James King. *Jack: A Life with Writers: The Story of Jack McClelland*. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf Canada, 1999. xxiv + 435 pp.; \$34.95 (hardcover). ISBN 0-676-97150-4.

In his forty-year career as a book publisher, Jack McClelland stated on numerous occasions that he was a 'publisher of authors, not books.' In undertaking his biography of McClelland, James King acknowledged this oft-quoted avowal of his subject, and used it as a guiding principle in rendering *Jack: A Life with Writers: The Story of Jack McClelland*. As the book's sub-title suggests, McClelland's relationship with authors forms the centre of King's biographical narrative. 'Telling the story of a major publisher and the publishing house he built,' explains King in his preface, 'is necessarily, in large part, about the development of writers' (xx). At the same time, King gives due emphasis to other significant relationships that affected McClelland's professional career, the most important being his interactions with those employed by his company, McClelland & Stewart (M&S), and the publisher's own difficult association with the family firm that simultaneously consumed and confounded him through most of his working life. Because of McClelland's integral role in the fortunes and follies of M&S from the late 1940s to the mid 1980s, King has penned a biography that, not surprisingly, is also very much a history of M&S during this period.

King's biography constitutes the third title to appear in recent years related to McClelland or the publishing house he oversaw. That this book is informed by Carl Spadoni and Judy Donnelly's *A Bibliography of McClelland and Stewart Imprints: A Publisher's Legacy* (1994) is evident both in King's narrative and his notation of sources. Moreover, *Jack* illustrates the kind of detailed story that can emerge out of a reading of the rich raw materials of McClelland's business correspondence, a small sampling of which has appeared previously in Sam Solecki's *Imagining Canadian Literature: The Selected Letters of Jack McClelland* (1998). In rendering his biography, King drew heavily on the archival materials available at McMaster University. Arguably, those papers proved to be the biographer's greatest source of information and insight into his subject's activities and character. King augmented his research with more than fifty interviews, and also drew upon existing magazine articles about the publisher.

The Jack McClelland to emerge from King's biography is a contradictory and conflicted personality who nonetheless maintained an abiding goal throughout his publishing career: to serve Canadian authors and the works they produced. Early in the volume, King states that 'in many ways, Jack the publisher was an enabler, someone whose creativity was directed to helping others realize their full potential' (39). To that end, King readily acknowledges—and describes—a number of the colourful promotional schemes orchestrated by McClelland in his effort to sell Canadian-authored titles, escapades for which the publisher gained a well-deserved reputation.

But, the biographer reveals, McClelland also provided other significant, creative input into his authors' lives and work. 'Throughout his career,' notes King, 'Jack resolutely maintained he was a publisher and not an editor, but his skills as a first reader and editorial commentator were remarkable, a talent that gave his authors tremendous confidence and himself great joy' (136). During the course of the biography, King offers judicious extracts from McClelland's correspondence with authors to support this assessment.

While McClelland's joy in working with authors seems to have outweighed the frustrations—and it is clear that there were more than a few moments of frustration—the same cannot be said of his experiences with the financial end of his business. King's biography is instructive for how much it reveals about the many financial frustrations that beset McClelland during his years as M&S's publisher. In reading King's recital of events, one is left with the impression that the house's reputation as a significant Canadian publisher was consolidated in a state of financial siege. 'As the list increased in size and awards accrued,' states King, 'it was Jack's relentless dedication that inspired the workforce at M&S.... Many employees had caught the spirit of their boss. They were doing important work, and many were exceptionally dedicated, despite the constant threat of financial extinction facing the company, the constant worry that their jobs would vanish' (191). As King makes clear, however, worry took its toll on McClelland himself, manifesting itself in illness, a dependence on alcohol and cigarettes, and intermittent announcements (private and public) that he wished to be free of the business. In his years with M&S, McClelland may have experienced an arresting life, but it was also an extraordinarily stressful one.

Jack will prove to be a helpful and welcome resource for scholars wishing to contextualize particular authors, books, or series published by M&S during the Jack McClelland years. The volume contains a good index, and detailed sub-categories are included in the entries for individuals who get a fair amount of coverage in the book. The presence of an appendix, 'Who Was Who at M&S, 1946-1987,' which was designed to serve as a *dramatis personae* to the biography, is also to be applauded, for it can equally benefit future researchers who choose to undertake their own explorations in the M&S archives. One complaint is the lack of file and box numbers cited in the footnotes referring to archival materials; the sheer volume of the M&S papers will make it difficult for researchers to track down specified archival items based solely on the references provided because they are limited to author, recipient, and date. Aside from that potential research frustration, however, the publication of a book-length study of this significant Canadian publisher and his contributions to Canada's cultural history is a boon to the field of Canadian publishing history.

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The History of the Book in Canada Project