Moscaliuc’s lyric debut unveils Communist and post-Communist Romanian life, recounting experiences and landscapes like a true wanderer. Romantic and spellbinding, her quest to understand language, origin and country unites celebration with mourning, the sacred with the profane, apathy with compassion.

“Moscaliuc’s first collection is hard to forget…her powers of observation and image remain impossible to deny.”

—Publishers Weekly

“In Mihaela Moscaliuc’s debut collection, the émigré poet collects totems from her receding past—nettle tea, pinworms, a saddlebag of ghosts, a grandmother translating the cry of a raptor—even as she begins a family in the new world. Father Dirt is steeped in the urgency of a woman still possessed by the pungent memories of the ancestral world she left behind. An outstandingly beautiful collection.”

—Kimiko Hahn

“With exquisite lyricism Mihaela Moscaliuc recreates her childhood in Ceausescu’s Romania. The narrative of hardship and loss is arresting and poignant but it’s the flavors and smells, the rich evocation of folk medicines, the vivid descriptions of potions, ghosts, and ways to ward off demons that raise this first book to impressive heights.”

—Maxine Kumin
a poem from *Father Dirt*:

Good Friday

We wake to find two trout waggling in the sink.
The olive green polka dots and stripes of steel pink
plume father's threadbare blue handkerchief—
a jagged anemone tucked under the plug.
Soon, they lose all interest in the forefingers
my brother and I, perched on tools, dip and wiggle.

By noon, we've assembled scales into necklaces and fingernails.
Mother layers our roe jar with a fresh film of heather pink.
Garlic and parsley lard melt upwards and pelt
kitchen walls dressed top to bottom in magazine brides
(Gone with the Wind sweeping gowns, cascades of tulle,
pearl-beaded bodices, crinolines perfectly flounced),

and when we gather around the garnished fish
we hardly speak: the meticulous defleshing—a supplicant's work.
Mother presses her lips to father's cheek,
then smudges the deep coral with her wrist.

Father cuts the round heap of coarse corn porridge
—mămăliga — with a butter-combed string,
brushes Mother's fingers in the lemon & garlic dip,
parts the crisped sheath to let the succulent flesh cool.

Mother kneads each morsel of fish between her lips,
then entices us with the inspected bits
—For good luck, she says, which I take to mean
being first to spot the ration truck,
take the ninety stairs in double strides,
grab my brother, and hurdle to the doubling line.

I try to read my brother's eyes:
he dreams the next truck will haul not
bread, fish, or flour, but oranges—
hard sweet foreign fruit brighter than our full moon.
I cannot ask him if I've guessed:
We never say our wishes aloud,
ever name our fish.

Born and raised in Romania, Mihaela Moscaliuc
came to the United States in 1996 to complete graduate
work in American literature. Her poems, reviews,
translations, and articles have appeared in *The Georgia Review*,
*Prairie Schooner*, *TriQuarterly*, *New Letters*,
*Poetry International*, *Arts & Letters*, *Pleiades*, and
*Soundings*. She teaches at Monmouth University and
lives in Ocean, New Jersey.

publicity and events

Upcoming Events:

November 18-21, 2010: The Forum Poetry Festival
St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands

February 8, 2011: Stadler Poetry Center, Bucknell University