

## The Art of Noticing: Tessa Ransford, *Made in Edinburgh* Review

Open the pages of *Made in Edinburgh: Poems and Evocations of Holyrood Park* and you will step out of the warmth of your home and onto the craggy volcanic rock of the Arthur's seat, the capital's brooding guardian. The poems of Tessa Ransford's collection are crisp and clear, depicting the park and its inhabitants with a careful acuteness that transforms the act of noticing to an art. Anyone who knows Edinburgh will find familiarity in this subject matter, and residents will knowingly smile over the Day of Summer:

*Foreign students from the language schools  
kept on their cardies and fleeces*

*but lily-white Scottish lads began  
to take off their shirts and  
sit on steps*

A fair-weathered friend of the park myself, rarely visiting outside of the annual New Year's day family outing, my excursions to Arthur's seat have been as infrequent as they are unprompted. Ransford is a more constant companion than I am however, and the collection shows a commitment to the park in all of its guises, revealing more than just a summer romance: a decade spanning dialogue from 1987- 2014. But far from being a romantic's rendering of the area, *Made in Edinburgh* is a work that celebrates the park in a variety of moods from the playful Jackdaws:

*jackwife  
jackknife*

*little chat  
this and that*

*latest trends  
jack friends*

to the pensive Ambience:

*what of the singing thrush I stopped to see  
and where the yellow-hammer, and their nests?*

It is not only nature in these poems; the margins of this collection are inhabited by a miscellany of mythical characters, from the 'Dragons of Climate Change' to Merlin himself. The introductory poem is a musing on mysterious ancient Romans ('*Why did the Romans go?*') who lurked in the shadow of the Crag, an opening that is reminiscent of Edwin Morgan's pre-historic start to *Cathures*.

Beginning in the harsh ground of a gloomy Edinburgh winter, this book moves with the seasons and gradually blooms into life. Ever the fair-weather friend I lingered over the Summer section longest, pausing (like the characters it depicts) on 11 July tête-à-tête:

*It is evening  
they do not move for an hour*

*their shadows move*

*The boy and girl converse  
heads together, feet apart.*

Pauses come naturally here as the captivating photographs of Michael Knowles compliment the rhythmic ebb of Tessa's poetry. That the pictures do not appear in colour is a minor shortcoming, for which their vividness more than makes up.

*Made in Edinburgh* is an impressive collection of over 70 poems executed with that travel-writer's flair that leaves you with the yearning to explore. So next time I'm in Edinburgh, it's unsurprising where I'll be.

*My home is equally in my head and I seek it  
always, not allowing myself to rest.*

(from *Homeseker*)

Amy Shipway