

With the death of Professor Cedric Watts in May 2022 the Joseph Conrad Society lost one of its longest-serving members and Conrad studies lost a major scholar and educator. Cedric's presence at the Society's annual conferences will be missed, as much for his inspirational and entertaining papers as for the opportunity to enjoy a pint with him in the pub afterwards. His contribution to Conrad studies was immense and his legacy endures in such volumes as *Joseph Conrad's Letters to Cunninghame Graham*, *Joseph Conrad: A Literary Life*, and *A Preface to Joseph Conrad*, his many critical editions and published articles, and in the memories of generations of scholars whose ideas about Conrad have benefitted from and been shaped by Cedric's work. The following obituary was first posted in 2022 on the website of the University of Sussex, where Cedric spent his career.

Obituary

Cedric Watts

By Dr Alistair Davies

Cedric Watts, Emeritus Professor of English Literature at the University Sussex, died on 12 May 2022. He was 85. An internationally renowned and prolific scholar of the writings of Joseph Conrad, he played a leading role in Conrad studies as editor, critic and biographer.

In his work he emphasised the structural and symbolic complexity of Conrad's fiction, its philosophical depth and its moral critique of the effects of imperialism, effects Conrad had experienced under the Russian domination of Poland and Ukraine and had witnessed as an officer in the merchant marine.

His meticulously researched biography of the wealthy Scottish author, adventurer and friend of Conrad, Robert Cunninghame Graham, rancher in South America, co-founder of the Scottish Labour Party and of the Scottish Nationalist Party, drew attention to an important but hitherto neglected figure, while his full-length study *Literature and Money* revived a largely neglected topic.

Cedric's interests ranged widely – he was a noted Shakespeare scholar, with essays on John Keats and a study of Graham Greene. With John Sutherland, he co-authored the engaging OUP study *Henry V, War Criminal? & Other Shakespeare Puzzles* which made the loose ends and open questions of Shakespeare's plays its focus.

Born in Cheltenham in 1937, he was educated at Cheltenham Grammar School (1947-55). From 1956-8 he completed national service in the Royal Navy, qualifying as a Russian translator before winning an exhibition to Pembroke College, Cambridge, (1958-1961) to study English Literature.

He graduated with a first-class degree. After doctoral studies at Cambridge (1961-4), he was appointed lecturer in English Literature in the School of English and American Studies in 1965 and professor in 1983. A stimulating teacher, supervisor and colleague and a witty and popular lecturer, he remained at Sussex until his retirement in 2002.

Cedric was a regular figure at jazz events in Brighton and Hove and remained active until his death as the author of scholarly introductions to editions of drama, fiction and poetry. In 2013, under the pen-name Peter Green, he published a semi-autobiographical novel based on his experiences at Cambridge *Final Exam: A Novel* – Ian McEwan found it 'a stimulating blend of high-energy intellectual and sexual tease' - which reflected upon the radical social, sexual and cultural changes his generation experienced.

Devoted to his family and with pride in the achievements of his children, he took a detached view of the passions which roared through the discipline during much of his career. His expertise in Russian and Slavic cultures and his experience of the sea may have drawn him to Conrad but he seemed to share his ironic and stoic habit of mind.

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