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The Nether World of Neither World: Hybridization in the Literature of Wendy Rose[1]

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THE VIEW FROM THE EDGE: A PERSONAL INTRODUCTION

What seest thou else
in the dark backward and abysm of time?
If thou rememb'rest aught ere thou camest here
How thou camest here thou mayst.
—Prospero in *The Tempest* (I.ii. 59–64)[2]

Conjuring up William Shakespeare to assist in my project of challenging the academic cognoscenti is indeed an ironic gesture coming from a colonized individual. Yet in the context of my upbringing as a Pilipina operating in the circles of academia, this selective borrowing is all too appropriate. As Jessica Hagedorn observes, "The Philippines spent four hundred years in a convent and fifty years in Hollywood. . . . I was taught that Filipinos are inherently lazy, shiftless and undependable. Our only talent, it seems, is for mimicry."[3] In this introduction to "dual" perception in the work of liminal artists, an act of appropriation, of mimicry,

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seems to be in order. It is a nod to my education—a reflex of good scholastic behavior in an attempt to substantiate the assertions cultivated by my colonizers' gift of learning.

Just as Eve, my fallen female ancestor, recoiled in a mixture of shock and fascination at her nakedness, so too am I simultaneously bewildered and empowered by my indulgence in the fruit of knowledge. Tempted into learning, I am endowed with the ability to question the literary Eden offered by my intellectual seducers while appropriating the language of their enticements in my own critical allurements. Thus, I have borrowed portions of *The Tempest*, a "master" work often read in a postcolonial context to examine the power of language, a subject that catalyzes modern debates regarding the canon's control of perception and the imagination.

As Samuel Taylor Coleridge states, "Language is the armory of the human mind, and at once contains the trophies of its past, and the weapons of its future conquests."[4] Intended as an homage to the power of locution and erudition, Coleridge's observations are relevant to the situation in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, my microcosm for the macrocosm in which we live and work. Prospero's power lies in his ability to perpetuate a self-serving version of the island's history. Thus, Prospero's language—his pedagogy—is also his armory. He colonizes subjects not only with the "magic" inscribed in his books, but with the "memory" he offers in his oral narratives. Although Prospero's daughter, Miranda, and the "noble savage/angel" figure, Ariel, succumb with little protestation to his teachings, the amphibious, would-be rapist and slave, Caliban, verbally resists: "[Y]ou taught me language, and my profit on't/ Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you/ for learning me your language"(I. ii. 444–46). Caliban is motivated by his memory to resist a new island history promoted by Prospero. Only Prospero's physical threats and "liquid treats" quiet the monster's grumblings of discontent.

Entering "the dark backward and abysm of time" that is remembrance, I, like Caliban, realize my memory is my resistance. As bell hooks states, "Resistance is . . . 'a struggle of memory against forgetting.' Remembering makes us subjects in history. It is dangerous to forget."[5] Likewise remembrance forces me to redigest the lessons on literature I was spoon-fed by my educators, the same sweet "water with berries in't" Prospero uses to subdue Caliban(I.ii. 410)..[6]

In the sixth grade, our teacher offered us a template for "good literature" which I have since re-encountered in numerous other

academic settings: the plot triangle. Attempting to give shape to the flat, linear temporal progression in most Western literature, this structure stands erect with exposition and dénouement at its base points, and conflict at its pinnacle:

conflict/climax
exposition denouement

As an industrial, mechanically based chronology has colonized the fluid oral-aural interchange of storytelling, so too has conflict been reconfigured as the philosopher's stone for supreme fiction.[7] Charting the chronology of fictional events, the incline of the triangle is composed of the episodes and complications that culminate in a climactic, ultimate conflict. This conflict is the pinnacle towards which all events aspire, and from which they are eventually resolved. Granted, the emphasis on conflict as the quintessent element in literature seems an overgeneralization. Yet Western pedagogy encourages this template in standard textbook after textbook that introduces literature from the earliest levels of education to the most advanced. In the general introduction to *An Approach to Literature,* for example, Cleanth Brooks (Yale University), John Thibaut Purser (Southeastern Louisiana College), and Robert Penn Warren (Yale University) emphatically proclaim, "The central fact about a fictional action is that it arises in conflict. . . . *No conflict, no story.*"[8]

Am I citing an archaism, a structure that, since 1964 (the copyright date of the Brooks, Purser, Warren text), has been duly amended in an institutional acceptance of diversified narrative forms? If Random House's *The Fiction Notebook* (1985) is any indication, the answer is a resounding "no." Take, for example, "Lesson Three: Conflict—The Heart of the Plot. *Conflict* is the mainspring of every good plot."[9] Following this statement is a tidy list of binarisms that specify the nature of the conflicts encountered in fictional situations:

Person vs. Person
Person vs. Nature
Person vs. Self
Person vs. Society.[10]

Opposition between two forces, physical or metaphysical, is requisite in the creative act of storytelling; our books and teachers tell

us so. I hear echoes of my public school teachers, my fellow students, and myself rattling off these binarisms in a mantra of their acceptance as unimpeachable fact—an elemental table to the world of fiction as real and tangible as the one that catalogs our physical earth.

At the conclusion of Random House's "Lesson 3" we are asked to "imagine conflicts of our own," create our own situations in this schema of opposition.[11] Obliging this request, I imagine the "internal moral conflicts" that initiated this personal introduction, the internal struggle between learning and "un"learning that informs all my scholarly pursuits. Noticing the ethnic surnames and gendered first names of the staff that assembled the Random House workbook, I am guiltily compelled to question my questioning of the structures affirmed in their academic presentation. If they are as comfortable with this structure as the trinity of white male editors who composed *An Approach to Literature*, something must surely be amiss in my doubt of the universally sanctioned, conflict-based perspective. Again, the voice of bell hooks resonates within: "Memory is resistance." I recall Prospero and his colonial "magic" of controlling the story for his benefit. Many of us at every level of education are enchanted by the spell of our colonizers' truth and acquiesce at will to *his*tory. Perhaps this at least partially explains the perpetuity of the models erected by our educators. Perhaps we are all Calibans struggling with memory-induced fits of resistance, while allowing ourselves to be baited by the intoxication of power.

THE OTHER WORLD OR "WORLD OF THE OTHER": DISSIDENTS OF EDEN

Seeking alternative "truths," we turn to the congregation of Others willing to deconstruct the monolithic tomes of literature and criticism inducted into the Western canon. Perhaps this "Other-world" is free from the reliance on conflict, exempt from the doctrine of domination of one entity over another. Perhaps this revitalized, fecund Eden is a garden of inclusiveness rather than of banishment.

Yet even as we endeavor to deconstruct our assigned languages and identities to win the freedom to reconstruct our own stories and individualities, we experience a residual dependency on oppositions to define the terms of this freedom. Resistance often necessitates the posturing of "Us" versus "Them," or a "Same" versus "Other." The identity of the Other is contingent upon the

existence of a central power that is either represented as explicit entities in marginalized discourse (e.g., male v. female, Christian v. heathen, straight v. gay, white v. people of color), or an implicit "invisible center" against which to struggle:

> Audre Lorde calls this center the mythical norm, defined as "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, Christian, and financially secure." Although each of these characteristics carries a somewhat different weight, their combination describes a status with which we are all familiar. It defines the tacit standards from which specific others can be declared to deviate, and while that myth is perpetuated by those whose interests it serves, it may also be internalized by those who are oppressed by it.[12]

A theoretical double bind results in which one may either conform to a stereotype of Other (since difference is defined by its opposite, in this case "Same"), or refuse the position of Other and assimilate through a denial of one's difference.[13] Does this double bind, then, automatically require a choice of membership in either group? In the conflict model, one entity must subsume the other; therefore, an allegiance to the dominant or subservient group must be declared. Likewise, in most postcolonial discourse, the ideological divorce from an established gender/ethnic/political group results in an uncohesive state of Otherness where dissidents are rarely joined together in intellectual exile but, rather, scramble for position to be next in line once the canon is toppled:

> For artists and writers who have been brought up in a system entirely based on a belief in great geniuses who produce great works, it is not easy to reject those concepts, even if that very system has consistently excluded works by members of their own race or sex. The broader attack on the canon can produce conflicted feelings of bitterness and anger in artists who have felt themselves on the edge of admittance.[14]

Those at the apex of admittance must subsequently define new boundaries of what constitues "Other." Ironically, the would-be representatives of Otherness flirt dangerously with aggrandizing the status quo. As Russell Ferguson warns,

> Too often the alternatives to dominant cultural power have been successfully segregated so that many different bodies of

> marginalized creative production exist in uneasy isolation. Such uneasy isolation can only contribute to the security of a *political* power which implicitly defines itself as a representative of a stable center around which everyone else must be arranged.[15]

The relationship between Same and Other or, in this case, "The Canon" and "Marginalized Discourse," is similar to the system of dependency between a negative and its photographic standard print. Although the two are rendered opposites, the photograph is derived from the negative and deviates from its source in mere tincture while retaining the inherent form and structure of the image. So, too, I believe, does the bulk of alternative discourse posture itself within the aforementioned double bind, leading to an "entrapment in a dialogue between same and other."[16] In attempting to dismantle the established hierarchical and oppositional systems, marginalized critics posit new hierarchies or are obliged to reference the old ones, giving credence to the notion that a preeminent center is the standard for judging all things Other. The "world of the Other" then, is not a resurrected prelapserian Eden, but rather a self-made, moated fortress of exile.

THE NETHER WORLD OF NEITHER WORLD: HYBRIDIZATION IN THE LITERATURE OF WENDY ROSE

We have seen how the Same vs. Other structuring of postcolonial discourse may oftentimes be as exclusive as the Western conflict model which requires a resolution of dominance and subservience. The juxtaposition of these two schools of thought brings me to the focal point of my analysis. The confusion and disillusionment surfacing in my effort to make sense of my learning and unlearning ultimately hinge on my inability to choose between these separate critical worlds. These worlds leave little room for hybridization, for the liminal space in a nether world that is of neither world.

At the risk of betraying my penchant for sci-fi television programs, I am compelled to make an example of a recent episode of *Star Trek: Voyager*, which articulates this complicated dilemma in simple, formulaic terms. In the episode "Faces," the half-Klingon, half-human chief engineer, B'Elanna Torres, is captured and placed as an experimental subject in an alien genetic engineering project. Alien scientists successfully separate her Klingon DNA

from her human DNA in order to use her Klingon genes exclusively as a cure for the plague debilitating their race. As a result we are privy to the sight of two B'Elannas: the first a pugnacious, short-fused, krinkly headed Klingon with a bad attitude, and the second a weepy, frightened albeit intellectually savvy human. Initially pleased with her self-division (one of B'Elanna's ongoing character issues is a self-hatred of her physically appalling Klingon half), B'Elanna soon realizes she cannot live without her Klingon self, without that gutsy determination and confidence her Klingonness adds to her character. Thus, the ship's doctor performs an elaborate medical procedure—rendered impossible earlier in the episode—in order to ensure Be'lanna's survival for at least another season.

Although this *Star Trek* example may seem rather pedestrian in an argument of literary criticism, the feelings of self-hatred, the fear of difference, and the need for a sense of wholeness expressed in these fifty minutes of television are precisely the emotions with which a mixed-blood must contend. When Paula Gunn Allen introduced me to the works of Wendy Rose, my own position as an intellectual hybrid began to make some sense. In her poetry and prose, Wendy Rose articulates the struggle, the pain, the horror, and the reward of being a liminal person. She achieves what the poststructuralist theorist Emmanuel Levinas expressed the utmost desire for: "a sociality of linguistic exchange [which] allows the self to open up to the other without assimilating the other: [one in which] parties in the dialogue establish a relation to each other but neither is subsumed."[17] In other words, it is a dialogue that frees the self from the entrapment of the "double bind," one that defies a tendency to define the self in relation to something else, one that celebrates difference and sameness without fear of reproach.

Just as Wendy Rose catalyzed my self-examination and my subsequent decision to survive as an individual exiled from both literary camps—or perhaps more accurately as a dual-citizen—so, too, has she made a poetic project of healing and survival for all mixed-bloods as well as for the Native American community with which she is most readily affiliated:

> How can you hope to speak if you have no voice? Neither castoffs, nor mongrels, nor assimilated sellouts, nor traditionalists, those who are like me are fulfilling in our own way a certain level of existence, a pattern in the prophecy. We

> must be here, though we cannot be soldiers or shields for those who are much stronger than we are. We merely face the same enemy.[18]

Unlike the aliens in the sci-fi world of *Star Trek*, we cannot extract half of our essences to cure our ailments. Instead, we must learn to survive by examining, struggling with, and eventually celebrating our confluent beings. Vocalizing the terms of our speechlessness, Rose has forged a unique brand of storytelling, one that grafts the binarisms threatening to define and tear her apart into a beautiful, harmonically dissonant whole. Of the blood of both "natives and strangers, gold miners and ranchers,"(*BD*, xiii) oppressor and oppressed, anthropologist and artifact, Wendy Rose copes with her volatile divisive essences by intermingling fact and fiction, poetry and prose, and birth and death to achieve a resolution of balance, not hierarchy. By explicating her literature, I hope to illumine how chronology, genre, and other ordering principles of literature are exploded in order to transport us to a truly otherworld: the liminal universe.

I. THE "NEON SCARS" OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY: TRUTH AS LIES/FACT AS FICTION

For ages, it seems, the poet has been accused of promoting lies. Implicit in the arguments of Plato and Augustine, and of particular force in the Puritan ethic, is the concept of poetry as "the mother of lies."[19] Likewise "myths," the very foundation of tribal culture, have also been located in exact opposition to fact and truth in the category of deception:

> Popularly among Americans, *myth* is synonymous with *lie;* moreover, it implies ignorance or a malicious intent to defraud. . . . Labeling something a myth merely discredits the perceptual system and world-view of those who are not in accord with the dominating paradigm. . . . *[M]yth* has not been considered synonymous with *belief* until recently. . . . [The Greek] is more accurately translated as "ritual," that is, as a language construct that contains the power to transform something (or someone) from one state or condition to another.[20]

Just as Paula Gunn Allen struggles to reappropriate the term *myth* in order to speak of beliefs excluded from the "meta-

myth" of established facts, Wendy Rose restores verity to the poetic word by infusing it with the "facts" of her biography: "If I had grown up with a comfortable identity, I would not have needed to veil those memories in metaphor. . . . Poetry is both ultimate fact and ultimate fiction; nothing is more brutally honest and more thickly coded."[21] An explanation and example of her creative project, Rose's autobiographical essay "Neon Scars" glides effortlessly between the imaginative and the literal, between memories and metaphor, as it culminates in a transformative discovery: the discovery of a dialogue for survival and regeneration.

Although I have identified "Neon Scars" as an autobiographical essay, it is a creative work that defies genre. As Trinh Minh-ha states, "Being truthful is being in the in between of all regimes of truth. Outside specific time, outside specialized space."[22] In form and content, Rose's literature exists in precisely this uncharted space of truth and magic. The form of "Neon Scars" appears to be prose, although only half of the piece contains the indentions that usually delineate paragraphs. Alternating commentaries work in tandem to propel her "story" and are indicated by the variations in font size as well as the indentions. Sections in the smaller type read as catechisms directed to herself and the reader:

> When I speak of the bruises that rise on my flesh like blue marbles, do you understand that these are real bruises that have appeared on my flesh? Or has the metaphor succeeded in hiding the pain while producing the fact, putting it in a private place just for those readers and listeners who know me well enough to have seen the bruises?*(NS,* 253)

This is Rose's subtext, the glowing liquid flowing within the glass husk sculpted into a neon message. What is usually reserved for the realm of implication is articulated in this running commentary beneath the prose we are trained to read—the larger type demanding its acknowledgment as the primary text. Whereas passages in the smaller type are composed of interrogatives, ambiguities, and confessions, the primary text is frank, factual, terse, and declarative. More specifically, the subtext springs from a subconscious world of dreams and the imagination, whereas the primary text is located in what is termed factual "reality":

> Do you know what is the greatest risk of all? Someday I may be forced to see myself in a sweat vision, wide open to the world. I may

> find that I am only the one I saw in the vision, no more, no less. I am only what you see. The vision is naked and cannot be tampered with. Is it enough? Will the voices that have always said I am not good enough be quiet? Is this worth the pain and the poetry? Will you be satisfied?
>
> Facts: May 7, 1948. Oakland. Catholic hospital. Midwife nun, no doctor. Citation won the Kentucky Derby, Israel was born. The United Nations met for the first time. It was Saturday, the end of the baby boom or the beginning. Boom. Stephen's little sister. Daughter of Betty. Almost named Bodega, named Bronwen instead. Little brown baby with a tuft of black hair. Baptized in the arms of Mary and Joe. (*NS*, 255)

Rose's innermost fears are uttered without hesitation in the first passage. Interestingly, the particular fear she writes of is an existential anxiety of nonbeing, of being "no more, no less" than what the physical world makes of her. This anxiety is an outgrowth of the fear of spiritual cancellation rather than corporeal obliteration, a fear of losing some sense of cosmic specialness:[23] "I am only what you see. . . . Is it enough?"(*NS*, 255) The subtextual passage also conveys feelings of lack and failure. Whether this is an explicitly artistic, intellectual, or emotional failure is ambiguous. Yet such fears are implicitly rooted in her inability to transcend some mundane figuring of the self, and in metaphor's failure to apparel bare reality: "The vision is naked and cannot be tampered with."

This assumption is confirmed by the catalog of facts immediately following her catechism. While the first passage anticipates the absence of meaning, the second passage enacts the actual collapse of metaphor. The story of her birth is denoted by inanimate snippets of reportage and random details. Although birth is a highly personal event of coming into being, the encroachment of news from the outside world diminishes the individuality of this instance. Perhaps Rose's language shares this formative process in which identity remains undeveloped and "being" is associatively defined by who won the Kentucky Derby, or when the United Nations met for the first time (*NS*, 254). It is as if the statistical recording of her birth affirms the existential anxieties uttered in her subtext; is she just another statistic, a fact, a figure? The confluence of time between the two passages, between the subtextual present tense and the statistical past tense, also re-

moves the story from any "special" or particular genre that requires linear chronology. Thus we are forced to wander with Rose through what Trinh has termed the "in-between regime" to search for our own sense of stability and to reassess our expectations of story, space, time, and truth.

Gradually, some figurative language creeps into Rose's primary text as she traces her cognitive development. The factual detail "Baby Boom" evolves into a descriptive, onomatopoetic "Boom." An assertion of identity and a consciousness of personal voice emerges from the hard factual layer. Yet even as this voice discovers figurative language and independence, a new system of dependency intercedes as the being defines itself through another set of associations, replacing newspaper headlines with members of her family: "Stephen's little sister. Daughter of Betty." Rose's identity is subsumed by the world seeking to define it, and a spiritual demotion via linguistic denotation occurs: "No friends. Confirmation. Patron Francis Assisi. He understands. Public school. Drugs, dropping out. Finally friends. Getting high, staying high"*(NS,* 254). Even as her life's developments are traced in this paragraph and her subject matter appears blatant, the declaratives speak unrevealingly: "Married at eighteen. Tried to shoot me. Lasted three months"*(NS,* 255). There are no reflective elaborations, no personal commentaries to accompany the onslaught of her life's events, which jerk forward in stilted, monosyllabics and sentence fragments. The pain is "safely cloaked in metaphor or masked by a persona"*(NS,* 259). The reader must struggle to find a hidden meaning in the primary text, which is emotionally coded while it is factually frank.

Rose illuminates her hollow primary text with the light of subtextual commentary. In a single word, her subtext momentarily peels away the mask to reveal the motivation behind this work:

> Healing.

On the page it appears no larger than an afterthought, a discard. The word seems small, yet it screeches out despite its unimposing size. Contained in this word is the monolithic project of finding some regenerative truth. Yet regardless of the dramatic, even disruptive appearance of this resonant term, Rose's record of the healing process continues in "Neon Scars."

The search for an inner truth or pathway to healing proceeds with more interplay between the two type sizes. Even as the

primary text becomes more inclusive of descriptive language and complex syntactical arrangements, the undulating subtext is still ultimately responsible for revealing and exorcising Rose's pain:

> I am probably my mother. She bears my face but is a lighter complexion, taller, long legged. She was thin enough a girl to be teased for it. Her eyebrows come to a point in the center, little teepees at the top of her face. My brother inherited these, while I got the upturned nose and hair that thins at the temple. From my father I have coarse dark hair, a flatness of face and mouth, no waist, a body made of bricks. At different times, I have resembled each of them. I see myself in old photographs of my mother as a short, stocky, darker version of her, and others have seen my father in me, thinner, younger, lighter, female.
>
> As much as I come from them, the two of them threw me away. I am the part of them they have worked long and hard to cut off. I have never depended on them. I have floated into the distance, alone.

These passages make it abundantly clear how the two texts operate. As apparently confessional and truthful as the primary text seems, the subtext shatters our image of what is truly confessional with unbridled, painful revelations from the heart's deepest recesses. Yet the latter never undercuts the former's claim to accuracy and truth. The subtlety in the primary text needs the subtext as a foil to illuminate the jewel of meaning within. The subtext, meanwhile, would lack impact and might seem harsh and unfounded without the primary text serving as a factual gloss.

Rose's process of finding a healing truth through the creative art of writing (art connoting lies, fantasy) is compelling and ironic. Since "Neon Scars" is autobiography, it lends a measure of authenticity to the creative act. Personal history is, in itself, a conflation of myth and fact and rebels against traditional delineations between fancy and truth. Audre Lorde labels this volatile concoction "Biomythography," while Trinh Minh-ha elaborates on this liminal terrain in *Woman, Native, Other:*

> Story-writing becomes history-writing, and history quickly sets itself apart, consigning story to the realm of tale, legend, myth fiction, literature. Then, since fictional and factual have

> come to a point in which they mutually exclude each other, fiction, not infrequently, means lies and fact and truth. DID IT REALLY HAPPEN? IS IT A TRUE STORY?. . . Which truth? the question unavoidably arises (sic). The story has been defined "a free narration, not necessarily factual but truthful in character. . . . [It] gives us human nature in its bold outlines; history, in its individual details." Truth. Not one but two: truth and fact.[24]

Rose's healing may be achieved only by a permeable truth that is also fact, myth that is also autobiography. Recall Gunn Allen's definition of myth as a powerful language with transformative qualities and we see the metafictional landscape upon which Rose treads. The essential balance between truth and "lies" is merely an individual set within a complex network of interdependents working toward healing in "Neon Scars": "I have been alone too much. I have been bitter too long. This part of me is not in balance. It has made me alien. This is something to pray about"*(NS,* 256).

As the piece transitions into an explicit discussion of Rose's "dual" ethnic heritage, issues of harmony and balance become increasingly focused. Rose traces her genealogy in order to expose the obstacles dual individuals must overcome in a quest for reconciliation:

> I walked onto the grounds [of the Highland Games in Fresno] to search for my roots. . . . It may have looked funny to all those Scots to see an Indian looking for a booth with her clan's name on it. The first booth was Irish; I showed my list of ancestral names to the man there, and he pointed to certain ones and said they had stolen his castle. I apologized to all of Ireland on behalf of John Bull and returned his castle to him; I suspect it would not hold up in parliament. . . . This is not the heritage I would have picked—to be the daughter of invaders. It is not where my sympathies lie. Searching the grounds, I found my clan.
>
> Great-Great-Grandmother, Henrietta MacInnes . . . you have given me what my [Hopi] father could not.[25] I learned that I am entitled to wear your Tartan, your symbol of a strong arm pointing to the sky with a bow in its hand. I also learned you were the natives of Scotland . . . and lent strength to my apology for Ireland. The colonizer and the colonized met in my blood. It is so much more complex than just white and just Indian. I will pray about this, too. *(NS,* 258)

The potent mixture in Rose's blood catalyzes a desperate outpouring of possible solutions to the dual individual's dilemma. As the languages of the two texts increasingly resemble each other, the poet's internal and external life close in on one another, forcing a desperate measure of reconciliation. The infant identity rooted in facts and associative relationships has reached a point of maturation and must learn to cohere with the separate, displaced identity of the subconscious represented by the subtext. Both streams of consciousness propose solutions. Paradoxically, the subconscious addresses the issue directly, while proposing an indirect method of attack. Yet it eventually acknowledges the failure of suppressive attempts:

> I would say something else, be someone else, act some other way—but there is no way I can twist my genes around. There is no sugar sweet enough to smear on the story of our household. . . . I didn't know that such scars never heal up. It's probably lucky that my nature is a fighting one; otherwise I would have died. (*NS*, 259)

The conscious narrative voice of the primary text, meanwhile, purposely avoids as it accepts the story of her life: "I will just talk about being different, as if I were talking about someone else. My mother said I was born different"(*NS*, 259).

The subtext is implacable as it appropriates the repressive language of the primary text in order to light the words with unadulterated truth from within:

> Her mother said she was born different. No one ever said what that difference was all about, but everyone knew when they saw it. They avoided it as if it burned them. And so she was alone and not just alone but thrown away. They told her so, over and over, through action and word until she could see it no other way. And so she knew she was rejected and she was rejectable. She learned to worship her difference, whatever it was, and this empowered her. She rejected them. (*NS*, 260)

The inner self pushes toward healing through reappropriation and empowerment. Language previously spoken in resignation to Rose's difference mutates into the language of empowerment because of this very difference. The antecedent to the pronouns *her* and *she* is assumed to be Rose, since the sudden shift in narrative voice from personal to omniscient almost passes undetected.

However, this shift in perspective opens up a multiplicity of possible interpretations by allowing the reader to identify with

the subject of the passage. Rose asserts something universal from the intimate with this sudden, albeit subtle, shift to an omniscient voice, permitting the reader to posit herself as the pronoun's antecedent. The reader may subsequently "worship" her many differences, since Rose left her subject's oddities unspecified: "No one ever said what that difference was all about, but everyone knew when they saw it."

Regardless of the assertive push the subtext makes toward an acceptance of difference, Rose's primary text is just as relentless in its attempts to candy-coat and disassociate from this difference. We have witnessed the development of the primary text's voice, from its earliest stages of concretizing identity through projecting to the outside world (note the "Citation won the Kentucky Derby" passage), to an intermediate stage in which hints of intimate feelings peek through a stoic recitation of family personal history. In both stages the subtext sufficed as an illuminating force, even as the two existed separately, never directly acknowledging each other. In the final passages of the text, however, the dialogue insinuated between the two develops into a specific set of responses. This is first intuited by the secondary text's appropriation of the phrase that begins, "Her mother said." The dialogue is made explicit when the primary text responds to the call for empowerment with, "Or I could try this":

> I'll make up a story about my childhood and see if anybody believes it. I will tell about happy summer days with all my friends. . . . I have been riding my healthy young stallion on the mountain; alongside is my healthy young collie. I know that when I go home my parents will be glad to see me; they'll hug me kiss me and hold me. . . . I have been skipping grades because everyone thinks I'm so smart. I'm pretty too. I will enter college at seventeen with an enormous scholarship. I will receive gold jewelry or a diamond for my graduation, my father will kiss me on the cheek and take my picture. (*NS*, 260)

What the primary text seems to propose is a complex string of lies, a "story" in the realm of make-believe.

Yet this development in the primary narrative voice is truthful even as it weans itself from factuality and chooses to consume the sweet elixir of fantasy. In other words, the story set forth by the primary text is a cultural myth of happiness, one that articulates an essentialist truth, a societal standard for familial joy and

normalcy. Trinh's observation that a story "is not necessarily factual but truthful in character" reveals the skill in Rose's juxtaposition of her autobiographical truth and the duplicitous truth/lie that society demands.

The necessity of treading the line between truth and lies for human survival is emphasized in the final passage of Rose's subtext. The subtext's acceptance of her unacceptable difference, and the primary text's preference for avoiding direct encounters with her "heart of darkness" converge in the statement, "I don't want to lie to you, but I don't want to tell the truth. The dirty laundry flaps in the wind, yet the alternative is to go on wearing it." For Rose, the only viable means of survival is to purge the innermost horrors of her past in the creative present, to transform the factual ugliness into poetic beauty.

Neither of the texts or modes of consciousness in "Neon Scars" remains mutually exclusive, as the piece concludes only to begin again. Both rendezvous in what was previously the realm of the surface text, in the larger type asserting its primacy. A cohesive voice speaks in the final paragraph:

> To uncover the memories I have peeled back layers of scar tissue. I have invoked the ghosts and made them work for me.... But then, you know—now—why I write poetry.... I have agonized for months over writing this essay, and now that I'm finished, I'm afraid of it. I am mortified and embarrassed. I am certain I said too much, whined perhaps, made someone squirm. But there is no way I can change the past and the literal fact is that I have tried to forget what is unforgettable; there are few happy moments that I recall -or perhaps, as I have succeeded in forgetting the bad, the good has also been forgotten. Perhaps the readers and the editors will forgive me for using them in an exorcism. (*NS*, 261)

To repeatedly experience purgation unsoftened by metaphor is much too frightening for the persona, yet her neon scars glow beneath the surface of every text. The "literal facts" she tries so hard to forget inform her work and are vital to her project of personal healing: "Everything I write is fundamentally autobiographical, no matter what the style or topic"(*NS*, 253). Ultimately, channeling shame and rage and accepting the dualities that tear us apart are the only ways to heal and survive. Rose's exorcism is as much for the reader as it is for herself, as much a movement toward reintegrating a universal split self as it is a coming to terms

with her European and Hopi lineages: "What force could be more powerful than people moving together with a single voice? What could be more important and life affirming than the unique universal poetry of life itself?"(*BD*, xvii) Reintegration, not separation, in life and art are the prerequisites of recovery and survival. Life is art, its facts are metaphors, its make-believe is truth. Wendy Rose's "Neon Scars" is testimony to this.

II. RED HANDS STEALING FROM MUSEUM SHELVES:[26] WENDY ROSE AS ANTHROPOLOGIST AND ARTIFACT

Because Wendy Rose is a writer of mixed cultural heritage, the social and literary demands on her are enormous. In "Neon Scars" we witnessed the parallel between the emotional struggle and the struggle between fictional and nonfictional modes of expression in her work. Yet the issues of hybridization that Rose contends with in her poetry and prose are not limited to those associated with her heritage or her occupation as a writer. In fact, Rose's exclusion from the English and Comparative Literature departments at the University of California, Berkeley, necessitated her entry into the field of anthropology:

> The fact is, the only academic department at Berkeley that would deal with my dissertation, which involves Indian literature, is the Anthropology department. Comparative literature didn't want to deal with it; the English department didn't want to deal with it, in fact the English department told me that American Indian literature was not part of American literature and therefore did not fit into their department."[27]

Thus another set of circumstances thrusts Rose into the liminal universe, for how can a native woman, a subject of anthropological study, also be an anthropologist? As Trinh Minh-ha reminds us in *Woman, Native, Other,*

> The *proper* anthropologist should be prevented from "going over the hill," should be trained for detachment in the field if he wishes to remain on the winning side. The classic example of the man who spent years trying to learn the religious secrets of a particular society and refused to divulge them has been seen as a *loss,* a loss of objectivity, for the man has changed sides and—why not say it?—betrayed his own kind, the kind of his "origins."[28]

In response to Trinh, the subsequent question must be, Can an anthropologist in any way be "proper" if she is *born* "over the hill?" Also, is it possible to retain her integrity as a member of her native culture if she is regarded as the enemy, the scientist who exhumes the graves of ancestors and displays them as artifacts? Referring to an incident that occurred in an archaeology class, Rose writes, "It seems that I could *feel* the trowels, *feel* my bones smother in paper bags in a lab, *become* extinct in a museum display. Rather than peering down into the excavated pit, I found that I was, instead, staring up at the archaeologist from below" (*BD*, xiv).

Both anthropologist and native, scientist and artifact, Wendy Rose must once again cope with the pain and reward of being a mixed-blood. In this particular instance, she is a circumstantial rather than a biological one: "I learned that this is not a condition of genetics and has nothing to do with ancestry or race. Instead, 'halfbreedness' is a condition of history, a result of experience, of dislocations and reunions, and of choices made for better or for worse"(*BD*, xvi). Although she is an anthropologist, she regards herself as a "spy" fiercely loyal to her native heritage.[29] An employee of the anthropology museum at Berkeley, Rose was often placed in situations in which she witnessed the appropriation of native people down to their very bones:

> I remember overhearing the assistant director of the museum talking to the director of another museum about how they would hide any remains they had from Indian people. They would claim they didn't have them so they could keep them for "scientific purposes.". . . So here I am typing away, and these anthropologists are sitting talking about all this as if I'm an invisible person. (*LC*,)[30]

Her experience as an invisible insider, as truly a spy, manifests itself in Rose's powerful creative work:

> No one was threatened, no eyes
> kept locked on my red hands to see if
> they would steal the beads and silver
> from museum shelves.[31]

Rose adroitly plays on themes of appropriation and, in her poetry, steals back what rightfully belongs to her people. Infiltrating the anthropological establishment, Rose subverts when least

expected and accomplishes a reappropriation of native culture by, at times, assuming an anthropologist's persona and, in other instances, speaking with her native voice. The poems "Excavation at Santa Barbara Mission" from *Going to War with All My Relations,* and "Three Thousand Dollar Death Song" from her collection *Lost Copper* provide a compelling juxtaposition of Rose's various methods of subversive poetics for survival and transformation.

In "Excavation at Santa Barbara Mission," Rose conflates her many identities of anthropologist, native, Catholic, artist, and poet, in a synergetic critique of objectification and appropriation. Her "pointed trowel," a tool for excavation and scientific examination, is also "the artist's brush/that will stroke and pry,/ uncover and expose" the secrets of her ancestral past:

> How excited I am
> for like a dream
> I wanted to count myself
> among the ancient dead
> as a faithful neophyte
> resting there and in love
> with the padres
> and the Spanish hymns. (*BD,* 84)

The persona's giddiness and naiveté stimulate excitement regarding the events to come, yet the past tense of the verbs *excited* and *wanted* forebode a potentially distressing lapse into knowledge amidst this backdrop of religious serenity.[32]

Just as skeletal remains often reveal themselves in fragmentary bits during excavations, so too does Rose unearth the details of her discovery in fragments colored by metaphors and similes:

> A feature juts out. Marrow
> like lace, piece of a skull,
> upturned cup, fingerbones
> scattered like corn
> and ribs interlaced
> like cholla.
> So many bones
> mixed with the blood
> from my own knuckles
> that dig and tug
> in the yellow dust.

Although this brief descriptive passage appears to function on a primarily narrative level, Rose is operating on numerous subversive planes to reconcile her anthropological background with her native heritage. With the tandem strokes of her "pointed trowel" and "artist's brush," the persona manages to infuse life into the artifacts while she exhumes them from the digging site. Curiously, she associates each bone fragment with functional and beautiful items such as lace, a cup, corn, and cholla. The bones and her blood become intermingled and indistinguishable, as the persona's multiple identities begin to forge.

This amalgamation takes its toll, however, for the anthropologist in the persona loses her sense of scientific detachment and objectivity the deeper she digs:

> How helpless I am
> for the deeper I go
> the more I find
> crouching in white dust,
> listening to the whistle
> of longbones breaking
> apart like memories. (*BD*, 85)

As her anthropologist and native identities merge, the persona cannot selectively choose her systems of association. Her memories, the history that flows through her blood, prevents her from placing these remains in context as scientific specimens.

The speaker subsequently develops a fear and disgust about what she perceives as the cannibalistic tendencies and self-destructive nature of her scientific work:

> Beneath the flags
> of three invaders,
> I the hungry scientist
> sustaining myself
> with bones of
> men and women asleep in the wall
> who survived in their own way
> Spanish swords, Franciscans
> and their rosary whips,
> who died among the reeds
> to wait, communion wafers
> upon the ground, too holy
> for the priests to find.

A four-tiered structuring of identity tenuously erected at the outset of the poem (anthropologist, native, Catholic, artist) crumbles as the mission walls peel away to reveal the forces that erected them. The persona is simultaneously the skeleton in the mission wall and the Catholic oppressor who placed her there, as well as the hungry scientist earning her sustenance through excavating human remains, and the native poet appropriating this experience to form it into linguistic healing. Paradoxically, the only way to come to terms with these identities is to resist through memory. Just as the naive dreams of the persona had to lapse into knowledge in order to satisfy her need to "count [her]self among the ancient dead," so too must the poetic consciousness accept the truth in order to survive. In a repetitive form reminiscent of chant or song, the persona subjects herself to a mantra of healing through acknowledgment:

> They built the mission with dead Indians.
> They built the mission with dead Indians.
> They built the mission with dead Indians.
> They built the mission with dead Indians.

So too does Wendy Rose acknowledge that she is accountable for her anthropological work:

> Guilt is non productive. Accountability is to recognize your part in something, to recognize who benefits, who suffers, and to try to make amends. You try to find some way to balance it with something positive in your life.[33]

Her positive contribution as both an anthropologist and a native poet is the reclamation of her ancestors' bones. Through digging she releases the bones from their encasement. Through writing she exhumes them from the confining pages of history.

THE VALUE OF MEMORY: "THREE THOUSAND DOLLAR DEATH SONG"

The title "Three Thousand Dollar Death Song" in itself adumbrates the thread of ironies that cohere the poem. Something as intangible as a death song is fixed within a tangible system of monetary valuation. Culture and human life are comodified, in essence dehumanized, in order to be controlled and colonized.

Distorting the delineations between facts and art, between objectivity and subjectivity, Rose begins her poem with figures from a museum invoice:

> Nineteen American Indian skeletons from Nevada . . .
> valued at $3000.
> —invoice received at a museum *as normal business, 1975.*
> (*BD*, 20)

Price—value—is established as the central issue or literal reality that the persona seeks to reconnotate. By reinfusing objectified artifacts with life, Rose reasserts an intangible moral and cultural value system in which human life and ancestry are treated with reverence rather than degradation. As Paula Gunn Allen observes, "The impact of genocide in the minds of American Indian poets and writers cannot be exaggerated. It is a pervasive feature of the consciousness of every American Indian in the United States, and the poets are never unaware of it."[34] Thus the invoice appropriated for the opening lines of "Three Thousand Dollar Death Song" not only establishes the tropes and moral motifs of the poem, but also introduces an underlying fear of extinction with which the persona contends throughout the course of her native existence.

A series of interrogatives begins a set of responses to the aforementioned invoice, and initiates a revision of anthropological, subjectifying acts:

> Is it in cold hard cash? the kind
> that dusts the insides of men's pockets
> laying silver-polished surface along the cloth.
> Or in bills? papering the wallets of they
> who thread the night with dark words. Or
> checks? paper promises weighing the same
> as words spoken once on the other side
> of the mown grass and dammed rivers
> of history. (*BD*, 20)

Although the enjambed lines produce the cascading effect of a stream of consciousness, the metaphoric language betrays a degree of labor invested in challenging the comodification of human life. Each question reads less like passive interrogation and more like a demand of accountability for the manner in which native people are objectified by the paper composing not only the invoice but the "bills" and "checks" used to purchase human remains.

Both the value of these papers and the value *system* that privileges these documents of transaction over the sanctity of human life and culture carry little weight for the speaker. Punning on "bill" and "check," the persona refers to the "paper promises" of the United States government—an institution founded on documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution—and derides their violation of treaties with Native Americans in favor of profit and imperialistic gain.

Likewise, the descriptive lines elaborating on each question are directed at those with the purchasing power, the anthropologists who subscribe to this weightless paper value system. The imagery of cash dusting "the inside of men's pockets" and bills "papering wallets" also alludes to the manner in which these human remains become adornments and trophies of scientific discovery. These skeletons are curios, souvenirs from centuries of conquest. Descended from these unwilling, fleshless subjects of anthropological inquiry, the persona anticipates and is resigned to her fate of becoming yet another involuntary subject in the pursuit of scientific progress:

> However it goes, it goes.
> Through my body it goes
> assessing each nerve, running its edges
> along my arteries, planning ahead for
> whose hands will rip me
> into pieces of dusty red paper,
> whose hands will smooth or smatter me
> into traces of rubble.

The repetition of the duosyllabic phrase *it goes*, with minor syntactical variations, linguistically reenacts this scene in history. Gunn Allen's statements regarding the manner in which Native Americans intuitively harboring feelings of imminent annihilation and extinction resonate with this portion of "Three Thousand Dollar Death Song" and provide an accurate assessment of the speaker's tone.[35]

A shift in locale from the speaker's atavistic, yet portentous cognitive terrain to the present tense of transactions occurs in the proceeding set of lines:

> Invoiced now
> it's official how our bones are valued
> that stretch out pointing to sunrise,

or are flexed out into one last fetal bend,
that are removed and tossed about,
catalogued, numbered with black ink
on newly-white foreheads.
As we were formed to the white soldier's voice
so we explode under the white students' hands.

A conflation of identity between the bones of the persona and her poetic "subjects" reaffirms an ancestral connection, a communal mingling upon interment. This association results in a more human standard of identification as opposed to the catalog numbers etched in black ink by anthropologists. The values of the scientific establishment are again called into question as the author suggests living poses for the skeletons, which are subsequently disassembled by the crude hands of their appropriators and "tossed" over shoulders with disrespect.

The author's project of reviving artifacts through a revision of their fossilized state gradually becomes a more deliberate pursuit in the poem. Using the skeletal mingling between herself and her ancestors as a point of departure, the persona pluralizes the narrative voice of first person singular from *I* to *we:*

We watch our bones auctioned
with our careful quillwork,
beaded medicine bundles, even the bridles
of our shot down horses. You who have priced us,
you who have removed us—at what cost?
What price the pits
where our bones share
a single bit of memory,
how one century has turned
our dead into specimens
our history into dust,
our survivors into clowns. (*BD*, 21)

Cultural artifacts are included in the speaker's own poetic catalog, an alternative to the numbered lists of bones circulating among anthropologists. Each item is revalued in the persona's subtle language. Quillwork and medicine bundles are handcrafted, invested with the care of human labor rather than merely excavated as artifacts of culture. The persona uses language to refasten bridles to "shot-down horses," again employing an associative link to an animate world and reconfiguring the "value" placed on

them by anthropologists. More specifically, she directs her question to a conglomerate "you," to all, including ourselves, who would consign cultural life to the brokers of anthropological commodities.

Although the series of lines that begin "What price the pits . . ." is phrased as a question, the author purposefully omits the punctuating question mark to suggest the unquestionable verity of these remarks. She recites a century's worth of disastrous transformations from "dead into specimens, history into dust, and survivors into clowns," accumulating into a casually phrased, yet dramatically loaded warning: "Our memory might be catching, you know." A major transition in the poem, this line marks the point of transformation where metaphoric and associative resuscitation results in a procession of reanimated fossils:

> Picture the mortars, the arrowheads, the labrets
> shaking off their labels like bears suddenly awake
> to find the seasons ended while they slept.
> Watch them touch each other, measure reality,
> march out the museum door!

Once the artifacts of culture and history are reappropriated, life may reenter the skeletal hulls thought to be annihilated, for their blood flows in the living, in the descendants of a proud legacy:

> Watch as they lift their faces
> and smell about for us. Watch our bones rise
> to meet them and meet the horses once again!
> The cost then will be paid
> for our sweet grass-smelling having-been
> in clam shell beads and steatite . . .
> turquoise and copper,
> blood and oil, coal and uranium,
> children, a universe
> of stolen things.

Previously resigned to her native fate of extinction, the persona acquires power from her "single bit of memory" to stimulate survival and rebirth. Operating in a "universe of stolen things" Rose too must plunder history to have a fighting chance. In "Three Thousand Dollar Death Song," Rose uses her invisibility and assumed extinction to thieve successfully from the very museum

shelves she is assigned to guard. As Paula Gunn Allen writes, "Certainly the knowledge of continuance is difficult to cling to. We cling to it nevertheless."[36] Because of the dual forces and systems of balance that constitute Wendy Rose, she is able to posit strategies for survival despite the threat of extinction. Thus her "death song" is truly the music of renewal.

III. "ONE HALF DEAD, THE OTHER POWERLESS TO BE BORN:"[37] BIRTH, DEATH, AND RENEWAL IN THE POETRY OF WENDY ROSE

Transcending its role as a biological function, "birth" has become a societal emblem for life. At the very least, birth is proclaimed a miracle of creation, an occasion that necessitates a shower of gifts. More philosophical considerations exalt the birthing process as a step toward immortality in which the offspring are conduits for the perpetuity of ancestral DNA. It is assumed that birth necessarily translates into "life," and that every being has a family, a home, and a world anticipating its arrival.

Yet the gulf between truth and ideal is unbridgeable. In the celebratory frenzy of "life" we forget that labor may be classifiably traumatic and that babies are sometimes born to unwanting parents and an unwilling world. For reasons as various and interconnected as economy, race, and culture, the birth rite, can, in negative circumstances, become a life sentence of illegitimacy, alienation, and interminable loneliness. Nowhere is this sense of "non-being" more prevalent than in the mixed-blood, the soul without kinship to either progenitive half, the individual whose dual inheritance adds up to the sum of nothing. In her groundbreaking critical study *The Sacred Hoop*, Paula Gunn Allen defines "the experience which creates this sense of alienation" in a Native American context:

> The breed (whether by parentage or acculturation to non-Indian society) is an Indian who is not an Indian. That is, breeds are a bit of both worlds and the consciousness makes them seem alien to traditional Indians while making them feel alien among whites. Breeds commonly feel alien to themselves above all.[38]

At times, this disembodiment of the self translates into a disenchantment with creation and human life. Wendy Rose echoes

Gunn Allen's sentiments of being a "stranger" in her "own life," and speaks of the resulting detachment from humanity:

> I have heard Indians Joke about those who act as if they had no relations. I wince because I have no relatives. They live, but they threw me away—so, I do not have them. I have always swung back and forth between alienation and relatedness. As a child I would run away from the beatings, from the obscene words and always knew that if I could run far enough, then any leaf, any insect, any bird any breeze could bring me to my true home. I knew I did not belong among people. *(NS,* 255)

Stranded atop a high-wire taut with her dual heritage, Wendy Rose balances her destabilized self with the rescue rod of poetry. Taking issue with the social celebration of birth as the commemoration of being, Rose's poems intermingle images of traumatic infancy with adult reconciliation to sing of the struggle not to live, but to survive.

Rose's estrangement from her respective European and Hopi lineages infuses her work with a powerful, liminal charge. As we witnessed in "Neon Scars," Rose finds it essential to purge one's innermost horrors. Thus she seeks healing through the poetic project:

> As readers and listeners have noted the angry or somber tone of my poems, I have struggled to lessen these things and at least, keep them in proportion. I work toward a balance and attempt to celebrate as often as I moan and rage. *(NS,* 253)

This macrocosmic movement toward reconciling isolated halves of the individual plays itself out in the microcosmic world of *The Halfbreed Chronicles.*

The mixed-blood or halfbreed experience Rose offers in these poems is not limited by racial distinctions. As she clarified in her interview with Laura Coltelli, "Halfbreed is not just a biological thing.... [R]ather it's a condition of history, a condition of context, a condition of circumstance."[39] Thus her personae run the gamut of humanity as well as the animal kingdom, with characters as diverse as Truganinny (last of the Tasmanians), Koko the gorilla, and Robert Oppenheimer. Aside from placing liminality in a broader context, Rose appropriates, as she did in "Neon Scars,"

the interplay between fact and fiction and employs it as a trope to arrive at truths about the variousness of alienation. Often this juxtaposition works in tandem with Rose's examination of birthing issues, including mothering and the loss of offspring. As Trinh-Minh-ha elaborates in *Woman, Native, Other*, "What is transmitted from generation to generation is not only the stories but the very power of transmission. The stories are highly inspiring, and so is she, the untiring storyteller. She who suffocates the codes of lie and truth."[40]

In "Truganinny" as in her other chronicles, Rose begins the piece with an expository gloss based on reportage:

> Truganinny, the last of the Tasmanians, had seen the stuffed and mounted body of her husband and it was her dying wish that she be buried in the outback or at sea for she did not wish her body to be subjected to the same indignities. Upon her death, she was nevertheless, stuffed and mounted and put on display for over eighty years.
>
> —Paul Coe, Australian aborigine activist, 1972[41]

Having established the "factual" context, Rose proceeds with the "fiction," the poetic rendering of the truth. Truganinny invites us to her liminal edge not casually, but imperatively:

> You will need
> to come closer
> for little is left
> of this tongue
> and what I am saying
> is important.

We are drawn from the cold block of fact into an intimate proximity with mortality. Truganinny's dying breath calls with urgency through her diction ("need" and "important"). The abrupt line breaks suggest her words may only be uttered in short bursts of primarily monosyllabic words. These are the final exhalations of thought, and Truganinny is not speaking exclusively either from the realm of life and death, but from both her spiritual and corporeal essences. This is punctuated by an isolated couplet announcing her extinction:

> I am
> the last one.

Treading the fine line between dual worlds of life and death and fact and fiction is necessary for maintaining the poetic "balance" Rose speaks of in "Neon Scars."

Thus it is natural that the stanza immediately following Truganinny's impending annihilation introduces an opposite force, a counterweight to balance with death. A glimmer of life appears as Truganinny speaks of lactating with the milk that feeds newborns: "I whose nipples/wept white mist." Yet the excitement of birth and nursing is appropriately short lived. The life-giving mist is spoken of in the past tense, alienating it from the present and future tenses of continuance. "Wept" from her breasts like tears, this mist is Truganinny's liquid concoction of sorrow for the "many/dead daughters/their mouths empty and rounded/their breathing stopped/their eyes gone gray." Overtones of infanticide conclude this stanza, this circle of events encompassing birth and death.[42]

Yet Truganinny's compelling saga continues despite the absence of progeny to perpetuate her race. After the painful recitation of her story of loss, Truganinny leaves the physical world and "melts" into the abstract imagery of dreams:

> Take my hand
> black into black
> as yellow clay
> is a slow melt
> to grass gold
> of earth
>
> and I am melting
> back to the Dream.[43]

Although she is reiterating images associated with death (the entry into blackness, the melting of clay into soil), she imbues these observations with a sense of cyclical regeneration, with a return to the fecundity of earth. It is as if her milk spilled from the mouths of dead children rediscovers its lifegiving qualities in the "grass" nurtured by the "gold of earth."

Having momentarily slipped away from the immediate dialogue with her listener, Truganinny returns from her dreamscape and implores us to stay and listen:

> Do not leave
> for I would speak,

I would sing
another song.

Your song.

We are reminded of her function as a persona, as a reflective entity whose tribulations speak for a common rather than a specific experience. In much the same way that Wendy Rose constructs a fictive world to stimulate the reader's self-reflection, Truganinny successfully entrances the audience with her inward vision in order to pass the perspicacity on to others, in order to assist a collective "us" in the quest for our spirits, our songs. After this transition, which enjoins the dual entities of listener and persona, the poem may proceed in Truganinny's point of view, with the understanding that her situation is applicable to a conglomeration of liminal beings:

They will take me.
Already they come;
even as I breathe
they are waiting for me
to finish my dying.

We old ones
take such
a long time.

Again we see the movement toward balance operating conjunctively with the interplay of dual forces. From the individual speaker, Truganinny, who speaks of her plight as a dying curio ("They will take *me*. . . . *I* breathe . . . *my* dying "), to the collective "We," extinction and survival are pervasive concerns.

This alliance between the reader and Truganinny plays itself out in the final stanza of the poem. For Truganinny to find peace in death, the involvement of another is necessary. Alienated and displaced, she cannot escape the torments of the world on her own, and she hopes the kinship tentatively established with the listener in the previous stanza will yield some assistance:

Please
take my body
to the source of night,
to the great black desert

where Dreaming was born.
Put me under
the bulk of a mountain
or in the distant sea,
put me where
they will not
find me.

Left without any of her racial familiars to lay her to rest, Truganinny seeks integration into the world of the imagination, the only place where her extinct race still exists peacefully. The other ghastly alternative would subject her to the curious ogling of outsiders, an indignity in death comparable only to her tragic life.

Despite the utter hopelessness and desperation in Truganinny's last words, Rose offers the reader a morsel of promise. The connection established between Truganinny and her audience grants her a poetic integration into a group that she was denied in her historic, alien life.[44] Rose also rescues Truganinny from the enclosure of her glass tomb and offers her a means of transcendence through the imagination. As a poet, she resuscitates Truganinny and grants her access to the spiritual plane of dreaming. Yet this reconciliation is not entirely without its tragic consequences. The looming presence of the opening prose paragraph is a reminder of Truganinny's catastrophic fate. This mixture of power and loss of self appears frequently in modern Native American poetry. As Paula Gunn Allen observes, "The ancient thrust towards the integration of the individual within the common whole is not lost in modern American Indian literature, but it is a movement fraught with pain, rage and angst."[45]

Channeling this rage and violence into metaphor is essential to Wendy Rose's creative process. Brute force and inner turmoil fuse to create a potent compound in Rose's imagery. Nowhere is this more skilfully developed than in her 1980 masterpiece "I expected my skin and my blood to ripen." An intricate composition of dualities, "I expected my skin and my blood to ripen" interweaves war and pacificism with the volatile unions of fact and fiction, and birth and annihilation into a single song of survival. As with "Truganinny," "I expected my skin and my blood to ripen" begins with a quotation to establish the factual context that informs the creative truth:

'When the blizzard subsided four days later [after the Wounded Knee Massacre], a burial party was sent to

> Wounded Knee. A long trench was dug. Many of the bodies were stripped by whites who went out in order to get the Ghost Shirts and other accoutrements the Indians wore. . . [T]he frozen bodies were thrown into the trench stiff and naked. . . . [O]nly a handful of items remain in private hands. . . . [E]xposure to snow has stiffened the leggings and moccasins, and all the objects show the effects of age and long use. . . . [Items are pictured for sale that were gathered at the site of the massacre]: Moccasins at $140, hide scraper at $350, buck-skin shirt at $1200, woman's leggings at $275, bone breastplate at $1000.'
>
> —Kenneth Canfield, 1977 *Plains Indian Art Auction Catalog* (*LC*, 14)

Just as Truganinny was confined in a glass case for display, elements of Plains Indian culture have been catalogued as artifacts. These victims at Wounded Knee are dehumanized, and their loss of life and property is made measurable by pecuniary valuation. "Stripped" of dignity, and "flesh and blood," the native people murdered at Wounded Knee serve as the particular that illuminates a general sense of hopelessness in the marginal individual.[46]

Having infused Truganinny with life through the vehicle of imagination, Rose likewise humanizes the victims of Wounded Knee in "I expected my skin and my blood to ripen" with the confessions of a single speaker:

> I expected my skin
> and my blood to ripen
> not to be ripped from my bones;
> like fallen fruit
> I am peeled, tasted, discarded.

Sibilant hissing and the rattling of *r*'s underscore the violent actions described by the persona. "Ripen," the dominating image for maturation, visually transmogrifies into "ripped," and the alliterative, sighing *f*'s of "fallen fruit" continue an aural onslaught. Juxtaposed with the price list that concludes the "fact-paragraph," Rose's animate poetic language and natural imagery ("fruit" and "seeds") paradoxically reclaim life as they describe death. Freed from the artificial confines of the catalog and its numbers, the experience of pain becomes immediate, personalized by the speaker's utterances.

With this enlivened description of death, the image of traumatic—one may even say abortive—birth reappears as one of Rose's tropes: "My seeds open/and have no future." Like Truganinny's dead offspring, these seeds are not the conduits of continuance but, rather, successors in a line headed for extinction. Literally stripped of her clothing and figuratively stripped of her culture, the speaker also concedes, "Now there has been no past." If this past does exist, it is tainted with the persona's guilt at having succumbed to the violence. Although she was merely participating in her pacifist, Ghost Dance tradition (referred to in the final lines of the poem), she assumes the burden of responsibility for her infants' deaths:[47]

> My own body gave up the beads
> my own hands gave the babies away
> to be strung on bayonets
> to be counted one by one
> like rosary-stones and then
> tossed to the side as if the pain of their birthing
> had never been.

The above lines also act as a metapoetic reference to Rose's own personal bouts with guilt and isolation.

The interplay between fact and fiction resurfaces as Rose employs metaphors to project her pain: "If I could just come right out and state it like that, as a matter of fact, I would not have needed the poetry. . . . I would not have needed to veil those memories in metaphor"(*NS*, 253). Rose's halfbreed status heightens this isolation while infusing "I expected my skin and my blood to ripen" with Roman Catholic *and* Native American imagery. The "rosary stone" is a reminder of the abuse she experienced in Catholic school: "Rosary beads hard like apricots—measuring prayers, whipping wrists"(*NS*, 254). Rose's hope—her prayers—are monitored according to a numerical standard set by the rosary. The act of measuring the immeasurable, or of fixing value and meaning upon something nebulous and indefinable, has its roots in violence. Much as the pain from Rose's "whipped wrists" is objectified by the nuns as a punitive consequence, the human dynamic behind the speaker's loss of culture, property, and offspring is denied by her oppressors:

> My leggings were taken
> like in a rape and shriveled

to the size of stick figures
like they had never felt the push
of my strong woman's body
walking in the hills. (*LC*, 15)

In their duet of rage, poet and persona shout choruses filled with the dissonant harmonies of alliteration. Paired *l*, *s*, *f*, and *w* sounds purge the indignity forced upon these twin souls. Despite a sense of imminent danger, and the persona's vulnerability to violence (specifically rape), an element of power emanates from her womanhood, from her "strong woman's body."

Yet as often occurs in Rose's poetry, opposite forces fluctuate in their search for balance. This interchangeability explains the dramatic move from strength to powerlessness within several verse lines:

It was my own baby
whose cradleboard I held
would've put her in my mouth like a snake
if I could, would've turned her
into a bush or a rock if there'd been magic

enough to work such changes.

The individual's magic lacks the potency of communal sorcery. Like Truganinny, she cannot conquer the enemy alone and, thus, seemingly acquiesces to her feebleness:[48]

Not enough magic
to stop the bullets, not enough magic
to stop the scientists, not enough magic
to stop the money.

Yet the persona is, in fact, not alone; she is accompanied by her creator, Wendy Rose. Through Rose's poetic magic of language, the regretful "if I could" transforms into a pluralized voice of renewal:

Now *our* ghosts dance
a new dance, pushing from their hearts
a new song. [my italics]

The indicator *I* becomes a unified *our* as the persona successfully rejoins a group of Ghost Dancers. Rose is included in this union,

and a song of survival, not a plaintive, individual warble, is begotten by their chorus of voices.

The flesh torn and lacerated by the unrelenting swords of conquest is healing from this "new song." As Rose's life and literature attest, reintegration is the dual being's solace:

> Hopi earth does contain my roots and I am, indeed, from that land.... Because the roots are there, I will find them.... I am not merely a conduit but a participant. I am not a victim but a woman. *I am building myself/There are many roots. I plant, I pick, I prune./I consume." (NS,* 261)

Born into a world in which she was a social "discard," Rose uses her poetry as an enabler to amend the injustices inflicted upon her because of her halfbreed status. Rebuilding the lives of Truganinny and the Lakota mother through her imagination, Rose may also be reborn through these creative acts of survival, and through her native roots. These roots, these scars, this poetry, will exist not only as chronicles of the struggle toward wholeness, but as Rose's own resounding commemoration of life.

EPILOGUE AND RETRACTION

> Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises,
> Sounds, and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not.
> Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
> Will hum about my ears; and sometimes voices
> That, if I had waked after a long sleep,
> Will make me sleep again; and then in dreaming,
> The clouds me thought would open and show riches
> Ready to drop upon me, that, when I waked,
> I cried to dream again.
>
> —Caliban, *The Tempest* (III. ii. 140–48).

As we emerge from our voyage to the liminal universe of Wendy Rose, it is only appropriate that the voice of the amphibious Caliban greets and soothes us, even speaks for us. Leading us into her imaginative world of stories unbound by formalistic expectations, Wendy Rose illumines the darker recesses of the human heart. Initially frightened by our proximity to this "dangerous" terrain unmarked by the safe boundaries of familiarity, we, like Caliban, come to realize that our fears are unfounded. These "sounds and sweet airs" are the songs of survival and rebirth

begotten not by inner "conflict," but by dissonant harmonies coexisting within a single resonant chord.

In this essay, I have occasionally broken apart the components of this wonderfully strange music in order to make the exotic familiar.[49] On occasion, I even feared that my analysis of Rose's hybridization in dualistic terms such as fact and fiction, anthropologist and artifact, and birth and death would defeat the promotion of harmony and integration I proposed in my introduction. Yet gradually, as I encountered Rose's work, I realized that the way to come to terms with a fusion of divisive halves is to retain the individual integrity of each, to know and understand the parts that constitute the whole. Thus, in using these dualisms throughout my essay, I have placed Rose's literature in terms understandable to me.

I cannot completely disengage myself from my Western learning and acculturation any more than I can extract my Pilipina DNA. Thus this essay is peppered with references to Eden, Shakespeare, and psychoanalysis, even as it tackles issues alien to standard Western criticism and culture. At this point in my young academic life, these are some of the only systems of association I have, and like Caliban, whose working knowledge of language is limited, my tongue slips with occasional vulgarities, for which I ask to be forgiven.

Before completing this project, I too was afraid of this "isle full of noises," the liminal terrain uncharted by the cartography of my intellect. Having entered this land sustained by dreams and the imagination, I feel I can never quite place both feet in either world.

Now that I am awake, I cry to dream again.

NOTES

1. This paper was originally written as Tongson-McCall's Senior Honor's Thesis in the Department of English at UCLA, for which she was awarded the Thompson Prize for Outstanding Honors Thesis in 1995. She was advised by Professor Paula Gunn Allen and by Karen Wallace.

2. William Shakespeare, *The Tempest,* ed. Louis B. Wright. New York: Washington Square Press, 1961.

3. Jessica Hagedorn, "Dia Conference Presentation," in *Critical Fictions: The Politics of Imaginative Writing,* ed. Philomena Mariani (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991), 147.

4. This quote appears on the cover of a set of chapbooks distributed by The Better Speech Institute of America, Chicago Illinois, entitled *A New Self-teaching*

Course in Practical English and Effective Speech, by Estelle. B. Hunter. I chose to cite this as the source for Coleridge's statement, since this is the context in which the quote captured my attention.

5. bell hooks, "Narratives of Struggle," in *Critical Fictions*, 54.

6. I equate my early educational experiences with the lessons Prospero offers his subjects Miranda and Ariel and, most notably, his beast of burden Caliban regarding the "history of the island."

7. Paula Gunn Allen distinguishes between a Western chronology motivated by industry and a non-Western (specifically Native American) achronology: "Chronological time structuring is useful in promoting and supporting an industrial time sense. The idea that everything has a starting point accurately reflects the process by which industry produces goods. Chronological organization also supports allied western beliefs that the individual is separate from the environment, that man is separate from God . . . and that the person who controls the events around him is a hero. . . . [This] contrasts sharply with a ceremonial time sense that assumes the individual as a moving event shaped by and shaping human and nonhuman surroundings"("The Ceremonial Motion of Indian Time," in *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1986], 149).

8. Cleanth Brooks; J.T. Purser; R.P. Warren, *An Approach to Literature* (New York: Meredith Publishing Co., 1964), 11 (emphasis in original).

9. James S. Russell and Cosmo F. Ferrara, *The Fiction Notebook* (New York: Random House School Division, 1985), 17 (emphasis in original).

10. Ibid., 18–19 (paraphrased).

11. Ibid., 20.

12. Russell Ferguson et al., eds., *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture* (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1990), 9.

13. Bridget Orr posits this theoretical double-bind in the context of gender relationships within a patriarchal model. My comparisons and reasoning are greatly indebted to her work in "The Only Free People in the Empire: Gender Difference in Colonial Discourse," in *De-Scribing Empire: Post Colonialism and Textuality*, ed. Chris Tiffin and Alan Lawson (London: Routledge Press, 1994).

14. Ferguson et al., *Out There*, 11.

15. Ibid., 9.

16. Ibid., 9.

17. Orr, "The Only Free People in the Empire," 154.

18. Wendy Rose, *Bone Dance: New and Selected Poems, 1965–1993* (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1994), xii–xiii. (Subsequent references to *BD* will be in the text.)

19. See Plato's *Republic*, "Book II": "Let none of the poets tell us that 'the gods, taking the disguise of strangers from other lands, walk up and down cities in all sorts of forms,'. . . neither let anyone either in tragedy or in any other kind of poetry introduce Hera disguised in the likeness of priestesses asking alms 'for the life giving daughters of Inachos the river of Argos'—let us have none of that repertoire of falsehoods. (From *Critical Theory Since Plato*, ed. Hazzard Adams

[HB Coll. Pubs., 1992], 21. For references to Augustine and Puritan ethics, see the introduction to Adams's volume.)

20. Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, 102–103 (emphasis in original).

21. Rose, "Neon Scars," in *I Tell You Now*, ed. A. Krupat and B. Swann (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 253. (Subsequent references to *NS* will be in text.)

22. Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), 121.

23. See Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death* for a thorough account of this human phenomenon. Likewise, Robert Watson's *The Rest Is Silence* applies this anxiety in explications of literature. Watson correlates the fear of a senseless personal meaning with the collapse of metaphor and poetic language.

24. Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, 120.

25. Rose's biological Hopi father, to whom she is referring in this passage, was estranged from her for most of her life, through her early thirties. Although she found him after years of searching, Hopi lineage is traced matrilineally; therefore, she could not claim membership in the Hopi Nation. She is both excluded from white society in the United States for her racial difference and denied membership in the Hopi Nation for her her lack of matrilineal descent and her mixed-blood status.

26. From Rose's poem "How I Came to Be a Graduate Student," in *Lost Copper* (Banning, CA: Morongo Indian Reservation, Malki Museum Press, 1980). (Subsequent references to *LC* will be in text.)

27. Rose, in *Winged Words: American Indian Writers Speak*, ed. Laura Cotelli (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 124.

28. Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other*, 55.

29. "I told Joseph Bruchac when he asked me [about being an anthropologist], that I was a spy. He thought I was kidding, and he repeated the question, and I repeated, 'I am a spy.' He laughed and figured, okay, that's all he was going to get. But I don't think he realizes to this day that I literally meant, I am a spy. But not in any cloak and dagger kind of way. But the fact is the only department that would deal with my dissertation at Berkeley . . . was the anthropology department"*(Winged Words*, 124).

30. Rose, "You . . . Who Have Removed Us: At What Cost?" in *Messengers of the Winds*, ed. Jane Katz (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), 207–208.

31. From "How I Became a Graduate Student."

32. This fall into disenchantment resonates on a metapoetic level as well. During her years in graduate school, Rose repeatedly entered anthropology classes anticipating a chance to contribute to the body of knowledge being shared about native peoples: "One of the anthropologists said, 'There's no pottery produced at Laguna Pueblo anymore.' I said, 'I know there's pottery produced there by people I'm distantly related to.' He said, 'Well, I've found that Indian people don't really know as much about their cultures as anthropologists do" *(Messengers of the Winds*, 207).

33. Rose, "You . . . Who Have Removed Us: At What Cost?" 212.

34. Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, 155–56.

35. Ibid., 155–56.

36. Ibid., 157.

37. This is a quote from the English Victorian poet, Matthew Arnold. In his interview with Wendy Rose, Joseph Bruchac suggests this may be an appropriate way to describe Rose's own dualistic nature ("The Bones Are Alive: An Interview with Wendy Rose," in *Survival This Way*, ed. Joseph Bruchac [Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1987], 255).

38. Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop*, 129.

39. Rose, in *Winged Words*, 123.

40. Trinh, *Woman, Native Other*, 134.

41. Rose, *The Halfbreed Chronicles* (Albuquerque: West End Press, 1985), 56.

42. This resonates with another of Paula Gunn Allen's observations regarding the power and imminent danger inherent in the dual perception of native women's poetry: "Loving, celebrating and joining are the sources of life, but they necessarily occur against a background of extinction. . . . [B]ecause our tribal present is inextricably bound to our continuing awareness of imminent genocide, our approach to the themes of love and death takes on a pervasive sense of sorrow and anger that is not easily reconciled with the equally powerful tradition of celebrating with the past and affirming the future that is the essence of oral tradition" (*The Sacred Hoop*, "Answering the Deer: Genocide and Continuance in the Poetry of American Indian Women," 155).

43. Rose, *The Halfbreed Chronicles*, 57.

44. Gunn Allen refers to this process of reintegration in "A Stranger in My Own Life: Alienation in American Indian Poetry and Prose": "Even when a group member is ostracized for severe violations of tribal laws, the narratives point to his or her eventual return to the people often bringing new laws or rituals like Handsome Lake of the Seneca or Kochinnenako of the Keres, or coming as a leader of great stature like Sweet Medicine Man of the Cheyenne" (*The Sacred Hoop*, 128).

45. Ibid., 128.

46. The choice of a Plains Indian woman as the persona in "I expected . . ." is characteristic of Rose's sense of "pan-Indianness." As she explains to Laura Coltelli, her own experience of dislocation as an urban Indian results in this liminal perspective: "I was born in Oakland, which is of course a big city. So there was always the sense of not really being connected enough to any one group. . . . I think in fact, it was James Welch who put it in one of his novels; at one point the protagonist is asked if being a half-breed meant that he had special insights and special privilege in both groups. . . . [T]o paraphrase his answer . . . what it actually means is that you don't have enough of either group. I can understand that. I know what he means" (*Winged Words*, 123).

47. Gunn Allen explicated this poem in the context of "Ghost Dancing" during a lecture in English M107C, "Native American Women Writers" (UCLA, winter 1995). Gunn Allen also discussed a "burden of responsibility" among native women writers and provides specific examples in *The Sacred Hoop*.

48. As Gunn Allen notes, there is "an overwhelming message of belonging, of enwholement that characterizes traditional American Indian literature"

(*Sacred Hoop*, 127). This "message of belonging," I believe, is essential to understanding the bouts with powerlessness that solitary personae undergo in Wendy Rose's poems. Themes of loneliness repeatedly appear in her autobiographical essays as well as her poetry. As she states in "Neon Scars," "How do you reconcile being an 'Indian Writer' with such a non-Indian upbringing? It is not the Indian way to be left so alone, to be alienated, to be friendless.... It would certainly be better for my image . . . to manufacture something and let you believe in my traditional, spiritual, loving childhood . . . where the actions of every day continually told me I was valued" (*NS*, 260).

49. I am indebted to Bharati Mukherjee for the phrase *to make the exotic familiar* (spoken in a conference presentation at the DIA Center for the Arts, New York, spring 1995).