

In My Household, There Are (NOW) Many Colors

(a book review of *In Some Households
the King Is Soul* by Harry Brown)

by Linda Maxwell

“It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.”

— Henry David Thoreau

For anyone who has ever desired to live two years, two months, and two days at Walden Pond with Henry David Thoreau, a close consolation can be found in Harry Brown’s *In Some Households the King Is Soul* (Wind Publication—90 pages). For anyone who has ever wished for a Kentucky parallel to the simple but profound work of William Carlos Williams, fulfillment awaits in this five-section poetry collection.

Like Williams, Brown’s insight ranges from his simple three-lined

“Lo, Like a Rose”

—for Judy

goal or gold

once got

’tis gone (4)

to the complex “Sassy Amy’s New Spring Look; or, Put Money in Thy Purse”—forty-four lines of “gangling gambol” that make reference to *Othello* and Emily Dickinson (66-67). Just as Thoreau (who also gets a brief two-line poem concerning the pronunciation of his last name) found meaning in the virtues of beans and firewood, this farmer/professor/grandfather poet gathers wisdom from acorns and ladders.

Animals get the same prominence in this Kentuckian’s fresh perspective in print. Calling the discovery of a mother mouse nursing her young “Natural, miraculous and right” in “Upon a Quaker Lady; or, Sentimental Man,” even the fiercest hater of rodents is seduced to put down one’s broom and let the family continue, albeit in the garage cabinet (64). Through this outdoors-man’s sunlit lens, skunks, owls, and seagulls all become sacredly honorable, meaningful, and magnificent.

Those poems that linger the longest, however, are those that uplift our humanity. William Faulkner wrote that it is the poet’s privilege and duty to be a prop and pillar

of man. Yet, Faulkner also notes that this privilege never comes without courage. With his veteran persistence, this accomplished ECU poet creates a breakfast table metaphor that casts our growing children as bowls, our parental lives as pouring vessels, our direction guided by trusting wisdom and a lost gyroscope. "I'm riding out my adolescent storm . . . When winds hint, or distance grumbles, I visit" (46-47).

Elsewhere in the book, the ensemble cast includes a former Latin teacher (84-85), renowned fiddler Kenny Baker (52-53), Mr. P _____ (75-76), and Lucky Bert (77), all multi-dimensional, memorable reasons that keep me returning to these pages, each time more richly compassionate than when I first opened their cover.

