

In Memoriam
Victor J. Ramraj

Scholars of postcolonial studies will be saddened to learn of the death of Victor Ramraj in August 2014. Born in Guyana, he completed his BA at the University College of the West Indies (London) in Kingston, Jamaica, and then continued on to graduate studies (MA, PhD) in Canada at the University of New Brunswick. In 1970, he took up a position in the Department of English at the University of Calgary. Generations of students, undergraduate and graduate, will remember him as an eloquent teacher.

Victor was a scholar of Canadian literature, Commonwealth literatures, and postcolonial literatures. His book *Mordecai Richler* (1983) was a path-breaking study of a writer who was to become a canonical figure for Canadian literature. The anthology he edited of world writing in English, *Concert of Voices* (1995), has been taught across North America and elsewhere. He was a co-editor of a collection, *Postindependence Voices in South Asian Writing* (2001), and an anthology of West Indian stories. The wide range of titles speaks strongly to the breadth and depth of his interests. He gave talks and plenary addresses at universities and conferences around the world, most recently speaking about the first Canadian Nobel Prize in Literature winner Alice Munro in Shanghai and Guyana.

The profession also gained great benefit from Victor's willingness to serve on many committees, too numerous to mention individually here. Some of the most prestigious were his

presidency of the Canadian Association for Commonwealth Language and Literature Studies (1992–95), his membership on the Commonwealth Literature Prize committee (1999–2001) and the Raja Rao Award for Literature of the South Asian Diaspora jury (2004), and his position as chief judge on the Guyana Literary prizes committee (2004–05 and 2011).

From 1990–2001, Victor served as editor of *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, leading the journal through a particularly crucial period as the study of Commonwealth literatures consolidated its emergent identity as postcolonial studies. In the superb issue he co-edited with Gauri Viswanathan, “Institutionalizing English Studies: The Postcolonial/Postindependence Challenge” (*ARIEL* 31.1–2, 2000), he pointed out the tensions to which new methodologies gave rise: “There have been major modifications in approach as well—undertaken cautiously, as shown in West Indian scholars’ wariness of literary ‘postcolonialism,’ viewed as originating in the Anglo-American world” (10). A scholar deeply engaged with “voices,” Victor was ever attentive to those situated away from metropolitan centres. It was under his leadership that the journal began to publish a “Perspectives” section that encouraged short commentaries, dialogues, and responses in the hope that the journal could find space for thinking not conceived as the “ordinary” academic article. He wanted other voices to be heard.

Those who knew Victor personally will remember him as a generous colleague, as a gracious host, as a hospitable companion for coffee or drinks. His welcoming smile and spirited discussions will be greatly missed. *ARIEL* extends its sincere condolences to his wife, Ruby, his children Victor V. and Sharon, and their families.

Pamela McCallum
Editor, 2001–11