

BOOK REVIEW

Thread of memory resonates throughout book of poems by Viriana Tkacz

"Three Wooden Trunks" by Viriana Tkacz. Sandpoint, Idaho: Lost Horse Press, 2022. 104 pp. ISBN: 9781736432365 (softcover), \$20.

by Olena Jennings

During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people felt sheltered within their four walls. The poet, Viriana Tkacz, composed the poems in "Three Wooden Trunks" during that time, looking for inspiration from the objects within her house. The poems in that book evoke memories of a different time, sometimes a different place. This is especially true in the section "Household Goods."

"Household Goods" includes the poem "Moments I Cannot Account For: The Book." It speaks of a book that changed the narrator's life. It is about the power of words and the power of the stories that are part of the household goods.

Ms. Tkacz, a theater director, uses many poems in her productions. She often translates them with poet Wanda Phipps. This is her first collection of original poetry, published by a press that boasts a Contemporary Ukrainian Poetry Series. The poems have been performed previously by Ms. Tkacz at such venues as The Ukrainian Museum in New York.

The book's title itself refers to the objects and memories we carry within us. The first is about when the narrator's family arrives in the United States with trunks. It's titled "The First Day," and it begins as follows: My mother arrived in N.Y./On May 18, 1949/With her parents/And three large wooden trunks.

The book is organized into sections, beginning with "New York Land" and ending with "A Neighborhood on Pause." The sections help to establish a story-line that readers can easily follow, putting accents on different points.



Viriana Tkacz

The narrative aspect of each poem shines. For example, "The Second Job" reveals a story about famine and survival that turns out to be "from life." The book is a Ukrainian immigration story, as well as a story of childhood and family.

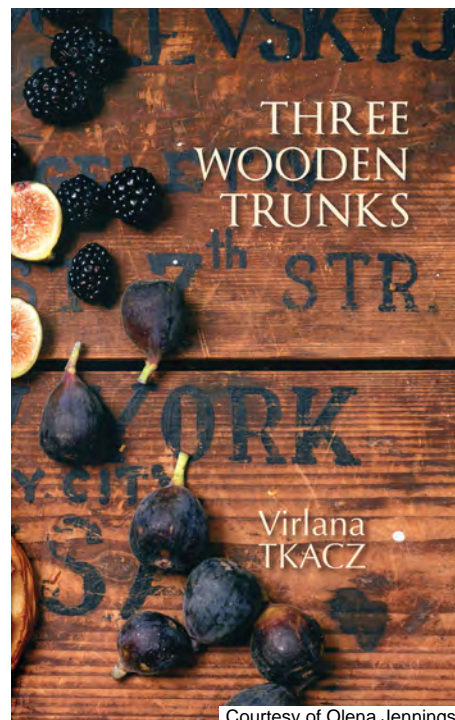
One immigration story can be found in the poem "The First Job," which addresses a time when the narrator's mother worked at the Dress Shoppe as a seamstress. One of the first things she bought with money she made working at the store was a new dress. It was a happy ending to all of her hard work.

The stories of childhood reveal a different sensibility as the narrator navigates the world in general and the American world at the same time. The American world includes the English language that twists on the narrator's tongue. The book also reveals the love of literature – which started to grow when the narrator was a child – in the story of the narrator's inadvertent obsession with "The Song of Igor's Campaign." The poem pursues her.

The stories of family focus on the narrator's mother and end with the loss of her mother's memory. This leads Ms. Tkacz to maintain those memories.

The book ends with COVID-19 and the hope that comes out of protest movements, such as Black Lives Matter. Readers will close the book by thinking about fighting for what is right. The glimmer of hope leads readers forward.

One of the most interesting aspects of this book is how one memory leads to



Courtesy of Olena Jennings

The poems in "Three Wooden Trunks" were composed by Viriana Tkacz during the COVID-19 pandemic.

another, and in turn leads the readers into their own memories. The poems sing with their rhythms, evoking verse that the narrator read in Ukrainian school. When the readers finish the book, they will likely want to step into another world of the author's creation.

The book is available from the publisher, Lost Horse Press, and various booksellers, such as Amazon.