into the poem, *into* the state of consciousness, where it becomes integral to the poem's dynamic being. In contrast, Clark brings the poem, the state of consciousness, *to* the natural world—at a particular place and in a particular instant or over a particular span of time, so that the poem becomes the shape of a consciousness apprehending an environment. The poem's formal variations and the flow of its thematic relations are, in some senses, a physical embodiment of that encounter with the natural world—part mimetic artifact, part map or reproduction. But Clark is careful to render the adaptive shifts of consciousness as much as he brings forth the elements of its world. Each poem, then, is unique in this work of attunement—less address or remembrance than experience, something the reader will confront as event.

As a whole, *The Path to the Sea* is vitally various with such attunement. Many of the single-page poems can be read alone, but they also function within a larger sequence. Though all the poems are short—from three to fourteen lines in length, and from two to eleven words per line—the potential experiences in each are manifold. Given the importance of each word's motility, it is not surprising that Clark uses no capitals, no periods, and only the occasional comma. His line breaks often turn the impact and implications of the sentences that pass through them, so that the balance of meaning changes as readers make their way down the page. There are many turnings in this text—both with respect to formal shifts and to turnings of focus within the content of the poems. So that when we arrive "in an access of brightness," it is not only the "brightness" that draws our focus, but also the "access" that opened it to view. Clark's attention to such shifts allows us to participate with him, to practice the endless corrections that look—perhaps, from the outside, or from a distance—like equilibrium. Reading his work, we learn to stay attentive to what the slightest material change on the page changes in us.

Rusty Morrison

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Geraldine Monk, *Escafeld Hangings*. Sheffield: West House, 2005. 128pp. $28

While it's often inadvisable to look to a poet's prose as guide to her poems, Geraldine Monk's "incomplete mapping" of her poetry on West House Book's website goes a long way toward illuminating her recent volume, *Escafeld Hangings*. On the site she describes her general approach as an "emotional geography of place"; in this book it takes the form of a meditation on Mary, Queen of Scots and her fourteen-year imprisonment in Sheffield (*Escafeld* in Anglo-Saxon), where Monk has lived since 1984. In its most successful

moments, *Escafeld Hangings* turns Monk's encounter with Mary into a rich set of lyric tropes about history and mutability, which reflect back and forth between the women's lives. At its weakest, Mary becomes a mere historical curiosity, her story and its setting a fetish that offers only the vague pleasures of myth and mysticism.

On its surface *Escafeld Hangings* is a simple request to "consider hard this castle beneath our time." (Appropriately *Escafeld Hangings* dwells in gothic conventions: ghosts, relics, secret tunnels, and castles.) The poetic mode is a form of literary reportage: part documentary, part personal experience, part anecdote. In an exemplary piece early in the volume, Monk sees Mary's Sheffield through a contemporary lens:

> At a rough guess the foundations
> are under the fish and meat markets
> and extend beneath the law courts.
> Within these precincts the Scottish Queen schemed
> and plotted and ordered the latest
> French fashions
> suffering
> agonies of ages—
> . . . . . .
> Let us pause before
> the bread baps, spare ribs,
> crab sticks and pigs trotters
> consider hard this castle beneath our time
> and plastic shopping bags:
>
> ("Downing the Days")

The aim, I suppose, is for historical transparency: to see the past in the present, as filmmakers use dissolves to blend time periods. But this is dangerous territory, for the technique often depends on hackneyed sentiment, as here with the appearance of the plastic shopping bags. The image wants to shock us out of an historical reverie, but the device is obvious and the effect generic.

Escafeld Hangings improves as Monk abandons such devices and engages the dramatic monologue. In the section "Unsent Letters," Mary writes letters to her sister Elizabeth in a sixteenth-century vocabulary shot through with twenty-first-century references (airports, tennis's Williams sisters). Though the sequence begins inauspiciously, by the end Mary has adopted Monk's gift for evocative phrases and juxtapositions:

> Water. Sea anemones. Creature-me emotional in deep worry-dives. Sea scythes. Scissors to my land-tongue. I am sub rosa.
>
> ("Points of Colour")

The more Monk impresses her style on Mary, the more revelatory the language becomes, and the better the poetry.

Mary's imprisonment, in Monk's treatment, comes to stand for Monk's own solitary practice, and by implication, poetry's interiority. Given this correspondence, it is notable what Monk does not do with Mary: she does not use her to promote a personal agenda or as a vehicle in a journey of personal discovery. Whatever license Monk takes is so evident that Mary survives intact, and thus Monk's concerns—credit card rip-offs, "balding conglomerate brains," "the Euphrates / in conflict"—affect us on their own terms. She comes away from the encounter with a sophisticated lyric mode that insists on the immediate awareness of material history, not unlike the mythic methods of the high modernists. The scope is smaller, of course, but the theory is the same.

Like Pound and Joyce, Monk dwells on the magical connections between all things corporeal—bodies, words, everyday objects, plants—as they exist through time. In this arena Monk is at best. From "Shed," the volume's final suite of poems:

> feely
> thinga
> with roots
> skinny fibres
> forensic thin a live
> stain the *what* inside linen
> in a thread of so lovely writ
> flimsy as nerve tissue cumulus
> when angels cross the noon chant
> Angelus gushty ups the gymslip shiver.
> ("The Comforting")

The syntax is beautifully reckless, as is Monk's overall feeling for spelling, puns, and neologisms (particularly in "Mary through the Looking Glass," a suite also included as an audio CD that accompanies the volume). You emerge as from a fall, with ghostly notions of the "*what* inside linen" and "angels" crossing the "noon chant." *Escafeld Hangings* exhibits a rich and wide-scoped lyricism modeled on the senses and dependent on intuition, much like "A surge through / the marrow bone / picks up the migration of / animal spirits" ("Amble").

John Lennox

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