Chapter Two
Paula Gunn Allen

This Chapter revolves around Paula Gunn Allen’s poetry. Her worldview expressed through her poetic creativity is to be viewed through a Bhabhalian lens and the notions of hybridity and mimicry are to be discussed in the selected poems from her volume entitled *Skins and Bones*. The reason for selecting poems from the anthology *Skins and Bones* is that almost all the poems are best representatives of the native worldview. The Chapter introduces Allen as a hybrid figure not only in birth as she is a mixed-blood but also in culture having grown up in a multicultural context. It is argued that Allen’s hybridity is entirely different from the dehistoricized hybridity formalized by the postcolonial thinker, Bhabha. The chapter carries out this argument by detecting the traditional ground on which her hybridity is based. Allen’s tribalism is beyond the myopic nativism which demarcates the Indian from the non-Indian and thereby reinforces the dichotomies of self and other. The detailed analysis of the selected poems display the worldview of Allen and how she celebrates her hybridity and concurrently revives and restores her traditions without falling in the traps of nativism. The poet’s worldview is also based on ecofeminism which is highlighted here not only as her distinct feature but also as her resisting strategy against the colonial sexism and racism. Her worldview against the male colonist is also exhibited in her native voice. The other significant characteristic of Allen’s poetry accentuated by the Chapter is her concerns about the environment, the land, and non-human creatures. Her poems show her
resentments against the devastating hold of the colonial urbanization and industrialization and that too partake her worldview. After a brief biographical literary introduction, the Chapter attends to the detailed analysis of the selected poems. The conclusion brings the analysis to a concluding discussion.

**Biography and Review of Literature**

Born in 1939, Paula Gunn Allen is a novelist, poet, theorist, and professor. A mixed-blood writer and poet from a Spanish-speaking village in Laguna Pueblo (New Mexico), Paula Gunn Allen mixes her tribal traditionalism with European modernism. In Louis Owens’s words, she is a “mixed-blood author of mixed-blood narratives” (Dennis 18). On her birthplace, Allen writes: “Being on the road to everywhere, at the crossroads of the modern, the early modern, the ancient, and the wilderness, Langua Pueblo has from its inception been a way station for everything that goes on the universe, sacred or otherwise” (Allen 4-5). The inherent feature of her birthplace is multiplicity which arises out of its hybridity. As she informs, her village has been founded by mixed-racial couple: the Spanish-American father and the Langua mother. Later on many people from other nations settled down there like Spanish-Americans, Mexican-Americans and Anglos, German Jews and German Christians, Lebanese Maronites and Spaniards, Italian-Americans and Greek-Americans, Basques immigrants, and Japanese-Americans, etc. Such hybridity has become part and parcel of her poetry as well. Therefore, her poetry best emanates from the liminal space representing the interstitial zero zone where cultures and codes meet and are destabilized. Such a borderless zone is the Bhabhalian Third Space whose
instability and protean characteristic renders the poetic scenery a fertile land. In “Thus Spake Pocahontas”, she contends, “we, writers on the interface/frontier between modern and timeless, are the void, the place of endless possibility. It is that sitewhich {sic} is a dynamic flux rather than a fixed pointthat {sic} is identified as Iyani” (Allen 11).

A highly polished poet and essayist, Allen has published seven volumes of poetry, one novel, and a collection of essays. She received her first education at Catholic schools in Albuquerque, at the Colorado Women’s College, and at the University of New Mexico. She attended the University of Oregon where she got her B. A. in English in 1966. In 1968, she received an M. F. A. in Creative Writing from the same university. Returning to New Mexico, she taught at the University of New Mexico while taking courses toward her Ph.D. She was awarded the doctorate degree in American Studies in 1975. Her first book of poetry, The Blind Lion, was published by Thorpe Springs Press. In 1981, she moved to Los Angeles to accept a fellowship at UCLA. From 1982 to 1990, she taught at the University of California at Berkeley in the Native American Studies Department. (Wiget 378). In 1990, she was awarded the Native American Literature prize, and her anthology Spider Woman’s Granddaughter (1989) received the American Book Award. She published Coyote’s Daylight Trip in 1978; A Cannon between My Knees in 1981; Star Child in the same year, and Shadow Country in 1982. The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions, published in 1986, contains her 1975 essay, “The Sacred Hoop: a Contemporary Perspective”. In this essay, Allen details the ritual function of Indian literatures as opposed to their Western counterpart. In Dyke’s
words, “Allen’s belief in the power of oral tradition embodied in contemporary Native American literature to effect healing, survival, and continuance underlies all of her work” (Porter and Roemer 96).

In 1977, she received a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship for essay writing in 1977, a postdoctoral fellowship in American Indian Studies at UCLA in 1981; in 1984 she was awarded a postdoctoral research granted by the Ford Foundation-National Research Council to study oral traditional elements in Native American novels. Coming from culturally and linguistically mixed context, Allen forges conscious connections between her life and the life of the Laguna Pueblo. In Wiget’s words, Allen “sees the people at Langua functioning as mediators, and her own life as a halfbreed as reflecting centuries of Languna experience” (Wiget 378). It is this act of mediation that is reflected in her poetry. Due to this role, she speaks from at least two perspectives; this dualism is both illuminating and alienating. Like many other Indians, she dwells in both worlds: the world of her native land and that of the dominant culture. Being able to function in both worlds does not mean that she is less Indian when in the mainstream culture; nor does it mean she has internalized her alterity. Rather her familiarity with the cultural codes of both worlds equips her with the requisite intellectual sovereignty. Her attempt to present both perspectives has rendered her poetry laden with fluctuations. Since the main focus of the present study is the worldview of Gunn Allen through the lens of hybridity, it should be noted that at times, she speaks for hybridity and at other times she expresses her cynical views on it. Such oscillations put under question the nature of hybridity itself. Being a mixed-blood, Allen is the offspring of
hybridity; she describes herself as a “multicultural event”, citing her Pueblo/Sioux/Lebanese/Scottish-American ancestry (Porter and Roemer 95). However, this hybridity is entirely different from the Bhabhalian Third Space in which the codes of both sides are mobilized and depolarized. Johnson quite aptly distinguishes the discourse of hybridity from “Mixed-blood” discourses that, in her words, “resonate with (often European) theories of cultural exchange and hybridity, which . . . risks rendering invisible the very elements that comprise what is hybrid” (project muse, 107). The hybridity of which Allen speaks can never be a dehistoricized one as she is fully aware of the historico-cultural context in which she finds the roots of her identity. Contra responsive to Bhabha, Allen is a poet who finds herself triggered by the historical demands of her setting. Responding to such demands, Allen draws on history and Native traditions which replete her poetic works. Quoting Iris Young, Hussain rightly observes that Bhabha’s hybridity “declares the birth of subject-(non)positions that are merely ‘a play of difference that cannot completely be comprehended’ and that can therefore even free-float out of history or situatedness” (28). Envisaged as such, Allen’s poetry both resents and celebrates hybridity. It resents the dehistoricizing hybridity which homogenizes cultural differences; and simultaneously, she cherishes in the hybridity which is the site of power struggle and marked with historical demands of the context. In this respect, her return to traditions and her Native culture is more than mere separatist nativism which has been avoided since Fanon. The same explanation applies to her approach to technology. Once technology has a protective role; at some other time, it becomes a devastating force for the Indians. It is in the light
of these oscillations that the present research carries out its analysis. It is argued that such inconsistencies are inherent to Allen who is located interstitially, fuelling her poetic career. This study argues that Allen’s poetic creativity arises out of these oscillations which mark her ideological stance as well. Viewed in this light, Allen’s poetry cannot be frozen under a fixed label like “postcolonial” which itself has become a colonial male legacy.

Gunn Allen is a feminist who has been hugely influenced by such radical feminists like the lesbian modernist author, Gertrude Stein, and the radical feminist theologian, Mary Daly. This does not mean she owes her feminist inspirations to the Western figures. By origin, she comes from a gynocratic tribal society “meaning a society in which feminine power is central” (Van Dyke, in Porter and Roemer 86). Her novel, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, arises out of her feminist perspectives. Dennis rightly calls the novel as an “exposition of her tribalism” as well as a “consciousness-raising” novel (21-22). She talks of the difficulty that non-Indian readers face in reading this novel since understanding the novel “depends on knowledge and understanding the structures of Native American myth and ritual; and she [Allen] offers an interpretation of it that is based on her sense of Native American philosophy of being” (Dennis 19). Referring to the women’s tragic loss of their respect under the colonial supremacy, Dyke explains this as the subject of this novel. This critic aptly calls *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* as “one of the first contemporary novels to have a complex Native American female as its central character” (Porter and Roemer 95). Following the lead of Momaday’s prize winning novel, Allen’s novel privileges tribal traditions.
as the solution to the female protagonist’s chronic crisis of identity. Technically, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* violates diegetic norms by blurring the implied author and the narrator. Allen utilized third-person point of view to “represent a strong empathy between implied author and protagonist, not a careful distancing” (Dennis 23). It is this sense of empathy that encourages another critic Cynthia McDaniel to describe the novel as semi-autobiographical (30; Dennis 23). Taking this novel as semi-autobiographical accords it a political significance. As Linda Anderson explains,

> The idea that autobiography can become ‘the text of the oppressed’, articulating through one person’s experience, experiences which may be representative of a particular marginalized group, is an important one: autobiography becomes both a way of testifying to oppression and empowering the subject through their cultural inscription and recognition. (104; Dennis 23)

In this research, Allen’s emphasis on the woman’s voice is of political significance, not merely sexually but also racially. Adopting the feminist lens, Allen’s poetry revives the tradition of her homeland which has been relentlessly silenced by the colonial male voice. More than giving her work a feminist angle, Allen attempts to revive and restore her Laguna Pueblo culture in which women are held in high respect. The tribes give assigned women all important jobs that of a farmer, a warrior and also of the chief of a tribe. Here she is not silenced and is not just a subject of sexual gratification. This point is quite clear in her own words describing the old narrative cycle of Pueblo peoples, which deserves to be
quoted at length; this narrative cycle is divided into three sections: creation, emergence, and migration. Allen explains:

Each of these portions is applicable to the community, to each clan within it, and to each individual member of the clans. In terms of our story as indigenous people in the contemporary era the story could be told thus: In the beginning was Thought, and she was Grandmother; the people emerged into the fourth world guided and led by our dear mother, Beautiful Corn Woman; under the continued guidance of Thought Grandmother, we migrated from where we were to our present homelands. Then there was the reprise of that cycle . . . The people were created as Pueblo by the coming of others from the east; we migrated in Thought and custom from where we had been situated to where we are situated now, and our Thought migrated over the globe, sending Grandmother Thought/Consciousness outward upon the web of life (again). . . . Transformation is, after all, the heart of the people, the heart of the tradition, and the heart of the process of Thought. (Allen 13)

This long quotation proves the matrilineality of her traditional culture. As notified by Van Dyke, Allen’s descent is “matrilineal – women owned the houses, and the primary deities are female. A major theme of Allen’s work is delineation and restoration of this woman-centered culture” (Porter and Roemer 95). This thesis takes Allen’s stress on the central role of women as presented in her poetry as one resisting strategy against the assimilating force of androcentric colonialism.
Moreover, this gender-based orientation stands for her resentments against the Bhabhalian hybridity which occurs in the colonial encounter as one of the practical aftermaths of this hybridity has been silencing women through a hybrid male dominant voice. This perspective accords significance to her poetic work when she writes of her birthplace, locally called the Woman Mountain, which changed from the neutral Spanish Cerro Pelones (Old Baldy) to American masculine Mt. Taylor (Allen, Off Reservation 5). Her feminism is a mixed one of her traditional feminism and the modern European one, as by culture she comes from a sexually complementary context, a trait which has been ignored and disrupted by the masculine colonial voice. Writing extensively on gender complementarity in Native American worldview, Patricia Hollrah explicates, “The important aspects of men and women’s roles is {sic} that they complemented each other, and they were equally valued for the contributions they made to the community; one role did not have more importance than another” (2). Calling gender complementarity as “balanced reciprocity”, Klein and Ackerman explain the worlds of men and women are “distinctly different but not generally perceived as hierarchical” (14; qtd. in Hollrah 6). Hollrah then detects gender complementarity in politics, literature, Native spirituality, education, and society. Through her politicized lens, Allen aptly de-totalizes the colonial androcentric claim over her land and her culture, while simultaneously she appropriates the feminist trend of the white woman. Deploying Linda Hutcheon’s terminology, Allen “installs” and then “subverts” the colonial feminism; or in Ashcroft et al.’s terminology, she “appropriates” the feminist trends of the West and “abrogates” them by restoring her Native
American worldview in the face of its Western counterpart. This accounts for the dominance of woman figure and the political role of female voice in her poetry. Thus her collection of poems is replete with women, mothers, girls, and grandmothers.

James Ruppert views Allen’s feminism as “an act of mythic and cross-cultural insight as well as a social position” (in Wiget 379). In Wiget’s observation, Allen “celebrates Native women as the source of connections, the focus of relationships, the well of creativity” (Wiget 379). For Allen, women not only have mythic significance but also function as healing agents. Women possess this curative power because of their relation to spirit. This is the point that Allen highlights about Native American women writers, stating: “American Indian women who write have as our first and most significant characteristic a solid, impregnable and ineradicable orientation toward a spirit-informed view of the universe, which provides an internal structure to both our consciousness and our art” (“This Wilderness in My Blood” 95; Wiget 380). For Allen, Native American worldviews are fundamentally mystic and spiritual. This is quite clear in her exposition of the novel, The Woman Who Owned the Shadows, and in The Sacred Hoop: “Entry into the narrative tradition enables individuals to realize that the significance of their own lives stems in large part from their interlocking connections with the lives of all others who share a particular psychospiritual tradition” (100; Dennis 23). Allen goes so far as involving the whole cosmos in these “interlocking connections” drawing upon the Western discourse of science and comparing it with the American view. In The Sacred Hoop, she comments in typically categorical style:
The closest analogy in Western thought is Einesteinian understanding of matter as a special state or condition of energy. Yet even this concept falls short of the American Indian understanding, for Einesteinian energy is believed to be unintelligent, while energy according to the Indian view is intelligence manifested yet in another way. (60; Dennis 39)

Elaine Jahner aptly contends Allen offers “alternate he-stories” (1986, 102; qtd. in Ruppert, Wiget 380). Commenting on the limited supporting evidence provided for Allen’s “gynocratic” view of tribal life, Elizabeth Hanson concludes, “Subjective at points, reflective of a chosen audience at others, Allen’s criticism is ambitiously largescale, enthusiastic, mythic, prolix and uneven in tone” (1990, 18; qtd in Ruppert, Wiget 380).

In her essay, “Kochinnenako in Academe”, Allen asserts that tribal “literature and philosophies are often accretive than linear, more achronological than chronological, and more dependent on harmonious relations of all elements within the field of perception than western culture in general is thought to be” (as cited in Nixon, project muse, p. 16). Further, she explains that “traditional peoples perceive their world in a unified-field fashion and that is very different from the single-focus perception that generally characterizes western masculinist, monotheist modes of perception” (qtd. in Nixon 16). The unity that underlies the tribal life is accentuated in Allen’s speech; she contends that the very idea of individual self-representation, which lies at the core of Western
conventional genre of autobiography, is fundamentally at odds with many Native American world-views (qtd. in Bloom 7).

Like Harjo, Allen believes in the central role of the storyteller as a mediator; she posits,

an Indian poetry must develop metaphors that will not only reflect the dual perceptions of Indian/non-Indian but will reconcile them. The ideal metaphor will harmonize the contradictions and balance them so the internal equilibrium can be achieved, so that each perspective is meaningful, and in their joining unity rather than fragmentation occurs. (Allen 161; qtd. in Reid in Bloom 14)

This view of poetry runs against its Western counterpart which aims its expressive powers at self-representation and thus celebrates fragmentation as the proper means to convey individual psychic rupture. While for Native Americans literature and specifically poetry functions as a healing power, for the West it functions like a mirror to reflect man’s loss of internal equilibrium. What is destructive for an Indian poet is not multiplicity of perspectives, but rather the mediator’s inability to reconcile the differences. In the cultural moments where multiplicity reigns and thereby “wholeness” is often represented as in flux, Allen aptly assigns a healing role to storytelling (literature); she argues, “it [storytelling, or literature in general] heals itself and the tribal web by adapting to the flow of the present while never relinquishing its connection to the past” (Allen 45; qtd. in Bloom 9). Allen’s argument for such a balance between the past and the present countersigns Bhabhalian
hybridity; for her literature is inevitably hybrid as it adapts itself and the tribal web to the cultural mainstream; simultaneously, however, it does not uproot itself from its past. Elsewhere, Allen comments,

> In the western mind, shadows highlight the foreground. In contrast, in the tribal view the mutual relationships among shadows and light in all their varying degrees of intensity create a living web of definition and depth, and significance arises from their interplay. Traditional and contemporary tribal arts and carts testify powerfully to the importance of balance among all elements in tribal perception, aesthetics, and social systems. (244; Dennis 49).

Bhabha is of the view that in the Third Space all codes are mobilized and this mobilization occurs in an ever changing flux; the flux is both dehistoricized and dehistoricizing for Bhabha. Allen’s hybridity, by contrast, retains its roots in the past in an affirmative gesture to legitimate Indian identity, hence historicized. The coveted harmony the ideal metaphor brings about culminates in the equilibrium that is lost to the West and is to be found in tribal-individual connections to both the past and the present, the Indian and the non-Indian. The harmony that features Allen’s poetry motivates Lincoln to describe the movement of her poetry as impression leading towards thought (1983, 215; qtd. in Wiget 379). Allen’s act of mind is, in Wiget’s words, one in which “Native perception forges the interconnections between a structuring series of opposing foci – physical/spiritual, contemporary/traditional, woman/man, wilderness/civilization, grounded/disconnected, personal/mythic, and white/Indian; her field of composition is one of
spirit, value, and continuance” (379). This harmony that Allen’s poetry deftly achieves accords her the role of a healer or a mediator.

Another implication of Allen’s speech is the context-boundedness of Native American literature. In Nixon’s words, “Native American literature must be understood in its Native context” (Bloom 172). Allen takes the roots of tribal literature and tribal aesthetics deep in the tribal traditions as “Native writers write out of tribal traditions, and into them” (5; qtd. in Bloom 173). Central to her Native tribal tradition is oral tradition and writes in details on the expressive forms of traditional song and poetry. In her discussion of traditional American Indian literature she explains the interconnectedness of myth, ritual and texts. One aspect of this is the use of repetition in chants. (Dennis 20). She aptly calls inscribed knowledge as text (Allen, p. 9).

Elaine Jahner writes on Allen’s task: “Because of her maturity and breadth of experience Allen succeeds in giving us what no one else has, a highly intelligent yet personal critique of basic cultural assumptions from a Native American feminist perspective” (qtd. in Ruppert, Wiget 380).

**Analysis and Discussion**

Allen’s worldview is reflected in her ecofeminism as well as in her spiritualism. Deploying her tribal woman-centered tradition, Allen gives the woman a mystical role and thus renders her a healer, a mediator in whom opposing forces are harmonized. Indian women get their energy and force from “their spiritual sources, their roles as sexual and cultural mediators, their connectedness with the earth and its creatures, and their historical consciousness” (Reppurt in Wiget 379). In Thomas Gannon’s
words, “The Others of nature and gender coalesce in ecofeminism” (20). Calling for a “synthesis” of “feminism and ecology”, Francoise D’Eaubonne laments men abusing both their environmental and countersex (Gannon 20). Allen is an eco-centered Native writer who attempts to restore the “raped” female voice to its proper deserving status. Her ecofeminism underlies all her poetic sketch of her context. She mixes her feminist standpoint with care and love for the environment and nature which forms her ecofeminism. And ecofeminism is also a traditional concept in the natives because of their noteworthy association with the environment and high regard for women. The collection aptly starts with C’koy’u, Old Woman” addressing the female soul which encompasses the earth and the sky: “Old woman there in the earth/outside you we wait/do you dream of birth, bring/ what is outside inside?/ . . ./old woman there in the sky/we are waiting inside you/dreaming your dream of birthing/get what is inside/outside” (2). This poem at the beginning of the collection somehow resembles the invocation that appears at the outset of classical epic works like Iliad, Odyssey, and Paradise Lost. In contrast to the colonial classical which invokes a masculine deity, Allen invokes a female one. The poem’s play on the concepts of inside and outside and assigning them a female identity capable of birthing is a deconstructive invocation. Besides, the interplay of the inside and outside is Allen’s strategy to bring about a harmony between the two just as she harmonizes the earth and the sky by according both a female identity. This balance is the coveted image which comes from her tribal perspective and which has been ruptured by the colonial male monopoly. The deconstructive theme of the poem is furthered by the ending stanza which switches to her tribal
chants, defamiliarizing the non-Indian reader: “a hey a hey a hey a ho/. .
/a hi oh ho a hi oh ho/a hey a hey a hey a ho” (p. 2). This stanza which
enchants the old woman in the earth and in the sky impels the non-Indian
reader to get acquainted with the role of chants in the Indian American
tradition. Moreover, the insertion denotes the hybridization of poetry with
oral songs and chants; what Allen achieves out of this hybridity is balance
and harmony between her Indian tradition and the Western form of poetry
rendered in English. In this light, the poem on the whole is a site of power
struggle between the language of the colonial and the oral tradition of the
Indian structure. The fact that the old woman who dominates the earth
and the sky is to be invoked in the traditional language (chant) hints at the
limitations of the colonial language in communicating with the feminine
soul of the whole universe. Linguistically speaking, the poem is a hybrid
one; yet unlike Bhabhalian Third Space this is not a depolarized liminal
space; rather, the poem develops out of the linguistic tensions between
the two traditions; the ending of the poem in the Indian language tilts the
power struggle in favor of the Native perspective, hence polarized. Here,
the native American worldview is showcased from the feminist
perspective when nature is perceived as a woman who is willing to be a
mother of new ideas, a new world. Moreover, Native American
Worldview is based on their traditional lifestyle and relations with the
whole universe.

In the second poem, “Eve the Fox”, the woman figure is utilized to
de-define the colonial religious discourse. Here, Allen draws upon the
Biblical figure of Eve and Indianizes her presenting her a “foxy lady”
who “knew all the tricks of the trade” (3). Calling the Fall event as “the
trade”, Allen is deconstructing the Christian story by putting under question God’s intentions. God is implicitly presented here as a treacherous figure who trades and tricks on His creatures. In contrast, it is only Eve who knows the tricks and can manage the whole incident in an enjoyable way. Describing Adam as one who was bored “renaming the beasts”, Allen superiorizes Eve over him because she has been enjoying herself and her body prior to eating the fruit. Besides, knowledge as such without sexual knowledge is boring. It is only after Adam eats the forbidden fruit that he comes to know about the real joy of which Eve had already been aware. She is a mixture of oppositions and cherishes balance: “serpent wise and snake foolish” (p. 3). While the Biblical narrative puts blame on Eve for Adam’s Fall and condemns the Original Sin, Allen’s Eve cherishes her sexuality and turns the Original Sin into the Original Joy. Committing the so-called Sin brings about a change in Adam; yet in Eve the change has already occurred, before the Sin: “And Wham-bam,/the change arose, it rose up in Adam/as it had in Eve” (3). While in Western Worldview the blame is put on the Eve, in the native worldview, the Eve is placed in high esteem. The maleness of western worldview is countersigned by the matrilineal social system of the Indians.

“Taku Skanska” is a philosophical poetic treatise on god, being, existence, calling all of them, the event. Here again, Allen concerns herself with the discourse of the colonial religion and deconstructs it through her feministic perspective. The speaker in the poem is most obviously a woman who dismantles the fixed notions of male God and
redefines it from her new perspective. Defining God not as a power or an agent but as “what happens”, as an event, does away with His fixities in the religious discourse and accords it a protean, ever changing feature. And “what happens” is not masculine, not frozen in some fixed images, but always on move. Dedefining God as masculine and redefining Him as feminine is Allen’s deconstructive treatment of colonial religion; moreover, this process of codification restores her gynocratic tribal belief in the feminine to the discourse of religion. The poet deconstructively violates the grammatical rules of the colonial language in order to accord it fluidity and a protean nature; such fluidity best manifests her femaleness. Allen shows the fluidity of her thought through such structures as “movesmoves”, “horsebreath, mybreath, earthbreath/skybreathing air. ing./ breathesbreathes movesmoves /in the cold. winterspringfall./ corral. ing. horse and breath.” (p. 45); what such strange combinations signify is the Indian worldview that draws a direct and constant link between man and nature, unlike the Western outlook that separates and prioritizes man over his environment. She aptly introduces her traditional philosophical thesis called “Lakota”. Giving a name to her philosophical thesis, Allen achieves many objectives concurrently. First of all, she introduces her tribal philosophy, Indianizes it, and puts it vis-à-vis the colonial one. Reflecting upon man, nature, and God shows her mental powers and philosophizing potentials which have always been undermined by the gender-oriented colonial stereotypes. Nullifying the colonial image of God as something fixed lays bare the monopoly of their religious discourse. Presenting God as something that
happens in nature, in man, and in being on the whole draws an intimate and permanent link between God and man; this direct link has been denied to man in Christianity, giving the priest the authority to intervene and interrupt the link. Moreover, God as an on-going event has more flexibility than a masculine, totalitarian Lord. In the realm of such God, the speaker riding on her mare feels the coldness and frozenness of the soul, “lifebreath of winter soul/. . ./happens to be frozenstiff in place/. . ./so I and mare/wear clothes thatmove in event/of frozen” (45-46). The poem ends in a catalogue describing the speaker’s natural setting against which the speaker and the mare move doing away with its dominant coldness. The last sentence of the poem is significant: “Lakotas say: god./ what we do” (46). Lakotas is the Indian philosopher who gives another definition of God with another spelling. Unlike the Western norm, this god is not capitalized. De-capitalization of God signifies de-stabilizing the authority of God which is away, far, above, and separate from the creatures. Defining god as “what we do” in the context of the poem is quite revealing. Postcolonially speaking, the inclusive pronoun “we” implicitly demarcates “we” from “they”, “us” from “them”. In the context of this poem, “we” and “us” could represent the Natives on move, dynamic, fluid and flexible, whereas the implied “they” and “them” could signify the colonial fixed, frozen, rigid, static, and cold. In this poem the only moving beings are the woman speaker and her mare; they are moving in a setting of stillness and frozenness. Implicitly, the ones that move can only stand for god since the event is with them or they are the event. In this way, Allen restores her traditional religion which gives
centrality to woman figure. Unlike Western Worldview that perceives women as silent spectators and subordinates, the natives held women in high admiration and give them all central roles within the families and tribes.

In the poem “What the Moon Said”, the moon is given a female voice talking of her freedom and movement based on her own wish. Allen’s strategy is to give room to the moon to speak for herself, thus direct quotations are inserted within the poem. Most of the lines of the poem are direct quotations which give full presence and authority to the speaker without the interference of some other narrator. By contrast, the Western tradition mostly quotes the woman indirectly, or worse, speaks on her part for her. Instead of giving her space to speak up, the Western tradition views woman in need of somebody else, a male voice, to represent her. This view gets racial implications when it comes to presenting the Indian woman. Unlike the Western woman who is at the service of a male, the tribal woman lives just on her own and for herself. This outlook runs in contrast to the Western worldview that marginalizes woman as “the other sex”, lacking autonomy: “The moon moves along the sky by her own willing./. ./. . It is her nature sometimes / to wander in some distant place, hidden, absent, gone” (p. 49). While the Western androcentric discourse claims woman, in the Native American worldview it is the woman who has full claim over herself: “There are things/ I work out for myself/. . ./These are my paces, and walking through them is my right/. . ./ if I’m mad at myself, don’t believe /I’m mad at you/. . ./it is not your glory I reflect./It is not your love/ that makes me pink,/ copper,/ gold./ It is mine” (p. 48). Native Worldview focuses on the revival of
traditional matrilineal system and gives equal significance to all creatures in the Universe be it a male or a female.

“Arousings” is a three-part poem on the fluid and free figure of woman. The speaker celebrates the femaleness of nature by showing how love flows down through her to the whole universe. The woman in the poem is in love; yet this love is not chaining her to a male figure; rather it resembles a lesbian sort of love, or a sisterly care. Allen’s ecofeminism is presented here in the many identifications that she draws between woman and nature. Just as she prioritizes the feminine, nature is also privileged in the poem, hence “the woman of the earth./the woman of the sky./ the woman of the water./of the seaspray./the fog./wakes” (53). With the woman’s wake, the whole universe is awakened: “and her awakening is not death or war, not rage./she’s in love, that woman the world. she’s in love” (53). Unlike the Western version of love which ravages the woman bringing her pain and frustration, the Indian notion of female love elates the woman speaker as well as the woman lover. Thus the speaker views the woman as the whole universe whose loving equals loving all nature and things. Like the Western feminists who describe a woman as the wind roaring or running water, flowing, protean, Allen describes her woman lover the same by associating her to water, hence the rain, “water running/ clear and frothy, cold” (p. 50). Allen’s woman figure is constantly on move; she is running like water; blowing free like the wind; pouring down like the rain; rising her breath; “she smiles and roars./pours in perfect passion./tosses her hair, body./her legs./she clasps her hands, she sings./ she dances” (51). Even when she is waiting for her lover, she is lying in “the pond of her self” taken by her dreams. (53). At Laguna,
they respect woman whose sexual arousing means “thought./ . . peaceful
hearts./ . . / wonder./water./want and need” (50 and 53).

In some of her poems she turns her hands on this aspect of
women’s lives representing their sufferings in a male-dominated society.
While Bhabha cherishes hybridity which undermines the colonial force by
mobilizing its codes in the colonial encounter, Allen focuses on the
negative impacts of this hybridity. In her collection, she has poems in
which hybrid women, mixed-bloods, suffer denouncement by their tribes
as traitors. Betrayal is one of the characteristics raised against those who
lie on the borders of the two races. The betayers are those who helped
the white man penetrate the territories of the natives, guiding them
through their lands. Allen, at times, takes side with the betayers; at some
other time, she condemns them. Such oscillations in her stand toward this
phenomenon, which has become inevitable among the tribes, represent
her pessimism toward hybridity and the Third Space which Bhabha
glosses over in his culture-oriented analysis.

In “Malinalli, La Malinche, to Cortes, Conquistador”, Allen
condemns the colonial for his greed for gold and calls it a spiritual
disease: “The Spaniard has a disease for which /the only cure is gold, you
said; nor/ did you know the disease was more of the spirit/ than of the
flesh” (p. 5). The poem is a narrative of an Indian who, having betrayed
her own clan, has guided the colonial in the territories of the Indigenous
people. The speaker is a mixed-blood, with “many-flavored tongue”, who
addresses the colonial accusing him of having brought war and
destruction to her people on their own lands. Not only does the colonial
destroy the Indians, but eliminates the whole tradition, hence she hears
Mother Earth, “mother of us all” (6), bemoaning in the white man’s jail, “Listen: in the barrios even now I hear/ her wailing cry as it was heard/ in the chambers of the ruler a cycle ago:/ oh, my beloved children,/ where will I hide you?” (7). In this quotation replacing “age” with “cycle” signifies the Indian notion of history as cyclic which countersigns the Western linear, chronological view of history. While the cyclic structure connotes repetition and completion, the linear signifies progression and thereby hierarchy. This linearity gains political significance reminding one of Hegelian definition of History. For Hegel, History starts in the East and ends in the West (Joyce’s thesis). Based on this view, History has origins in the East but its development takes it to the West; this stereotypifies the East as the primitive the savage, the undeveloped and the West as the civilized and the developed. Setting aside all categories like “age”, “period”, “era” which cognate Hegelian view of History, Allen’s deployment of “cycle” mythologizes and thereby Indianizes the view of history in the face of its Western hierarchizing notion.

In the epigraph with which this poem starts, the speaker speaks of the slave girl gifted to Cortes, the colonist. Presenting the girl in the epigraph is paralleled to gifting the land of gold to the intruders. This juxtaposition signifies the importance of the girl as the land. Exposed to the denigrating stereotypes of the colonist, the slave girl ironizes the white man’s claims of authority presenting him a captive in her hands: “Ever I twisted you to my will,/ .../for you did not know she sang/of your victories before your name was dreamed” (5). The speaker is the slave girl, suffering the state of a mixed-blood: “And I myself have been maligned: a fitting/ irony. Maligned I, La Malinche,/chief of traitors,
chief of slaves” (p. 6). She expresses her sin of having betrayed Mother Earth: “Betrayed I the father gods,/the false serpent who claimed/ wings, who flew against /the grandmother sun declaring/ prior right; who brought/ murder and destruction, gold and jade” (p. 6). This cynical treatment of the role of the mixed-blood slave girl shows Allen’s resentments against hybridity. And at the same time, it shows the sufferings of mixed-bloods within the Indian tribe, suffering a suspending sense of belonging. She calls him “unblessed conqueror” who is boastful “of a power you would never own” (5) and cherishes his “barbaric splendor” (6). The colonial greed ends in failure; thus she calls him to: “glimpse the falling feathers / of your dying king” (7). The speaker’s confession that s/he declared “prior right” against the grandmother sun reminds one of the paper-ownership which illusively brings a sense of right over the owned. Besides, it implicitly puts in contrast Western-made ownership to natural proprietorship whereas the Indians bestow utmost importance to the nature around them. In this light, the failure of the colonial so-called owner signifies his defeat under the force of nature.

“Pocahontas to Her English Husband, John Rolfe” is another poem with the same theme which starts with a quotation from Charles Larson calling Pocahontas “a kind of traitor to her people . . . a hostage” (8). The poem, in contrast to the epigraph, presents the Indian girl as the savior of her white husband, calling him her “foolish child” (8). While she retains her silence for which she has been subordinated by the white husband, “saying I was/ a simple wanton, a savage maid” (p. 9), she reminds him of his debt to her for her support and guidance: “and you,/ deceiver, whiteman, father of my son,/ survived, reaping wealth . . . / . . /from what
I taught you and/ from the wasting of my bones” (p. 9). These lines portray how the West has thrived on the deterioration of the Natives.

In the poem, “Molly Brant, Iroquois Matron, Speaks”, the Indian complains of having been separated from her clan by the whites and taken by force to the white men’s schools; she ends the speech by showing the savagery of the colonizer, “the happiness of the people is constantly sacrificed to the splendor of the empire” (p. 10). This destruction is not merely physical and emotional since the white-run schools which separated children from the parents and thereby from the clan has been effective in estranging the next generation to the traditions of the parents and the tribe. Taking away the children from their cultural and tribal context accelerated the processes of deculturation and acculturation. The speaker in the poem is a woman who tries to conform to the laws and conventions of the “civilized” white men but in reality finds herself debauched and subordinated by the colonists and estranged to her own tribe. She is the product of the colonial encounter who resides in the Third Space in which she suffers from her suspension between two cultures none of which claims her; she cannot be one of the whites for being a native, nor is she accepted by her Indian tribe for having become “civilized”. Having fought for the Whites in war, she sees the real face of the war and their part in it: “How could we know,/bound o the borders we called home,/the Revolution we conspired for/would turn us under/ like last year’s crop?” (12). Aware of the belittling view of the Whites, she states, “How could we know I would be / no longer honored matron/ but heathen squaw --/ in their eyes, my beloved daughters/half-breed dirt” (10-11). Having engaged in the civil war for the benefits of the White
men, she later on recognizes that they, she and her brother, have both become strangers to their tribal culture: “we/ all but forgot the little ones / dear to our Mothers/ and their ancestry,/the tender fortunes/ of squash, corn and beans” (p. 11). While fleeing the war scene, they realize “so far from the Roots of our being/ had we flown” (p. 11). They find White men’s war frustrating as it is devastating to the earth and nature:

I speak now because I know
the Revolution has not let up.

. . .All that is left
is not so precious after all –
great cities, piling drifting clouds
of burning death, waters that last drew breath
decades, perhaps centuries ago,
four-leggeds, wingeds, reptiles all
drowned in bloodred rivers of an alien dream
of progress. Progress is what
they call. I call it cemetery,
charnel house, soul sickness,
artificial mockery
of what we call life. (13)

Calling White man’s progress as cemetery, the speaker countersigns the grounds for the colonial claims to authority. The end that
she craves for is the total obliteration of the earth which washes away the colonial and his destructive power on the earth: “Maybe when the last great blast goes up/ you will hear me screaming with glee,/ . . ./trilling ecstatically my longed-for revenge” (13). This desire and revenge shows that the Third Space in which she finds herself situated is not a symmetrical one, but an imposing space in which the power relations unavoidably tilt to the oppressive side.

While in the previous poems betrayal has been condemned by Allen, in “The One Who Skins Cats” she treats the betrayer in a more positive and supportive way. In this poem, Allen speaks of an Indian woman variously called “Sacagawea, Bird Woman”, “Porivo, Chief Woman”. Sacagawea is a powerful female figure, a hybrid, “I am the one who wanders, the one/ who speaks, the one who watches,/the one who does not wait,/ . . ./the one who wears a silver/medallion inscribed with the face /of a President” (14). Counterdistinction to a European woman, Sacagawea embodies history and culture of her people: “I am legend. I am history./. . . /I am/ grandmother of the Sun” (p. 14). The affinity that the Native woman cherishes with nature is the missing joy in the life of a Western woman living in cities. While in the Western worldview, it is the woman who follows up the man, in the Native worldview it is the woman who takes the lead since it is believed that only a female soul can do so. Hence the Bird Woman ecofeministically describes herself as “Slave Woman, Lost Woman, Grass Woman, Bird Woman./ I am Wind Water Woman and White Water Woman, and I come/ and go as I please . . . ./ I am Many Tongue Woman, Sacred Wind Woman,/ Bird Woman. I am Mountain Pass/ and River Woman” (15). Such a prominent figure has
been degraded by the White women as an “Indian maid” who can skin a cat (15-16). The Chief Woman talks of the colonizers making her “the most famous squaw in all creation” and complains they subordinated her because “they was tired of being nothing / themselves. They wanted to show how nothing / was really something of worth” (16). The fact that the Indian Chief Woman speaks of herself in the language of the colonist represents how she has absorbed the linguistic codes of the colonial and utilized it in order to show her true identity against their stereotypes. This is along with her violation of grammatical rules, hence “they was tired” instead of “they were tired”. Besides, the other political implication of this violation is claiming the colonial language, modifying it based on her own needs, and thereby de-stabilizing the linguistic supremacy.

While her people accuse her for having betrayed them showing the white man their territories, she votes for her more effective weapon against the colonists, her hybridized identity which enables her to “skin a cat” (p. 17). This point is hinted at when she states, “Maybe there was a better way to skin that cat, / but I used the blade that was put in my hand” (17-18). When she mentions, “the things my Indian people call me now/ they got from the whiteman” who “came like barbarian hordes” (18), she is implicitly referring to the demoralizing impact of the white man’s culture on her people despite their separatism. When at the end she argues, “It’s not easy skinning cats/ when you’re a dead woman” (18). Within the context of the poem, she describes white woman as the “dead” woman who is debilitated by the patriarchy of white men.

Similar to the theme of betrayal which receives contradictory treatment by Allen, technology is also viewed both cynically and
positively. “Taking a Visitor to See the Ruins” centers on an explorer, himself an Indian who has quitted his tribe, guided by the Native speaker to see the wilds in New Mexico. Ironically enough, she, the guide, takes him to a well-protected apartment in which the Indian ruins are presented in the figures of her mother and grandmother (22). Symbolically, the modern well-secured apartment becomes the container that supports and preserves the old Native American worldview, hence technology at the service of traditions. The ending stanza of the poem is highly biting, censuring the destructive force of the colonist, having displaced Indians from their territories where they have been stripped of their security: “the two who still live pueblo style in high-security dwellings/ way up there where the enemy can’t reach them/ just like in the olden times” (23). Allen most aptly leaves traditions secured with the female figures of the family; this shows her feminism and tribal gynocraticism and simultaneously restores the lost ignored centrality to the woman’s voice. The fact that her mother and grandmother still retain their Native lifestyle despite relentless usurpation of their lands by the Whites in the urban dwellings not only represents the hybridity of their culture but also their resisting power against the assimilating force of the colonist. In contrast to this poem which gives technology a protective visage, “Coyote Jungle” and “Teaching Poetry at Votech High, Santa Fe, the Week John Lennon Was Shot” present technology as an estranging force. In “Coyote Jungle”, Allen complains how mechanization of agriculture has estranged man from his own land. No more does man feel the land which he burrows; rather it is the machine, a tractor, that does the work and thus distantiates him from his land; Allen aptly calls it “the velvet dark/ of technological
truth” (p. 34); thus the man “doesn’t understand/ that the furrow on his
/forehead was transferred /from the furrows he once turned/on the land . .
./. . .as he sat on the tractor” (34). Moreover, the speaker’s view that the
man’s forehead is furrowed because he has left furrows on the face of the
land draws an intimate link between man and nature; while the Western
worldview situates man on top of the tractor giving him a seemingly
higher position to the land, the Indian tradition brings man down to earth
by linking him directly to the land, hence unity. It is this state of harmony
which is ruptured by the interference of technology, a legacy of the
colonist.

The long, hybrid poem, “Teaching Poetry at Votech High, Santa
Fe, the Week John Lennon Was Shot”, is the poet’s complaints against
modernity; it bemoans how modernity has penetrated into the culture of
the Indians, having estranged them to their own selves and giving them
“faceless fate” (36). The speaker is a female teacher whose revolutionary
urges to bring sea change in the status quo are frustrated at the
assassination of their leader, John Lennon. She is teaching “glossy
poetry” (36) at a high tech school and hence her discourse is inevitably
replete with technological and scientific terminology. She herself is well
aware that this school is not her place, “through their eyes, / I see myself
punitive, demanding, irrelevant. /Though I am not/ vocationally
authorized,/I hold  the chalk” (36). The poem starts with the hums and
drums of schools: “Noise everywhere, scrambling over/untouched books
glossy and slick/with disuse” (36). In such a technology-ridden
atmosphere, she feels her life threatened by technology, hence “electronic
mornings creep/over my horizons/fill my days with danger” (p. 36); the
smoke of electric plant” (37), “the December crystal air” (37). She
mourns the loss of Lennon as she remembers his blood has been “washed
away just after / by the city’s rain” (37).

In the second part she recalls how her tribe has changed in eighteen
years of urbanization (37). The history of colonization started with the
Westerners’ gifts such as alcohol which gradually changed into
“electronic commodities” (38) having beguiled her people into
urbanization, “not understanding/ how they’ve been crucified, / or by
who, / they make do with plastic reveries sunk/ in heedless desperation”
(38). Allen’s speaker, however, does not put all the blame on the
colonists; she criticizes her own people for not having “the will to
fight/the mindless nothing that infuses/inexorable anguish into their
lives” (38). Now the Indians have become technology-stricken,
“Synthetic clatter crusts/ their days, makes electro-/chemical tissue of
their gaze” (p. 38). She contemplates on the plights she shares with her
people, “What world is this?/Cut off, torn away, shattered, maybe/ they
dream of when it will get better,/ of when they will be free” (38). In such
descriptions, the teacher is implicitly denouncing the people’s dreaming
of their freedom and betterment of their lives, as they have been uprooted
and estranged from their own traditions. Such adjectives as “cut off, torn
away, and shattered” refer to the distance created between her generation
under the reign of the colonial and their tribal and parental traditions. The
desperate teacher sees no future for their next generation: “What do they
become, these children,/the same age as my own, / who I watch
staggering into life, /despair rising/ . . . /like poison on the desert air?/. .
./They do not plan, they do not dream./There is no future they can bear”
Foreseeing no future for her generation marks the failure of the colonial system in “civilizing” the Indians for which they have displaced them from their traditional and natural contexts. Moreover, as the history of the West itself reveals urbanization and their so-called civilization have failed to give the whites themselves the golden world in which they used to hold faith. Caught up in the maze of modernity that they have wrapped themselves in, the Westerners are seeking an outlet all in vain.

The fifth part of the poem describes how Indians have been inflicted by the morbid legacies of Western civilization; the teacher suffers being “surrounded /by eyes that canny and closed/. . ./ Artificiality-induced/ boredom barely masks /their scorn of the dusty /plastic tiempo heir minds are frozen in;” (40). She sees how modernity has stricken her generation who “understand the nature of their punishment./ They do not understand their crimes” (40). In her young students, she finds nothing other than “plastic faces /barely differentiated into closed/ and empty, resentful and dazed. They /are sick with disuse,/ plasticized in an atrophic age” (40). Modernity has plasticized man handling “plastic/ that refuses to recognize/ whatever it is you are,/ huddled into petrochemical clothing/acrylic/cold/ unrewarding/ no energy in it” (40). Like T. S. Eliot’s hollow men, she sees her people as “dying soul[s]” (41).

The next part of the poem describes the end of the week when the teacher feels exhausted and lacks all motivations as she finds her students “lost to plastic rugs and desks” (42). The seventh section of the poem is a catalogue of different objects rushing to her tired mind, lacking punctuation and violating all grammatical rules. Sample of her stream of
consciousness, this part reads like a kind of brainstorming, while her mind is perturbed by the shock of Lennon’s death (42-43). The eighth part is on the news of the shooting which is reported in a ridiculous way, “She?/He? Who is it that speaks? / ‘See, man – I mean ma’am (smirk)/ You know He is talking to HER/. . ./and HE says:/ let me take you down’ / (leering at the thought)/ (Dying at the shot, yeah, man, / he’s been taken down, verdad)/They do not mention the tone of grief” (43). The ridicule in the tone of these lines shows the humiliating stance of the reporting discourse. The last part of the poem depicts the robot-like indifference of her people who have now become timid, “we/ learned to say what there is to say/ under bricks, under rubble of dead/elephants’ dream/transformed into heaps of ivory” (44). The ending line of the long poem, “Later that day it rained” (44), signifies how soon death of Lennon has been washed away from memories of her modernized people.

The corrupting force of modernity, a colonial legacy, targets the institute of family, disrupting it from within. Modernity as the modern life style has done away with traditional worldview which accords a high status to family and familial bonds. “Yesterday’s Child” is a mother’s complaint for not having seen his son, not even receiving any call from him who is now away from her in a city among the whites, educated by their codes, and has now become a stranger even to his mother. (32). She wakes up in the morning to find her face wet with tears of grief over her son: “I want my son. I want Gene” (32). As a mother, she wants to see his son growing into a man: “I remember I am a mother./I want to see Gene, to talk to him out loud/. . ./know whether he has grown /more hair, a moustache, a beard,/ . ./as I get up I find me angry/ at the vanished son
who does not call” (32-33). As elaborated in Chapter One, family and familial bonds are sacred and thus of the greatest importance for the Indians. In the tribal discourse, the mother as the unifying force holds the central position. This poem shows how the so-called hybrid atmosphere in the poet’s present time has disrupted this sacred institute and has marginalized the mother figure. Moreover, the contrast that the poem implicitly draws between the Native and the Western sheds a critical light on the Western side, showing its deficiencies with regard to the institute of family.

Allen’s attack on modernity and Western worldview reaches its peak in “Myth/Telling – Dream/Showing” which subverts the Western definition of wilderness and casts it back on the West itself. This poem puts in contrast the worldview of the Indians to that of the whites. The poem comprises thirteen numbered stanzas. The first two-line stanza is on a white man going into the Indian wilderness on his vacation. While the white man discharges himself of the inequities done to the Indians by his ancestors, the Indian reminds him that wilderness is for him only a vocation, while for themselves it is their life. In the other stanza the speaker tells of the Indian woman’s hatred toward the whites, “says she sees it like vomit. like/ a crippled withered leg she must drag/ with her everywhere she goes” (p. 59). There are some stanzas on a caged bird that never dreams of trees for not having seen even one but only of food. (p. 60). The caged bird may stand for the Indian who has been transplanted from his wilderness and displaced by force in Western cities, and now after generations he has got estranged to his tradition, his own natural habitat. The only dream the bird has is to escape the cage into the city
which is the real wilderness the West has made for him: “go through the
door that opens./into wilderness. city traffic/ bird-empty streets” (p. 60).
So the poet in the poem gives two completely different versions of
wilderness; the white man views Indian life as wilderness which yokes
with itself the stereotype of Indians as wild; while the bird calls white
man’s life in traffic-laden cities as wilderness where nature has been
eradicated from. Such a play on the notion of wilderness is the poet’s
attempt to do away with stereotypes showing their arbitrariness and
artificiality.

Allen targets the selfishly demarcating worldview of the West and
puts it in contrast to the all-inclusive Indian perspective in “Horns of a
Dilemma” (26). This poem emerges out of Allen’s belief that “in Indian
literature, Indian oral tradition and Western tradition can interact just like
the wings of a bird in flight” (Porter and Roemer 42). Even the title of the
poem, “Horns” stands for the nature-based Native lens through which the
poet approaches her subject. This outlook is emphasized in the first stanza
which starts the argument with birds, beasts, and fish. Dividing people
into two groups, those who have one brain and those who have two- or
three-part brains, Allen aptly distinguishes, “the people of one brain/use
it to shame the other brain./ they say they are shaming whatever /is not
themselves. they don’t know / the other is the other side of one./ they
don’t know that there never was one side.” (26). The monopoly of the
West is compared to a bird with one wing that not only cannot fly but
also dies soon. She goes on to say that other birds let the one-winged bird
die, “because they’re cruel./ because they’re indifferent. / because they’re
powermad. / because they lack compassion.” (p. 26). Comparing humans
to animals, the poet emphasizes parenthetically “(we are smarter and better than birds./ we people wouldn’t let a onewing bird die)” (26). History of human being has practically proved otherwise; especially the Indians suffering the atrocities of the West shows the dictatorial reign of the powermad, the indifferent, and the merciless. Therefore, this parenthetical note is to be taken as Allen’s tongue-in-cheek comments on the way humans treat one another and which cannot be justified in any way. In the ironical tone of the lines, one feels how Allen casts her critical views on man contrasting man with bird. The comparison these lines draw between man and bird implies the colonial Christian belief in man’s lordship over all other creatures, especially in such comparative adjectives as “smarter and better”. Allen’s ironical treatment of man in fact takes issue with this religion-based outlook and represents how as the lord of the universe the “powermad” man lacks compassion, wisdom, and love. Besides, what these lines accentuate is the Native tribal outlook which never leaves an individual behind, hence compassion and cooperation. Furthermore, democracy which is the inherent feature of Native traditional lifestyle puts them in sharp contrast to the Western single-horned dictators: “the Hopi say that the twohorn gods/ are the wisest and eldest gods. / . . ./the onehorn people couldn’t understand” (27).

While “Horns of a Dilemma” celebrates racial hybridity and implies the survival of races depends upon their mutual support, in “Dear World” Allen cynically approaches the dilemmatic situation of mixed-bloods, of which she herself is a member. “Dear World” narrates the perpetrations inflicted on mixed-blood Indians who have been displaced
in white man’s cities. The speaker argues that their racial in-betweenness is the main source of their sufferings; being a mixed-blood means being located on the racial interstices belonging to both races, black and white, and not being claimed by either (p. 56). The speaker talks of her mother who has got lupus, “a disease /of self-attack” (p. 56). She relates this to her being a mixed-blood, “I know that you can’t make peace/ being Indian and white/They cancel each other out./Leaving no one in the place.” (p. 56). While for the Indian, traditionally all races are the same and there is no difference in terms of skin color, it is in the Western perspective that differences emerge out of racial discriminations. When the speaker tells her mother that being Indian and white cancel each other both, she is implicitly criticizing the Indian for having been influenced by the Western worldview, no longer taking the other race as one’s own. The history of oppression of Indians by whites has culminated in such a change in Indian perspective. Symbolically, the mother figure here can stand for the earth which has been the battlefield for racial wars. The ending stanza of the poem describes how her mother deteriorates bodily nearing her death: “My mother’s eyes burn,/they tear themselves apart./ her skin darkens in her fire’s heat,/ her joints swell to the point/of explosion, eruption” (p. 57). These descriptions indeed anticipate the death end of the earth under the pressures of wars between races, “where irreconcilable opposites meet” (p.57). The irresolution between the two races results in the death of mother earth just as the one-winged bird is doomed to die. “Horns of a Dilemma” is the poet’s attempt to avoid the bird’s one-winged bird, whereas “Dear World” sees death of her mother for being two winged inevitable. Such fluctuations in Allen’s perspectives
represent the state of hesitation and suspension that she suffers in her hybridized context. On the one hand, she views the different races and their perspectives vital for the survival of human being, and on the other hand, she sees how much one suffers in the crude zone of racial contact, where democracy turns as an illusion or a mere dream. Allen’s dreams run encounter to the realities of her world and this contrast proves her Indian perspective an illusion in the world distorted by the monopoly of the Western outlook.

Facing the realities of racial contact and its asymmetries, Allen is quite aware of the dominant violent atmosphere. “Fantasia Revolution” emerges out of the central contrast the speaker sets up between the Natives’ dreams and their frustration. It narrates how the Indians’ dreams change into curses or nightmares. Dream for Indians is very essential as it is one of the ways through which they grow spiritually. Dreams are sacred for them and hence of high respect among them since it is through dreams they can communicate with the soul of the whole universe, the nature, and the spirits of their ancestors. Besides, in Perrault’s apt words in 1994, dreams become transformations that are acts of resistance. (in Nixon, project muse, p. 18). The speaker talks of dreams they had: dreams about the sun, the wind, apple, great ships, etc. Dreams embody the wishes of the dreamer, the wishes that have not been realized. Hence, when the speaker states, “we had dreams /that did not include random bullets/sudden death and no clouds/ exploding to rain death/ on helpless heads” (p. 29), she is implicitly bemoaning the violence perpetrated on helpless Indians by the colonists. All through the poem the speaker’s different dreams touch on one aspect of Native Americans’
sufferings and their lacks; as an instance, one can refer to these lies: “we had dreams/soft conversations in/ the lamplight, hands to hold/ slim and strong whenever/ we needed, voices filled/ with understanding and strength/ for every fear/ and every tear dried / by gentle caring touch” (p. 29). When their dreams do not come true “we had curses”, then the speaker turns all the dreams into curses: “we cursed the lollipops/ we cursed the ice cream/ we cursed the wheat/ . . ./we cursed love and freedom/ we cursed crystal sun/ and shade” (p. 31). The poem starts with dreams of the sun and shade and ends with cursing the same; this gives the poem a circular shape which is sacred for the Indians. However, this symbolic structure is not deployed here to cherish in the beauties of man’s life; rather it marks the completion which ends in destruction, as a dream is transformed into a nightmare.

The penultimate poem of the collection is “Grandma’s Dying Poem”. This poem is a speculative note on the life and death of the speaker’s grandmother. In the Indian tradition, grandmothers enjoy a highly celebrated status as they are the bearers of all tribal traditions and the transmitters of the traditions to the new generation. The speaker is reflecting upon her grandmother’s life marked with the white man’s many atrocities: “When the last grandmother dies /you have to reflect” (62). In the grandmother’s figure, the speaker finds her own life, her own image: “She’s somehow what your life has been/all along,/ you realize – your life has been /a mirror of her ways” (62). In the second stanza, the speaker directly addresses her dying grandmother telling her of what she thinks when she looks at her “83-year-old photograph” (63) and sees how she has withered away by age. In the next stanza, the speaker puts under
question the grandmother’s definition of being a lady with the one which has become hegemony under the colonial West. The speaker asks her grandmother: “So what are we, if not the ladies/as you long so supposed? Or did you know?” (63). Then she goes on to enumerate some features of ladies which the grandmother lacks: “Ladies don’t look directly,/ don’t bark their words,/ are not abrupt, determined, / demanding like you, like me” (63). The speaker sees herself “undone by the nature of genetic lines – /or is it the force of learning, strong,/ of knowing you all my life?” (63). Influenced by her grandmother, the displaced speaker finds herself “a wanderer in an alien land,/ a pretender to customs I cannot claim” (63). One may argue the word “pretender” here may mean the Bhabhalian “mimic” man; however, while for Bhabha mimic men are the carriers of the codes of both the colonial and the colonized in a depolarized way, here Allen’s speaker is specifically an Indian with firm roots in her traditions as the string affinity she has with her grandmother; thus her hybridized world is a politicize one which is also historicized in the figure of the grandmother. The way the speaker portrays the grandmother through her sensitive eyes and presents every ebb and flow in the grandmother’s life and movement presents the strong emotional tie that she has with her. Her detailed portrait of the grandmother shows the strong tie she has with her: “I think now about the ways I knew you” (64). The last thing she never forgets about her is “the howl of face you died with/the look neither soft nor serene – not composed,/the one that knew no gentling – and that unearthly/ protesting wailing of NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO/ to death” (65). The grandmother’s resistance against death and destruction shows the firm objection that the speaker
holds for forgetting traditions. This point is explicitly expressed in the short ending stanza of the poem: “Do you suppose that/when grandma dies/more of her stays than goes?” (65). Not only do these lines express the persistence of traditions but they also echo their inevitability; thus the speaker locates in herself the same resisting force either genetically, through DNA, or by habit: “Is there not a similar wind, moan, howl, will/in me – placed there by double helix,/ their dance and spiral – RNA, DNA – or by/living beside you as I have all my life/until you died” (65).

Conclusion

The detailed analysis of the poems of this volume of Allen’s poetry reveals many things about her and her outlook as a Native American figure. Giving voice to the silenced female voice, Allen tries to restore her tribal matrilineal tradition. James Ruppert describes Allen as a personal and cross-cultural mediator whose creative acts of mediation make her move between two sometimes opposing perspectives (Wiget, p. 378). This study focuses on Allen’s worldview through hybridity which is inherent to any cross-cultural contact zone. As the detailed analysis of her selected poetry presents, Allen is not at ease with the hybridity that she is witnessing under the colonial androcentric force. Being a mixed-blood by birth, she herself is aware of the rewarding and enriching features of hybridity; yet when she comes to the colonial encounter in which asymmetrical power relations have always tilted towards the powerful, she nurtures her own resentments against such a monopoly-oriented hybridity and its devastating impacts. Her interpretations and responses to the changes of her context, however, are not without their own fluctuations and thus provide a look at her worldview. These
inconsistencies are best reflected in the state of hesitation that Allen reveals in her poetry towards hybridity and technology as the colonial legacies. As shown in the analysis, she is sometimes in agreement with technology, appreciates it, albeit with a suspicious eye; but most of the time, her bitter descriptions show her taking issue with the colonial hybridity. In this light, her stress on the restoration and revival of woman voice gets political significance as it can stand for her nativist trend in the face of the masculine colonist.