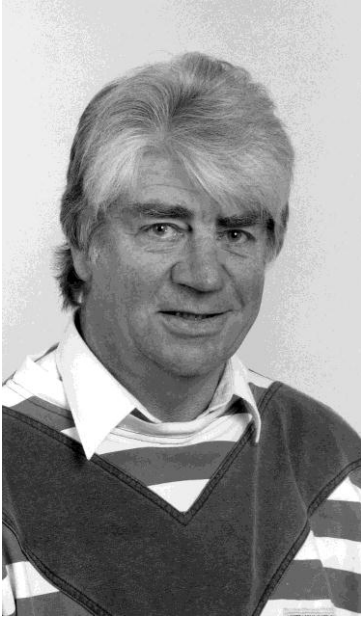


Syd Harrex: Roads Less Travelled



Syd Harrex, as a mentor, as a colleague, but most importantly as a friend, had a profound influence on my life. Through his courses on literatures that were not Eurocentric, on literary roads less travelled, it was Syd who made me and countless other students at Flinders University aware of the myriad voices that existed outside of the British canon and of the potential and freshness in those voices. Later, as my doctoral supervisor, he was gently encouraging while academically rigorous, always ensuring that I was cognisant of and respectful towards the cultures and worldviews with which I was dealing.

He was a champion of marginalized voices in literature and spent his career ensuring that these authors and academics were heard and recognized. Though his influence in the “new” literatures in English extended globally, it was in Southeast Asia that I saw it firsthand. His close friendships with the leading English-language writers of Malaysia and Singapore - Lloyd Fernando, Lee Kok Liang, K.S. Maniam, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Wong Phui Nam, Edwin Thumboo, Kirpal Singh, to name but a few - evidenced the importance of his work and the esteem in which he was held. Over the years, I lost count of the number of writers and academics I encountered from around the world who came to know of the English Department at Flinders University because of Syd and his founding of the Centre for Research in New Literatures in English.

But perhaps my strongest memories of Syd are of his zest for life and his ready camaraderie. Whether holding court over lunch at Table Number One at Flinders, at a hawkers’ center in Kuala Lumpur or Singapore, in the cafes of Aachen and Liege, or at his own tables in Coromandel Valley and Kangaroo Island, conversation was never dull. New friendships were forged, life was lived, lives were touched. Syd was an original: his gentleness, his intelligence, his integrity, and his generosity of spirit will be long remembered and sorely missed.

Bernard Wilson
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