are concerned.

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R.L.C. AARONS, Esq.

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*2nd Vice-President*

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*Hon. Treasurer*

A. K. ELLIOTT, Esq.

C/O THE INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA,

14-16 EAST STREET,

KINGSTON,

JAMAICA, B.W.I.

Telephone 4253

February 12th, 1960.

Peter Abrahams, Esq.,  
164-66 Harbour Street,  
Kingston.

Dear Mr. Abrahams,

I am delighted to hear that you have decided to become a member of our Centre of the P.E.N., and it brings me great satisfaction to be able to say that your application for membership has been passed by our Committee, not only unanimously, but with applause!

I enclose herewith a copy of our Rules for you. Please forward your entrance fee of 5/- and annual subscription of one guinea direct to our Hon. Treasurer as follows:- A.K. Elliott, Esq., 78 Sandhurst Crescent, Kingston 6, at your convenience.

We look forward to having you with us as often as possible, and welcome you very heartily to our circle. We hope that you will enjoy your associations with us as time goes by.

Sincerely yours,

*H.V. Ormsby Marshall*

H.V. Ormsby Marshall,  
Hon. Secretary.

THE INTERNATIONAL P.E.N. CLUB  
Jamaica Centre

Treasurer's Address:

78 Sandhurst Crescent,  
Kingston 6.

4 MAY 1960

Dear Member,

As you know our financial year begins on the 1st of November. Our membership fees are payable in advance, so that your subscription for this year is now due.

I shall be glad to receive as early as possible your guinea. Please send it to me at the above address while it is fresh in your mind!

Yours sincerely,

A.K.Elliott,  
Hon. Treasurer.

Please note: Your entrance fee of 5/- together with the annual subscription of one guinea both became due on your election to membership. We should be glad if you would let us have these amounts as early as possible. A.K.E.

Personal

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OUR REF.:

21st December, 1959.

Mr. P. Abrahams,  
West Indian Economist,  
164 Harbour Street,  
KINGSTON.

Dear *Peter*

Just a reminder that you are going to fill up and return the application for membership to the Jamaica Branch of the P.E.N. Club.

I look forward to having the form returned to me early.

Yours sincerely,

*A.L. Hendriks*  
A.L. HENDRIKS

*Very Christmas &  
Happy New Year to you  
& Daphne  
& the kids*

AIH:pw