

Blissful Abode and Blessed Self: Reading of Wendy Rose's Selected Poems

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Abstract

Space, geography, and environment play a crucial role in determining and navigating one's identity and existence. This paper attempts to read select poems of Wendy Rose, the Native American hybrid/mixed-blood poet (Hopi tribe and Irish-Scottish ancestry), to discover how she negotiates the notions of home, belongingness, and identity, and how she tackles the issues of forced displacement and alienation through a profound consciousness rooted in the native environment. How she engages in an imaginary reconstruction of the native home as a 'felicitous space' (a concept propounded by Gaston Bachelard) through recollection, that primarily manifests through body imagery connected to Nature, which serves as a gateway to self-discovery, assertion of the native identity, and spiritual rejuvenation is the concern of the paper.

Keywords: Body; Felicitous space; Home; Self; Spirituality.

We are bones that are just covered with flesh and muscle. The part of us that is spirit is just a component that is part of that entirety. We are parts of the earth that walk around and have individual consciousness for a while and then go back.

-Wendy Rose, "The Bones Are Alive"

Rooted in profound ecological consciousness, egalitarianism, ecological spirituality, and cyclical world vision, Native American writing distinctly stands out among all other streams and disciplines in the wide panorama of the dominant, European tradition of writing. The umbrella terms 'Indigenous Americans' or 'American Indians' or 'Native Americans' of the United States carry within them diverse tribes and lived systems with their unique cultural corpus. Despite the singularity each tribe possesses,

the epistemological framework or the fundamental knowledge system on which the 'first settlers' or the 'first people' of Native North America base their lives is the same, with its emphasis on the land, Word (orality), and Thought (related to the myth of creation and birth). This world vision is unveiled, directly or indirectly, in their artistic expressions and articulations.

Nature is an indispensable part of Native American thought, where, the land and its entities are conceived as sacred and spiritual. Paula Gunn Allen, the native writer-cum-critic, in *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986), presents a comprehensive picture of Native American tribal epistemology, its historical, cultural, social, mythological, and spiritual aspects from a woman-centric perspective, and also points out the features of Indian literature through the analysis of some works. As she states, the feminine principle "All Spirit" that forms the core of the universe governs and determines the lives and ways of the natives, and all surrounding entities- living and non-living- are taken to be the manifestations of this supreme and transcendental entity (Allen 60). The Mother Earth, Corn Woman, Sky Woman, and other deities that pervade and permeate the lives of the natives are the anthropomorphized versions of this omniscient power. The spirited nature is not just revered but also serves as an integral medium in the healing and spiritual ceremonies in Native American tradition.

For Native Americans, the land they inhabit is inseparably bound to their being, existence, and livelihood. As Allen says, "The earth is the source and the being of the people, and we are equally the being of the earth" (119). The intrinsic connection between place and identity has long been a point of discussion by cultural geographers and ethnologists, and it is undeniably agreed upon that a place has a formative and sustained role in determining a person's identity and existence. According to Larry Evers, "By imagining who and what they are in relation to particular landscapes, [native] cultures and individual members of cultures form a close relation with those landscapes.... A sense of place derives from the perception of a culturally imposed symbolic order on a particular physical topography" (212). For the post-1968 Native American Renaissance writers such as Linda Hogan, Wendy Rose, Joy Harjo, Louise Erdrich, and many others, recollecting the past and reconstructing the native tradition is not a passive act but an act that is deeply political and fundamental to defining their troubled existence since they are already displaced from their native roots and forced (due to historical reasons) to be in an urbanized, hybrid state of mixed-bloodedness.

Rose, who belongs to the native Hopi tribe on her father's side and the white Irish/Scottish/Miwok on her mother's side, uses poetry as a mode of self-expression to speak about the condition of being a 'halfbreed'- a modern, urbanized Indian - and also about the sense of 'nowhere-ness' or in-betweenness triggered by it. In an anthology titled *Songs From This Earth On Turtle's Back* edited by Joseph Bruchac, she states, "In some kind of unconscious recognition of my "hybrid" status, I have always had an identification with the centaur.... Like the centaur, I have always felt misunderstood and isolated - whether with Indians or with non-Indians" (207). This split-self or confused identity characterized by a strong sense of rootlessness and alienation is a major drive for her poems through which she recollects and recreates the past as a strategy to assert her nativity and thus attempts to resolve the crisis she confronts.

The terms 'home' and 'spirituality' used throughout this paper need to be explicated in some detail. Helen May Dennis, in her work titled *Native American Literature: Towards a spatialized reading* (2007) expands on a concept called 'felicitous space' which was first used by Gaston Bachelard to refer to an imagined space. Dennis observes that Bachelard uses it to denote home and its various related images like "refuge, shelter, protection and security, as imagined or viewed in daydream" (7). Based on this, she expounds the following:

Felicitous or eulogized space is thus not mere indifferent space, but inhabited space that protects and renders safe and happy the human self. It is imagined space; that is to say, it is mediated through human consciousness and also the human unconscious.... The home and its analogues provide the human being with a safe place from which to contemplate the cosmos.... (7)

Throughout this paper, home emerges in the above-mentioned sense by which a distant-yet-close, abstract-concrete, realistic-imaginary space is referred to. The term spirituality used here is quite different from the Western, non-native concept of spirituality. By the term, the state of attaining self-realization or knowing the inner self in relation to the sacred homeland is denoted. In her autobiographical writing, Linda Hogan states, "All of the work I do is part of a spiritual journey. 'Spirituality is your own inner self', a medicine person in New Mexico told me. It is in being.... Poetry is a large spiritual undertaking." ("Two Lives" 247).

In the process of rebuilding and reclaiming the self as part of a survival attempt, Rose employs some specific strategies in her writing. Apart from

the various stylistic and formal innovations that she employs, one can note a distinct image of the body deeply imprinted in her poems. Amalgamating body and nature, and by comparing, juxtaposing, and associating the body/bodily aspects to various elements and entities of nature that are central to Native American cultural and mythological beliefs, Rose performs her idea of nativism. How does an imaginary construction of the native land as a felicitous space, a journeying back 'home' in this way become a spiritual process of self-cleansing and self-discovery could be seen through the analysis of three poems titled "Lost Copper", "Turning, and "Walking on the prayerstick".

"Lost Copper" which originally forms a part of the work *Lost Copper* (1980), is a short poem replete with images of land, nature, and body and expresses a search for the speaker's identity, an attempt to define her existence. The poem opens with the speaker longing to strike a connection with the past and her lost land:

Time to tend the fields again
 where I laid my bone-handled spade to earth
 and dug from its dirt the shy-child songs
 that made my mouth a Hopi volcano.

The phrases 'bone-handled spade' and 'my mouth a Hopi volcano' are the first of a series of images of the Hopi homeland - in connection with the native body - that Rose evokes.

The usage 'bone-handled spade' could mean the spade with a handle made of bone or taking the bone as a synecdoche for the person, the meaning of spade handled by the person could also be attributed. According to Andrew Wiget, bones in Rose's poetry "represent her most essential self" and are associated with the larger image of the Body which is seen as both "a resource" and "a residuum" (31). Thus, the phrase 'bone-handled' could be seen as an embodiment of the self of the speaker in connection with the earth itself, which gets emphasized by the image of digging that follows it. The expression 'My mouth a Hopi volcano' is undoubtedly the conjoining of a body part and a natural element - the mouth as the volcano - that strikes a kinship and inseparability between the self and the land, and it also serves as a marker of the Hopi identity. By associating her mouth with that of the volcano (the mouth of the earth), the female body is taken to be the earth itself that is fit to burst off. The phrase 'shy child-

songs' becomes the marker of her childhood memories and the long-lost past of pristine, pure existence and native innocence. Taking into consideration the 'child-songs', this oneness brought in between the mouth and the volcano could be read as the speaker's wish to sing out loud the songs of native innocence and buried memories as she used to do in the past.

When the speaker laments that her hands 'retreat' without finding "... water pure enough/ to slide the ages and stones from my [her] skin", there is a vision of the body as the land itself; the speaking persona carrying stones on her skin underscores the resemblance between soil and skin. Ages and stones could metaphorically stand for the suffering and traumatic experiences of the speaker. The speaker is conscious of the loss she suffers from, the serious damage her soul has met with – the inability to fix her identity – that seems to her almost irreparable and irrecoverable, which is underscored when she utters that there is "no water pure enough" to cleanse her destructed soul.

Similarly, another line - "...my navel gone home/ I scrape my cheek and teeth and ride" - strongly invites our attention. 'Navel' that is associated with an origin, a birth, or a beginning and is also linked to the relationship with one's mother, is pictured as 'gone home', which is followed by the speaker's image of 'riding' - journeying home – by scraping her teeth and cheek in anxiety. One should note that the image of 'home' for a mixed-blood like Rose is complex, but her attempt to draw various images of the native land is a spiritual process, a survival strategy, that she employs in her construction of an imaginary homeland (which used to be a reality). The fields, child-songs, Hopi volcano, dusty and brown hands, and navel are knit up to construct a sense of home as a felicitous space – a happy and blissful space – for the speaker experiencing a serious dilemma.

The final lines of the poem mark a strong spirit of survival through the image of a "squash-brown daughter" born from the earth:

From there I rise of earth and wind
.....
to feed the place that has sent me songs
to grow from the ground that bears me:
this then my harvest

squash-brown daughter

blue corn pollen

lost copper.

The persona rises from the earth – she is very much a part of the earth and traces her origins to the same – gathering strength from the elements of nature. The image is one of growth, flowering, and renewal. The indivisible bonding with the land in tune with the tribal tradition is quite clear from the lines, “to feed the place that has sent me songs” and “to grow from the ground that bears me”. The songs, that represent the native oral tradition and also the ceremonial healing processes that form a part of it, befittingly denote the spiritual, healing nature of the journey that the speaker has undertaken. An in-depth awareness of one’s origins and an irresistible call of the land in the journey of self-discovery characterize these lines.

The final phrase in the poem – “blue corn pollen” – used in synonymy with “squashbrown daughter” is to be focused in this regard, as it holds deeper cultural, mythological, and spiritual implications related to the native tradition. The corn, central to Native American culture, stands as a powerful feminine symbol as is reflected in the native mythological tales, where, Corn Woman, Corn Mother, and so on appear as female deities of creation and generation. Frank Waters, in his *Book of the Hopi* (1977), states that “...the corn plant was also a living entity...corn was also their [Hopis’] mother...” (7) and that the Mother Earth and Corn Mother were synonymous with each other, seen as ‘spiritual mothers’ (9). Corn pollen, especially, is a feminine spiritual symbol as Allen puts it (265). It stands for the generative power of the universe and symbolizes creation, fertility, and fruitfulness. Here, by imagining herself as resurrected in the form of a corn pollen, the speaker envisions her spiritual regeneration or rebirth. This extension of the body to the land and vice-versa, as clearly manifested in these lines, creates a sense of a rejuvenated, empowered self that shows the spiritual inner awareness gained by the speaker.

One can note that throughout the poem, instead of a wholesome body/self, the images that appear are fragmented, as in the depiction of hands, mouth, hips, cheek, teeth, belly, and breasts. This symbolizes the fragmented mind of the writer which is torn between the native and the white worlds, but it also serves as a tool in creating a strategic space – ‘home’, as a felicitous space, where both imagination and reality intersect

- from where the speaker asserts her native self and identity.

According to James R. Saucerman, "The key to Rose's poetry is movement.... Sliding (or sometimes jostling) across time and place, Rose's poems, like Wright's sliding know, create an "aesthetic integrity" with universal ideas sliding from past through present situations, giving artistic coherent to fragments (26). Highly personal at the same time representative is the poem "Turning", a part of the collection *Itch Like Crazy* (2002). The poem is a poignant portrayal of a woman, who is displaced from her homeland and alienated in her life, craving to affix the lost link with the native people and the earth. It displays a series of dream visions, as part of the imaginary journey taken to the native land by her, where, a smooth movement from one scenario to another is impacted by a renewed connection with the land at each stage.

The initial part of the poem appears like a chant, and the words uttered, which are true expressions of the self, are conceived to be the spoken spirits of the sacred land. The sacred word becomes an extension of the sacred earth that engirdles the universe with its spiritual power. As the poem opens, the words are perceived as "peridot" (a stone) carrying the "colour of fresh/ timothy gathered/ by red-haired women" (17). It is alternatively taken as a 'bony white oak' and also as the rhythm and essence of the 'Miwu' tribe. Here, the word/song - that is the purest manifestation of one's voice and identity - is nicely blended into different elements of nature. The song/word is described as:

a knowing that breathes
against angles of granite
and meets the ground
in a flurry of sound.
Or the song rides down from a star
.....
to find old words buried deep in the earth. (17)

The concepts of Word, the oral tradition, and ancient voices that are central to any tribe of native North America are manifested in these lines. According to Janice Gould, Word is the purest and the holiest medium to connect with the spiritual world around, and it becomes "a vehicle of ceremony" (Rader and Gould 11) that contributes to healing in the native cul-

tural system. Laura Coltelli, another cultural critic, talks about the significance of words to Native Americans in her introduction to *Winged Words*, as "...we imagine ourselves, we create ourselves, we touch ourselves into being with words.... The word is a means of knowledge and experience, and it stands at the core of community life" (2). The songs are not mere utterances, but sacred words holding spiritual power that inextricably bind the speaker to the ancestral voices 'buried deep in the earth'. This connectivity to the past becomes quite important for the speaker discontented and disturbed by her mixed-blood subjectivity, and she desperately tries to identify with and relate to the native land as part of a healing process.

The woman is then addressed as "a prayer in the flesh" (17) which denotes the juxtaposition of the body and the sacred word. The words she utters are "volcanic birthing words" (17), which marks a resemblance between the land and the woman's body, where, the process of giving birth/voice to words - is linked to the volcanic eruption on the surface of the earth. The image of the blood bubbling down (17) that follows this adds to the perception of the earth as a woman's body and vice-versa.

From here on, the speaker presents her dream journey (episodic) through the image of a girl located in specific imaginary realms in connection with the native cultural symbols and elements. This gradually becomes a construction of the sacred homeland itself. A pleasant image of nativity and domesticity is brought in through the image of the flying acorns (nuts of oak trees, a North American delicacy) the speaker carries in her hands. The acorns, like seeds, signify the relationship with the native land and symbolically become an evocation of the native spirit. As already mentioned, corn is a significant identity marker for Native Americans. Rose's statement in her introduction to *Bone Dance*- "The tough stocky corn is as much a part of me as the acorn baskets and books. Perhaps, it is that part which refuses to stay dead and instead emerges each year to re-enact that original Emergence" (xii)- demonstrates its importance. This indivisible relation that she has - the beautiful blending of the self/body and the land - with the Hopi side of her lineage, gets reflected through the image of the girl.

In the second sequence of the spiritual-dream journey, the girl, who is "kneeling in a small room" (18), is presented as cherishing the piki stone (18) which is yet another Hopi cultural symbol. The piki stone is a broad stone used to grind blue cornmeal to make the piki bread, a staple food of the Hopis. The act of moving back and forth on the grinding stone that follows could be seen as the act of love - the corn and the piki stone in-

distinctively merging with the woman's body – where both contribute to an act of creativity and productivity. It should be noted that through the process of recollecting corns and piki stones, the poet is also craftily building beautiful homes, which will turn out to be strategic, creative spaces to explore the potency of the self (relating to the land), as could be seen in the rest of the poem.

The girl, who stands 'inside' a mountain meadow, in absolute closeness with nature, tying her hair, finds "...seeds loosen/ and cling to her shoes, her stockings, / her long skirt, her skin" (18). The image manifests the process of the coming-of-age of the girl, where, the seeds that denote fertility, fecundity, and fruitfulness become the symbolic representation of her potency or readiness to blossom; it could also be the symbolic representation of her future motherhood or even the process of giving birth. The very image of the seeds calls our attention to the concept of Mother Earth that bears seeds, which is central to the native Hopi culture. Like the seeds on the earth burst open, here, the seeds that get loosened stand for the outflow of the female productive power, after which "she fearlessly walks/ through gold fiddleneck, / small mountain lupines,.../" (18-19) and so on, which conspicuously marks the spirit of freedom and independence.

This point of self-realization and self-discovery turns out to be a milestone in the spiritual journey undertaken. What invites our attention is the image that follows the above:

a woman gathers loop after loop
.....
she is the mare and the soft sandstone
and the hot rocks rolling in acorn soup,
trying to heal the gash spread across her path.... (19)

Apart from the depiction of the woman holding the rope of the horse (the liberating force of nature), she is projected as the mare, sandstone, and rocks, which is once again an image of the body as an extension of the sacred land. Allen sees "the hard substances (like the earth, minerals, crystals, and stones), wood, and water" as representing the unique "female principle", and as something that "remains" (267). Perceiving the body in these forms, therefore, becomes an exploration of the feminine spiritual power that lies deep within the self. The woman is, thus, seen as carrying

“a rainbow” (the symbol of birth, a beginning, and supreme joy) in “a sacred memory” (19) as she travels from the “ocean to mountain to mesa” (19), that encompasses all the journeys to come. The memory is sacred because it is about the intense relationship with the land the speaker holds that is sacred and sanctified.

The poem, which has been a dream journey through various aspects of the holy homeland, shifts to a different scenario altogether in the last part, where, the image of an old woman ‘aching’ in the cold is brought in. The ending is, in fact ambiguous, as one cannot discern whether this is the same woman as the previous one, but, as with the previous case, this could denote her final stage – the transition of the young woman to an old woman – where she is on the verge of death. The speaker’s assertion that she is the sole, rightful link to the land can be justified considering the immense identification and connection built with the same through the long, mental-spiritual journey so far. The poem, thus, testifies to the strategic remembrance through the body that contributes to a revelatory experience for the speaker.

For Dean Rader, “Native writers seek the poem because of the poem’s ability to fuse disparate elements: present and past, poetry and prose, the lyric “I” and the communal “we”.... It is the genre that most completely and most thoroughly mirrors Native oral potential and Native world-views” (11). Rose’s poem “Walking on the prayerstick” stands as a perfect example of the statement. Different from the earlier poems, this one discards the individualistic ‘I’ and encompasses a strong sense of community and collectiveness to construct a spiritual worldview. Memory and nostalgia serve as pivotal drives in rekindling the deep-seated, profound relationship the speaker has with the homeland and the ‘spirit universe’, and the poem essentially becomes a journey into the self.

The introspective, contemplative journey begins on a note of communion, collectiveness, and belongingness:

When we go to the fields
 we always sing; we walk
 each of us at different times
 on the world held
 like a feathered and fetished prayerstick.

Here, singing and walking are no longer passive acts performed by a person, but they start attaining deeper spiritual meanings connected to the sacred and sanctified nature of the land. Singing in the native culture, as mentioned earlier, is the sacred form of utterance that is central to the oral tradition. According to Gould, "We respond to pain and suffering by seeking a healing, a healing that cannot be completed in the human world but must be completed by understanding our ties to the spirit world" (Rader and Gould 11). Singing, which forms the central act of ceremonial healing processes in the native tradition, here too turns out to be instrumental in self-healing. It becomes instrumental in marking the deepest connection not just with the land, but also with the ancient words, ancestral voices, and entities of the nether world, which thus contribute to spiritual healing.

Similarly, walking on the native land has far-reaching connections with the notion of identity, as manifested in the rest of the poem. By stating that 'each of us' walks 'at different times' (the notion of various generations walking on the sacred land), a strong sense of timelessness is brought in. According to Amy T. Hamilton, "The poem connects the act of walking across the land with cultural history and memory" (56) and it becomes "a reaffirmation of place, memory, and identity" (56). Walking, especially taking into consideration the notion of timelessness, becomes a larger movement to re-establish the lost connection with the place, the homeland.

The world compared to a prayerstick is to be analyzed to emphasize the spiritual worldview put forth by the poet. The prayerstick, a ritualistic material used in tribal ceremonies to call forth ancestral spirits or ancient words, appears as the symbol of hope, healing, and spirituality. The term 'fetished' used to denote the particular magical charm of the prayerstick adds to the divine associations of the same, and by conceiving the entire world as the prayerstick, the all-inclusive and all-encompassing tribal vision also gets underscored. As mentioned earlier, the natives believe that all living and non-living forms on the earth are extensions or manifestations of 'All Spirit'. Rose herself puts it in her interview with Bruchac, as quoted at the beginning, "The part of us that is spirit is just a component that is part of that entirety. We are parts of earth that walk around..." ("Bones" 262). In the poem, by perceiving the world in the singular, but larger, encompassing spiritual image of the Hopi prayerstick on which the speaker and her companions walk, the healing process is initiated. Walking turns out to be a spiritual activity, where, the natives who walk on the land intensely identifying and binding with it become the material manifestations of the force that engirdles the universe. The poem achieves

a chant-like tone on this account.

As the poem proceeds, the speaker presents the ways by which the land and the landscape play a formative role in moulding their lives:

We map our lives this way: trace our lineage
by corn, find our words in the flute,
touch the shapes that feed us with dry seed.

We grow as shrines grow from human belief;...

Corn, as has already been mentioned, stays close to the heart and soul of a Hopi, both as a natural element and as the mythological figure of the Corn Mother. This figure, which is one of the forms of the 'quintessential spirit' (the Old Spider Woman), "pervades everything, ...is capable of powerful song and radiant movement, and...moves in and out of the mind" (Allen, 13). This quintessential spirit that manifests in various forms is responsible for the creation of the Earth and all other living and non-living forms on it. Allen further cites mythologies, where, the Corn Mother "...maintains the connection between individuals in the tribe as well as the connection between the nonhuman supernaturals and the tribe" (17). Corn, especially for the Keres tribe, "...holds the essence of earth and conveys the power of earth to the people" (22). In one of the stories of creation, Abanaki, the First Woman, "...transfers the power she possesses to the corn and tobacco (her flesh and her bones)" (25) and it is believed that she creates and vitalizes lives on the earth. When the speaker articulates that they, as a community, trace their lineage by corn, all the above-mentioned associations are to be read along with it, which underscores its role as a carrier of the spiritual, sacred powers of the land, a link to the larger mystical forces, and above all, as the Godmother of all creation. Through recollection, the speaker links her roots to this ultimate spiritual source that turns to be an act of rejuvenation and revitalization. Words, that are expressions of one's self, with the body being a medium of transmission, are here traced to the flute, and the people 'touch the shapes' that feed them with dry seeds. The 'shapes' could be the various forms of Mother Earth, as she is the supreme life-giver and provider, and the act of touching becomes an act of spiritual communication.

The image of singing, coupled with a sense of renewal, regeneration, and revival, once again appears in the poem that gets expressed quite strikingly by projecting forth the power of the body:

We grow...

We sing a penetration through our pottery bodies.

Nothing is old

about us yet;

We are still waiting.

An ever-growing, ever-flowering self is on display here. The term 'pottery bodies' deserves a special mention. Pottery, with its inseparable link with the earth and association with the body- the body as an extension of the spiritual earth - becomes a signification of the feminine-spiritual power of the self. Singing takes place through bodies - bodies that are bound to the holy land through the image of 'pottery' - and it turns out to be an act of self-healing, as it evokes the ancestral words and voices, the spirits of the past, and most importantly, a sense of reverence for the holy land.

The walking in the initial part turns into floating in the final stanza of the poem. One can note a smooth unification of the body/self with the natural elements in this part. The image is one where the body floats "on the granite where water/ drains breaking open the rocks". Allen, who sees the hard substances as female symbols, takes water to be representing the female body. "Female is", she says, "earth, sun, moon, sky, water in its multitudinous forms" (269). This underscores the spiritual element which is deeply embedded in them as they all inevitably form parts of the divine universe. Thus 'water' and 'rocks' are significant, as they are the natural manifestations of the spiritual self or the spiritual body. The final part brings in a sequence of images that depict the seamless merging of the body/self and the land. This is presented in association with the act of singing:

This is where we first learned to sing

on ancient mornings

because our skin was

red sand, because our eyes

floated in flashflood water,

because our pain was made

of burdens bound in cornhusk....

By associating the body parts with the land and various elements of the land, and thus re-establishing an unbreakable spiritual connection with it, the speaker engages in an act of self-definition. The fluidity of the body can be seen as a notable feature of this part, that reaffirms a sense of continuity and permanence.

The closing lines, “because touching ourselves/ we touch everything”, is perceptibly an expression of the realization of the spiritual power within, an act of looking into one’s self. The spiritual cosmos and the body/self are merged into one, where, knowing one’s inner self becomes an act of discerning the universe itself. As stated in the introduction, the natives hold a larger belief in interconnectedness, where, the material bodies and all other creations on the earth are seen as embodiments of parts of the spiritual whole, the All Spirit. The native vision of interconnectedness and ecological spirituality are what get exemplified in these lines. Like the other two poems, the focus on the body – the acts of walking, singing, floating and touching along with the fragmented parts of skin and eyes – serves to be a key instrument in expressing the depth of the relationship the natives share with their homeland. It turns into a strategy for building a strong sense of home as a felicitous space in a recreated and redefined form, that becomes crucial and central to the journey to the self that is portrayed.

According to Kenneth Rosen, native writers “draw from this [the] sense of place, from this [the] traditional sense of belonging, a feeling for something that goes beyond both individual time and individual space”. For Rose, the native Hopi land has always been an alluring entity that she hoped (and still hopes) to reach, grasp, and make a part of herself. As she puts it in her autobiographical writing “Neon Scars”, “My father told me...that Hopi earth does contain my roots and I am, indeed, from that land. Because the roots are there, I will find them. But when I find them, he said, I must rebuild myself as a Hopi” (261). This intense urge to return to the roots is what gets reflected in the selected poems. The home that Rose constructs – as a felicitous space – by remembering through the poetic body/self becomes central in dealing with the notions of self, spirituality, and survival, and it indisputably becomes an emphatic, performative activity of her Hopi nativism.

Notes:

1. According to the *MLA* 8th edition, a poem appearing on a single page need not be given the page number in in-text citation, hence the page number is not provided.

2. This poem also appears on a single page in the source, hence because of the same reason, as stated above, the page number is not given.

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