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The Doric Gruffalo, Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Axel Scheffler, translated into Doric by Sheena Blackhall; *Whit the Clockleddy Heard*, Julia Donaldson, illustrated by Lydia Monks, translated by James Robertson; Black & White Publishing, Edinburgh, 2015, 2015, 26pp., 27pp., £6.99 x 2.

Julia Donaldson kens hou tae scribe braw buiks fur bairns, an there can be nae mair skeely transcrievers nor Sheena Blackhall an James Robertson. *The Doric Gruffalo* ('Fit's a Gruffalo, then?'), rummles alang ahint the Scots an the Dundonian anes, an it's geyan upsteerin tae see sik buiks, no juist in a bairn's ain leid, but in a bairn's ain tune. It isnae easy tae transcribe verses an haud tae aw the rhymes an rhythms, but Sheena Blackhall daes a skinklin joab:

"For will ye tryst wi him?"
"Here, by thon steens,
An his favourite maet is roast tod's beers"

Sin the Gruffalo stories hae lang been a favourite o bairns, nae glossary is necessaire. Unkent Scots vocabills suin cheynge tae kent anes, an kent anes are legeetimised bi bein prentit oan a page. Whit better wey is there fur bairns tae lear tae yaise their ain leid undoutandly?

Whit the Clockleddy Heard is anither pure delicht, fu o repetetion, beasts' grunches an squaiks an hoos, coamic seetuations an baddies that are sae glaikit they hae tae git made a ned o. Ilka page has a clockleddy wha is whiles deeficult tae fin, but sic braw fun tae luik fur gif ye're a fower year-auld! An the clockleddy, the ainly craitur that disna mak a soun, is the seelent 'hairt heroicall' o the hail ongauns:

"BLEAH!" said the yowe
"WOWFF" said the dug
And the fermer cheered, and baith cats purred
But the clockleddy didnae sae yin wee wurd.

Wi buiks lik thae twa, we nicht een stert tae howp that Willie Soutar's wuiden cuddy can brek intae a binner.

Ann Matheson

The Poetry Hat, *Piano Lesson*; *Flat Out*; *Poems & Tales in Scots & English*, Lochlands, Maud, 2015, 2015, 2016, 38pp., 26pp. 28pp.; *Cheerybye Eden: Tales an Owersetts in Scots & English*; *The Cloud Collector: Poems & Story in Scots & English*; *The Wound Man: Poems in Scots & English*, Lochlands, Maud, 2016, 2015, 2015, 27pp., 30pp. 34pp.; all titles by Sheena Blackhall, £3.00.

At the back o *Cheerybye Eden* is a wheen o reviews o Sheena Blackhall's wark. Alan Spence cries her 'probably the most prolific poet in Scotland, and one of the most rarely talented', while Joy Hendry claims that

she has 'the lyric voice of the early MacDiarmid'. There's nae doot that, as Derrick McClure says, she has extended 'the scope of Doric poetry' and also 'enlarged its literary range by using it for short stories and novellas...'. In the abuin-mentioned pamphlet is 'The Arching Scythe: A Biography of a Scots Childhood', which gies a fair insicht intil the makar, wha was born in 1947 at Cuperstone Nursing Home and wis, according til her mither Winifred, 'the ugliest bairn on the ward'. It's a bittie sad that Winifred, a 'highly intelligent woman', didna fufill her ambitions tae be a publisht author or a teacher. Her faither, Charles Middleton, didna get tae extend his education either. Par for the course in thae days, mair's the peetie. They're o byornar interest, the 22 pages that bring her til Primary 7 and the dreided 11+, and there are fine poems amang the prose. At the end we hae this laist verse o 'Homage to the Ancestors':

Many wombs opened before my coming.
Quiet door in the spirit house on the moor
Where grandmother's ghost is weaving a wooden cradle
So she may nurse my bones

Lovely stuff.

I dinna hae eneuch room tae gie muckle mair. As a matter o interest gin ye'd read aa o her poems they are noo available at www.poemhunter.com and her website is <http://smiddleton4.wix.com/sheena-blackhall>. I'll feenish wi the first stanzas o the eponymous 'Flashback (Barn door Fadlydyke)', tae shaw hoo fine her touch is in the Doric, in case ye dinna already ken:

Forkit lichtnin cracks the Heivens in twa
Lichtnin the pit-merk ferm, celestial fire
Aa nicht the storm dinged on...a hard doonfaa
Ram stam the rain, stottin aff barn-cum byre

Flashback, afore the snawy hoolet screeched
Laird o the teem derk crannies o the barn
Afore the chaumer rikk deed in the lum
Far jackdaas reest noo, sentinels o sharn

A rare talent indeed.

Raymond Vettese

Scottish Spleen, eds. Tom Hubbard, James W. Underhill and Stewart Sanderson, Tapsalteerie, Alford, 2015, 33pp., £5.00.

Ye'll no be disappyntit wi a keek at *Scottish Spleen* (2015). It's like ane o thae fantoush boxes o gulsochs, craftit by maister chocolatiers: sma, delitesome an gausie, wi a strang gust o a Cadbury's flake; aye wi a preein o the fameeliar. If aa the worthies in ane o Brueghel's landwart pentins hud a soond track, *Scottish Spleen* is whit, I imagine, wid be the clatter. Fae Belgium o the 16th century, tae Paris o the 19th century, an oan tae Scotland

the-day, fowk, by fegs, haena cheenged muckle at aa: ‘... Baudelaire still speaks to us, here, today ...’ (‘A word about the originals and refanglin them’, James W. Underhill). This translation intae Scots o Baudelaire’s *Le Spleen de Paris* (1869), sets the poetic prose alight; it draws ye in, getting a sicht o the innermaist myndin o fowk kent weel. The auld wifie in Derrick McClure’s ‘The Carlin’s Wanhope’ (‘*Le Desespoir de la Vielle*’) maks yer heart sair: ‘Ach, wae’s me for us auld dune carlins, the days o our pleasing is aa gane by, e’en tae saikless bairns; an we jist gie the grue tae the littleens we ettle tae luve’. In ‘The Jampher’ (‘*Un Plaisant*’), translatit by James Robertson, ye can feel the cauld air, and sense the thrang o the streets oan Hogmanay: ‘... a bourach o glaur an snaw, crossed by a thousand caurs, skinklin wi trantlums and whigmaleeries, heezin wi wants an waes, a toff beglovit and buffed up ...’

The funniest is shuirly ‘The Dug and the Scent-Bottle’ (‘*Le Chien et le Flacon*’) by Tom Hubbard. Mony believe thit Baudelaire lat daub at the wey his wark wis guidit by fowk he felt didnae hae the wittins tae appreciate it. Here, we hae: ‘... you’re juist the sib ti the GREAT SCOTTISH PUBLIC, that wullnae thank ye fur the finer things in life, but wad raither ye gien thaim a personally selectit pile o shite’. In ‘Get Yersel Fu’ by Walter Perrie and ‘Be Du Fu’ by Christie Williamson (fae ‘*Enivrez-Vous*’), we hear the wunerfu vyces come tae life in twa o the mony deialecs uised in Scotland. Perrie gies us the glaise soond o ‘The Patter’, and Williamson, the lithe soond o Shetland: ‘So that ye dinna feel the hellish load o Time that breks your shouthers an blatters ye doon ...’ / ‘Sood du no bear dat waett o Time apo dy shoodirs at brukks an benkles de tae da grund ...’. The Latinate versions o Baudelaire misses the evendoun o the Scots wirds fund in aa its deialecs, an the Inglis translations jist disna pit ower the byspale o the oreeginal. Uisin Scots gies a vievely insicht tae the wark o Charles Baudelaire, an *Scottish Spleen* is suirly aaready a Scots leid classic. Sae, aa the braw scribevers wha haes translatit sae weel: ye aa need tae git yokit, and dae muckle mair o it!

Lisa Simmons

The McFables: Selected Aesop’s Fables in Scots, Glenn Muir, A McStorytellers, Publication, Amazon, 2015, 34pp.,£2.75.

The McFables (2015) by Glenn Muir is a gessarant yairn awa o the fables o Aesop in the Scots leid. Muir’s Scots brings the tales tae life an maks them even mair gleg an bricht tae tice in awbody wi the wyse yairns. Readin them oot loud in yer heid or tae ithers is whaur the magic lies; as they screed aff the page, fou o life, aye findin relevance tae the wey we speak the-day. In *The Dunkey’s Shadie*: ‘...The Owner said ‘Ye are a sado, [...]... (p.18)

I wis fair disappyntit at the lack o drawins or pentins tae accompany the text, but mebbe Muir will hae thon in mynd for his neist buikie, an I for ane, canna wait! Muir haes got the grip o Aesop’s fables an baith young an auld will git a hantle o pleisur oot o it. Ye canna help but feel for Andy and the lion in this tale o bravery, loyalty an freendship whin aa is lost an agin them, in the likes o *Androcles and the Lion*:

... ‘Jings’ said Andy tae the Lion

'Thon limp is awfie bad.
'I can see a muckle hawthorn spike.
'Here, I'll get it oot yer pad ... ' (p. 6)

Fowk are no suir wha Aesop wis, bit his story will appeal tae mony, as a slave wha wis flung aff a cliff for chorin some piece o siller, appairntly. But whit is niver in dout, is the stories he telt at haes hauden oan efter aa this time; aye bidin true tae the spirit an lair o aa fowk, nae maitter whaur they come fae. This buik cairries oan in the tradeetion o story-tellin, wi yairns at disnae tire. Glenn Muir is a true talesman, for the 21st century, in the Scots leid.

Lisa Simmons