

Emily Robins Sharpe

**"The heart above the ruins": Miriam Waddington's
Poetry, the Spanish Civil War, and Jewish Canadian
Literature**

The Jewish Canadian writer Miriam Waddington returned repeatedly to the subject of the Spanish Civil War, searching for hope amid the ruins of Spanish democracy. The conflict, a prelude to World War II, inspired an outpouring of literature and volunteerism. My paper argues for Waddington's unique poetic perspective, in which she represents the Holocaust as the Spanish Civil War's outgrowth while highlighting the deeply personal repercussions of the war – consequences for women, for the earth, and for community. Waddington's poetry connects women's rights to human rights, Canadian peace to European war, and Jewish persecution to Spanish carnage.

L'écrivaine juive canadienne Miriam Waddington est fréquemment revenue sur le sujet de la guerre civile d'Espagne, cherchant la lumière dans les ruines de la démocratie espagnole. Le conflit, prélude de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, a suscité beaucoup d'engagement et inspiré de nombreuses œuvres littéraires. Mon article met en avant la perspective poétique unique de Waddington, où elle représente l'Holocauste comme une émanation de la Guerre d'Espagne tout en éclairant les répercussions profondément intimes de la guerre – ses conséquences pour les femmes, pour la terre et pour la communauté. La poésie de Waddington fait dialoguer droits des femmes et droits de la personne, paix canadienne et guerre européenne, persécution juive et carnage espagnol.

*“Come, my friends, let us dance by the ruins
Of all we fought and so bravely failed,
For the ultimate victory unassailed
Remains in the heart above the ruins”
– “The Exiles: Spain”*

*“she is the ragpicker who
comes to warn you
of future Guernicas”
– “The Woman in the Hall”*

Miriam Dworkin Waddington's poem “The Exiles: Spain” optimistically expresses the courageous hope that attended the Spanish Republic's struggle against fascism. Writing from Canada in 1936 during the earliest days of the Spanish Civil War, Waddington's poem imagines the camaraderie of those fighting against Francisco Franco's attempted coup. The Spanish Civil War would continue for another three years, concluding with Franco's victory and followed shortly thereafter by the eruption of World War II. Waddington's poem presaged an enduring poetic engagement with the conflict's human repercussions. Waddington's early poem on Spain is also one of many written in Canada, where the Spanish Civil War inspired an outpouring of support, volunteerism, fundraising,

literature, and art. Many of those writing about Spain were, like Waddington, Jewish Canadians, with particular insights into the social threat that Franco's Nazi-backed fascist movement posed, and with a unique connection to Spain as an originary location of Jewish exile. In writing about Spain and exile, Waddington (1917–2004) – a writer, critic, and social worker – also participated in a North American feminist project of women writing about the stakes of the war for women in Spain and around the world. After the war's disastrous conclusion, Waddington continued to articulate the war's unrelenting repercussions.

Waddington's creative output has long been recognized for her emphasis on the natural world, on women's lived experiences, and on politics, identity, and community.¹ Her sustained engagement with these topics as they intersect with her literary depictions of the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) merits further consideration – the war's consequences for women, for the earth, and for community.² Moreover, Waddington's perceptive understanding of the war leads her to explicitly connect it to the Holocaust, and to the global oppression of women, leveling a devastating critique of the ongoing yet avoidable human costs of anti-Semitism, sexism, and non-intervention. Her continuing poetic interrogations of the Spanish war and its aftermath render explicit and visible the conflict's stakes for women and Jews internationally.

To demonstrate Waddington's innovative poetic approach to representing an evolving historical narrative, this article first situates her work within the social context in which Waddington began writing about the Spanish Civil War, in both her immediate community and amid the country's reaction to the conflict. I conclude by suggesting how Waddington's Spanish Civil War poetry from the 1930s up to the 1990s responds to the larger category of literary responses to the war by both Jewish Canadian writers and North American women writers in general. In so doing, I demonstrate Waddington's participation in and expansion of a literary phenomenon at once North American, Canadian, Jewish, and feminist, as she insists upon the ways in which violence begets violence – violence so often aimed at marginalized populations.

Spain's Civil War in Canada

Waddington's poetic representations of the Spanish Civil War can be understood as an outgrowth of the polyvocal Yiddish-English socialist, intellectual milieu in which she was raised, educated, and worked. Waddington was the child of Russian-Jewish immigrants to Winnipeg. Peter Stevens notes, in his biography of the author, that her home was a hub of art and activism: "The Dworkin home became a centre for many Jewish and Yiddish authors, and, as Isidore Dworkin had left-wing political sympathies, for a number of political activists as well."³ While I have been unable to find biographical material pointing to specific Spanish Civil War activism, Waddington's

sustained community engagement is well documented. In his encyclopedia entry on Waddington, Richard Menkis describes her manifold, long-term involvement with social justice, including her early writing at the Y. L. Peretz Folk School on “the rather weighty topic of Jewish Colonization in the Soviet Union” at the age of twelve. Later, she attended an Ottawa anti-fascist group, where she met her future husband, Patrick Waddington. Menkis also recounts her training in progressive social work, and her involvement in the Canadian modernist literary magazine *First Statement*.⁴ Waddington grew up speaking Yiddish at home. And, in addition to her prodigious literary output of poetry, short stories, essays, and criticism, she also laboured to bring Yiddish writers to a wider audience through her translations of Yiddish writers and her editorial work publicizing the writings of A. M. Klein and other Jewish Canadian authors. Her commitment to social activism, her familiarity with the outsider experience, and her interest in representing multiple perspectives and experiences are all evident in her Spanish Civil War poetry.

Waddington wrote the poem “The Exiles: Spain” soon after the conflict’s outbreak. This early literary engagement with the Spanish Civil War suggests that Waddington, like many Canadian leftists, perceived the war’s treacherous stakes, as well as the tenuous connections between the two rapidly transforming countries, and their parallel struggles with national identity, women’s rights, and religious pluralism. A few years earlier, in 1931, Spain had abandoned monarchy for democracy, while Canada became autonomous and independent when the United Kingdom ratified the Statute of Westminster. In Canada, the decade of the Great Depression was marked by rampant poverty and unemployment, harsh immigration restrictions, mistreatment of Canada’s Indigenous populations, and nationwide debates over which denizens of the dominion counted as authentic Canadians. Canada’s population furthermore lacked the very framework through which Canadian identity could be secured: it was not until 1947 that Canadians could hold Canadian rather than British citizenship (they remained both Canadian citizens and British subjects until as recently as the early 1980s).⁵ For new immigrants, xenophobic policies, anti-immigrant violence, and rampant anti-Semitism belied the title of “new Canadians” that had welcomed them upon their arrival. Anti-immigrant sentiments and anti-Semitism frequently intersected, as in Canada’s refusal to accept almost any Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany between 1930 and 1939. As Irving Abella notes, Canadian anti-Semitism grew in the years leading up to World War I, as the “Anglicized, comfortable, integrated community” of Jewish Canadians gave way to “Yiddish-speaking, Orthodox, penurious immigrants.”⁶ For many in Canada, anti-Semitism and fascism seemed a threat both abroad and at home.

During this same decade in Spain, the democratically elected Republican-Socialist government of the Second Spanish Republic decreased the political power of the nobility, the influence of the clergy, and the size of the military. This government

introduced new rights for its citizens, including education and enfranchisement. It also grappled with various leftist and independent factions over issues such as workers' rights and Catalan independence. The resulting ongoing social revolutions eventually led to the creation of the Popular Front coalition government. At the same time, working in exile in the Canary Islands, General Francisco Franco harnessed Moroccans' antipathy towards their colonizer to support his fascist invasion. Aided by the military support of fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, Franco's insurgent forces attacked Spain in July of 1936. Due to European and North American pledges of non-intervention, the only support for the Republicans came from the governments of Mexico and Soviet Russia, in addition to 35 000 international volunteers who came to Spain to support the various leftist factions – primarily the communist International Brigades – by working as soldiers, medics, ambulance drivers, journalists, and social workers.

Many in Canada were riveted by news of Franco's attempted coup and the Spanish Civil War's eruption. They were convinced that, after Italy's invasion of fellow League of Nations member Ethiopia, with Hitler gaining power in Germany, and now a civil war being fought from beyond Spain's borders, fascism's spread would be inevitable if not actively countered. Despite the Canadian government's unwillingness to intercede, approximately 1 700 Canadians made their way to Europe with passports stamped "not valid for travel to Spain," risking their lives for the Spanish Republic along with the potential refusal of re-entry into Canada.⁷

Before the creation of the Canadian Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion in 1937, Canadians were typically assigned to the American Abraham Lincoln Brigade (along with Cuban and Irish volunteers). That year also saw the creation of the Yiddish-speaking Botwin Company, which united Jewish volunteers from around the world, including those from England, across Europe, and Mandatory Palestine.⁸ These Canadians were joined in Spain by Canadian nurses, doctors, and journalists, among them approximately a dozen women.⁹ Well-known Canadian volunteers included the blood transfusion doctor Norman Bethune, the Jewish journalist and author Ted Allan, and the activist and journalist Myrtle Eugenia "Jim" Watts. Canadian volunteers in Spain were also aware that in fighting fascism in Spain, they were actively countering fascism and Nazism's spread: Mussolini and Hitler supported Franco with finances, weapons, and troops, using Spain as a testing ground for warfare techniques and concentration camps.

This transnational support of Franco in a supposedly civil war was well known. As a Jewish character in Allan's novel *This Time a Better Earth* (1939) sarcastically comments, "Ladies and gentlemen, for the next couple of hours you will hear an air bombardment through the courtesy of Franco, Hitler, Mussolini and Company."¹⁰ And another character, also Jewish, in the gentile British-Canadian writer Hugh Garner's

novel *Cabbagetown* (1968) reminds his fellow volunteers, “Don’t forget I’m a Jew. I owe those Nazi–Fascists plenty.”¹¹ Even if the Canadian government was not willing to stand up to Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco, these volunteers would. They were fearful of European fascism’s spread, but also driven to leave Canada by rampant unemployment, mounting dissatisfaction with the government’s local and international policies, and alienation from the mainstream. Most volunteers had emigrated to Canada within a decade of the war’s beginning; between 38 and 52 of them identified as Jewish.¹² Many had first-hand experience of the poverty and discrimination they hoped to fight against in Spain.¹³

Canadians who did not travel to Spain participated in other ways: many on the home front raised funds and awareness, and wrote extensively about the Spanish Civil War, even if they had never seen the conflict first-hand. For many North American women working in support of Spain, the Spanish cause was a key opportunity for direct political action that would drastically improve women’s lives: Before the war’s outbreak, Spanish women in the new republic had fought for and won reproductive freedoms, access to education and political enfranchisement. In response to the attempted coup, they enlisted as soldiers in the anarchist group *Mujeres Libres* (Free Women) and pursued leadership positions. Spanish women’s public and private emancipation in wartime struck a chord with leftist women around the world. In Canada, as Larry Hannant notes, women’s participation in leftist movements at once allowed them the kind of direct political work they desired and—because of the patriarchal structures of the movements themselves—often curtailed the feminist implications of that labour.¹⁴ Activist work additionally provided many Jewish Canadian women with an escape from constricted lives, limited by both the anti-Semitism that historian Gerald Tulchinsky characterizes as “domestic fascism [that] seemed a greater threat than it was in either the United States or Britain,” and by the expectations of Jewish culture, which preserved them as wives, homemakers, and mothers.¹⁵ Participation in leftist movements was an important opportunity for those Jewish women often denied equality because of their gender and their religion.¹⁶

“The Exiles: Spain” and “Spanish Lovers Seek Respite”: Waddington’s Early Spain Poetry

Activist work took many forms, including depicting the war in literature, art, film, music, and theatre. Such depictions were particularly significant for women artists; as Candida Rifkind notes, “For women writers on the left, neither the conservative Canadian establishment nor the socialist cultural leadership was particularly interested in re-imagining the female author as a voice of innovation or radicalism,” indicating the “masculinist rhetoric characteristic of Canadian socialism during the Depression.”¹⁷ It is within these contexts – a masculinist Canadian literary leftism averse to women’s radicalism and a simultaneous large-scale engagement with the

Spanish cause, Jewish Canadian concern for the Spanish Civil War's outcome, and Waddington's familial and communal values – that I want to position Waddington's early Spanish Civil War poetry's uniquely collective focus.

Waddington's earliest Spanish Civil War poem, "The Exiles: Spain," articulates the strength of a community forged amid chaos and destruction. The poem appears, in fact, to be her earliest published poem, composed while Waddington was a student at the University of Toronto and published in the student newspaper *The Varsity* on December 11, 1936.¹⁸ The poem depicts a group bidding each other their final celebratory farewell before departing to become solitary exiles. It also contrasts love with war, in a deceptively simple representation of the battlefield as a place anathema to human connection. The poem's title is the only clear connection between the text and the Spanish Civil War – these exiles exist within the context of a fascist incursion, but the possibility of being exiled, Waddington suggests, exists for all, no matter their citizenship.

While the experience of exile may be universal, the poem also refuses to represent these exiles as a dejected, faceless mob of refugees. Instead, "The Exiles: Spain" imagines the strong communal bonds forged among those forced to flee Spain as they allow themselves to enjoy the country's landscape one last time. The poem's first two stanzas begin with the refrain "Come, my friends," as the unnamed speaker implores their companions to join in a final dance on the shore to commemorate their courageous and difficult fight.¹⁹

But while the speaker commends their unity for having "fought and so bravely failed," and promises future fortune, since "the ultimate victory [remains] unassailed," it is their surroundings that foreshadow danger.²⁰ These exiles are surrounded by ruins. The natural world is personified and peculiar: Waddington's speaker describes how "the cold sun sets with a distant grief," and then wonders whether the sun will ever rise again.²¹ The "black waves fret" around the shore where the exiles join hands and dance, while "evil frets at [their] hearts."²² This shared verb, "fret," links the nightly incoming tide to the darkness of impending war. At the same time, however, Waddington gestures to a communal heart unthreatened by evil, a victorious heart that "[r]emains ... above the ruins."²³ The protected victory that "[r]emains in the heart" ends the poem on an indefinite note, one compounded by the speaker's statement that they cannot know whether they will "live through these evil days."²⁴ The dance on the shore represents a final, poignant moment of abandon in a scene itself deeply distraught by the looming war. Paradoxically, it is through the celebration of kinship and national lands that the poem also subtly gestures to the mounting threat of war. "The Exiles: Spain" also represents this threat in its poetic form. The poem is a Shakespearean sonnet missing its concluding couplet – three rhyming quatrains that lack a final turn or volta. The sonnet form is traditionally associated with declarations

of love and friendship, with the final rhyming couplet the culminating statement of amity. Instead, in Waddington's war poem, the curtailed form reproduces the anxiety and uncertainty that mark the poem's message, a message lacking its concluding conviction. We never know whether the speaker's request is met – whether their friends ever “take hands and dance on the shore” – and this unknowing reproduces the speaker's question within the poem's structure, of “whether we [will] live through these evil days.”²⁵ Waddington intimates that there may be more evil days to come, more exiles from more nations, more ruins. Published at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, “The Exiles: Spain” is unique among Canadian poems about the war in its ambiguous, rather than optimistic, representation of the ongoing Spanish conflict. At the same time, the poem's emphasis on camaraderie is an important commentary on the need for fellowship and community, especially in the midst of violence and exile.

Almost exactly a year later, as the war raged on, Waddington published another poem foregrounding the importance of love and community in the midst of war-time. The free verse poem “Spanish Lovers Seek Respite,” published in the University of Toronto's University College magazine *Undergraduate* in fall 1937, imagines how a night without war might facilitate continued allegiance to the cause.²⁶ As in her previous war poem, Waddington emphasizes the ways in which the natural world both reflects and remains impervious to human conflict. Where the sun was setting in “The Exiles: Spain,” here it is the middle of the night, a “menacing night” from which there is only temporary respite.²⁷ However, both poems share a belief in the possible comfort of the natural world: the poem's speaker imagines a nightlong escape into the cooling wind of the mountains, explaining, “Up there is peace, dry wind, / And sky clean and dark.”²⁸

Echoing “The Exiles: Spain,” this poem is also singly-voiced by an ungendered speaker appealing for a brief interlude of peace and love before returning to danger and conflict. The speaker of “Spanish Lovers Seek Respite” pleads,

Let us go away from this:
 No, not forever –

 We need new strength,
 We need to be with ourselves,
 You with you
 Myself with me,
 And both of us together.²⁹

Solitude, as well as love, will fortify these individuals. Like “The Exiles: Spain,” “Spanish Lovers Seek Respite” does not imagine an end to the war, but instead highlights the immediacy of personal relationships. The independence and togetherness that

the speaker craves – "Myself with me, / And both of us together" – underscore the individual and collective freedoms that drove support for the Spanish Republic. A brief reprieve from the war will reaffirm the importance of intimacy and of love. Waddington's speaker here insists upon remembering life outside of a warzone: that is, rather than glorifying war, "Spanish Lovers Seek Respite" emphasizes its hoped-for outcome of peacetime, love, and community.³⁰

Taken together, Waddington's early poetic depictions of companionship and solidarity in wartime refuse the comfort of a happy ending. Both poems end ambivalently, without any indication that their speakers receive what they have requested – a fleeting pause with loved ones – and instead suggest the ongoing, unceasing terror of war. This war impacts everything, tearing apart friendships and families, destroying the natural world, even truncating the sonnet form of "The Exiles: Spain". Community amid destruction is essential, but also nearly impossible.

Waddington's early Spanish Civil War poetry emphasizes the importance of protecting community – the vital reasons for which the war was fought – from a vantage point at once local and transnational. Waddington herself never travelled to the Spanish Civil War; her depictions of its exiles and combatants, and of the country's landscape, are all imagined. However, in both poems, Waddington adopts a first-person speaker: a voice that feels intimately the experience of personal exile, and of battlefield danger. While neither speaker is gendered, both emphasize the sustaining power of love and friendship. Further, I argue that this imagining gives Waddington's poetry a particularly activist bent: she, like many in Canada, perceived the Spanish conflict's relevance, and the need for Canadians to identify themselves with Spain's communities. If Waddington's upbringing had taught her to view herself as simultaneously belonging to multiple communities and identities within Canada, then in her Spanish Civil War poetry I view her assumption of participants' voices as an articulation of her sympathy and her sense of community with individuals around the world, especially the exiled and embattled Spanish populace, threatened by fascism. Ending the war in Spain, and thwarting Franco, Hitler, and Mussolini, becomes a cause not only for Spaniards but also for all those opposed to Nazism and fascism.

All of the so-called premature anti-fascists' fears came true in 1939. The Spanish Civil War concluded with the withdrawal of the International Brigades (but not the international forces on the insurgent side), and soon after, Franco's accession to *Caudillo*. The war's shattering outcome was followed shortly by World War II's outbreak, and the mandatory enlistment of many former Spanish Civil War volunteers. In the war and the Holocaust, the Nazis employed the techniques of warfare and mass killing they had practiced on the battlefields of Spain.³¹ In Spain itself, those who had supported the Republic, including many women, were punished by the new regime with violence, even murder.³²

These local and global horrors at once proved the prescience of the Left's intervention in what was never strictly a civil war and threw their visions of transnational sympathy into question. Some former volunteers grew disenchanted with their own countries and moved to what was then Mandatory Palestine, directing the cosmopolitanism of the Spanish Republic into Zionism and the establishment of a Jewish state. Others found it necessary to moderate their far-leftism (especially, a couple of decades later, as the McCarthy era's Red Scare seeped across Canada's borders), espousing liberalism instead. But many supporters of the Spanish Republic continued to represent the Spanish Civil War as the "last great cause."³³ To create an inclusive, ethically constructed vision of personal and national responsibility remained an important project.

Waddington's 1930s poems about Spain maintain some hope, if not for the Spanish Republic then at least for the possibility of sustained community. During this time, she graduated from the University of Toronto and studied social work, becoming, in her words, "a romantic middle-class social worker."³⁴ After World War II and the Holocaust, however, the loss of the Spanish Civil War becomes, for Waddington, the originating moment of all subsequent destruction. In "Dog Days" (1945), for instance, she describes how "some lost / All hope and hear the Spaniard's curse / Even in dreams."³⁵ In "Icons" (1969), a well-travelled, middle-aged speaker visits Francoist Spain and has an affair with a Spanish labourer. The worker's affection for her – "*un poco / amor*"³⁶ – is mitigated by the hatred that covers his body and country in the form of "the scars on / his hand, his wounded / country and the black- / jacketed police."³⁷ "Icons" meditates on the absence of love in the world, represented in the speaker's newfound need for non-religious iconography, reminders of an emotion that no longer exists. The speaker of "The Nineteen Thirties Are Over" (1970) is in the midst of a Toronto winter, yet her "bones ache / with the broken revolutions / of Europe."³⁸ The echoes of Spain's loss reverberate widely, and harm deeply.³⁹

"The Woman in the Hall": The Spanish Civil War and the Holocaust

It is in Waddington's poem "The Woman in the Hall" (1992) that these personal and communal wounds are most explicitly articulated in an unequivocal statement of the human cost of fascism and Nazism. First published in the *Canadian Forum* in March 1992, and included in Waddington's collection *The Last Landscape* that same year, this later free-verse poem yokes the carnage of the Spanish Civil War to World War II and the Holocaust, to poverty around the world, and to a history of Spanish conquest and war-making, romanticized in the paintings of Francisco de Goya and suffered by the denizens of Spain's former colonies.⁴⁰

Rather than the first-person voices of many of her earlier poetic invocations of Spain, "The Woman in the Hall" invites us to examine the volatile titular figure from a narrative distance. She is introduced simply: "There is a woman / in the hall."⁴¹ "The Woman in the Hall" is a nondescript, solitary, oracular Everywoman: "she lives alone

in / some upstairs room / in a nebulous city,"⁴² and she may be "birdwoman or / sibyl,
farmwife or / fishgutter, or is she / the buttonhole maker."⁴³ But her profession is not
as important as her history:

Whoever she is
she is also Guernica
and Madrid she is Moscow
besieged and Dieppe
betrayed

she is the addled brain
of the crazy woman who
survived the camps.⁴⁴

The woman is an accrual of global trauma and "patriarchal injustice," as noted by reviewer Judith Brown.⁴⁵ She is this trauma personified, invisible or repulsive in her daily work and yet a reminder of the recent and not so recent past. The woman's trauma does not spell the end of her attachment to her many communities, however. While solitary, "The Woman in the Hall" is not necessarily alienated from the rest of society; instead, by sharing her deep historical knowledge with others, she rouses their awareness of their own complicity. In her solitude, "sit[ting] out the days on the / shores of the Dead Sea / muttering curses and / incantations" or "in some small / town eking out a life on / a pension," she is the universal confessor: "she hears your messages ... your anger and sorrow."⁴⁶

What's more, "The Woman in the Hall" turns this distress into productive change, a prophet who, in prophesying, is able to effect transformations amongst others. The poem concludes,

she is the ragpicker who
comes to warn you
of future Guernicas,
and she is the woman who
at last awakens in you
your broken promises your
ancient righteousness.⁴⁷

"The Woman in the Hall" exists at once within constant global suffering and outside of time. She recalls the Jewish German philosopher Walter Benjamin's "angel of history," in his final essay "On the Concept of History." In contemplating how current progress and past destruction intersect, Benjamin describes "Angelus Novus," a Paul Klee painting in which the angel appears to stare at something he is also ready to

depart. The angel's unbroken gaze upon that which he is leaving behind parallels how Benjamin understands the supposed progress of the current moment, which can only be understood in terms of its destructive origins: that "one single catastrophe, which unceasingly piles rubble on top of rubble and hurls it before [its] feet ... That which we call progress, is *this* storm."⁴⁸ Benjamin wrote "Theses on the Concept of History" in 1940, shortly before he committed suicide in what was then Francoist Spain, while fleeing the Nazis. Waddington's nameless woman – human, not angelic – invokes a belated, parallel reckoning with fascist anti-modernity. "The Woman in the Hall" can see, and make others see, a history of devastation. Furthermore, her humanity additionally allows her to "awaken" them, to inspire them to change.

"The Woman in the Hall" is not a poem about community, but rather its absence. But although she is friendless, the isolated woman of Waddington's later poem also forges solidarity—offering warnings, and "awaken[ing]" "broken promises" and "ancient righteousness" that are essential, even globally protective. In contrast to Waddington's earlier depiction of a desperate final celebratory dance in "The Exiles: Spain" and a moment of passionate abandon in "Spanish Lovers Seek Respite", this later poem calls back to those revolutionary friends, promising both bloodshed and justice to come, and affirming the prescience of those early exiles in fearing for future "evil days." Indeed, the poems are further rhetorically linked by the ruins that form the setting for "The Exiles: Spain" and that flow within the blood of "The Woman in the Hall"; "her wrists throb[bing] with the / pulse of ruined cities."⁴⁹ Read alongside Waddington's early poetry about Spain, "The Woman in the Hall" becomes a powerful statement on the foundational role women play in building and rebuilding communities. Whether in Spain, in Canada, or in some "nebulous city," Waddington's poetic speakers underscore the moral duty to work towards a world beyond war.

Writing of Waddington's poetic oeuvre, Ruth Panofsky notes how Waddington's poetry yokes Judaism and Jewishness to the poet's own diverse communities in Canada, as the Canadian-born daughter of Jewish immigrants. In Panofsky's reading, "A gendered social consciousness drove the moral questing for knowledge and understanding that lay at the heart of [Waddington's] poetic practice."⁵⁰ In "The Woman in the Hall," Waddington implicitly questions the safety that Canadian nationality ostensibly provides – a safety, as Waddington herself well knew, only unevenly available based on factors including gender, language, immigration status, and religion. The moral imperative at the core of "The Woman in the Hall" connects Canadian peace to European war, and to Jewish and Spanish carnage. As Esther Sánchez-Pardo González argues, Waddington's poetic voice does not stem from "mere sympathy for political minorities or for the 'victims' of society who are isolated in some way, but cannot subscribe to their external reality;" rather, Waddington's aesthetic perspective illuminates the social realities that would be easier to ignore.⁵¹ Waddington's desperate "Woman in the Hall" tries, in an attempt that may prove to be futile, to

warn those around her of the destruction to come. Despite the ultimate failure of the Spanish communities Waddington's early poetry depicts, and likewise the international failures to stem the spread of fascism and Nazism, her later poem holds out the promise of a future transnational solidarity. In the face of local and global trauma, there remains, for "The Woman in the Hall," a "heart above the ruins" and the promise of an "ultimate victory."

Writing Spain

To conclude, I want to move from the evolving political context of Waddington's poetry to the literary. Waddington's Spain poems participate in at least two overlapping literary developments. First, in writing about Spain, Waddington engages with a North American community of women writers whose works form a chorus of literary voices articulating Spain's tremendous egalitarian promise and then, after the war, the depth of its tremendous loss.⁵² The war was covered first-hand by female journalists from around the world, including the Jewish American journalists Martha Gellhorn, Lillian Hellman, and Muriel Rukeyser. Gellhorn, Hellman, and Rukeyser all wrote other kinds of literature about the war, too, from Rukeyser's poetry to Gellhorn's short stories and novellas.

Although she did not travel to Spain herself, like many women writing about the war, Waddington demonstrates women's key wartime roles and the particular risks that war and its aftermath pose to women. She instructs her audience in sympathy for all victims of patriarchal fascism. Furthermore, like Gellhorn, Waddington draws explicit connections between the Spanish Civil War and the Holocaust. But where Gellhorn's postwar fiction depicts the terrible fates of Jewish International Brigades volunteers in Nazi concentration camps (in her fiction "Good Will to Men," *Till Death Do Us Part*, and "About Shorty" for instance), Waddington's poetry instead represents the Spanish Civil War and the Holocaust as one ongoing conflict, with their attendant bloodshed an enduring accrual of trauma and destruction.⁵³ Waddington's poetry, then, forms an important facet of this North American women's chorus, one that not only highlights the immediate costs of war for women but also its long-term, transnational reverberations.

Waddington's understanding of the wide-ranging, ongoing aftershocks of the Spanish Civil War and the Holocaust is also unique within the many Canadian literary responses to the Spanish conflict. Canadian writers took up the Spanish Civil War as one of the most extensively documented events in Canadian literary history. From poetry to fiction to reportage, Canadian authors, among them well-known authors including Dorothy Livesay, Hugh MacLennan, A. M. Klein, and Mordecai Richler, depicted what happened in Spain for a Canadian audience, implicitly encouraging Canadian readers to view themselves as global citizens.⁵⁴ This Canadian literary proj-

ect of representing Canada's stake in world affairs intersects in intriguing ways with a related project of Canadian literature: even before the Spanish Civil War broke out, Canadian literature frequently took the formation of a national character as a prominent theme. This idea of Canadianness needed to be one distinct from British colonial subjectivity, estranged French heritage, or the creeping cultural influence of the United States.⁵⁵ As Waddington herself noted in her remembrance of Yiddish poet Ida Maza, "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."⁵⁶

Many of the Canadian writers who depicted, and continue to depict, the Spanish Civil War identified as Jewish, immigrants or the descendants of immigrants. Like Waddington, many of these authors felt like both insiders and outsiders to the country and its literary establishment. Waddington's allusion to "brainwash[ing]" suggests how these damaging representations of immigrants, especially Jewish immigrants, may have inspired the depictions of many Jewish Canadian writers' of the Spanish Civil War: Canadian literature about the Spanish Civil War frequently teaches sympathy towards those suffering under fascist attack. The Spanish Civil War was thus not only a significant catalyst for Canadian modernist literature, but also for Jewish Canadian literature. Ruth Panofsky dates "[t]he flowering of Canadian Jewish writing in English [to] the mid-1940s," when many of the authors responsible for this "flowering" were writing about the Spanish Civil War and its aftermath – A. M. Klein, Miriam Waddington, and Irving Layton, among them.⁵⁷ They wrote for a mainstream, Anglophone audience about Canadian identity and the Spanish Civil War. Among Jewish Canadian writers like Charles Yale Harrison, Matt Cohen, A.M. Klein, Ted Allan, Mordecai Richler, and Leonard Cohen, and many others, I trace a long-standing literary commitment to exploring the linkages between the Spanish Civil War and Canada.⁵⁸ Some of these writers depict Spain's people and land destroyed by war; others lament the murder of the queer Spanish poet Federico García Lorca, killed by Franco's fascists; still others imagine Canadian participation in the war – their own or others'. Together, these diverse, decades-spanning writings underscore the direct relevance of the foreign war to those who would identify as Canadians.

Waddington's Spanish Civil War poetry epitomizes the overlapping issues that drew many to feel that they had a stake in the conflict. Over decades of writing, Waddington distinctively articulates the Spanish Civil War's importance while demonstrating how the Spanish Civil War's importance was uniquely resonant to Canadians and especially to Canadians from marginalized groups – Jews, women, and immigrants among them. Her poetic engagement with the war is at once a case study of a single poet's decades-long aesthetic and political commitment, while also indicative of some of the ways in which Jewish Canadian writers had a unique stake in depicting the Spanish Civil War, recasting Canadian national identity as a transnationally-ori-

ented pride in difference. Waddington's writings from across her career extend and expand the Spanish Civil War's resonances, arguing explicitly for the war's relevance to Canadian misogyny, to European anti-Semitism, and to future global unrest. Her poetry is a lesson in sympathy, a warning against complacency, and a stirring of "broken promises" and "ancient righteousness."

1

See, for instance, Friedel H. Bastein, "A European Writer in Canada': A Brief Introduction to the Life and Work of Miriam Waddington," *Voices from Distant Lands: Poetry in the Commonwealth*, eds. Konrad Gross and Wolfgang Klooss (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1983), 94-97; Ruth Panofsky, "This Problem of identity': Miriam Waddington's *Summer at Lonely Beach and Other Stories*," *At Odds in the World: Essays on Jewish Canadian Women Writers* by Ruth Panofsky (Toronto: Inanna Publications and Education, 2008), 13-32; L. R. Ricou, "Into My Green World': The Poetry of Miriam Waddington" *Essays on Canadian Writing* 12 (Jan. 1978): 162-91; Laurie Ricou, "Miriam Waddington (1917-)," *Canadian Writers, 1920-1959, First Series*, ed. W. H. New (Detroit: Bruccoli Clark Layman, 1988), 334-39; Candida Rifkind, "A Collection of Solitary Fragments': Miriam Waddington as Critic," *Wider Boundaries of Daring: The Modernist Impulse in Canadian Women's Poetry*, eds. Di Brandt and Barbara Godard (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2009), 253-73.

2

For a short analysis of the representation of Spain in "The Exiles: Spain," see Liz Tetzlaff, "Miriam Waddington's Poetry Enters Spain Stage Left," *Canada and the Spanish Civil War: Virtual Research Environment of Canadian Cultural History about the Spanish Civil War*, 2016, available from <<http://spanishcivilwar.ca/sites/spanishcivilwar.ca/files/Tetzlaff-MiriamWaddingtonsPoetry.pdf>>. While I diverge from Tetzlaff's reading of the poem as using Spain solely as backdrop, her analysis of Waddington's representation of kinship is particularly insightful.

3

Stevens, *Miriam Waddington and Her Works* (Toronto: ECW Press, 1984), 1.

4

Menkis, "Miriam Dworkin Waddington," *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*, March 1, 2009, <<https://jwa.org/encyclopedia/article/waddington-miriam-dworkin>>.

5

For the sake of brevity, I will refer to "Canadians" and "Canadian citizens," even when referring to pre-1947 designations, rather than to "British citizens living in Canada."

6

Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1990), 103. See also Ira Robinson, *A History of Antisemitism in Canada* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2015), 59-101.

7

Eventually, nearly all the Canadian volunteers were allowed to return, although they were not given veterans' benefits. In "Canadian Jewish Boys in Spain': Jewish Volunteers from Canada in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-39," Myron Momryk cites at least three examples of Jewish Canadians who were prevented from re-entering the country because of their "alien" status and so settled in Mexico, Palestine, and Great Britain. See Momryk, "Canadian Jewish Boys in Spain'" (unpublished essay, 29 ts pages), 17. Canada was the last of all the countries involved in the war to welcome its citizens home, and not until 2001 did the Canadian government erect a memorial to the volunteers who died in battle. Even worse was the treatment of citizens from the fascist countries who fought alongside the Spanish Republicans, who lost their citizenship and became stateless.

8

The Botwin Company has received little critical attention, in large part due to its omission from most historical texts about the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigades. Ger-

ben Zaagsma's recent book *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* is a welcome exploration. See Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers, the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), especially 37-57. For more on international Jewish participation, see Derek Penslar, *Jews and the Military: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 201-07; and Alain Brossat and Sylvia Klingberg, *Revolutionary Yiddishland: A History of Jewish Radicalism*, trans. David Fernbach (New York: Verso, 2016), 95-129.

9

See Jim Fyrth, Foreword in *Women's Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, eds. Jim Fyrth and Sally Alexander (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2008), 29 n. 1.

10

Ted Allan, *This Time a Better Earth*, ed. Bart Vautour (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2015), 40.

11

Hugh Garner, *Cabbagetown* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1968), 408.

12

Momryk cites thirty-eight. Momryk, "Canadian Jewish Boys in Spain," 5. In *Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War*, Michael Petrou tallies fifty-two. See Petrou, *Renegades* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 22-23. While the number of Jewish-identified Canadian volunteers may seem small, Derek Penslar suggests, "The low numbers might be explained by Canada's Foreign Enlistment Act, which prohibited its citizens' enlistment in the armed forces 'of any foreign state at war with any friendly state,' and which technically applied to Canadians fighting on either side in Spain." See Penslar, *Jews and the Military*, 201. According to Gerben Zaagsma, between 3,500 and 4,000 of all the foreign volunteers were Jewish. See Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers*, 2.

13

Even amongst those united in their support of Republican Spain were many divisions: most were affiliated with the Communist Party but often split along ethno-national lines. According to Momryk, at least twenty-four of the Jewish-identified volunteers were members of a Communist group—the Young Communist League, or the Communist Parties of Canada, the United States, or Spain. See Momryk, "Canadian Jewish Boys in Spain," 7. Of the

Jewish Canadian volunteers whose ancestry could be traced, half identified themselves as Canadian, while the rest came from the United States, the Ukraine, Hungary, Finland, Poland, Denmark, Lithuania, Belarus, and Russia. See Petrou, *Renegades*, 10-25; see also Ian McKay, *Rebels, Reds, Radicals: Rethinking Canada's Left History* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2005), 145-217. Looking internationally, Zaagsma cautions against ascribing volunteers' decision to travel to Spain to their Jewish identities, seeing this as a belated categorization of Jewish participation in Spain as resistance to Hitler. Furthermore, he argues that such categorization overlooks volunteers' individual motivations: "This is especially problematic because important questions need to be asked about nationality politics within the brigades, competition among national and/or ethnic groups and ... the existence of anti-Semitism and/or anti-Semitic stereotypes. All of this is not to deny many individual acts of heroism or sacrifice on the part of many volunteers." See Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers*, 19.

14

See Larry Hannant, "My God, are they sending women?": Three Canadian Women in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939," *Journal of the Canadian History Association/Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 15.1 (2004): 153-76.

15

Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 281. White Canadian women gained the right to vote beginning in 1917, but women in Quebec—which had a large Jewish population—could not vote until 1940. Indigenous women did not gain the vote until 1960.

16

For more on Jewish Canadian involvement in the Spanish Civil War, and especially Jewish women's organizing, see Ester Reiter, *A Future Without Hate or Need: The Promise of the Jewish Left in Canada* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2016), 75-85.

17

Candida Rifkind, *Comrades and Critics: Women, Literature, and the Left in 1930s Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 10-11.

18

(December 11, 1936): 1.

19

Waddington, "The Exiles: Spain," in *The Collected Poems of Miriam Waddington*, ed. Ruth Panofsky (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014), 2, lines 1, 5. All subsequent references to Waddington's poetry cite *The Collected Poems of Miriam Waddington*.

20

Ibid., lines 6, 7.

21

Ibid., line 2.

22

Ibid., lines 3, 4.

23

Ibid., line 8.

24

Ibid., line 10.

25

Ibid., lines 12, 10.

26

8, no. 1 (Fall 1937): 51.

27

Waddington, "'Spanish Lovers Seek Respite,'" 4, line 17.

28

Ibid., lines 19-20.

29

Ibid., lines 6-7, 10-14.

30

Esther Sánchez-Pardo González also cites the unpublished poem "We of 1937," in which Waddington "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.'" See Sánchez-Pardo González, "Transitional Spaces: Constructions of the Modernist 'I' in Miriam Waddington's Poetry," *Revista canaria de estudios ingleses* 54, no. 1 (2007): 169-80, 179. Sánchez-Pardo González does not include citation information for "We of 1937," and the poem is not included in Panofsky's *The Collected Poems of Miriam Waddington*.

31

Paul Preston explicitly connects the Spanish Civil War to the Holocaust in the title of his book *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2012).

32

Ibid., 471-517.

33

See Stanley Weintraub, *The Last Great Cause: The Intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War* (New York: Weybright and Talley, 1968). For more on Jewish experiences after the Spanish Civil War, see Zaagsma, *Jewish Volunteers*, 109-13.

34

Quoted in Stevens, *Miriam Waddington and Her Works*, 2.

35

Waddington, "Dog Days," 81, lines 14-16.

36

Waddington, "Icons," 436, lines 48-49; emphasis original.

37

Ibid., lines 49-52.

38

Waddington, "The Nineteen Thirties Are Over," 500, lines 45-47.

39

There is also a photograph by Michael Semak of a museum-goer looking at Picasso's *Head of a Horse, Sketch for Guernica* in Waddington's *Call them Canadians: A Photographic Point of View*. Picasso painted *Guernica* in 1937 in response to the fascist bombing of the Basque town. See Waddington, *Call them Canadians: A Photographic Point of View*, ed. Lorraine Monk, prod. National Film Board of Canada (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1968), 187.

40

Canadian Forum (March 1922): 22; *The Last Landscape* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3-5.

41

Waddington, "The Woman in the Hall," 768, lines 1-2.

42

Ibid., lines 3-5.

43

Ibid., lines 11-14.

44

Ibid., 768-69, lines 20-24, 35-37.

45

Judith Brown, "Turning Words on a Loom: *The Last Landscape* by Miriam Waddington," review of *The Last Landscape* by Miriam Waddington, *Essays on Canadian Writing* 55 (Spring 1995): 269.

46

Waddington, "The Woman in the Hall," 769-70, lines 38-41, 68-70, 71-73.

47

Ibid., 770, lines 79-85.

48

Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Concept of History," trans. Dennis Redmond, *The Walter Benjamin Archive*, 1940, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm>; emphasis original. Candida Rifkind similarly observes of Waddington's literary criticism, "For Waddington, the poet works Janus-faced, with one eye to the future and one to the past." See Rifkind, "'A Collection of Solitary Fragments'," 258.

49

Waddington, "The Woman in the Hall," 770, lines 74-75.

50

Ruth Panofsky, Introduction, *The Collected Poems of Miriam Waddington*, ed. Ruth Panofsky (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014), xiii.

51

Sánchez-Pardo González, "Transitional Spaces," 179.

52

In writing of American Spanish Civil War poetry, Cary Nelson has referred to the leftist poetry "chorus;" I see this chorus more broadly and also more specifically, extending beyond the American border and dwelling on the war's particular stakes for women and Jewish people, for instance. Cary Nelson, *Revolutionary Memory: Recovering the Poetry of the*

American Left (New York: Routledge, 2003), 220-24.

53

See Gellhorn, "Good Will to Men" in *The Heart of Another* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 186-267; *Till Death Do Us Part in The Novellas of Martha Gellhorn* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 271-309; and "About Shorty," in *The Honeyed Peace* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1953), 119-31.

54

The Canada and the Spanish Civil War Project has assembled a bibliography of Canadian cultural production around the Spanish Civil War currently totalling 390 pages. See Bart Vautour, Kaarina Mikalson, and Emily Robins Sharpe, "Bibliography," *Canada and the Spanish Civil War: Virtual Research Environment of Canadian Cultural History about the Spanish Civil War*, Sept. 13, 2017, <http://spanishcivilwar.ca/content/bibliography>. See also Jørn Carlsen, "Canadian Literature and the Spanish Civil War," *Dolphin* 16 (1988): 41-53; Mary Peck, *Red Moon Over Spain: Canadian Media Reaction to the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Ottawa: Steel Rail, 1988); and Nicola Vulpe and Maha Albari, eds., *Sealed in Struggle: Canadian Poetry and the Spanish Civil War* (La Laguna, Tenerife: Centre for Canadian Studies, 1995). There has been minimal critical research into Canadian literature about the Spanish Civil War, a situation paralleled in historical research into Canada's role in the conflict. Michael Petrou's *Renegades* provides a much-needed overview. His research surveys and quantifies Canada's unprecedented involvement and reframes earlier research. See also Victor Hoar, *The Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion: Canadian Participation in the Spanish Civil War* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1969); William C. Beeching, *Canadian Volunteers: Spain, 1936-1939* ([Regina]: Canadian Plains Research Center, University of Regina, 1989); and Mark Zuehlke, *The Gallant Cause: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939* (Vancouver: Whitecap Books, 1996). John Gerassi's research is almost entirely composed of American volunteers' first-person accounts of the conflict, but does include some Canadians as well. See Gerassi, *The Premature Antifascists: North American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939, An Oral History* (New York: Praeger, 1986).

55

Waddington reviewed and critiqued different critical perspectives on Canadian literary traditions, noting,

There are also many ugly aspects of our history that have never been accounted for in literature. Some of these aspects are still buried in the suppressed radical tradition, which has somehow failed to appeal to the Canadian literary imagination. The story of the long struggle of the dissenting minority against the forces of colonial conservatism, and of the inevitable defeats on political, social, and personal levels, has never really been told. Our poor people, our Indians, our lonely immigrants, our prisoners, our Metis in Manitoba—few of these have found a place in serious Canadian literature; they are just beginning to find a place in our culture through the mass media.

See Waddington, "Canadian Tradition and Canadian Literature," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 8.1 (1969): 140.

56

Waddington, "Mrs. Maza's Salon," *Canadian Woman Studies/Les cahiers de la femme* 16.4 (1996): 121.

57

Panofsky, "Guest Editor's Introduction," special issue of *Studies in American Jewish Literature* 35.2 (2016): 139.

58

See Charles Yale Harrison, *Meet Me on the Barricades*, eds. Bart Vautour and Emily Robins Sharpe (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2016); A. M. Klein, "Of Castles in Spain," *Complete Poems* by A. M. Klein, ed. Zailig Pollock (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 473-74; Irving Layton, "On Spanish Soil," "El Caudillo," and "El Gusano," in Vulpe and Albari, eds., *Sealed in Struggle*, 211-15; Ted Allan, *This Time a Better Earth*; Miriam Waddington, "The Exiles: Spain," "Spanish Lovers Seek Respite," "Dog Days," "Icons," and "The Woman in the Hall," in *The Collected Poems of Miriam Waddington*, ed. Ruth Panofsky (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014), 2, 4, 81, 435-38, 768-70; Mordecai Richler, *The Acrobats* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2002); Mordecai Richler, *Joshua Then and Now* (New York: Knopf, 1980); Leonard Cohen, "The Traitor," *Recent Songs*, Columbia, 1979; Leonard Cohen, "Take This Waltz," *Poets in New York*, Discos CBS, 1986; Leonard

Cohen, *Book of Longing* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2006); Matt Cohen, "The Sins of Tomas Benares," in *Life on This Planet and Other Stories* (New York: Beaufort, 1985), 76-102; "Sentimental Meetings," in *ibid.*, 114-30; Seymour Mayne, "Parrots, Generals," in Vulpe and Albari, eds., *Sealed in Struggle*, 217; "Madrid Evening," in *ibid.*, 210; "Spain, You Hurt Me," in *ibid.*, 145.