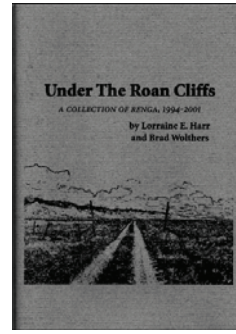


Under the Roan Cliffs

Reviewed by Moira Richards



***Under the Roan Cliffs: A Collection Of Renga, 1994 - 2001* by Lorraine E. Harr and Brad Wolthers. Mountains and Rivers Press, 815 E. 28th Avenue, Eugene, OR 07405, USA. mtns_rivers@hotmail.com, 2005. Small A5, 51 pages, \$9**

I feel, as I read through this collection, as if I'm sat between Lorraine and *Brad* on a porch rocker at sundown, hearing their recountings of tales and remembrances of daily life in rural Oregon. These fourteen collaborations read with the easy comfort of two people well-used to both writing in harmony together and also, to appreciating the ever-changing outdoors world around them.

You'll find bits of gossipy aside,

the old coverlet
with grandma's gingham patches
both daughters want it

*the way they sit sipping tea
you can tell they're arguing*

humour,

churning the cream to butter
going to gather eggs

*set to "run like hell"
if the twister suddenly
changes directions*

and lively repartee...

planting the bean seeds
one by one in the rutted line
each pale as the moon

*mud on my tile floor," she sighs
"means the yard work is getting done."*

There is a strong sense of times past in this part of the world, sometimes of the character-building type;

she sews by lamplight
each piece of gingham holds
its hard-times story

*on the log-cabin's clothesline
icicle-fringed patchwork quilt*

and other times, of the type best forgot

unrolling barbwire fencing
by the newly dug post holes

*"you don't want to know
what they used in place of rope
to hang that rustler."*

Traditional cherry blossom is eschewed in favour of a gardener's delight of different flower verses and the moon is included often in a variety of different guises...

*the shepherd is roused
dogs running their tight circles
keep the sheep bunched up*

a rift of buttermilk clouds
across the face of the moon

*in bright afternoon
"lady of the night" strolling
with no parasol*

Often, you'll be treated to displays of vivid imagery and skilled linking

a stab of lightening hits it—
opens the heart of the pine

*seagulls circling—
freshwater clam shells scattered
on the rocks below*