

represent those of all Indigenous women, as has happened with Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed*. Even today, in the University of Manitoba bookstore, *Halfbreed* is on the shelves in the Social Work section; the book is considered a text for social workers rather than a piece of literature in its own right, as if Campbell's experiences are those of all Indigenous women.

Acoose discusses some work of two white Canadian authors who perpetuate racist stereotypes of Indigenous women in their works, Margaret Laurence, and William Patrick Kinsella. She makes links between the degrading portrayals of Indigenous women in literature, and the "cultural attitudes that encourage sexual, physical, verbal, or psychological violence against Indigenous women," such as the violence perpetrated against Helen Betty Osborne and countless others.

When a member of the colonizing group writes about the oppressed group, the perpetuation of stereotypes is nearly inevitable. The lived reality of an oppressed people differs vastly from what the colonizers *perceive* to be their reality. The imagination is not free, as Marlene Nourbese Philip has noted, but rather serves the prevailing interests of the WECCP. Laurence and Kinsella both write about Indigenous women from a colonizer's perspective.

"Kinsella exhibits no social consciousness when he exploits Indigenous peoples' misery, nor does he provide a social, political, or economic context for the miserable conditions he constructs around his Indigenous characters." This effectively implies that the conditions in which Indigenous people live are of their own choosing, thus relieving the WECCP of any responsibility for its violent attempts at cultural and literal genocide of Indigenous peoples. Acoose focuses on Kinsella's short story "Linda Star" in which the title character is an Indigenous woman who is a prostitute and is in an abusive relationship. By failing to provide a context for Linda Star's life,

and by superimposing WECCP values on her actions, Kinsella both implicitly judges and condemns her behaviour, while implying that the conditions of her life are self-determined.

"Laurence, on the other hand, writes with compassion and an understanding (albeit restricted by the period in which she was writing) of the complex issues of racism and classism." While her portrayal is sympathetic, Laurence nonetheless continues the white literary tradition of portraying Indigenous women characters as "creatures of nature, temptresses, or femme fatales, Indian princesses, easy squaws, or suffering, helpless victims." Acoose examines Laurence's story "The Loons" in which the Indigenous character, Piquette Tonnerre, is viewed through the WECCP lens of the protagonist, a young, white, christian, woman. Throughout the story, the white protagonist acts, thinks, reflects, lives—while Piquette is the object of action and reflection, and is constructed as a victim. The story is saturated with WECCP attitudes, both those of Laurence (despite her attempts at understanding) and those of the protagonist and her mother. As with Kinsella's work, there is no context of colonial history which would put Piquette's life and suffering into perspective. Rather, the tone of the story condemns Piquette for the "choices" she has made, and the "vices" which finally killed her.

In spite of the WECCP's past and current attempts to stifle and destroy them, "Indigenous peoples' multiple and distinct cultures have been transmitted from one generation to another" through various means. As the colonized people of this continent, Indigenous peoples have different ways of resistance, one of them being through writing. Maria Campbell's *Halfbreed* was a pivotal work in terms of breaking the silence which obscured the lived realities of Indigenous women's lives. While Campbell's autobiographical work does not represent all Indigenous women's lives, it provided encouragement and inspiration to many Indigenous wo-

men writers, such as Jeanette Armstrong, Beth Cuthand, Lee Maracle, and Beatrice Culleton.

Halfbreed was the first work by an Indigenous woman to name the oppressor and the tools of oppression, using the oppressor's language. As such, it paved the way for more Indigenous women to continue the work of decolonization. Acoose concludes her book with a discussion of the many Indigenous women and men who have reclaimed the power of naming and self-definition, and who are actively engaged in resisting colonial stereotypes and violence through their writing. In this way, they are reclaiming the humanity which the WECCP denies them. It is vital for Indigenous peoples to be rooted in their cultural traditions as they name the pain of colonization and ascribe responsibility for that pain.

AFTER PARADISE

Janis Rapoport. Toronto: Simon and Pierre, 1996.

THIS IMAGINED PERMANENCE

nathalie stephens. Toronto: Gutter Press, 1996.

by Eva C. Karpinski

Despite all their stylistic, tonal, and thematic differences, Janis Rapoport and Nathalie Stephens, the authors of these two volumes of poetry, seem to have one thing in common: they are both fascinated by boundary crossing. For Rapoport, a disciplined and seasoned poet, the territory that beckons her imagination lies in the shadowy areas between life and death, the material and the spiritual, the metaphysical limits of prehistory and afterlife. On the other hand, Stephens, who appears to be the more iconoclastic of the two, boldly assaults the borders between self and other, sanity and madness, lesbian desire and creativity.

Rapoport's fifth collection, *After*

Paradise, includes four cycles of poems: "Borders," "In the Carousel of Space," "Ghosts & Angels," and "After Paradise." "Borders" has been inspired by Rapoport's travels in Nova Scotia. She (re)creates landscapes turning into mindscapes, where things lose their familiarity and, in the words of the epigraph, start to "recall another state of being." Confronting the elemental forces of nature, the speaker reverts to feeling "unknown, unthought, unformed." A summer tourist and a fossil hunter, trying to follow the road signs with her companion, she becomes submerged in the world of archetype and the subconscious, populated by mythological beasts such as crowned serpents:

Their wings could mash the surface into waves,
 their mouldy breath or glance
 drown the swimming child.
 Such creatures have been sighted here
 only in the minds of visitors
 such as ourselves
 who have viewed fossilized basilisk tracks and barbed tail drags
 in museums, on beaches and for sale in shops.
 ("Purcell's Pond")

She foregrounds the ironic contrast between the stubborn indifference of the past and the tourists' (and the poet's) continued "hammering and calling out to whatever lived here, and died, by its perfect though unremembered name." The same irony pervades "Blue Beach," another poem from this series:

The cliff is falling, exposing more fossils. You're happy,
 though not particularly that I'm underneath.
 With each rockfall there is more for you to pry out,
 more to split open, more to shove under the impatience of that brass microscope.

Her exploration of the cartography of the mind ends with a beautiful poem called "Boreal," where the ex-

perience of canoeing down the river is magically transformed into the archetypal journey through life and the cosmos.

The next section, "In the Carousel of Space," which borrows its motto from Gwendolyn MacEwen's *Afterworlds*, often reveals Rapoport's delight in humour and surprising effects of language. In such poems as "Ivory," "Pewter," and "Amber," she experiments with the haiku form. She offers us a playful recipe for "Gossip Ragout." The poem "At the Horse Races: Breeders' Cup Day" is a funny attempt to incorporate as many horses' names as possible into its narrative frame. In the section "After Paradise" there is one more poem woven out of such ready-mades or "language fossils"—mystery book titles). Even the poem in memory of Adele Wiseman, "Into the Peaceable Kingdom," relies on essentially comic effects.

"Ghosts & Angels" is more sombre and reflective. It is a gothic combination of vignettes and monologues, an orchestration of voices that recall dramatic events and deaths, pain and suffering refusing to go away. The haunting presence of sad ghosts is counterbalanced by the whole constellation of angels whose presence we project on "what we most fear, or most desire." In her incantations and litanies to these celestial creatures with angelic and demonic attributes, Rapoport conjures up compassionate angels, guardians and witnesses to births and deaths, protectors and avengers. Her poems, speaking the language of secret wisdom or ancient and new superstition, express the longing for the presence of the sublime in ordinary human life.

The poetic pieces in the last sequence, "After Paradise," seem to be more consciously politicized by exploring issues around gender, which is signalled by the title reference to the Fall. The most memorable poems here talk about women burning cookies and Barbie dolls; about a tragic distance separating a daughter from her father and her brother, whose murderous emblems are the gun and dead animals; or—in the aptly called

"Misinterpretation of Dreams"—about the ever-present legacy of misogyny, not only Freudian but also popular. For Rapoport, her poems are gifts to others—and there are at least nine names of people to whom different pieces in this volume are dedicated and with whom we share the unique pleasure of their reading.

Nathalie Stephens' imagination and her poetic strategies are more verbal than visual. In *This Imagined Permanence*, her second collection of poems, the language abounds in "unpoetic" things (donut shops, cigarette butts, coffee stains) and mixed registers, ironically juxtaposing the trivial and the philosophical, or the mundane and the abstract. *Gaze, dream, passion, skin, and lust* are key words in understanding her poetics of writing lesbian subjectivity, lesbian desire and creativity. She registers tensions involved in being a poet, a lover, and a voyeur: a desire to reach forward and touch and the inability to make contact; the fear of leaving and the fear of commitment; the attractions of choosing absence and choosing life:

To exist on my own terms. Without regard for boundaries. The way in which birds cut across road maps and desires swell despite the chasms we dig within ourselves.

Love is coded in negative terms, feared and distrusted, one of the words that burn out holes in the speaker's mouth. However, trying to remain unattached, a mere observer, she is not "immune to loneliness."

She throws herself into the space of "What if"—which is a space of potentiality, of virtuality, and also a space of voyeuristic desire. Stalked by possibilities, the poet is a voyeur, watching women watch themselves, "impatient to feel these two women's lives" and carrying their story on her skin. She proposes a fluid model of identity, blurring the boundaries between the desired and the desiring self. The circulation of pronouns (she-

I-you) also suggests liquid identities, becoming others, impersonation ("But what of a woman who tells another woman's story and believes herself to be her?"). A similar purpose is served by doubling and repetition (for example, images such as mirrors, skin on skin, echoes, eye/I—conflating desire and writing), or the way her name is inscribed on top of every other page: "nencenathalie." Interestingly, the idea of flow is paralleled by the format of her poems which are not discrete units but a narrative continuum of poems.

Voyeurism as a metaphor of writing is only one aspect of self-mirroring that characterizes her poems. Another related trope of self-reflexivity is the body/text metaphor, where reading the body equals reading a book of poems and skin/page become interchangeable, as in: "her body is covered in words i cannot read. of a language i do not understand." The images of the tongue as both an instrument of love making and the maker of poems underscore the eroticism of this poetry. The poem is a route to erotic pleasure, to amorous conquest:

I have imagined myself to be
the words they read aloud from
a book that they
cherish. Wet under their tongues.
But to be spoken by them.

She celebrates both lust and poetry—sexual and creative passions, "bending her body elaborately to create interesting sounds to wrap around her lover's tongue." At the same time, writing can be worn like a layer of skin ("all that separates my flesh from the wind"); it can be a means of controlling madness and pain—her "demons" and "flies."

For Stephens, poetry exists in the repeatedly performed acts of translation—from the body into language and back into the body—binding the poet to the poem to the reader:

I know the translation into words
to be dangerous

in telling of the pressure of her
hand on my arm.
And what of her lover who would
have seen
everything and surely had some-
thing to say. The
adaptation imperfect from
mouth to ear I am sure.

The reader and the speaker are both haunted by the unbridgeable gap between seeing and telling, the inadequacy of words, the impossible "entanglement of interpretation and truth," and the "what if" of a failure to translate experience into words.

Stephens rewrites in the lesbian imaginary the classic dilemma of life versus poetry, legitimizing the lesbian gaze in the process. Poetry and life are entwined in the title of *This Imagined Permanence* and again, when the speaker

dreams of carving her lover's initials into her leg
this imagined permanence nothing but a string of
knotted contradictions...

Semantic substitutions of skin/paper, carving/writing, pain/contradiction, or words/scars clearly signal that Stephens practices writing on the body, "one of ink on skin." Ultimately, her poetry is "this imagined permanence," as opposed to "the impermanence of trust engraved in promises and park benches."

CULTIVATING WOMEN, CULTIVATING SCIENCE: FLORA'S DAUGHTERS AND BOTANY IN ENGLAND, 1760–1860

Ann B. Shteir. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996.

by Verna Linney

As we attempt to convince both ourselves and our daughters that science

need not be gendered male, we can rejoice to find support for our position within the historical record. In *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760–1860*, Ann B. Shteir richly offers such support. Shteir has applied the lens of gender analysis to a detailed examination of women's place and contributions within the developing science of botany, indicating how women were able, quite successfully, to "edge" into early science—and then how the increasing professionalization of science in the nineteenth century edged them out.

Women's extensive involvement in the early years of natural science has largely been missing from the record. As Shteir states in her prologue: "Conventional histories of botany, in line with traditional disciplinary assumptions, report on heroic (male) individuals and scientific advances; it is a historiographic style that excludes the kinds of botanical work women did and could do in earlier periods." Shteir's purpose is to remedy this omission, and her extensively researched and exciting exploration offers us the pleasure of discovering the lives and work of the many women who contributed to the development and dissemination of botany, both those who worked within gendered space, and those who pushed against its boundaries.

The eighteenth century saw the establishment of a firm linkage of women and femininity with nature and gardens. Botanical study and practice came to be associated with women, and encouraged as desirable activity. After 1760, the simplicity and clarity of the newly-accepted Linnaean system of botanical classification encouraged women's participation in scientific botany. Shteir's account skillfully interweaves theory and explanation with extensive detail and anecdote, bringing us into the living space of many women whose involvement with science was very much an integral part of lives lived as women. Of necessity, these women combined creativity and accommodation: they were practitioners, writ-