

Poetry

**Nicole Brossard Selections**

Nicole Brossard

Jennifer Moxley, translator

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“I do not believe that one becomes a writer to reinforce common values or common perspectives on reality,” writes Québécois poet, novelist, and essayist Nicole Brossard in this new and provocative compilation of poems gathered from a prolific forty-five-year career. This substantial collection, with its many new translations, allows English-speaking readers to enjoy an important voice in French-language avant-garde poetry.

Brossard began writing in the early 1960s, when, “everything was being questioned: education as well as social, political, religious, and cultural life.” As a lesbian poet, Brossard was impacted by the feminist movement, but unlike many of her English-speaking counterparts, she was intently interested in French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose studies asserted the fluid meanings of words. Her language moves between sensuality and deconstructionism in a luscious interplay between the abstract and the corporeal. In her poem, “Matter Harmonious Still Maneuvering,” she writes, “all has not been said because I know that I love absolutely in tongues the pink shells of meaning, the assiduous structures which graft ecstasies and something torrential in the midst of the voice and its performance, secret matter, rounder matter, matter like your sighs and still other liquids.”

Over three-fifths of the book is given to Brossard’s poetry, and her ludic use of sound and form are both gracefully captured in translation, as in this section from her book, *Museum of Bone and Water*:

*The etchings of Goya in Madrid  
crosshatch of bars convents ripple of cars  
dancing in the dark at high noon  
child’s fingers caught between vowels*

*and the wool of prayer mats and luxury*  
*simplicity of the verb*  
*to die and its ink*

A variety of additional texts provide other avenues of discovery. An introduction by poet and contributing translator Jennifer Moxley offers biographical notes, historical and cultural context, and an in-depth look at the poet's influences. Also included are several essays by the author and a 1993 interview, which outline Brossard's poetics, politics, and motivations.

The new translations in *Selections* are a provocative delight—from *Obscure Languages*: “Someday we will have to agree over violence and its long history. Its way of standing between us and the pure beauty of sky and sea, which we have forgotten to such a degree that our terrorized eyes can no longer make out, through the flood of thoughts, a horizon for our thoughts to move on.” Recommended for poetry lovers and scholars of women, lesbian, or Québécois studies.