

BOOK REVIEW: READING TEA LEAVES AFTER TRUMP, by Thelma T. Reyna
Review by Radomir Vojtech Luza
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This collection of poetry is a trailblazing ride through the rough and tumble world of politics, 2016-17. It underscores perhaps the most unique, intriguing Presidential election in this country's history, when a billionaire with no political experience defeated a woman nicknamed "the resume" by her political peers. Thelma T. Reyna masterfully captures the mood of the race from President Trump's announcement to run for the highest office in the land, to election day, and the state of the country afterwards during the first year of the Donald J. Trump Presidency.

This is no mere mortal reporting on an election. It is a dazzling poet at the height of her powers commenting on possibly the largest and most meaningful upset victory in the history of the world. Like a master playwright, Reyna pulls at our deepest emotions and beliefs. The melding of poetry and politics and art and reality give us, the readers, a bridge from the real to a reflection upon that reality. The author weaves newspaper articles with real and fictional characters to give the poetry a well-worn feel and a vivid picture of the fears, hopes, dreams, aspirations and everyday tragedies of Americans in both red and blue states under President Trump's watch.

Like a Greek or Shakespearean tragedy, the collection is arranged into five sections, akin to a playwright's "acts." The work here is electric, healing and illuminating, inspiring us to think not only about the state of the country, but the emotional and psychological state that we are in personally. The work is layered, deep and sincere. From the compelling, striking cover to the book's fierce examination of the Trump Presidency, the eight-time national literary award-winning author is on top of her game in this, her fifth book. She leaves no one, from ordinary citizens to President Trump himself, unrepresented in her poems and prose. If tea leaves continue to be read, they will certainly speak of the brilliant talent of this female wordsmith.
