

Colin Manlove
(1942 - 2020)

Stephen Prickett
(1939 - 2020)

In 2020 the readers of *VII* and the scholastic community it represents bid *à-Dieu* not just to two valued members of *VII*'s Advisory Board, but to two pioneering literature scholars. Even more importantly, they were two fellow lovers of Story and enthusiasts of adventure, two warm and welcoming teachers who have mentored and encouraged more students in the field of literature—fantastical lit in particular—than any but their Maker knows. Together their initiatives made possible much of the work that now appears in this journal, and that appears in related fields.



Colin Manlove in 2017.



Stephen Prickett in November 2018.

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Colin Manlove and Stephen Prickett are the two literary critics whose books I scribbled on most during my graduate work—with enthusiastic agreement as well as dissenting exclamation. I was not alone in this. Stephen's insistence that "The nature of literary criticism (and the kinds of sensibility it implies) cannot be understood in the nineteenth century without reference to contemporary theology, just as the contemporary theology cannot be understood without reference to the literary criticism of the period" in *Romanticism & Religion* legitimised for me a whole entry into academic work on George MacDonald, and gave me courage to ask probing questions of my theology peers.

Poet and scholar Revd Dr Malcolm Guite writes that this particular text was “a vital book for any student that wanted to defend and explore the theological and spiritual implications of poetry,” and that it “gave students of my generation something substantial with which to counter the pervasive hermeneutics of suspicion.”

Colin’s insistence that MacDonald is a particularly Scottish fantasist and his challenge that much in MacDonald (and other Scottish literature) that is labelled “Romantic” should be more accurately identified as particularly Scottish (Romanticism even owing a debt to Scottish literature), was an epiphany for me. But Colin was a trailblazer in the study of fantasy literature generally, with his *Modern Fantasy: Five Studies* (1975) being one of the first critical works to treat the genre with academic gravitas. Victorian scholar Dr Franziska Kohlt writes that

his work was of course the portal for many young scholars entering the study of fantasy literature; but not did only his scholarly voice guide them through their journey, so did Colin himself. He listened patiently, engaged thoroughly, and encouraged young scholars, even—if not especially—when their conclusions differed from his own, when their argument was sound. Colin was not the gatekeeper, nor the gate that demanded you speak “friend”—he was the gate that spoke “friend” for you to enter.

Kohlt’s praise of Colin is true academic accolade, and we were amongst a myriad of young scholars invited by both these men to enter into such conversational scholarship of MacDonald and Inklings studies. The lists of Colin’s and Stephen’s accomplishments are admirably long. Both had intellectual gifts in multiple fields—art, in particular, was never far from Stephen’s discussions of literature, nor science from Colin’s, and their mutual love of history undergirds much of their work. Both were thespians and boatsmen (Colin a winning rower in Oxford in the 1960’s; Stephen still punting in Cambridge while in his 70’s). Both were hospitable and generous. Although Colin was quiet and Stephen gregarious, each one had endearing elements of childlikeness that exuded warmth and charm. Colin knew Scotland deeply and well and invested his entire career in Edinburgh University; Stephen brought quite literally a global experience to the lectern: born in Sierra Leone, a student of CS Lewis, he eventually taught in 23 different countries (including professorships at the universities of Kent, Glasgow, Baylor, and Australia). Lists of their vast treasury of publications and associations can be easily found—and for those significant academic contributions alone many of us would be indebted to their work. Yet it is not this that makes them so uniquely fit to be scholars of the seven sages honoured by this journal.

It is rather, as indicated by Dr Kohlt, the love both men had of drawing others into deeper understandings of and relationship with Story that made them true Inklings scholars; not in the abstract, but in the particularity of their choices to invest in students and colleagues. I first met them in 1999, at an Oxford conference co-sponsored by the GK Chesterton Society and the George MacDonald Society, hosted by Stratford Caldecott: "George MacDonald & the Sacramental Imagination." I could barely believe that I was listening in person to scholars whose works I had studied, quoted, written upon. Little did I dream that in just a couple of years two of these teachers would be inviting me—a lowly student—into their respective Edinburgh homes, treating me so generously already as a young colleague.

Colin showed me his early Inklings editions, got excited about my thesis proposal, and gave me a tour of his beloved (and world-class) geological collection. We bonded over MacDonald, Scottish skellies, and a determination to love life despite painful challenges. Through the years, he went out of his way not only to encourage me as a student, but also as a human being. At one conference when my exploration of MacDonald's engagement with Scripture was clearly ruffling some feathers, Colin quietly sought me out, fortified me, and cheered me on. That same year Stephen and Patsy had (the now Dr) Gisela Kreglinger and I to dinner—unknown grad students from a different city—and delighted us with a partnered pedagogical evening of literature, art, and education history. In years to come Stephen and I would work together in the George MacDonald Society (of which he was president), planning conferences, editing books, lecturing. But more telling of Stephen are the times he pushed my wheelchair down cobbled streets, stepped in to deflect an aggressive lecture questioner, and punted a boat of my friends up the Cam whilst regaling us with passages from the most recent Shakespeare play he'd staged.

I share these personal anecdotes because these men were not a list of academic accomplishments, although they both achieved many. They were colleagues who became friends from whom I learned much, with whom I debated, assented, and laughed. As have many others who read this journal. We were blessed to learn from them, and with them. Their written work, the courage with which they forayed forth, leaves an admirable legacy to which we are indebted. But the greater legacy yet is the memories now treasured by the students and colleagues they mentored, encouraged, walked alongside; with whom they ate, drank, and—importantly—laughed. For Stephen and Colin's choice to participate in this community, to invest in these relationships, and thus stand in the tradition of our "seven British authors," we give thanks.

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