children to MacDonald's stories and, at the same time, wondering if my childhood memories are colored by my adult psychologies and imaginings and articulations of meanings; and perhaps my role as a parent and my long, meandering path back to childlikeness color those memories, too.

Manlove spent much of his career not only opening up studies of MacDonald and other fantasy authors in this way, but also making space for those who entered into the same field of study. As Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson quoted scholar Dr. Franziska Kohlt in this journal in a memorial to Manlove: "'Colin was not the gatekeeper, nor the gate that demanded you speak "friend"—he was the gate that spoke "friend" for you to enter'" (qtd. in "Colin Manlove and Stephen Prickett" 6).

In that spirit, Colin Manlove's final published work is a gift to his readers. I can't say that reading it made me less mystified by MacDonald's complex use of the imagination, but it did make me want to explore his stories more. This is a book to be appreciated and enjoyed by anyone who finds MacDonald's numerous children's fantasies at once baffling, and, at the same time, enthralling and strange. This book is especially helpful for those who are ready to go deeper into the imagination of George MacDonald.

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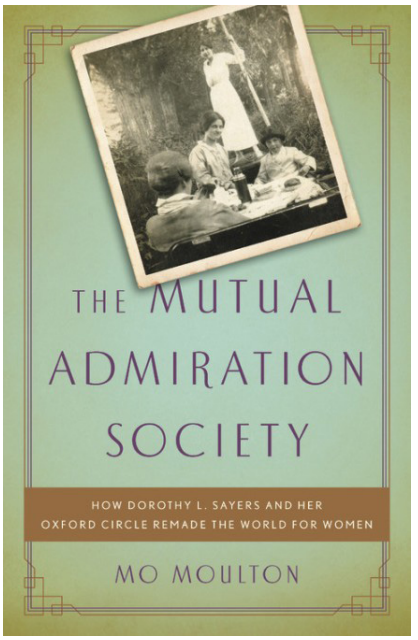
Mo Moulton, *The Mutual Admiration Society: How Dorothy L. Sayers and Her Oxford Circle Remade the World for Women.* (New York: Basic Books, 2019).

Dorothy L. Sayers relished her years at Oxford University (1912-1915), matriculating at Somerville College with a prestigious scholarship in 1912 and culminating her formal education with highest honors in 1915, the same year that J.R.R. Tolkien achieved honors at Oxford. The main difference is that Tolkien failed at his first attempt to earn a "First," as it is called, whereas Sayers passed with flying colors. Nevertheless, despite having attended the same lectures and completed the same requirements as male students, Sayers was not granted a diploma, since such a distinction was considered inap-



propriate for women. Instead, Sayers received a "Certificate for a Degree Course with Honours," which is now housed at the Marion E. Wade Center.

The Wade Center also includes in its holdings the book under review, which explores how Oxford University shaped Sayers's sensibilities. Called *The Mutual Admiration Society*, this impressive tome was written by a senior lecturer in history at the University of Birmingham. Having done extensive research at the Wade, spending a week in 2015 and another in 2018 in order to study both published and unpublished materials, author Mo Moulton credits Wade archivist Laura Schmidt in the book's Acknowledgments. It is an honor, for Moulton has produced a significant work of scholarship, providing a history of female empowerment spanning over half a century, which includes two world wars.

Lucidly written, Moulton's history focuses on several women in a writing group that Sayers helped initiate within weeks of beginning her first term at Somerville, and which Sayers dubbed the Mutual Admiration Society (MAS). Moulton's fascinating work makes clear why Sayers loved her time at Oxford University despite her marginalization as a female: she was sustained by brilliant and bold women who energized both her intellect and her imagination.

One of the many interesting stories Moulton shares has to do with Sayers's vexed participation in all-male classes, where she was "frequently the only woman in the room." Sometimes "isolated like a leper," she never said a word or "lift[ed] her eyes from her book" during a German course (22). This, of course, does not sound like the Sayers many have come to know through her lively fiction and hilarious letters, a woman who loved to socialize not only at Oxford, but also as a founding member of London's lively Detection Club. Moulton's description of Sayers's classroom demeanor therefore illuminates the way Sayers and other MAS members responded to the many "porters, lecturers, sales clerks, male undergraduates, and others [who] resisted the integration of women into Oxford" (23).

The Mutual Admiration Society, however, is not a screed against sexism. Instead, Moulton makes clear that difficulties encountered by women at Oxford highlight the amazing stamina and intelligence of Sayers and her

Somerville friends, enabling them to develop the fortitude and vision necessary to challenge problematic cultural practices. Focusing primarily on four MAS members who "remade the world for women," as the book's subtitle puts it, Moulton interweaves discussion of Sayers, called DLS by her friends, with Muriel St Clare Byrne, Charis Barnett, and Dorothy Rowe: names familiar to most Sayers scholars. Moulton, however, pushes beyond their various relationships with Sayers to provide significant biographies of four individuals who challenged gender constructions in the first half of the twentieth century, repeatedly returning the reader to their growing and/or changing friendships with each other.

For example, Charis Barnett became "a nationally known authority and advocate on child-rearing, birth control, maternal mortality, and juvenile delinquency" (2), which explains why Sayers reached out to Barnett in 1929 to ask about contraception: a practice Sayers had once considered sinful. Barnett was also the friend who, fourteen years earlier, took Sayers on her first escalator ride: an incident that serves as a constitutive metaphor in my own recent book on Sayers, *Subversive*.

While Barnett connected with the practical part of Sayers, Dorothy Rowe and Muriel St Clare Byrne appealed to her love of theater, the former founding a progressive amateur theater club in Bournemouth; the latter becoming a lecturer at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London, and a governor at the Royal Shakespeare Theater. And both shared Sayers's interest in cinema, Rowe actually collaborating with Sayers on a screenplay.

It is Muriel St Clare Byrne, however, who provides the most intrigue. As is well known, she and DLS worked together on a successful Peter Wimsey play, *Busman's Honeymoon* (1936). Less well known is the fact that, after this experience, "Muriel would read and comment on drafts of nearly everything DLS wrote, up until her death decades later" (156). Sayers not only made St Clare Byrne the executor of her estate, she also introduced her to her "adoptive" son being raised by her cousin Ivy: John Anthony Fleming. Though Sayers's biographer Barbara Reynolds assumes that St Clare Byrne did not realize John Anthony was Sayers's biological as well as adoptive son, Moulton suggests that Sayers may well have shared the truth with St Clare Byrne. After all, as a practicing lesbian, St Clare Byrne would have understood Sayers's fear of being a pariah in 1930s culture. Indeed, Sayers's parents died never knowing the boy they met at their niece's home was actually their biological grandson.

The Mutual Admiration Society clearly provides insight not only to Sayers but also to the culture in which she was embedded. It is biography of the best sort: sensitive to each woman's life circumstances and respectful of the choices each made, including Sayers becoming an outspoken Christian apologist in the late 1930s. Seasoned Sayers scholars, who may be a bit annoyed by a lack of clarity in the book's endnotes, will nevertheless learn much from

Moulton, who includes other recognizable names of friends Sayers made in the MAS, especially Muriel "Jim" Jaeger and Catherine "Tony" Godfrey. People unfamiliar with Sayers will be amazed by the power of Sayers and her MAS friends to transcend prejudice in order to make a difference in society.

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