

JANE SOUTHWOOD & BERNARD BOURQUE

Professor Christopher J. Gossip

This volume celebrates the life and scholarly achievements of Chris Gossip, who, before his retirement in 2007, held the Chair of French at the University of New England, New South Wales, Australia, for almost two decades.

A graduate of Edinburgh, Chris distinguished himself early on as a student of high intellectual capability. His doctoral thesis, undertaken at the University of Edinburgh, initially under the supervision of Professor Harry Barnwell, before the latter moved to Belfast, was on the Roman tragedies of Thomas Corneille. This was to be the pattern of Chris's scholarly work.

Chris's first academic appointment, from October 1964 to September 1974, was at the University of Aberdeen. He then proceeded to fill the post of Senior Lecturer in French at the University of Swansea, where he remained from October 1974 to January 1991, when he was invited to take up the Chair of French at the University of New England.

Accompanying his busy schedule of teaching and administration, during the period of his incumbency at the University of New England, Chris produced an impressive number of publications: nineteen articles in scholarly journals and six chapters in books, on French seventeenth-century theatre, covering performance practice and publication, and critical appraisals of the work of Molière, Pierre Corneille, Thomas Corneille and Racine. He also co-edited a book on the *Commedia dell'arte*, and produced a monograph on Corneille's *Cinna*, in the series Critical Guides to French Texts, published by Grant and Cutler. In addition, he engaged in reviewing critical works on French seventeenth-century drama, and in writing articles on the teaching of French.

Chris continues this scholarly output today. His edition of Samuel Chappuzeau's *Le Théâtre françois*, the only contemporary account dealing with day-to-day life in the theatres of seventeenth-century Paris, is due for publication in early 2009. He is currently leading an international team of scholars in the preparation of a multi-volume critical edition of the complete works of Thomas Corneille. Some forty plays, ranging from comedies to lyrical tragedies, will make up this definitive work, to be published by Éditions Classiques Garnier in Paris, in both paper and electronic formats.

Early in his career, Chris demonstrated this scholarly rigour and application by publishing his first book, *An Introduction to French Classical Tragedy* (London: Macmillan, 1981). This period saw the publication of eighteen articles, covering the works of Molière, Pierre Corneille, Thomas Corneille, La Calprenède and Racine, as well as on general aspects pertaining to the theatre of the time. He also published a critical edition of Cyrano de Bergerac's *La Mort d'Agrippine* and of Thomas Corneille's *Stilicon*, and reviewed a significant number of works.

Not only a distinguished scholar and teacher, Chris has also been an inspired and highly effective administrator. The accounts of his kindness and wisdom, during his tenure as Head of the School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics at the University of New England, and within the discipline of French, are legion. He brought to bear upon these jobs the ability to make decisions, to consult with colleagues when necessary, and to handle efficiently complex issues – all done with courtesy and consideration.

The strong connections between French- and English-speaking communities, initially fostered by Chris, as a student, and, later as an academic in the UK, were furthered by his setting-up of student exchange agreements between the University of New England and the Université d'Angers (Angers, France), the Université Jean Monnet (Saint-Étienne, France), the École Supérieure de Commerce Chambéry (Chambéry, France) and the Université Laval (Quebec City, Canada). These well-functioning agreements have proven to be highly successful, with a significant number of French and Australian nationals participating annually in the scheme. Ties between France and Australia are further cemented by Chris's presidency of the Armidale branch of the Alliance Française, a role in which he is very active.

It is these aspects of a well-rounded scholar and man which led us to wish to celebrate Chris's very considerable accomplishments. This volume, composed of scholarly essays contributed by friends and colleagues from around the world, is the expression of the high esteem in which Chris is held. The title of the *Festschrift* was chosen to focus on Chris's main area of research and publication, while allowing contributions from scholars working in earlier and later periods. The articles cover the development of texts from Antiquity into the literature of seventeenth-century France (H. T. Barnwell, Derek Connon), the re-working of identical subject matter by different playwrights of the classical period (William Brooks, B. J. Bourque), the perceptions held by Prussian society of the theatre of Racine and of Voltaire (M. S. Rivière), the re-working in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in film, novel or theatre, of French seventeenth-century texts or doctrines (Helena Duffy, Noël Peacock, Lee Brotherson, Jennifer Hatte, Jane Southwood), internal developments within the body of work of seventeenth-century France or of a particular playwright (John Campbell, Henry Phillips) and the continuation of sixteenth-century conventions in the peace celebrations marking the wedding of Louis XIV and the Infanta (Alison Saunders).

The idea of the *Festschrift* was unveiled at a dinner in honour of Chris, held on 1 October 2007, attended by family, friends and colleagues. Chris and his wife, Jean, were delighted to learn about the proposed volume. The project has been considerably facilitated by the generous financial assistance of the French Embassy in Australia, and of the University of New England, through the good offices of its Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Peter Flood, who has been an enthusiastic advocate of the whole venture, as have the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Professor Margaret Sedgley, the Academic Director of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Professor Kerry Dunne, and the Head of the School of Arts, Professor Jennie Shaw. Administrative support has also been extended by other personnel of the University of New England, whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged. The support and encouragement of Dr Graham Speake, Publishing Director of Peter Lang, Oxford, and of Professor Noël Peacock, Series Editor of Medieval and Early Modern French Studies, for Peter Lang, have made our task

considerably easier. The editors are also extremely grateful to the thirteen-member team of peer reviewers, spanning three continents, whose critiques of respective essays were invaluable. Their names and brief biographical details are mentioned at the end of this volume.

The final bouquet must, however, go to Chris Gossip. The readiness with which people accepted to contribute to this volume is testimony to the great esteem in which he is held. As one of our contributors said of Chris's critical work on French seventeenth-century literature, 'Chris Gossip deserves our huge gratitude for all he has done for the subject'. Chris's meticulous attention to detail, his readiness to assist students and staff, his warmth and his gentle humour have made him a much-loved colleague, mentor and friend, as well as an outstanding scholar, teacher and administrator.

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