TRANSITIONAL SPACES: CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE MODERNIST "I" IN MIRIAM WADDINGTON'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

In her first books of poetry (*Green World*, *The Second Silence*), Miriam Waddington explores female identity and subjectivity from the perspective of what she refers to in her poem "The Bond" as the "Jewish me." In these two books, one finds "the credibility of colloquial speech as an alternative to impersonal modernism" (Arnason). My paper is an attempt to approach the construction of the lyric "I" exploring the dialectic between inner and outer world —a transitional space where the subject engages in a process of transformation. In Waddington's poetry the modernist lyric was a central means to explore a rupture with the old world (colonial and patriarchal) in her own textual terms.

KEY WORDS: Miriam Waddington, Modernism, lyric poetry, jewishness, women.

RESUMEN

En sus dos primeros poemarios (*Green World, The Second Silence*), Miriam Waddington explora la identidad y subjetividad femeninas desde la perspectiva de lo que en su poema "The Bond" llama el "yo judío". En estos dos volúmenes encontramos "la credibilidad de la lengua coloquial como alternativa a la impersonalidad modernista" (Arnason). Este ensayo es una aproximación a la construcción del "yo" lírico en este período, que explora la dialéctica entre mundo interior y exterior —un espacio transicional donde el sujeto experimenta un proceso de transformación. En la poesía de Waddington, la lírica modernista fue sin duda el medio privilegiado para explorar la ruptura con el viejo mundo (colonial y patriarcal) de acuerdo a su singular manera de entender el texto poético.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Miriam Waddington, modernismo, poesía lírica, herencia judía, mujeres.

In the ninth section of his book of criticism *Craft Slices* (1985), George Bowering doubts the aptness of the term Modernist as it is applied to poets such as F.R. Scott, A.J.M. Smith[1] and E.J. Pratt. Other important voices in our time such as Robert Kroetsch think Canadian literature entered the Postmodernist period without ever having gone through the Modernist (Kroetsch & Bessai 206-207).

Certainly if we confine our sense of Modernism to the styles exemplified by *The Cantos*, *Ulysses*, *Paterson*, *The Making of Americans*, and *The Portrait of Madame Matisse* (to mention works by the writers whom Bowering names), then Canada experienced Modernism late. It is this side of Modernism —the discontinuous forms, the linguistic researches, the Poundian "Make it New" credo, the emphasis on what Whitehead called presentational immediacy,[2] and so on— that has had the most lasting influence on post-war literature in Canada and elsewhere.

When Miriam Waddington (1917-2004) set out to write the Afterword for the 1986 edition of her *Collected Poems* —gathering the best of her poems to date plus a good number of uncollected poems— she was still struggling with the legacy of modernism and its aftermath in Canadian letters. At that moment, she stated, "A poem, like any other structure, has its own existence and integrity; it is part of a particular time, place, and person. Once it is written, a poem is an organic thing that has its roots not only in the thought and feeling of the poet but in her/his actual physical existence as well. We tend to forget about the physiological origins of a poem —from which the rhythm, tone, voice and the very breath of the poet are inseparable." (*Collected* 411) Waddington, as other women poets of her generation, had been educated to use the code of objectivity, a telling expression of the professionalism of both poets and critics during the modernist period. But her emphasis on the physicality of the poem and its origins places her along the line of an alternative tradition, that of women's poetry in its fundamental specificity. In *Changing Patters: Women in Canada*, Jane Errington notes that "throughout the 1940s and 1950s ideas of femininity, of fundamental differences between the sexes and of 'woman's place' persisted..." (76). In the case of Waddington and her contemporaries, to be a poet and female, meant conflict with cultural codes that tacitly assumed female subordination.

In *Reinventing Womanhood* Carolyn Heilbrun notes, as a Jew, a female academic, and a professor of literature in the fifties, "I pretended to be part of two worlds the gentile, the male, to neither of which I belonged" (61). As a poet Waddington was in an analogous position in Canada in the forties and fifties with the significant difference that as a modern female poet she was on record in her first books as investigating the "inner underground of life" of herself and her sex. The material world of Canadian literary culture remained dominated by male editors,

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[1] A.J.M. Smith wrote the controversial preface to the *New Provinces* anthology —the first major anthology of Canadian modernist poetry— published in 1936. It gathered together a selection of poems by Robert Finch, Leo Kennedy, A.M. Klein, E.J. Pratt, F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith.

[2] Alfred N. Whitehead's theory of perception is an account that attempted to join two traditional theories of perception: the phenomenological —what is given in immediate experience— and the causal (or physiological) theory —what is immediately experienced in perception is relatively unimportant compared to the causal mechanism which contributed to its production. The role of the body in perception finally seemed to occupy the centrality it deserved. He insisted on the simultaneous enjoyment of perceptions in the mode of what he called presentational immediacy and causal efficacy, constructing a theory of perception which is composed of realism and mediatism.

academics, and critics. Over the years many of these women explored the vocation of poetry and came to agree on the need for a female-centred community.[3]

As a Jewish-Canadian poet writing in the 40s and 50s, Miriam Waddington faced discrimination due to her ethnic background among other conditions. She was born into an intellectual Jewish family in Winnipeg, Manitoba, where she lived for fourteen years. She earned degrees from the University of Toronto both in literature and in Social Work, and entered social work with an avowed desire "to help change the social system" (*Apartment* 19) During those years she described herself as an "outsider" to the Anglo-Saxon and Protestant establishment as a Jewish daughter of Russian immigrants.

"Being of independent mind and rebellious nature," Waddington possessed a passionate temperament, however, as a Jewish-Canadian, she knew race-hatred first hand. As a child, and later as a young woman, Waddington faced discrimination because she was Jewish. She recalls that while still living in Winnipeg she experienced anti-Semitism as part of everyday life: "Canadian society during the twenties and thirties brainwashed every schoolchild with British Empire slogans, and promoted a negative stereotype of all Eastern European immigrants but especially of Jews...During all my primary school years, the phrase 'dirty Jew' had regularly been hurled at me from the street corners and back alleys of North Winnipeg" (*Apartment* 5).

She has written of the resentment she felt as a teenager of her own "difference from my Canadian friends whose parents had been born in Canada of English background" (*Apartment* 5). The Dworkin family moved to Ontario at a time when "the Muskoka resorts advertised themselves as being for Gentiles only, and the sign NO JEWS ALLOWED was a commonplace... and no Jew could get a job teaching in a Canadian university until after World War II" (*Apartment* 40). In her first books and beyond, Waddington explores female identity and subjectivity from the perspective of what she refers to in her poem "The Bond" as the "Jewish me." Her work stakes a place for the "I" traditionally outside the dominant group in terms of both gender and ethnicity. Her first language was Yiddish and the influence of this decidedly other tradition on her work deserves further research. In her book of essays, *Apartment Seven* (1989), she notes that the Montreal Yiddish poet Ida Maza was the first "real writer" to read her poetry (*Apartment* 3). She recalls, "I had been writing poetry for about four years, and my mother must have mentioned it because Mrs Maza at once offered to read my work" (*Apartment* 3). In *Apartment Seven*, "modernism" is referred to in the context of its second wave period, from the early 1940s into the 1950s, a time when English-Canadian nationalism and modernism fused.

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[3] There is a clear perception of a lack of connection among women poets throughout Modernism in Canada. Waddington herself felt very close to Dorothy Livesay —with whom she shared her love for literature and her commitment to social work— and she wrote with admiration of Livesay, Anne Marriott, and also of Raymond Souster "[who gave] voice to the Canadian man and woman in the mass" (*Apartment* 23).

Waddington portrays a dynamic Canadian community of men and women in three Canadian cities: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver (*Apartment* 24).

In her essay, "Outsider: Growing Up in Canada" she describes "two cultural aspects —Yiddish and English Canadian— [which] did not come together in me for many long years. They simply existed side by side and I devised two codes of behaviour one to fit each world" (*Apartment* 40). The trouble she found in both "worlds" led her to write poetry: "that's why I also had to create a third world, my own invented one..." (*Apartment* 38).

The year 1945 was not an auspicious moment for women poets within the panorama of Canadian letters. Carole Gerson has noted that female poets like Waddington who did use modernist methods were seldom "taken as seriously as their male counterparts" (54-55). Reviewing *Green World* favourably for *Canadian Verse*, Alan Crawley found that much of the charm of the writing came from the skilful recording of visual beauty and from her sensitive feeling for the loveliness of language. Ten years later, Desmond Pacey called the "dominant theme" of *Green World* "the beauty and goodness of the natural world, suggested by recurring images of greenness and growth" and set in contrast to the "twisted and frustrating nature of contemporary urban society" (56). In addition, Pacey commented on the volume's "straightforwardness of...technique" in contrast to the early work of P.K. Page and Patrick Anderson (56). The dominant tone of both reviews suggests that while *Green World* displays "charm" and "loveliness" there is little else, really, to say about this first volume of verse.

Numerous critics have tended to find *Green World* "too simple" (Jacobs 26). Yet, in their timid praise, these critics have also tended to overlook the complexity of the "I" within *Green World*; a complexity exhibiting an exploration of contradictions that makes the book, an important contribution to Canadian poetry and poetics in the 1940s. Northrop Frye seemed to recognize this when he wrote that "the most successful poems in *Green World* are "strikingly original" and display a "distinctive quality" (51). It is the lyric "I," addressing a changed world, an "I" not always identified as female which offers an altered vision both of self and of other women. I will be focusing on the most successful poems from this first book which include "Green World," "Gimli," "Unquiet World," and "Investigator."

Both Laurence Ricou and D.G. Jones describe the title poem, "Green World" as, to quote Jones, "mark[ing] the fundamental direction of her poetry, and its fundamental strength" (Jones 74). While praising "Green World" as both rhythmically and aurally beautiful," Ricou regards this poem as dealing with a "conventional situation: the speaker of the poem steps out of doors, perhaps on a late spring morning." In my reading, the speaker ventures forth as a voice, an "I" without sex within a text which is resonant of the child's first landscape, the mother's body, alive to the rhythms of the first metric marker: the heart. The "I" steps out with the first phrase and is launched into the poetic space of "feeling the green world."

The world in the poem is described as a space of poetic revision "beyond all geography," a "transparent place" which nurtures a growing self. This is a space, "the inside sphere" of poetry in which the speaking "I" can play out a transformative

process. This is an enclosed space, as close to a womb as language can bring us, a receptive, alternate green world where the subject both steps out and is held:

> When I step out and feel the green world
> Its concave walls must cup my summer coming
> And curving, hold me
> Beyond all geography in a transparent place
> Where water images cling to the inside sphere
> Move and distend as rainbows in a mirror
> Cast out of focus (*Collected* 1)

"Green World" observes neither fixed meter nor rhyme, there is a clear fluidity of movement that illustrates the explicit reference to water imagery, a circularity that takes us into the "inside sphere" of prismatic possibility, "as rainbows."

The second stanza suggests the female-centred process of birth and metamorphosis as the waters break before birth. And the poem constitutes a poetic space at first "holding" the speaker and then, enacting its passage "into large and windy space."[4]

"Gimli" the second poem in *Green World* contains two matched stanzas. The pronoun "I" occurs only once and is not identified as either male or female. In the poem we find the geographic specificity of a known Canadian place. The reader may recall Waddington's insistence that the poetic voice is "without gender," a voice that at strategic points, refuses to be either decisively female, or male. The voice speaking in "Gimli" celebrates the memory of a Canadian childhood which is neither sustained by things "British" nor centred on men.

The territory of "the voice in me like a child" is the one celebrated in this poem; and that voice takes us back into its past. The poem functions as a metonym of the "green world," not only of "dark spaces" but also of the whole poetic process. The "I" in the poem sees the fine detail of a particular landscape and also sets forth a wandering "I" in the lyric:

> I travel over you a swift railway track
> Spinning to Gimli's summer sudden beach
> Rusty well-water, bitter, iron-tasting
> Frog ditches pocket of jelly eggs
> Hanging from the banks. (*Collected* 1)

The world of technology which can diminish the human self attempting to speak in modern verse is here an engine assisting the "spinning," "hanging," "blowing" process of memory.

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[4] The second stanza in the poem reads as follows: "And this crystal chrysalis / Shapes to green rhythms to long ocean flowings/ Rolls toward the sun with sure and spinning speed/ And under the intensely gold point/ Warms, expands,/ Until walls crack suddenly / Uncup me into large and windy space" (*Collected* 1).

There are two women in the poem. Neither is described as a mother, but both offer the children milk: the "shrill-voiced English woman handed us/ Sad blue milk for our red pails," while the Polish woman is "the right kerchief keeper of two cows" with "rich milk foaming." English milk is "sad blue milk," while the Polish woman is "rich."

Like "Green World" with its "rainbows in a mirror/ cast out of focus," "Gimli" reflects back on its speaker, as mirrors do. The last lines read:

> All those castles we planted in childhood
> Now bear their fruit of lighted aching windows
> My grief of waiting. (*Collected* 2)

In "Unquiet World," the reader moves to "Friday's festival" and the Jewish heritage. The Old Testament prophet is kept offstage, for a speaker who, while using the imagery of the Jewish Sabbath, speaks of renewed vision and hope for the entire world. The image of the pious wife is at the centre of the poem and one notes that the pattern of imagery moves from the all consuming male "beard of Jew," to the "fold[s]" of the female's "shining hair." Both reader and speaker are "fold[ed]" together in sleep:

> Fold us smooth as shining hair
> Of a pious wife in slumbers sweet,
> Then wake us fresh with sabbath bread
> From enchanted sleep and look
> With us past templed ruins,
> Deep as the cratered earth
> Plumb our purpose and hallowed be
> The heady wine of our hope. (*Collected* 3)

This brief poem has within it a dense cluster of imagery. It draws together the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty, the tradition of patriarchy within Judaism, and the "templed ruins" of post-war Europe. None of the imagery is developed. Instead, consistent with Waddington's modernism, the reader receives fragments. The "prophet" is invoked like a male muse to "look deep" and "plumb our purpose," then having done so, to bless "the heady wine of our hope" (*Collected* 3). The waking from "enchanted sleep" in the centre of the poem suggests a challenge to pursue a transformative vision centred around women waking within a changed world; the old world is in "ruins" and the new one remains to be raised.

Numerous poems which follow such as "Ballet," "Tapestry," "In the Big City," and "Girls," specifically focus on the contemporary woman and record a recurrent lament for what seems, in part a sameness in experience articulated on girl grief, fear and mourning. The "I" in both "Tapestry" and "Girls" responds to "sorrows," "longing" ("Tapestry") and "the broken wings of your future" ("Girls") with the offer of "mak[ing]" something from sorrow, a work which is, in "Tapestry" both linked to the fabric of a female tradition in art, and associated with the healing power of poetic making.

In "Investigator," the task of the one who investigates is directed to the decay of urban civilization. The repeated play with the verb "to know" which continues in the first and second stanzas of "Investigator" suggests and emphasis on ways of knowing. Beginning with "I" and ending with "me," "Investigator" is nevertheless, a poem in which the opening premise is not to be believed for this is a poem about a "knowing" which seems to preclude being "known." The "Investigator" delves into "knowing" nothing but darkness and debris, opening before us a "timeless litter" of the modern world, and anything other than urban refuse and squalor remains outside the parameters of the poem. We are presented with a record of urban grotesques: "foul granny," "hunchback son," and "old man." The lyric "I" both describes the "hot streets" and sees inside dwellings:

> I could tell you and no exaggeration
> Of the in and out of houses twenty times a day,
> Of the lace antimacassars, the picture of kings and queens,
> The pious mottoes, the printed blessing the dust piling up on bureaus,
> The velour interiors, the Niagara souvenirs,
> The faded needlepoint, the hair pulled tight
> And the blinds drawn against day and the feel of sun. (*Collected* 5)

There is no patriarch in the "once-mansion," only the "drooling senile decay" of "the old man" who sits "[p]ast the garden" and "[l]ets the sun slip ceaselessly through his fingers." The old markers of beauty, order and symmetry are gone in this poem.

In *Writing in the Father's House*, Patricia Smart writes of the feminist critic as the "investigator" of matricide (3-30). The lyric speaker is the "investigator" of an urban world in which women disappear into interiors of "faded needlepoint, the hair pulled tight." In this poem there is no specific crime here but instead a death in life extending to both sexes.

The urban scene is one of oppressive containment. "Investigator" contains a chronicle of an urban culture full of "dust." Whereas many of the other poems in *Green World* suggest a dichotomy between "green" nature and a decaying urban world, the "Investigator" is confined to recording decay. The irreverent tone of ironic distance is set at the start ("Just ask me") and affirmed again at the end of the poem when a "long lean lap-eared dog... Blinks wet eyes at me." The image of a garden and dog echoes images found at the end of "The Burial of the Dead," the first section of *The Waste Land*.[5] In "The Investigator," the dog is both present and passive rather than absent and menacing. The narrator of the poem responds with immediacy to the scene observed. There is no received mindset or formula of belief

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[5] In "The Burial of the Dead" one finds the lines: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?"/ "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?"/ "O keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men,"/ "Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!"" (71-75).

displayed here; the investigator moves about unfettered by "mind forg'd manacles." There is no possible "friend to men" (Eliot 74) or for that matter women in Waddington's poem. The dog seems more alive than "the old man" "drooling" in the last stanza. *Green World* begins, and concludes, with a very different version of subjectivity than Eliot's speaker offered in 1922 to "You! Hypocrite lecteur! —mon semblable,— mon frère!" (76).

In Dennis Cooley's view "[Waddington's] more abstract social poems present a green world as an antidote to broken lives in a world of lost vision she would have us move into suspended moments from the past, put on "bandages of light." Doors and windows offer thresholds to 'other selves' that we are invited to recover, and memory emerges in metaphors of water, presenting the need for descent and flow." (Cooley 1160) *Green World* creates a topography in which the speaker steps out of what I read as the known world of patriarchy into an alternate poetic enclosure.

In *Apartment Seven,* Waddington states that "[p]art of the problem of modernism is to accept that not everything can be unified, or even should be" (160). *The Second Silence* (1955), Waddington's second book of poems is a work which eschews both a unified identity for its female subjects and a unified approach to female subjectivity. The woman within her poems refuses to be captured in any one essentialist position. *The Second Silence* is divided into four sections: Poems of Love, Poems for Children, Poems of Work and Poems of Living. Clearly one senses in this division an attempt to address all the significant aspects of life made particular within lyric poetry. In this volume, the female speaker is increasingly aware that her interests are different from the expectations her culture bestowed on her.

In "Three poems for My Teacher," Waddington uses short lyrics. In this poem the emphasis changes from lyric meditation on love to a claiming of a spiritual mother. It begins with one reference to "your death" here figured as a space of transformation. The "loving brain" (*Collected* 35) of an intellectual and nurturing female presence is at the core of this poem:

> I wish your death be magic as your life
> As loved and loving, and as full
> As seeded summer in its flurried colour.
> I wish you quiet hush and holy
> As this morning, and I wish
> All voices lost and gone
> And all those voices mourning
> Return to attend your ending.
> You are a fountain mother to be so loved
> By all your children, our words and thought
> Transform you and we keep
> In this mortal world your spirit
> Young forever, and your name
> By our humanity is hallowed. (*Collected* 11)

The poem suggests a shifting from the domestic world in which the female speaker must struggle to claim a textual space which turns around a healing female

presence both teacher and mother. In "Journey to the Clinic," this presence is manifest in "Good fairy true-heart whose sweet skill can ring/These walls with health like some gold glowing/ rope" (*Collected* 35). In "Three Poems for My Teacher" the movement into female empowerment is anticipated as both death and a "transformation accomplished with 'words and thoughts'" (*Collected* 11), not of the "teacher" herself, but rather of those she has nurtured. The "wish" in the above stanza has to do with the "hush and holy" of "new morning."

In the second stanza of this poem, the "married couples" return "walking in double silence." It is the mother's hand which "steadily retrieves/ Their glances from the whirlpools" (*CP* 11). Although "Three Poems for My Teacher" generated no commentary among Waddington's reviewers when it was first published it can be read today as engaged with the consideration of a maternally based ethics of care which is prominent throughout her social work poems. Before "maternal ethics" had been theorized, at a time when maternal feminism seemed dated, Waddington's "Three Poems for My Teacher" celebrates a maternally based ethics: manifest in provision of "the flowering season and moving space" of female-centred nurture through which human beings may continue, past childhood, to grow.

The third and final lyric sequence of "Three Poems for My Teacher" privileges the world of popular song and popular tradition rather than the elite vision of high modernism. Waddington's emphasis on "accessible form," on "words plain as ballad," may have led some critics to consider her work as less challenging than contemporary male lyric poets' such as Dudek or Layton. But in this poem there is the suggestion that plain language may itself be a strategy linked not to a careless approach to her material but rather to what we referred to before, the development of an "ethics of caring," an ethics which can also be read to extend the book's subsequent exploration of the mother-child relationship.

In the "Poems of Work" section, wounded children are at the centre of "Journey to the Clinic." In seven linked lyrics the speaker travels from "the white hush of quiet suburb" where she is "licked, possessed identified" (*Collected* 32) by a neighbourhood dog to "the sluggish gray/ of Saint Antoine's shore-line" (*Collected* 34) in Montreal. On the way to "the clinic," she is one of a number "sway[ing] like mermaids on these leather scraps;" the "crane quarries the city/ and steam shovel spreads a naked, garish claw" (*Collected* 34). The "indifferent builders dredge/ the soul of my city" without "mercy" (*Collected* 33). Underwater imagery introduced in the second poem continues in the fourth poem.

The speaker in "Journey to the Clinic" takes us on a journey in which subjectivity of both males and females is diminished before the "machinely humour" of an industrial and uncaring technology. Within the trains all are "anonymous" and the "thirst denied" in the second stanza is answered only by the bitter orphanage in which little children seem linked to the sea imagery of tides and the sandpiper:

Anonymous, we swim these deeps
These whales of misery,
And through the glass

Drink bitter orphanage.
On tides of noise the little children rise
From playground to day nursery,
(Through the miles of space
I hear a sandpiper sing) (*CP* 33)

Although it records the "naked garish claw" (*Collected* 34) of the mechanized modern city, "Journey to the Clinic" challenges its reader to enter the "inner world" (*Collected* 34) of the "loving brain" (*CP* 35) needed to care for these "little fish" (*Collected* 34) Waddington's poetry repeatedly returns, as in her earlier work, to a vision of inward glimpses of green (*Collected* 35):

This is no harbour.
It is instead the place
Where years of make-do, months of minimums
And all the world of poor at last have brought you.
Call up the demons, let them scale the tree
That waves its flags and flickers green to me
In my most inward glimpses (*Collected* 35)

While gender is not an explicit concern here, as compared to scarcity, poverty, "months of minimums," it seems committed to an active caring in an industrial world in which nurture has ceased to be valued.

The allusion to "True-heart" most likely stands in for nature and renewal within an industrial culture which has lost its sense of purpose and direction, its heart. The following passage reads like a hybrid between a Cold-war fairy tale and a prayer to a white witch with a "transform[ing]" power:

And may her wand transform
The evil disease.
And to all the stricken bones
Bring bandages to light.
Beseech her clever touch
(And more her loving brain)
Against your clouded dreams
Of injury and wreck (*Collected* 35)

The evil disease not clearly defined is, in "The Bread We Eat" —a poem in the final section entitled "Poems of Living"— related to the chill of Cold War with "bitterness and destruction" carried in mind at mid-century "not early and not late" (*CP* 39). Within this "strange neutral" (*Collected* 39) appearances belie the underlying threat of nuclear war and that is the subject explored in "Poems about War" and the final poem, "Inward Look the Trees." Waddington's poems in the final section of *The Second Silence* return to female subjectivity, whether it is at that of the old woman on the bus in "Prayer" (*Collected* 48) or of "The Music Teachers" (*Collected* 53), or in the marvellous poem "Getting Older," which focuses on a woman who "becomes the red/ passionate dictionary" (*Collected* 51) as she enters middle age.

In *Apartment Seven* Waddington notes that she and other modern Canadian poets read "the new British poets —Auden, Lewis Spender, MacNeice..." (22). The unpublished poem, "We of 1937," reflects a political awareness suggesting the influence of these British male poets, and undertakes a critique of a militaristic male-dominated elite, emphasizing the culpability of "the old men" who "sat and/ wasted time and urged us to wait" while "the world was crumbling." The reference to the crumbling of the world is, of course, a phrase which suggests the rise of Fascism, leading up to World War II.

It is clear that the central tension in Waddington's poetry arises from the effort to mediate between the private world and the external one. It is possible to describe this tension in political terms, but it would be misleading, in my opinion, to trace its source to a mere sympathy for political minorities or for the "victims" of society who are isolated in some way, but cannot subscribe to their external reality. These elements exist but are not, I believe, her major preoccupation. Her "involvement" is primarily that of an artist rather than political. The two kinds of involvement are not mutually exclusive; but the second is subordinate to the first, and is, indeed, an extension of it. That the artist must make the effort to mediate between the internal and the external is central to her poetry. No matter how painful the process may be there can be no turning away, no ivory tower aestheticism. Even the observer's stance is rejected and though several of her poems deal with it she is extremely critical of its validity.

From the first poems in *The Second Silence* it is clear that the speaker within these lyrics is acutely aware of gender and class inequality as an issue. 'Woman' is seen in many different lyric stances, most of which insist on ambivalence and ambiguity. In Waddington's poem "Night in October" (*Collected* 28-29), the question addressed to the subject "Are you there, are you there/ Are you there?" (*Collected* 29), still hung in the air as the second wave of modernism drew to a close. Would successive generations recognize Waddington's and the struggle of the women who wrote modernist poetry to negotiate female subjectivity within the Canadian modernist lyric? For women in their differences to be "there" in the text, the contemporary reader has, ultimately, to reread the question and answer, "unsolved and insoluble" (*Collected* 29) to the best of her knowledge.

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