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According to Miriam Waddington, Canadian poet and professor of English at York University, if you can't love, you can't create. In her latest collection of poetry entitled, *Mister Never*, she investigates one aspect of this love experience—that of absence of departed love.

The poems written between 1968 and 1977 represent a period of reflection in the poet's life and complete a theme begun in *A Price of Gold*, an earlier collection published in 1976. The pain and the loneliness of 'Forest Poem' and 'Someone Who Used to Have Someone' from the earlier collection are echoed in 'Dreaming of Mister Never' and resolved in 'Disposing of Mister Never As a Good Man'.

Opposed to the principles of a male-dominated ideology, which directs our society and tends to overvalue fact and undervalue feelings, Miriam Waddington writes from her own emotional experience and offers the reader poetry which is original and innovative in tone, language and form.

Waddington has been criticized in the past for writing biographically and emotively. But, in fact, it is precisely the presence of the personal element which serves to intensify the power and the poignancy of her created work. The poems in *Mister Never* convey energy, humour and optimism. Collectively, they form a powerfully humorous and feminine statement about love and loneliness.

In a male-oriented society, women writers work at a distinct disadvantage. Miriam Waddington believes that the masculine ideology which shapes our world has always interpreted female psychology according to its own principles and needs. Female intuition, defined by Mrs. Waddington as simply the logic of emotion, has traditionally been viewed with either suspicion or patronizing condescension. Consequently, female writers working in a male-dominated society run the risk of having their works misinterpreted and undervalued.

Miriam Waddington challenges this state of affairs. In *Mister Never*, she deals squarely with emotions and freely declares herself a passionate woman. As a poet, she reflects upon the significance of offering love. It is through this investigation into the female view of the man/woman relationship that the reader becomes aware of the presence of an essential though perhaps unintentional theme in the collection: that of the power of woman. The poet understands the value of the power and the pain of love and is able to rejoice in her capacity to experience and offer it.

Although the importance of a love relationship is evident in her poetry, the emphasis in *Mister Never* is placed on the creative, passionate individual. Witness the pain of unrequited love in these lines from 'Dreaming of Mister Never',

I awoke to a dawn
full of the old
torment a world of
endless wednesdays

and the joyous erotic tribute to love found in 'Singing' from 'Fragments of Mister Never in My Dream Telescope',

I am singing
with the rosy
softness of
only
the inside
of your mouth

This is the voice of strength, gentleness and understanding acknowledging the need for and paying a tribute to departed love. But more than this, *Mister Never* is a self-portrait, the celebration of the creative, intuitive, passionate woman.

Disposing of Mister Never as a Good Man

A good man
has little need
of a passionate woman
he is so timely so finely
balanced he is
a reservoir
filled to the brim
with good water as
good as himself,
he is pure and
fine-toned, tautening
as chokecherry juice
and careful as a ripe
leaf about which hill
he rolls over but

The passionate woman
poor thing she walks
her precarious balance
on the wobbliest wires
she might be
electrocuted, and whether
she knows who cares and
whether she cares
who knows, she is
fuzzy and half-asleep
in summer and in
winter the wind is
her cold comforter
her sole printer.

Still she sees
into reservoirs deep
enough to find
reflections,
she admires the rare
goodness of the
good man she
dangles his good
profile like a drowner's
medal and she lets
his cleft chin divide
the whole autumn and
half-asleep
she hears how his
goodness sounds
in the faraway valleys
of spring.

Miriam Waddington