**Waddington, Miriam (née Dworkin) (1917 – 2004)**

Molly Hall, University of Rhode Island



**Waddington, Reading.**

(url: http://rimstead-cours.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/ANG560\_

EnglishCanadianPoetry/ANG560\_EnglishCanadianPoetry/Miriam%2

Waddington.html)

Canadian poet Miriam Waddington was born in Winnipeg’s Jewish North End neighborhood in Manitoba, Canada on December 23, 1917. Her secularist socialist Jewish parents had immigrated from Russia and were members of the Yiddish intellectual and anti-bourgeois circles of Canada. She attended Yiddish schools until high school, where she was shocked by the discrimination she experienced at public school in Toronto. After graduation, she studied English at the University of Toronto at her parents’ behest, as they were trying to put distance between her and her non-Jewish boyfriend—Patrick Waddington. Their attempt was unsuccessful, and the two later married with her parents’ approval after he agreed to convert to Judaism. However, the pairing did not last, and led to a divorce in 1960. Waddington went on to receive her Masters of Social Work from University of Pennsylvania in 1945 and held a career as a social worker until 1962, when she became a lecturer in English at York University in Toronto. Although practicing social work for almost twenty years before becoming a literary professional, she continued to write and publish her own poetry throughout those years. She remained at York University until her retirement in 1983.

Waddington was honored with several awards for her writing throughout her career, winning the Borestone Mountain Awards for best poetry in 1963, 1966, and 1974, and the J.J. Segal Award in 1972; receiving honorary doctorates from Lakehead University in 1975 and York University in 1985; and even being imprinted on the Canadian $100 bill in 2004. She was the Canada Council Exchange Poet to Wales in 1980 and writer-in-residence for the Windsor Public Library and University of Ottawa.

Waddington’s socialist and Yiddish upbringing inflected the politics of her poetry throughout her life. Because of her parents’ connections she was able to receive mentorship from respected Yiddish poet Ida Maze, whose influences can be seen in Waddington’s work. Her translations of Yiddish poets were also central to her own poetic practice. Her style was unique for its formal precision in combination with a conversational tone—an innovation of stylistic play uncommon before her time. Her poetic focus on female lived experience, a preoccupation with her Jewish roots, and her Canadian nationality were deftly interwoven with explorations of cultural, national, and personal identity. She mixed the cityscapes and more natural landscapes of her life and country. Her later work addresses issues of aging and mortality. Waddington, who was the first Jewish Canadian female poet to publish in English, died on March 3, 2004 in Vancouver, British Colombia, leaving behind a far-reaching legacy of her contributions to Canadian modernism.



**Waddington, Portrait.**

(url: http://rimstead- cours.espaceweb.usherbrooke.ca/ANG560\_

EnglishCanadianPoetry/ANG560\_EnglishCanadianPoetry/ Miriam

%20Waddington.html)

**Selected List of Works**

Collected Works

*Collected Poems* (1986)

*The Collected Poems of Miriam Waddington*: *A Critical Edition* (2014)

Poetry

*Green World* (1945)

*The Second Silence* (1955)

*The Season’s Lovers* (1958)

*The Glass Trumpet* (1966)

*Call Them Canadians* (1968)

*Flying with Milton* (1969)

*Say Yes* (1969)

*Driving Home: Poems New and Selected* (1972)

*Dream Telescope* (1972)

*The Price of Gold* (1976)

*Mister Never* (1978)

*The Visitants* (1981)

*Summer at Lonely Beach and Other Stories* (1982)

*The Last Landscape* (1992)

*Canada: Romancing the Land* (1996)

Edited

*A. M. Klein* (1970)

*John Sutherland: Essays, Controversies and Poems* (1972)

*The Collected Poems of A. M. Klein* (1974)

*Canadian Jewish Short Stories* (1990)

Criticism

*Folklore in the Poetry of A.M. Klein* (1981)

Essays

*Apartment Seven: Essays Selected and New* (1989)

**Further Reading**

Gutkin, Harry and Mildred Gutkin (1987) *The Worst of Times, the Best of Times: Growing up in*

*Winnipeg’s North End,* Markham.

Jacobs, Maria (1980) “The Personal Poetry of Miriam Waddington,” *CVII: Contemporary Verse*

*II*, 5(1), 26–33.

Ricou, L. R. (1978) “Into My Green World: The Poetry of Miriam Waddington,” *Essays on*

*Canadian Writing*,12, 144–161.

Stevens, Peter (1984) *Miriam Waddington and Her Works*, Toronto: ECW Press.