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Again it falls to the undersigned's sorrowful lot to report the death of an old Conradian companion. Conradian elder statesman Professor (emeritus) Gerald Morgan embarked on his last voyage on Sunday, 30 August, 2015 at Vancouver, Canada. With his passing Conrad scholarship has lost a mainstay, for he was a pioneer of Conrad criticism in its take-off phase in the 1960's and '70's, and remained devoted to letters *usque ad finem*. As a Master Mariner, along with his friend Hans Van Marle he was a font of knowledge on Joseph Conrad's sea life, and shared his nautical expertise in many quarters, including the editorial board of the Cambridge Edition of *The Works of Joseph Conrad*. Among his many exquisite articles and reviews, his essay "Narcissus Afloat" (Norton edition of *Nigger of the Narcissus*, ed. Robt Kimbrough, 1979) stands as a classic of the literary scholar's craft.

Loyal shipmate to sailors in war and peace and inspirational teacher of the humane virtues to countless colleagues and students, Gerald Morgan was the model of his own favourite description of humankind, which he liked to quote from the 12th century theologian Petrus Abaelardus: *homo risibilis et navigabilis* — man, the creature that laughs and sails a boat. Like Conrad's, his was a muted inner laughter, celebrating the human comedy and its follies, as he shot his own bearings — sometimes humanly off-azimuth in the world of petty things, but always unerringly on course in what really matters. He was both blessed and cursed with being a romantic and an innocent — *The Fol Sage*, the living title of a book (1989) by his Conradian protégé Professor (emeritus) Camille La Bossière, also author of *Joseph Conrad and The Science of Unknowing* (1979).

Gerald came to his love of Conrad's work naturally, because his life's voyage was on a course parallel to the author's, beginning where it left off the year previous. Orphaned at birth, his early years spent in an orphanage, boarding school, and the foster care of an aristocratic guardian surrogate matriarch, at age 13 in January, 1939 he was sent to the Merseyside training ship *Clarence*. The sea was to be his only home for the next 15 years. As a Welsh Catholic lad of gentle upbringing, he was an alien spirit thrust into a hurly burly of tough English waifs bound for maritime service. But he proved his mettle, even becoming cockswain for the ship's boat.

In October, 1940, he left the *Clarence* without permission, and still only fifteen years of age, embarked on his sea life proper in convoys in U-Boat-infested waters, watching helpless as nearby ships exploded, their crews burning and drowning. In September 1941, the *Lafian* was torpedoed by U-107 and sunk under him. Years later he would write in a letter, "Joseph Conrad was my 'avatar' at sea. I'd bought his first novel (tropical) [*Almayer's Folly*] while on the Niger in 1941; had read it before the convoy battle had sunk it with my ship." "Next," he recalled, "I'd read a Mediterranean novel of his [*The Arrow of Gold*], between bombings at Bizerte; and so on."

After four years at sea in British vessels, in October 1944, almost 19 years of age, Morgan shipped aboard his first Canadian vessel *Eastwood Park* as Third Mate, the youngest certified officer afloat in Canada's Merchant fleet. During those deadly years of the Battle of the North Atlantic he sailed with 1000 tons of ammunition underfoot, survived sinking and torpedo-bombing, and ended his war on VE Day, his birthday, west of Gibraltar steaming home. He continued in the Merchant Marine after the war, becoming by 1950, Chief Mate of the Montreal-built *Bolivar*.

Somehow between voyages, our Gerald managed studies, first at Acadia University at Wolfville, Nova Scotia, then at Montreal's Loyola College, achieving a Baccalaureate in Philosophy in 1951. In 1953 the Canadian merchant fleet, wracked by strikes, was doomed. With a Merchant Marine Master's certificate and no ship, he came ashore finally in Montreal, having sailed in 19 ships all told. He worked for a pittance where he could as a mechanic, then tried his hand at editorial journalism, and a year teaching English at a French school, all the while inspired by the art of Joseph Conrad and other greats as he laboured to earn Master's degrees in Philosophy and Literature at the University of Montreal.

In 1955 at a garden party near Montreal Gerald met Janina Budlewska, and they wed two years later. His beloved Janka hailed from Gdynia on Poland's Baltic coast; as well as being devoted mother to their gifted daughters Monica and Marina, she became his mentor and amanuensis in things Polish, so that he soon mastered Conrad's mind as have so few scholars of English letters west of Poland.

After boyhood in a British training ship, young manhood in the Battle of the North Atlantic, and fifteen years at sea, Gerald had come ashore by degrees, as it were. In his life ashore — “beached,” as he called it — his achievements were as precocious as they had been afloat. Literary academe was beckoning. In 1958 he achieved a post at the *College Militaire Royale*, at St Jean, Quebec, and the same year was graced with a University of Montreal doctorate in literature. He was soon appointed Head of the Department of English; and in 1965 he accepted the Headship of the Department of English at Royal Roads Military College in Victoria, British Columbia. He went on to become president of the Humanities Association of Canada, a member of the executive of the Humanities Research Council of Canada, and a presenter at the First World Conference of Slavists. Through his career he spoke on Conrad at 24 universities in all, in both English and French.

However, he was never truly beached. *Homo navigabilis* Morgan — his very name Cymric for man of the Sea — sailed through life, buffeted but hardly aware of the stormy seas wracking the surfaces, his gaze always fixed on fathomless depths and limitless heavens. For him they were the same. He wasn't wise in the ways of the world, of the surfaces that preoccupy most of us. He was often misunderstood and sometimes dismissed, or on occasion even cynically used by some without his poetry of spirit. He once proudly quoted to me his letter to some grey apparatchic in Veterans' Affairs, upbraiding him in prose worthy of an ancient Druidic warrior bard, for the neglect of Merchant Seamen who had risked all in the Battle of the North Atlantic. The bureaucrat wouldn't have had a clue what his letter was about.

But Gerald knew what facts are worth. He once told to a historian colleague who evinced scorn for literary scholarship and often preened himself publicly on his “primary sources,” “It's not the facts that matter. It's what you *do* with them.” Gerald's true grasp of what one does with facts is what made him a great teacher, who never stinted to share his wisdom with his charges and colleagues alike, the very type of his beloved Chaucer's Clerk of Oxford, “Gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.” He was a dear mentor to his junior colleagues and to me, come late from soldiering to letters. When I cast about for a Conradian doctoral dissertation topic, he said, “You're a soldier, aren't you? Write about honour!” Those few words took me from opaque roiling surfaces into a pellucid depth where everything was instantly clear. (My thanks is miserly, for a revelation costing me so many years tortuously navigating the life of the mind.)

In a letter I had from the ancient mariner only days before a near-fatal stroke, he wrote in Conradian bardic mode as if prophetically penning his own epitaph:

I've been there, done it. Have clanked at full speed for 26 days in vast ocean solitude under the nightly sweep of constellations (which helped me save a 10,000-ton ship from a lightless coral that wrecked a less-careful sister ship as if she'd been the Titanic). Have looked down a red-rock crater, with a hundred fathoms under my keel; have brought a Yang-Tze river boat under Egyptian cliffs and past Jebel Musa (called also Mount Sinai); have watched the sun rise in the west over Frankfurt; have seen in deafening blast, a ship with 50 men rise in a single cloud from emptied place on the sea. What must so Ancient Mariner learn from junior bookmen whom off-handedly he can beat ashore at their own game?

No quest for “Sleepe after toyle, port after stormie seas.”** for Gerald. Shortly after retiring in 1985, he joined the Baccalaureate faculty of the Benedictine Abbey of Christ the King, overlooking Mission, British Columbia, and continued to teach there well into the 21st century, until age and illness spelled *finis* to the calling he loved.

Over Professor Morgan's years of service to academe, countless future military and naval officers, scholars, and divines have been inspired by his wisdom and his reverence for the life of the mind. Our friendship deepening through more than four decades, the myriad letters of the voluminous correspondence we shared over the years always ended, “UAF” (or sometimes, “Waffers”) — *Usque ad*

finem,” a Conradian motto we shared and meant as a signatory pledge of fidelity to the end of life’s voyage. Gerald loved the sea. For him, no less than for the author whose books he so loved, the sea was a living symbol of the eternal to which he has now returned. I can express that no better than by adapting a poem by Rudyard Kipling, for whose mind and work I share Gerald’s admiration:

Gerald’s returned to his sea—the sight of salt water unbounded—
The heave and the halt and the hurl, and the crash of the comber wind-hounded.
The sleek-barreled swell before storm, grey, foamless, enormous, and growing—
Stark calm on the lap of the Line or the crazy-eyed hurricane blowing—
His Sea in *no* showing the same, and his sea the *same* 'neath each showing. . . .
Gerald’s returned to his sea—the immense and contemptuous surges—
The shudder, the stumble, the swerve, as the star-stabbing bow-sprit emerges.
The orderly clouds of the Trades, the ridged, roaring sapphire thereunder—
Unheralded cliff-haunting flaws and the headsail’s low-volleying thunder—
His Sea in *no* wonder the same, and his Sea the *same* through each wonder. . . .
Gerald’s returned to his Sea and her excellent loneliness, rather
Than forecourts of kings, and her outermost pits,
And the mean streets where we mortals gather
Inland, in the dirt and dry dust—among lubbers to dull to believe him—
Away from the arms of his Sea, and her bosom whereon we now leave him—
His Sea that he loved from the first, his Sea that at last shall receive him.
—His Sea that his being fulfils.***

We, Conradians all, wish Professor (emeritus) Gerald Morgan, Master Mariner and “one of us,” fair winds and following seas.

** Lines from Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Bk 1, quoted on Joseph Conrad’s headstone.

*** “The Sea and the Hills” (1902)

G. W. Stephen Brodsky
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