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With a voice steeped in Eastern European tradition, poet examines identity in the face of conflict

PITTSBURGH—Romanian poet Mihaela Moscaliuc explores the experiences of immigration, life in the Chernobyl Zone in the aftermath of the nuclear disaster, and the myths of her native land in her new collection Immigrant Model. Her second collection, it also includes stories about women holy and/or slightly diabolical, she said.

“My poems explore issues of individual and communal identity in the face of conflict, conflicting ‘truths’ or histories, and uprootedness,” Moscaliuc explained. “They explore the notion of homeland as it relates to one’s roots, adopted space, psychological terrain, and gendered body.” She said if the collection reads as a collage of voices rather than a book with an identifiable arc, “it is because that’s the only way I’ve managed to answer, so far, the question, “What is it like to be of this world and this world and this world, while also of the elsewhere skirting these worlds?”

In praise of the forthcoming book, Naomi Shihab Nye said, “The poems of Immigrant Model embody robust and sizzling magic. Moscaliuc transports readers through vivid, multi-layered scenes, richly startling images, and a mesmerizing gift for narrative. Here, a haunting world we would never otherwise see – our sense of history and terrain is altered forever.”

Stephen Dunn remarked that Moscaliuc “takes on Ceausescu’s Romania as well as the aftermath of Chernobyl with a surreal, sensuous ferocity. Mouth, lips, tongue (some of the most frequently repeated words in the book) are means of survival; they devour and indict. The book’s sustained power is extraordinary.”

Moscaliuc is the author of the poetry collection Father Dirt. Her poems, reviews, and translations of Romanian poetry have appeared in American Poetry Review, the Georgia Review, New Letters, Prairie Schooner, TriQuarterly, and Mississippi Review, among others. Moscaliuc is the recipient of two Glenna Luschei Prairie Schooner Awards and a fellowship from the New Jersey Arts Council. She is an assistant professor of English at Monmouth University and teaches in the low-residency MFA program in poetry, and poetry in translation at Drew University. Moscaliuc lives at the Jersey Shore with her husband, poet Michael Waters, and their son, Fabian.

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