

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Lynne Thompson: Three Poems

Lynne Thompson · Wednesday, November 23rd, 2016

The recipient of a Fellowship from the City of Los Angeles in 2015, Lynne Thompson is the author of three poetry chapbooks as well as two full-length collections, *Start With A Small Guitar* and *Beg No Pardon*, winner of the Perugia Press Book Award and the Great Lakes Colleges New Writers Award. A Pushcart Prize nominee, Thompson's work has recently appeared in the *North American Review, Prairie Schooner, and Ecotone*, as well as the anthologies, *Coiled Serpent, Poets Arising from the Cultural Quakes and Shifts of Los Angeles* and *Resisting Arrest: Songs to Stretch the Sky.* She is Reviews & Essays Editor for the literary journal *Spillway*.

Lynne Thompson by Alexis Rhone Fancher

Hammer & Pick

Long before I came along a dream Daddy told his boys he was glad for any kind of work and FDR with his New Deal politics was his guy always there If it wasn't for the WPA, my brothers say, they would have had nothing to eat peace and glory Daddy's talent to draw a bow down a fiddle wouldn't keep a roof over their heads, and he was happy to go into the sewers instead of waiting glad to slip below the earth before sunrise, to return to it in starlight Undeterred built a railroad swung the hammer & pick, the other men twice his size and strength, but Daddy did whatever he was told now he's done He didn't think of history. Hoped his kids would survive another potatoes-and-water supper

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Lost Spirits

Daddy was laughing but he sat quite still the day he told us what he had seen: an Obeah man with one eye, smiling. Daddy, young, played alone, as he often did, or with boys from the next plantation. He was laughing but sat quite still, his eyes brooding as he remembered racing up the hill he was forbidden until he came upon the Obeah man with one eye, smiling. We loved his stories of Papa Bois, of douens with backward-facing feet, of old traditions because he was laughing while sitting still and looking beyond a great distance, knowing between Papa Bois and death is a connection to the Obeah man with one eye, smiling, but he just looked at us then winked his left, said I ran away before anything wicked happened. Again he laughed but sat so still as he spoke to us of an Obeah man with one eye, smiling.

White Flight: Los Angeles, 1961

The woman in the window is a dead ringer for Donna Reed. Minutes ago, she sent her reasons for living safely off: her husband with his flask of milk, his Dragnet special; their daughter with Heidi-hefty curls of gold; their sons perched atop their Schwinns and armed with news about some preacher named King; her man's don't take chances drumming in her ears-avoid the windows and lock the doors. Across the street, one of the neighbor's boys (she can't tell them apart) re-mows the freshlymown lawn, transistor blaring Sam Cooke's Chain Gang—surely no good can come of that. The boy's father, his Caribbean-breeze-of-an-accent soft, leaves earlier than her man, and that irks. On the telephone wires above their houses, a flock of white-crowned sparrows raise a squawk sensing the presence of a blackbird, red hidden in its wings. How do they know

she asks later, *when it's time to fly? By their sense*, *of imminent doom*, her husband growls, spits, reading about a sit-in at a southern Woolworth's, a version of the 5-and-10 where his kids buy Coke and waxed lips. [alert type=alert-white]Please consider making a tax-deductible donation now so we can keep publishing strong creative voices.[/alert]

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