

Wasserman's unhappy life and mourned for him in sad funereal tones.

And he wasn't the only writer whose anniversary of death she observed; there was Edna St. Vincent Millay, Elinor Wylie, Sara Teasdale, and a long roll call of dead Yiddish writers. She mourned them all, and recounted their tragic lives as well as their artistic triumphs in spite of adversity. She would often read me passages from their work, and sometimes she would ask to see my poems and read them back to me, analyzing and praising and prophesying a good future.

When I think back to those summer afternoons on her veranda—actually it was a low open balcony in the French-Canadian style—I can still picture her rocking and keening. She radiated a sybilline and mystical quality, and possibly that was the secret of the magnetism that drew so many artists to her Esplanade apartment.

My parents, in spite of their unquestionable identification with Jewishness, were not observant of rituals and never went to synagogue. When it came time for the high holidays, Rosh Hashonah and Yom Kippur, my parents, the Mazas, and two or three other families all converged upon a farmer's house near St. Sauveur—the Lamoureux place. There we stayed for a week or ten days enjoying continual harvest pleasures. Mme Lamoureux set a long table with huge bowls of food: soup, chicken, beef, vegetables—raw and cooked—apple and blueberry pies, and homegrown Lamoureux pears, apples, and plums. Everyone heaped his or her own plate at these country feasts. And I have no doubt that the grownups, as they strolled along the gravel roads, gave thought in their own way to the year past and the year still to come.

The Lamoureux are long dead and their farm is no longer a landmark. It was long ago absorbed by modernism and the autoroute to the Laurentians. And Mrs. Maza is no longer alive to mark and mourn the anniversaries of the death of her favourite writers or the loss of the Lamoureux farm with its harvest bounties that were so happily shared by a group of friends. But they are still alive and present in my mind, and they keep me company whenever I watch the light change on mountains or pick wild raspberries in some overgrown ditch. Somewhere Mrs. Maza is still urging hungry poets to have a bite to eat, and turning on the light in her dining room to illuminate a crowd of displaced Yiddish writers. And behind them stretches a larger crowd, the long procession of every writer who ever wrote in whatever language. No matter. Each one paid his individual tribute to the love of language and to its inexhaustible resources. And their traces still linger, marking out the path for all writers still to come.

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*Ida Maza was born Ida Jukovsky on 9 July 1893 in a small*

*town in White Russia. In 1907, when she was 14, her family emigrated to Canada and settled in Montreal. There she married and had three sons, one of whom died in childhood. During her lifetime she published three books of poetry in Yiddish, A Mother, My Children are Growing, and New Poems. In 1954 she was working on three books—Stones for Children, Selected Poems, and a historical novel about Jewish settlements and migration to America in White Russia, Diena. She died in 1962, and her novel Diena (Deenah in Yiddish) was published in 1970, largely through the efforts of the Montreal Yiddish poet Moshe Shaffir.*

*Miriam Waddington is the author of several books of poetry, including The Last Landscape, Mister Never, The Glass Trumpet, Say Yes, The Season's Lovers, The Second Silence, and Dream Telescopes.*

## RENEE RODIN

### Mid-Stream

time, tea(s), and other remedies  
made it better but even at its worst  
whether from that initial reception  
or my relief I was just reacting  
to the vagaries of hormones  
there wasn't a month I wasn't thrilled  
by the first sign of blood

when Joey began to menstruate  
I too tapped her face before we embraced  
it was on a visit back east  
to celebrate a silver anniversary

at a table whose surface was rendered invisible  
because of the copious amounts of food  
(cold cuts, knishes, bagels, pickles)  
the word went whispered around

amidst the blush of embarrassment  
was the flush of pleasure darkening  
my daughter's delicate cheeks  
as to her we raised our glasses  
"mazel tov" (good luck) "Y'chayim" (to life)  
"today you are a woman"

*Renee Rodin was born in Montreal in 1945, but has lived on the west coast since 1968, where she raised, as a single parent, her three children. Her book of prose-poems, Bread and Salt, is to be published this fall by Talonbooks.*