

*The Gype: Poems in Scots and English*, Sheena Blackhall, Lochlands, Maud, 2017, 22pp., £3.00.

Sheena Blackhall's curns o poesie are aye a fouthie variorum o Scots an Inglis, elegiac an coamic, vieve glisks o the past an social commentar on the here an nou, willyart craiteurs an fowk o aw disposicionunes. The Scots poems nearly ayeways seem mair sparkie nor the Inglis anes that whiles kythe as a tait flett alongside the cantie birr o the Doric; but there are exceptionunes. 'Dia de los muertos' ends in a hert-ruggin couplet anent her deid laddie:

'If candles could light his way back from the world of shades /  
I'd plant a path of them through fields of glass'.

In shairp contrast, 'The Earthquake' (the Heilan ane o 5 August 2017) is stappit wi shortsome irony:

A yowe in Ardnamurchan  
Lost two two teeth and a fleeciful of fleas  
When the earthquake struck

On Ben Ledi two tourists  
Feeling the earth move beneath them  
Thought that the Highland air  
Had boosted their libido.

'The Earthquake', along wi a wheen o the Doric poems, are raelly performance pieces, cryin oot tae be scriftit. Amang thaim are 'The Gype' whase life is a wee windae on social histore, 'Brither Masons', an the glegly ironic 'Time Warp: 1897-2017', whaur she describes, wi the transmogrification o her great grandsire's wee shop intae the Corner Tree Café, hou: 'Scones rest in a birdcage. Vintage widden boxies / Haud chintzy furliegourums'.

There's naethin that escapes the eident een o this makar. Burds, beasts, bairns, birth, daith, natur an art, an a hantle o ither subjectks, jostle their wey through the pages. Aiblins, there are twa-thrie poems, lik 'Caribbean Paradise' an 'Old School Ties', that are a tait wersh-like, but the quality o the ithers maks up for it.

**Ann Matheson**

*The Tale o the Wee Mowdie that wantit tae ken wha keeched on his heid*, Werner Holzwarth and Wolf Erlbruch, Scots translation by Matthew Mackie, Tippermuir Books, Perth, 2017, 20pp., £6.99.

There's a puckle braw Scots buiks fir bairns an young readers oot there. *The Gruffallo's Bairn*, the owresettings o Asterix an Tintin, an on tae Matthew Fitt's furst Harry Potter, oot last year. There's a kist o riches noo bein biggit here, sae soon young fowk fae early bairnhuid richt through tae late teens will be able tae finn a buik that's baith in Scots an o tremendous quality. But the kist is far fae stappit fu. There's need o a fouth o tap-level buiks in ilka dreil, sae Scots can haud its heid up as a leid o learnin an fun, an gie fowk o ilka age an ability a level tae enter in at.

Matthew Mackie's *The Tale o the Wee Mowdie that wantit tae ken wha keeched on his heid* is juist whit yon hauf-toom kist is needin. This is an owresettin o a German original, furst furthset aa the wey back in 1989. Yet aa thae years havnae made it stoorie in the least. The story is fun an weird. Matthew's Scots skinkles on the pages, gien the tale a new smeddum.

The tale is ane o the queerer anes ye'd gie tae a bairn. A wee mowdie howks himsel up oot the yird tae hae a keek at the sun. Oot o nae place, a muckle daud o keich faas oot the lift an splats on his heid. The wee mowdie is then up an oot the grun, ragin, an breenges aff tae finn oot just wha it was that keeched on his heid. He speirs at grumphs, doos, flees an aa sorts o craiteurs, afore airtin-oot the culprit an gettin his revenge. Ye'll fin nae spoilers here aboot wha did the deed, sae awa oot an buy a copy, an gie it tae a pal, a Scots learner or a bairn fir a birthday. Quality gear sic as this maun be supportit.

**Alistair Heather**