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The Troll and the Kist o Gowd, Julia Donaldson, ill. David Roberts, Translatit intae Scots by James Robertson, Itchy Coe and Black & White Publishing, Edinburgh, 2016, 32pp., £6.99.

Wi a cast o glaikit pirates, a gaullimaufry o canny beasts, an a bauld but blate troll that bides aneath a brig, this is shair tae be a winner wi bairns. Braw picturs bi David Roberts mak it easy tae unnerstaun new wirds an ken the names o aw the craitors that teeter-totter ower the troll's brig, tho I dinna unnerstaun whit-wey aw the beasts got their Scots names, excep the mappie. This Inglis rabbit is ma ainly reservation, for the Scots is braw an naitrel, wi the kin o intimacy that scrievin fur bairns needs tae hae. The ettercap skelters, the moose fitters, the rabbit boonces, an the puir troll shauchles as he walks the pirate plank afore he's telt tae 'Loup!'. An it's geyan encouragin tae see Sophie the pirate, even wi a herrdo lik Marge Simpson's. The picturs are a pure delicht, wi the kin o wee details that weans luv an learn frae; lik the ettercap wi eicht een, an the mowdiewort wearin its specs oan the end o its neb.

Ann Matheson

The Glasgow Gruffalo, Julia Donadson, ill. Axel Scheffler, Translated intae Glaswegian by Elaine C. Smith, Black & White Publishing, Edinburgh, 2016, 27pp., £6.99.

An whit-wey no the Glesca Gruffalo? It's rerr tae see no juist owersettins intae Scots, but intae different dialects as weill. This latest Gruffalo ane has aw the coamic patter an colour o the ithers, but I hae ane or twa reservations anent the owersettin. 'Is', 'wis', an 'whit's' shairly dinna need tae be spelt phonetically, as 'iz', 'wiz', 'whitz', kis that's hou ye say thaim onywey. Tae me, sic spellin maks Scots seem mair fremmit. Ither wirds spelt phonetically had me scartin ma heid a bit, tae: 'evdy' (everybody), 'afftae', 'erza', 'funna', 'goattie' are ither dooble wirds that ye unnerstaun in contex, but dinna mak a loat o sense oot o it. An, in some cases, a wee bit o eident editin wad hae been a help: 'Heh, d'ye hear that, wee wan, in they leaves up ahead?'. The best bits o this buik are the braw Glesca idioms that awbody can recognise, lik 'Catch ye later, wee barra!', 'highrise treehoose', 'shot the craw' an 'Gonnae no tell me erza gruffalo in sight!'

Ann Matheson

Cleikum, Poems in Scots & English; Crossing the Bridge, Poems & Tales in Scots & English, 2016, 29pp; Dimitri Keaw, Poems & Tales, 2017, 18pp; In Faldy's Wood, Poems & Tales

in *Scots & English, 2013, 30pp*; *The Seely Howe, Poems & playlet in Scots & English, 2016, 22pp.*; Sheena Blackhall, *Lochlands, Maud*, all titles £3.00.

There's nae doot that Sheena Blackhall is a prolific poet, mebbe the maist prolific that we hae, an there's nae doot that ower the years she's brocht us a rowth o guid stuff. The pamphlet *Cleikum* minds us that the Cleikum Ceremony is held at Innlerleithan in July, an re-enacts the moment whan the Deil is hookit by the saint an driven frae the toon. Sae, in 'St Ronan an the Deil':

The Deil cam roon the Border Lan
An he wis boastin brawly
Quo he 'I'll catch masel a saunt
And claim his soul richt surely'

The Deil, acoorse, is scunnert: 'An noo the Innerleithan fowk / Act oot the Deevil's shame'.

I like Blackhall's wark best whan she maks this kinna verse, but in *Crossing the Bridge* there is a muckle deep sorrow, dedicated as it is til the memory of her first-born son, Morven Coutts Blackhall, wha deed in July laist year at the age of forty. Tae yird a bairn is shairly the sairest o things for onie mither, an in the poems here is a dool that gangs ower aa the earth

You crossed the bridge too soon
Who would have thought one room
Could hold such pain?

(‘At the Rest Room’).

Or, frae 'At Coull Kirkyaird':

Ye've jinked the mools an ye've skipped awa
Stepped oot o yer mortal claes
Aroon lies anely the aisse an stoor
Dry banes o fowks' wardly days

that ends wi an appeal tae a Gaelic spirit, the 'Washer at the Ford': 'May the time be short afore I see / The Bean Nighe rinse her shift'.

Owersettin is anither thing that Sheena Blackall dis weel. In the pamphlet *Dimitri Keaw* there's verse bi the Australian poet Mark O'Connor, which made me smile wi mindin:

*Latin is a leid
As deid as deid can be ...*

It killt the auncient Romans

An noo it's killin me...

(frae 'Lingua Romana'; italics the author)

As ever, there's nae eneuch room for ocht but sma glisks o whit ilka title contains. *In Faldy's Wood* is a fine walin. An auld freen o mine an monie, the late Dr. George Philp, gets a braw lament, gin that's no an oxymoron. It stairts:

Ye've slippit awa tae the Lan o the Leal
Faith Geordie, ye'll kittle them there, man
For ye'll aye hae a ploy on the hotter or byle
Ye was niver a chiel tae be still, man!

Hoo true. *The Seely Howe* taks its title frae a North East rhyme that tells o the fairy folk be-in expelled frae a sheltered glen bi a local wizard. The saicont verse, 'Coull Cemetery', gings:

The burn that wynds through the seely howe
Spikks wi the voice o prophecy
Tea planters, dominies, fermin cheils
They aa come hame in the end, said she ...

As Sheena Blackhall writes in the acknowledgements: 'My son Morven's ashes were buried in the family lair at Coull, in the Howe o Cromar, overlooked by Lochnagar and the Druid circle of Tomnaverie'. A sad note tae end wi, mebbe, but the sense o the lang dreemin o the fowk is deep in her poems an deep in her hairt.

Raymond Vettese