

Men were not so limited" (*Estrangement* 136). Though the war is over, the status quo cannot be restored. Forced by the war to take on the burden of the family, women stepped out of the domestic domain. When peace was restored, many women refused to go back to the confined private sphere.

Women and War: A Study of the Novels of Emecheta, Ekwensi and Amadi provides a good introduction to Nigerian war novels, especially for students approaching the field for the first time. The production and printing values are good, but for one flaw: the numbering of the footnotes is missing; this is probably part of the teething troubles of a new publisher.

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Sam Solecki, ed. *Imagining Canadian Literature: The Selected Letters of Jack McClelland*. Toronto: Key Porter, 1998. Pp. 300. \$26.95 pb.

Is it possible to imagine Canadian publishing over the last half-century without the dominating influence of Jack McClelland, son of McClelland and Stewart's founder, the company's driving force over four decades and its president from 1961-82? *Imagining Canadian Literature: The Selected Letters of Jack McClelland* edited by Sam Solecki, reminds one how difficult it would be *not* to imagine Canadian literature with this ambitious and highly influential publisher.

This collection consists of 172 pieces of correspondence (or 171, depending on how one counts a 1978 "reply" to Pierre Berton) selected from "nearly two hundred boxes [of correspondence] in the McClelland and Stewart archives at McMaster University" (xi-xii), as well as an afterword of sorts by Margaret Laurence. The first letter in this essentially chronological collection is from McClelland to Earle Birney, dated 4 May 1949, the last from McClelland to Margaret Laurence, dated 17 June 1982. Solecki notes that he has edited several of the letters but has not indicated any of the deletions in what is intended to be a non-scholarly edition (291). He has been judicious and helpful in his use of annotations.

Overall, the correspondence paints a vivid picture of arguably the most influential figure in Canadian publishing history, but although very informative, it may not offer too many surprises. There is little in any of the selections to challenge or counter the dominant image of McClelland as an enthusiastic, energetic, tell-it-like-it-is-and-to-hell-with-the-consequences individual, who has given his heart and soul to the publishing and promotion of Canada's national literature, a publisher always more dedicated to the interests of "his" authors than to his company's bottom line. But the lack of challenging material in this carefully controlled collection may make it tempting to imagine at

least a few letters in the two hundred boxes of McClelland and Stewart archives that might shed a less flattering light on McClelland. Even the letters that touch upon his foibles and failings do so more as a background contrast to further highlight his immense successes than to damage his reputation in any way. One would not really expect anything different from this highly laudatory edition, prefaced in a suitably modest fashion by McClelland himself.

That said, it is nevertheless a valuable book, giving its readers further insight into what they already know, or think they know, of Jack McClelland. Solecki's selection of letters carefully builds upon the image of a Jack McClelland concerned first and foremost with the creation of great Canadian literature, a publisher convinced that the best way to do that was to demonstrate throughout his entire career his genuine interest in the well-being of the writers who publish through his company. Of the one hundred and thirty letters written by McClelland in this collection, all but a few are addressed to McClelland and Stewart authors, fifteen of them to Mordecai Richler, nine to Margaret Laurence, eight to Earle Birney, seven to Al Purdy, six to Margaret Atwood, five apiece to Brian Moore and Irving Layton, and four apiece to Norman Levine, Farley Mowat, and Malcolm Ross. The rest cover quite a representative collection of recipients, from other McClelland and Stewart authors, to such well-known figures as John Diefenbaker, Roland Michener, Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Margaret Trudeau. Forty-two of the letters in the collection are written to Jack McClelland from twenty-two different people, including six from Margaret Laurence, four from Earle Birney, and four from Farley Mowat.

As a case study in evolving social attitudes, this collection often provides some interesting insights. For example, the first five letters in this collection consist of correspondence between McClelland and Earle Birney regarding Birney's novel *Turvey*, and, typical of the correspondence between the two, much of the exchange focuses on Birney's use, or proposed use of profanity. Here is an amusing excerpt from the earnest young McClelland's first letter to Birney.

"Bucking," I think, is delightful if not overworked. I think you could cut down in some places. "Cr—nt" is quite objectionable. We don't like the word "Jesus" when it would be possible to substitute "Jeezus" or "Geezes," etc. I don't think anyone means "Jesus" when they use the expression, so there is no need to risk offending. An expression such as "bug—y" dance is O.K., I suppose, but does not seem to add much and might as well be out. I hope we can agree on these matters. (5-6)

Times and tastes had changed somewhat almost two decades later, as evidenced by McClelland's 1965 letter to Leonard Cohen regarding *Beautiful Losers*:

I'm sure it will end up in the courts here, but that might be worth trying.

You are a nice chap, Leonard, and it's lovely knowing you. All I have to decide now is whether I love you enough to want to spend the rest of my days in jail because of you, and even though I can't pretend to understand the goddamn book, I do congratulate you. It's a wild and incredible effort.

(102)

Besides his letters to various McClelland and Stewart authors, there are informative letters to others both within and outside the publishing business: for example, to Malcolm Ross, the first general editor of the highly influential New Canadian Library Series; to Edward Schreyer, urging a radical reformation of the Governor General's Awards; and to Hugh Faulkner and André Ouellet, campaigning on behalf of Canada's authors for fair and just copyright protection from the federal government. His lengthy letters to Mordecai Richler and Margaret Laurence regarding the University of Calgary's 1978 conference on the Canadian novel are quite revealing, particularly his response to Laurence's criticism that the conference became essentially a colossal advertisement for McClelland and Stewart.

While many of the key moments in the McClelland and Stewart publishing history are appropriately covered, some appear not to be. For example, even though 1971 was one of the most critical financial years in the company's history, and McClelland no doubt spent much of his time and energy securing a million-dollar loan from the Ontario government to keep the company in Canada, of the eight selections written by him in that year only one of them addresses any aspect of the financial and nationalistic issues looming large that year, and that one somewhat indirectly, as a response to another letter in *The Globe and Mail*, defending the company's decision to manufacture a particular book in Italy in order to save on costs. Conspicuous by their absence are letters either to or from such significant McClelland and Stewart authors as Rudy Wiebe and Ralph Gustafson. Also telling is the extent to which the correspondence remains focused on the English-Canadian literary establishment. Several notable Francophone writers have published through McClelland and Stewart; however, only one letter to André Langevin and a few letters to and from Gabrielle Roy are included here. It is possible that Solecki was unable to find letters sufficiently interesting to be included, but readers may nevertheless still rightly wonder about what was excluded from this collection.

Despite these omissions, *Imagining Canadian Literature: The Selected Letters of Jack McClelland* is a wide-ranging collection that does much to provide a sometimes provocative, sometimes educational, but always entertaining portrait of a man Leonard Cohen once called "the real Prime Minister of Canada" (ii).

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