

## Vale, Dear Friend

Syd Harrex was a dear friend – and I say this not just for myself but for people around the world. Syd’s capacity for warm, generous and lasting friendship was one of his defining characteristics. When I first arrived at Flinders University as a young and inexperienced lecturer I had a number of mentors but Syd was one of the most encouraging of them all. Syd was always early at work, and for



Syd Harrex at a conference on R.K. Narayan

many years I enjoyed a cup of tea with him and others before we started the teaching day. At those early meetings, or at his famous lunch table, Syd encouraged me in many ways – in my teaching, in my administrative career and in my research. In the last of these he was instrumental in drawing out my latent interest in the New Literatures and in encouraging me to apply postcolonial notions to the Scottish literature that was my main area of research. I mention all this as just one example of how Syd’s encouragement and interest in what they were doing supported and sustained many scholars – students, fellow staff and friends – in their research and in their careers. In particular, he was an outstanding supervisor for many postgraduate students, both by example in his own writing and by nurturing of their ideas and aspirations. Syd’s establishment of the Centre for Research in the New Literatures in English (CRNLE) at Flinders University, his fostering of the many publications of the Centre (including the long-standing *CRNLE Reviews Journal* which ultimately transmuted into the continuing *Transnational Literature*), and his acuteness and sensitivity as a literary critic were immensely important in developing the study of the New Literatures (as Syd always called them, rather than adopting the latterly more prevalent “postcolonial”) and attracted many excellent students to Flinders who went on to make their own mark in the field. However, it was as much as anything his network of friendships that drew to Flinders the stream of visitors that we were privileged to meet over the years, some of them as visiting fellows, others passing through more briefly. I am thinking of people as eminent, and likeable, as C.D. Narasimhaiah, P. Lal, Jack Unterecker, Eddie Baugh, Yasmine Gooneratne, Nissim Ezekiel, Eunice de Souza, Kamala Das, Anna Rutherford, R.K. Narayan and many others. As this list shows, Syd’s friendship knew no boundaries, racial, cultural, or national: his sympathies were

universal. It was also his lasting friendship with the artist Tom Gleghorn which led to many splendid covers for CRNLE publications. Of course Syd was also an exceptionally fine poet, publishing a number of volumes of intricately worked, humorous and passionate poetry. Here, too, his devotion to friendship shone through strongly, not only in the many poems addressed to his friends, or in memory of them, but even in a whole volume of poems, aptly named *Dedications*, with each poem dedicated to a friend. The field of New Literatures will not be the same without Syd, but those of us who knew him as a friend will feel his loss with special acuteness. Vale, dear friend!

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