



## Lloyd James Austin 1915-1994

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When Lloyd Austin, Drapers Professor of French in the University of Cambridge from 1967 to 1980, was elected to an Honorary Fellowship of the Academy in 1985, this was fitting recognition of the place that a leading member of A.R. Chisholm's 'Melbourne school' had come to occupy internationally in the discipline. His death, at the age of 79, on 30 December 1994, a little more than three years after Gardner Davies was suddenly taken from the learned world, removed the second of the two Australians who, in the eyes of at least one specialist in France itself, were the greatest Mallarme scholars of our time.

Unlike Davies, who devoted all his leisure in a busy life as a public servant and diplomat to Mallarme exclusively, Austin covered a much wider range. This was perhaps inevitable in a forty-year career of university teaching that began in Melbourne soon after the outbreak of the Second World War and continued in St Andrews, Cambridge, Manchester and finally Cambridge again. There were interruptions-war service in the Royal Australian Navy Volunteer Reserve between 1942 and 1945 and a long period of private research in Paris in the early 1950s-but for more than half a century and until he was disabled by a first stroke in early 1993 Austin was a full participant in Australian and British academic life. Responding to the demands of teaching and supervision as well as of research he developed broad expertise in nineteenth- and early twentieth- century literature, especially poetry.

Lloyd Austin went from Melbourne Church of England Grammar School to the University of Melbourne at the beginning of 1933. He took a First in French but accompanied this in the fashion of that era with solid studies in Latin and German. At the end of 1937 a French Government Travelling Scholarship gave him the opportunity to undertake doctoral research in Paris. Despite the distractions and interruptions of a Europe moving towards war he managed to complete and defend a thesis that was published as *Paul Bourget: sa vie et son oeuvre jusqu'en 1889* in 1940.

From 1 October 1945 to 31 July 1947 Austin occupied a 'Temporary (Post War) Lectureship in French' at the University of Melbourne and was particularly concerned with devising and giving refresher courses to ex-servicemen. An appointment to St Andrews saved him from a projected long stint of leave without pay that he thought essential both to renew family contacts (his wife Jeanne was French) and to have access to books and journals that were unavailable in Melbourne. Since there was no promise or even likelihood of employment at the University of Melbourne after 1948, this step was unavoidable. In the event he was not to return to Australia except as a visitor. His Alma Mater offered him Chisholm's succession in December 1954, but he was busy with the book that appeared in 1956 as *L'Univers poétique de Baudelaire: Symbolisme et Symbolique*. In that same year he took up the prestigious Chair of Modern French Literature at the University of Manchester.

It would be inaccurate to speak of Australia's loss. Austin continued to be interested in, and latterly concerned about, academic developments in this country. He contributed to the *Australian Journal of French Studies* and other periodicals based here; he welcomed and encouraged postgraduates from our universities; above all, he exemplified to the world at large the best qualities - rigour and meticulousness allied to a broad imaginative sweep - that have been characteristic of our strong and longstanding tradition of French studies. Thus we could rejoice in his achievements and honours: distinguished editorship for fifteen years of the British journal *French Studies*, a primordial role in the great and exemplary edition of Mallarmé's correspondence, a doctorate *honoris causa* of the Sorbonne, presidency of the Association internationale des Etudes françaises, election to the British Academy and to the Académie Royale de Langue et Littérature Françaises de Belgique. A substantial

Festschrift- Baudelaire, Mallarme, Valery: new essays in honour of Lloyd Austin, edited by Malcolm Bowie, Alison Fairlie and Alison Finch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982) - and much more recently a memorial number of the Australian Journal of French Studies (volume XXXII, no 3, September- December 1995) say something of the esteem that Austin's colleagues in both hemispheres had for him. He was a formal man in an old-fashioned way and a formidable critic of academic shoddiness and sloppiness. For these traits too we could respect and remember him. However, he lives in his many distinguished writings, not least in the articles that have been collected and reprinted in recent years: *Poetic principles and practice: occasional papers on Baudelaire, Mallarme and Valéry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) and *Essais sur Mallarmé* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

For us in this Academy almost fifty years after Austin's departure for Europe it is appropriate still to reflect on our country's capacity to support the most ambitious research on topics that lie outside the narrow limits of patriotism and nationalism. Travel is undoubtedly easier, and libraries are better stocked than they were in 1947. Nonetheless, we cannot be complacent, faced as we are with clear signs of growing disinclination to acquire what is not written in English. Will recognition of achievements at the highest level continue-in fields like French studies-to depend on expatriation?

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