

*Introduction*

**Susan Ballyn & Elisa Morera de la Vall**

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When Anna Mow, Serge Liberman's widow, wrote to us both to tell us Serge had died, we were stunned. We had no idea he had been ill nor so tragically terminally so. We both felt that we had lost a dear friend and a wonderful writer and thinker. Serge was always willing to help and when Elisa decided to do her PhD on Jewish Australian writing with me as her supervisor, Serge facilitated contacts, allowed her access to his own library and advised wisely. I could not have had a better ally in supervising Elisa's work. In his usual quiet generous way Serge was thrilled with Elisa's thesis and remained in contact over the years.

We were truly honoured when he came to lecture to the students at the University of Barcelona. We met for coffee before the lecture and Serge seemed totally at ease. That was until we stood waiting outside the lecture room. His nervousness became patent and he seemed anxious. Once introduced, however, he began in his quiet engaging way, his eyes lighting up as the students responded to him, his smile ever present and away he went to give a truly magnificent lecture. A version of that lecture is reproduced for the first time in this volume of *Coolabah*. We had left time for questions after the lecture, but it proved not to be enough. The questions continued as the students swarmed around the desk and then outside the classroom.

The last time we saw Serge was when he came to Barcelona as part of a tour of Sephardi Spain. Anna was with him. Before coming he sent us a wealth of material on the itinerary that they were following and articles relevant to the tour. When we met, he was absolutely shining with delight at being able to see us, but even more at being able to do the tour which must have been very grueling given the lectures included at each place visited and the route

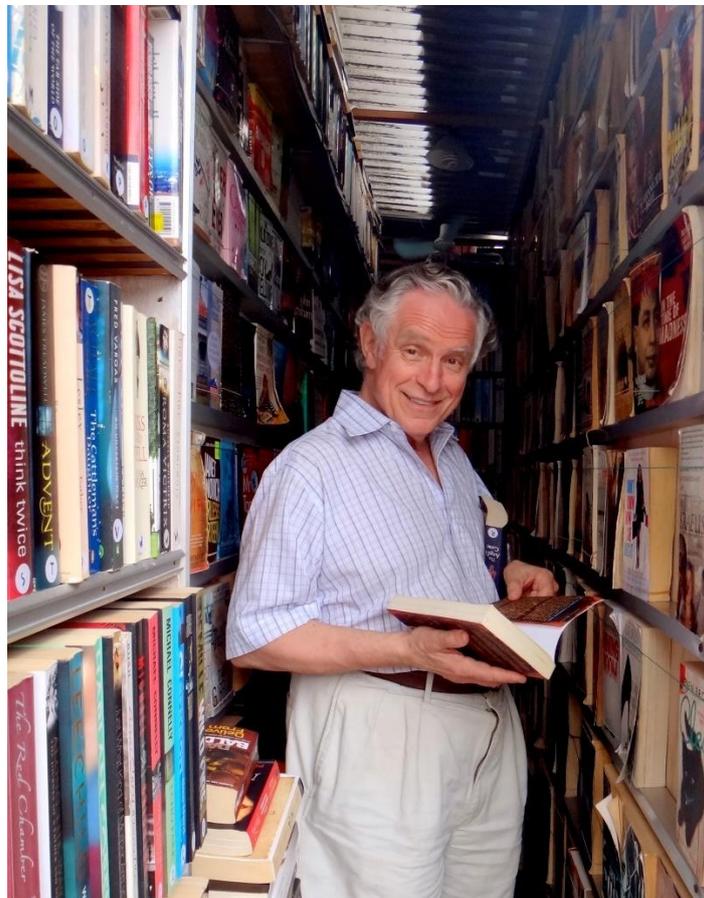
itself. Generous as always, Serge later sent a detailed summary of the experience.

When we received the news from Anna that Serge had died, both of us felt that we had to do something in his memory and a volume of *Coolabah* seemed appropriate. Anna's support was invaluable in all stages of this sad venture and she gave us permission to publish the lecture he gave to the students. All the contributors were close to Serge and each has written in the way they have felt fit to honor Sege's legacy as a writer, medical practitioner, intellectual, his profound humanity and understanding of human nature. Serge left behind him what we call "a golden wake" for others to follow. His life and work are an example to us all of passion and humanity. He will not be forgotten.

Sue Ballyn

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Serge amidst books (courtesy Anna Mow)