

A Patriotic Fan Letter in the Archives

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Research Question:

What can Dawn Clarke's fan letter reveal about her admiration for Margaret Laurence, literary society and the archival process?

Introduction:

- July 30 1972, Dawn E. Clarke wrote a letter to Canadian author Margaret Laurence
 - "The Stone Angel", Margaret Laurence (1964)
 - "...the world is a better place for [Margaret] having lived" (Clarke, 1)
- The existence and preservation of this document is an opportunity for readers to discern Clarke's intention
 - A window into the past
- Demonstrates the impact of an author on an individual and what this person's reactions suggest more broadly

Methodology:

- Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections
 - Margaret Laurence Fonds
- Content examination
 - Writing style, word choice, personal details
- Physical examination
 - Condition of paper, spelling errors, crossed off words

Conclusions:

- People have savoured "... with great public...[and] private joy the truth and depth and maturity of [Margaret's] vision..." (Clarke, 2)
 - Careful and particular word choice and exceedingly neat writing
- Excuse "... the crudeness of my chauvinism in my pride that you are...Canadian. I'm sorry that we Canadians, in our humility, are so unappreciative" (Clarke, 2)
 - Dawn has national pride
 - Canada as a literary destination
- Dawn as a "public" figure
 - Female presence in literature through women as readers, characters and authors
 - Dawn endures in the Archives through her letter



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