

Editor's Column

This issue of *Asiatic* has seven sections. The first section is devoted to Syd Harrex (1935-2015), a prominent Australian poet and pioneer in New Literatures studies, who passed away at his Adelaide home peacefully on May 29. Syd was an exceptionally charismatic figure, with a sharp wit and Aussie sense of humour. His mind was inclusive and sensitive to all cultures, and when it came to making friends he was above all petty prejudices, which stood him apart from many of us. Syd was ever enthusiastic in the study of other cultures, especially the literature of the British Commonwealth, which he rebranded as New Literatures, and actively promoted through the Centre (CRNLE) he founded at Flinders University in 1977. He also launched a journal – *CRNLE Reviews Journal* – to carry out his mission, which published reviews of books from Asia and Africa that were totally neglected by mainstream readers of English literature at the time. In this way, he was instrumental in setting the foundations of what has now become a very popular subject of study, Postcolonial Literatures.

His pivotal role in New Literatures studies, and more importantly the example of inclusivity and fairness he set through his personal relationships, has earned him many friends and admirers from different parts of the globe. This is evident in the personal tributes to Syd published in this issue, which have come not only from his native Australia but also from Bangladesh, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore, the UK and the USA. In addition, to commemorate Syd's life and work, we have included an article on his poetry in this section. I would like to thank all contributors for responding to my call at short notice.

The second section brings together eight articles on Asian American literature, which have been guest-edited by Dr. Chingyen Yang Mayer of Siena College, USA. Dr. Mayer has been proactive from the beginning in ensuring that we secure and publish in this issue a number of strong and insightful essays on the theme of “unstable homes” in Asian American literature. I would like to put on the record my warm gratitude to her for all the help and cooperation I have received from her in finally publishing the eight essays in this section. It was truly a pleasure to work with her. Details of these articles have been discussed by Dr. Mayer in her introduction to the section.

This follows a section of general articles in which we have three essays, one written by the veteran Australian academic Dennis Haskell, who, like Syd, has contributed significantly to the study of Asia-Pacific literature generally and Southeast Asian literature in particular. The other two articles in this section are by Malaysian scholars: Ungku Maimunah Mohd. Tahir, a well-renowned critic of Malay literature, and Fateha Aziz, a young critic of Malaysian literature in English.

The next section contains an interview with Jaishree Misra, an Indian writer who has published an astonishing eight novels over a period of fifteen years (2000-2015). This is followed by a review article by Saurav Dasthakur of Visva-Bharati University, where he introduces and examines two recently edited volume of essays on Indian literature by Prem Kumari Srivastava and Gitanjali Chawla.

The section that follows features a collection of 18 book reviews in which scholars and academics from Bangladesh, China, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Singapore and the US review recently published creative and critical works of Asian and postcolonial literatures.

We conclude the issue with a group of four poems by Dennis Haskell, a multi-award-winning Australian poet whom I have already mentioned earlier in relation to his article, and who was recently made a Member of the Order of Australia for his significant contribution to literature, education and intercultural understanding.

With such a broad range of material, this issue is sure to appeal to readers of different literary interests within Asian and postcolonial literatures.

Finally, I wish to thank Dr. Susan Philip, Dr. Somdatta Mandal and Dr. Eddie Tay for their valuable contributions in putting together this issue. Thanks are also due to Quaratulain Shirazi, our Web Manager, for her invaluable assistance throughout the year and especially for uploading the issue on the journal's website.

Mohammad A. Quayum
Editor-in-Chief