CHAPTER II
NATIVE VIEW OF FEMINISM
(WOMEN CHARACTERS OF PAULA GUNN ALLEN)

My great grandmother told my mother: Never forget you are Indian. And my mother told me the same thing. This, then, is how I have gone about remembering, so that my children will remember too

(Quoted in CLC, Vol. 84).

This poem very clearly depicts the fact that in Native American culture mother and grandmother play a very significant role. The poem also tells that Native American culture is matrilineal. Indigenous communities across the globe are matriarchal. Many indigenous myths and stories of emergence depict woman as the creator and preserver of life and culture. It is women centered where women are creators and teachers of tribal rituals and laws. Women are respected because; they are the life givers and the protectors of culture. We come across many female gods who are honored and are feared in almost all Native American writings. Paula Gunn Allen, award-winning American Indian scholar, a Laguna-Lakota-Lebanese-American poet-essayist, novelist, critic, educator and editor, born in 1939 belonged to such culture. As a scholar and literary critic, Paula Gunn Allen has worked to encourage the publication of Native American literature and to educate others about its themes, contexts, and structures. She is a dedicated feminist whose fiction and poetry frequently refer to her identity as a mixed blood. Paula Gunn Allen passed away at her home in Ft. Bragg, California, on May 29, 2008, after a prolonged illness. She
was 68 years old. She is survived by a daughter, Lauralee Brown (Roland Hannes), a son, Suleiman Allen (Millisa Russell), two granddaughters, two sisters, and one brother. Two sons, Fuad Ali Allen and Eugene John Brown, preceded her in death. She was a founding mother of the contemporary women’s spirituality movement. As a poet she has written several poems which appeared in over twenty-five journals, and have been included in six major anthologies. She has written numerous essays and several pieces of fiction. She also has written introductions to the books, by Brian Swann and Maurice Kenny. Almost all her works frequently refer to her identity as a mixed blood. There are few Indians that are fully blooded Indian. Most Indians in our nation have mixed heritage. This creates a problem for the mixed Indian because not only are they not accepted in White society, they may have learned different views that counter each other, thus creating disorder in thoughts and beliefs.

Allen is a dedicated feminist who attempts to educate mainstream people about Native American themes, structures, issues and contexts. She writes about various Native cultures emphasizing the status of Amerindian women. Allen emphasizes the importance of feminism in our lives. She defines that tribal view of feminism, a life that centered on female characteristics, not just females as leaders. Allen’s novel *The Woman Who Owned The Shadows* depicts the aspect of search for self-actualization and an integrated self. Allen was influenced by Gertrude Stein in the beginning of her career. All her earlier works reflected Stein. Then she was influenced by Romantic poets like Shelly and Keats. Her poem “Moonshot” was similar to Keats poem “Ode to a
Nightingale.” Next Allen was influenced by Judy Grahn. Judy is known for clarity and simplicity in her work and Allen learnt simplifying the structures from Judy. Allen was also influenced by Adrienne Rich and Audre Lorde. Allen read Bob Creeley’s “For Love” and was thunderstruck. Later she worked with him for two years. Bob introduced her to Charles Olson and Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg was a major model of Allen. Denise Levertov was the first poet Allen had read. Levertov knew how to end the poem more effectively than anybody Allen knew. Later in 1965 Allen realized that she had enough from other poets and now she had to establish her own identity. Allen writes from the perspective of a Laguna Pueblo woman from a culture in which the women are held in high respect. The descent is matrilineal — women owned the houses, and the major deities are female. Allen often used Spider Woman and Corn Maiden, imagery which is central to all women’s studies and feminism today. A major theme of Allen's work is delineation and restoration of woman-centered culture.

Paula Gunn Allen’s second landmark publication, an investigation into a native women’s feminism, naturally emerged in times in which the question of women’s rights in Indian Country became subsumed by the struggle for basic rights, for survival, in the midst of massive social change. The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions (1986) became the monument for anyone teaching feminist or native contemporary culture or literature. In this collection of scholarly essays, Paula constructed a Laguna Pueblo female scholarly context, as she examined female deities, the honored
place of lesbians and the importance of the female in indigenous cultures. The book provoked controversy even as it established itself as a classic. In her last celebrated book, *Pocahontas: Medicine Woman, Spy, Entrepreneur, Diplomat*, (2004), Allen tells the story of the beloved Indian woman from a Native American perspective. Paula flips the Disney Barbie doll image of Pocahontas and renews a female native image of woman to honor the Algonquin Beloved Woman, Pocahontas, and to give an image of empowerment to her descendents. All native women in this country are essentially Pocahontas’s descendents.

Allen’s final book of poetry *America the Beautiful* was published posthumously by West End Press in 2010. These poems, written in the last decade of Paula Gunn Allen's life and the first years of the new century, capture the variety, ingenuity, and complexity of this beloved and influential Native American critic and poet. In the lexicon of Paula Gunn Allen, what makes America beautiful may come as a surprise: its horrors confront its hopefulness; its absurdities challenge its promise. A powerful, sustained lyrical and narrative sequence written in the midst of political and personal catastrophe (the second U.S. invasion of Iraq, a disastrous home fire, her own battle with lung cancer), Allen's last book of poems is at once a bonfire made up of the ruins of civilization, a call for one more effort to set things right, and a gift to us all from this fertile and generous writer.

Allen’s novel *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* is considered autobiographical by many. To some extent it is true. The description of the
novel’s protagonist Ephanie as short and stocky with almond eyes and dark hair, dressed in moccasins, Jeans, and comfortable shirt is a description of Allen herself. Allen’s background is similar to that of Ephanie. Allen is of mixed Native American, Scottish, and Lebanese heritage. If we read the details of Allen’s life, such as rearing two children alone, later the birth of twin sons and crib death of one, and the migration between Albuquerque and San Francisco, we understand the autobiographical resources. The novel is very complex blend of myth, oral history and personal memory which retells in modern circumstances the ancient quest for ritual and supernatural understanding in order to achieve harmony with gods, one’s tribal home, and oneself. Allen is an American, poet and literary scholar who reinterprets the historic and mythic beliefs of Native Americans from a twentieth-century lesbian-feminist perspective. *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows* is about a journey to healing and a journey back to the female center. It explains women’s tradition within Keres Pueblo for their ritual significance. The novel is complete blend of myth, oral history, and personal memory. This retells in modern circumstances the ancient quest for ritual and supernatural understanding. This is so in order to achieve harmony with the gods, one tribal home, and oneself. This tightly organized novel evolves around a single character, a woman named Ephanie. This novel depicts the confusion of the main character to sort through the varying influences to reclaim a Native American women’s spiritual tradition. Ephanie on her journey uses traditional
Laguna Pueblo healing ceremonies as well as psychotherapy, the Iroquois story of Sky Woman, and the aid of a psychic Euro-American woman.

Allen in her writings collects and interprets Native American mythology. Her novel begins with prologues. The novel is divided into four parts because four is a unifying number in tribal tradition. Each part begins with a prologue which tells about Amerindian myth on woman as the creative Spirit. Each part reflects the memory, thoughts, emotions and imaginings of Ephanie Atencio, the protagonist of the novel. The first part evokes the familiar myth of the Spider Woman. Spider Woman is the great grandmother of earth and all living things and her Web symbolize the creation and preservation of the life-pattern. It symbolizes the organic wholeness of Native life, sensibility and culture. It is a pattern that may expand itself without altering the basic design. The prologue to the second part is a rite of Exorcism with the Singer sweeping away the sickness through the door of the “healing place”. In part three the prologue recalls the legend of Iyatiku, the mother of the Indian tribes, who gave each daughter born to her the name of a clan, “teaching them as the Spider had instructed her so long before” (126). In part four, the prologue returns to the myth of the Spider. Those who reach her are “forfeit to her”. Those who co-operate with her design, serve her, and through her, they actually design creative and the Life-restoring Power. Thus we learn about Spider Grandmother, Thought Woman who has created the world. These prologues are the keys to understand the crisis and development of the protagonist, Ephanie. Throughout the novel, we see that Ephanie tries to understand the meaning of
these stories. Through a series of epiphanies she arrives at a convincing re-
interpretation of the mystery of the ever-going (re-)creation and of her place
within it. Allen redesigns her creation myth. She feminizes and personalizes the
myth of Spider Woman and her twin so that it becomes a means of viewing and
revealing the events of the narrative.

   In the beginning was the Spider. She divided the world. She
made it. Thinking thus she made the world. She drew lines that
crossed each other. Thus were the directions. Thus the powers.
Thus were the quadrants. Thus the solstices. Thus were the
seasons. Thus was woman. Within these lines placed she two
small medicine bundles. Singing, she placed them. In the sacred
way she played them. There were no others then but the Spider
who sang. In the center of the universe she sang. In the midst of
the waters she sang. In the midst of the heaven she sang. In the
center she sang. Her signing made all the worlds (1).

   Allen describes in this novel the power of applied mythical wisdom to
cleanse, heal and create. Allen has dedicated this novel to the Native American
deity Thought Woman. Many Native American myths are used in this novel.
On her journey, her protagonist uses traditional Laguna Pueblo healing
ceremonies as well as psychotherapy, the Iroquois story of Sky Woman, and
the aid of a psychic Euro-American woman. This novel emphasizes the
importance of storytelling tradition in Native American culture, incorporating
such diverse narrative modes as folk tales, letters, legends, dreams, and Pueblo
“thought singing”. *The Woman Who Owned The Shadows* charts the progress of Ephanie’s recovery from self-doubt to wholeness. Her interior journey is guided by the traditional tales of spirit women: Gato Kepe, the murdered healer; the betrayed Yellow Woman; the mythic grandmother, the Spider (*Ephanie’s Ghosts*). The novel evokes a symbolic women’s universe which is created by women. This novel tells about a woman artist who heals herself through the act of aesthetic creation. The setting, time, plot, and characters are derived largely from Allen’s own contemporary time and experience in the post-war American Southwest.

Allen thus tells the tale of a "half-breed" named Ephanie who in her confusion attempts to sort through the varying influences to recover a Native American women's spiritual tradition. She eventually learns to accept her sexual orientation and cultural identity rather than conform to social stereotypes. Ephanie is a woman, a divorcée, a daughter and a granddaughter seeking to find her own identity among strangers in a strange land. She is a Guadalupe woman living in New Mexico who comes away from the reservation and a bad marriage, leaving her two children with their grandmother. She is in the midst of a severe psychological breakdown which has seemingly reached its peak with her broken marriage with an Amerindian. She is very upset as she is abandoned by her husband and as a result she becomes self – alienated. Abandoned by her first husband, she moves with her two children to San Francisco. Ephanie’s attempt to take on a female gender identity fails. However, she marries a man and bears two children. Later, she
grows progressively more depressed. She is unable to care herself or her children. She moves to San Francisco along with her two children. Out of loneliness she drifts into sexual relationship and later marries Thomas Yoshuri, the Japanese-American, called Judah, who fails to show affection to her when she craves for it. Judah is Japanese-American filled with hatred over the mistreatment of his people during World War II. Her hyphenated existence becomes more complicated after marrying him. He suffers from identity dislocation. She wondered herself why she thought of marrying him. But she knew that it was because she was too tired to fight. She couldn’t resist and for her antagonism was not possible. Thomas Yoshuri’s symbol is his Rising-Sun flag. Judah impregnates Ephanie and she gives birth to twin children. But one of her sons dies a victim of crib-death. Ephanie attempts suicide by hanging herself. She is obsessed by the idea: that whatever she thought he had done to her, he had done… out of forbidden rage…tormented into isolation…he was kin to the alien spirit that had grown over the land as the fog grew over the forests (108). Allen interweaves Keres myths to demonstrate the parallelism between the mythic experiences of Keres deities and those of Ephanie. Judah leaves her and Ephanie isolates herself like Naotsete. Naotsete of Keres mythology isolates herself and as a consequence is impregnated by the Sun which abandons her. Like Naotsete, Ephanie must give up one of the twin sons she bears. Ephanie is also identified with Kochinninaku, Yellow Woman, who is heroine of Keres abduction tales. In that myth, Yellow Woman is carried away by a stranger, becomes pregnant, and returns to her village with twin sons
who become a rejuvenating force in her society. Like Naotsete, Ephanie must give one of the twin sons she bears. However, after all this trauma, after all these misadventures and wrong turnings, after the anger, frustration, and sorrow, Ephanie apparently finds peace through the spiritual intercession of an old Indian woman and a vision that links her with other Indian women and with what one might call the feminine force in the university. The novel is about the character, about Ephanie and her struggle to maintain balance and to persevere. She feels that even her body which is short, choppy and sturdy was at odds with her name. She likes tall and serene personality. Thus she is longing for towering, serene, free and graceful image.

Ephanie is caught within the tension between positive and negative interpretations. Her negative interpretation is related to her complicity within a patriarchal, white ideology. Her positive interpretation triumphs through the imagination of a woman creating identity for herself and other Native American women. Ephanie is tensed and her tension is revealed through an image of dream of years. Ephanie dreams of Elena, the girl who abandons her. She dreams that Elena and she are running with fear of a long circle of animals chasing them. She sees that her mother, aunts, sisters and grandmothers stood and watched them unconcerned. Ephanie feels that they are unconcerned because they too are victims and hence can do nothing but watch since they also share the vulnerable status of woman. She feels so as she is feminized in the western way instead of the tribal way. This image shows that nothing is in control, nothing is made ready, and all that remains for woman is to run forever
without any way of escape. Ephanie is victimized. She is seduced and abandoned by many men and one woman who are her lovers. Ephanie lived her life in the shadows of men. She keeps on expecting men to do her life for her. Ephanie feels a close bond to her cousin, but recognizes that he smothers her, does not allow her to be real. In such disturbed condition Ephanie recollects her past memories one after the other.

An incident that depicts Ephanie’s masculine personality is related with Stephen. Ephanie remembers how as a child she had jumped down an apple tree just to have the feel of soaring. Ephanie is dared by her timid cousin Stephen to leap from a rope jump he has constructed in an old apple tree, one planted by Ephanie's white grandfather. The tree is symbolic and is used throughout the novel to show Ephanie’s mixed-blood heritage. Sure of her own strength and agility, Ephanie takes the dare, thinking, "If he can do it, I can". She had jumped from a rope as she was challenged by her cousin, Stephen. She slips and breaks her ribs and punctures her lung. She feels that she has been tricked and betrayed by Stephen. His betrayal and the loss of her relationship with Elena, and this “fall” causes her much pain both psychically and physically. Because I thought I should have been smarter than to listen to Stephen's dare. Because I was hurt . . . alone and scared and feeling so guilty. When the limb breaks beneath her and she falls, suffering broken ribs and a punctured lung, Ephanie gives in to community pressure and blames her masculine behavior for the accident. When she is released from the hospital, Ephanie's behavior, speech, and appearance are restricted, signifying the loss of
her alternative gender identity: The old ease with her body was gone. The careless spinning of cowboy dreams.... Instead high heels and lipstick.... Instead full skirted dresses that she'd scorned only weeks before. Instead sitting demure on a chair, voice quiet, head down.... Curling endlessly her stubborn hair. To train it. To tame it. Her voice, hands, hair, trained and tamed and safe (202-03). This incident makes Ephanie change her personality from masculine to feminine. This incident also has a mythical concept. We find Allen using many legends in her novel. One of the legends is about a father who forces his daughter to marry a sorcerer. The sorcerer tests the young woman’s courage. She always is tested by impossible deeds but she manages to succeed. Her husband and other sorcerers mistrust her powers. The young woman’s husband was advised by the sorcerers to uproot the tree of light and persuade his wife to jump into the hole. His wife who was arrogant, tricked into believing that she can float like a petal jumps into the hole. They replace the tree so that she can never return. Allen says, the world thus began on the shining blue globe below. This story is similar to Ephanie’s leap from the apple tree.

In her childhood Elena was her inseparable companion. Ephanie's childhood exploration with her friend Elena involves play that is normally expected only of boys; they pretend to be ranchers, trick riders, and stunt men, all specifically male roles (21). Ephanie is repeatedly warned by her Catholic community that "a twelve year old girl shouldn't be acting that way. That she might get hurt, she might fall and break something" (197). Ephanie and Elena were forcibly separated by Elena’s mother and a school nun who feared the
girls’ physical affection for one another. Ephanie's beloved childhood companion, Elena, tells her that they can no longer see each other because her parents consider their friendship sinful and somehow wrong. “Ephanie sat. Stunned. Mind empty. Stomach a cold cold stone. The hot sun blazed on her head. She felt sick. She felt herself shrinking within. Understood wordlessly, exactly what Elena was saying. How she could understand what Ephanie had not understood. That they were becoming lovers. That they were in love. That their loving had to stop. To end. That she was falling. Had fallen. Would not recover from the fall, smashing the rocks. That they were in her, not on the ground” (30). Through Ephanie and Elena, Allen depicts the feminine relationships. We even find the concept of lesbianism through their relationship which is quiet common in Native American society.

Later Ephanie recollects her first cultural shock at the government boarding school and her early confrontations with the dominant culture. “Stand up for your rights, they had told her, she had told herself, someone was always telling someone” (12). As a child she was overwhelmed with confusion, rage, shame, red cheeked tightness. She was always haunted by the shadows of her private past. She tries to re-affirm herself through her native cultural roots. She meets her grandfather at the village. Her grandfather was not an Indian but he has spent his lifetime with the Natives, working with them. He shared their food, their anger, their joy, their grief, their life and their death. They never talked about division. This shows how the Native and Non Native cultures meet. Ephanie doesn’t feel herself a part of the pattern. This might be due to
her Western education or the too individualistic modern times. Ephanie’s Catholic school experience tries to train her to be the Euro-American ideal of womanhood: “Long, empty, polished corridors. Silent white faces of women whose whole heads and bodies were encased in black heavy fabric. Whose rosaries hanging dark and heavy down their legs clinked with every quiet step they took. Of those white faces, almost always unsmiling. Of those white hands that never touched a child. Of those that simple expression caused great pain. Who said she must pray. Must ask to be forgiven….must remember to sit quietly at the table. And never ask for more. Who must eat when told, sleep when told, study when told, piss when told, shit when told and must never use too much paper to wipe her butt. Her tiny child’s butt” (154). These childhood incidents slowly change Ephanie’s behavior.

The western education makes Ephanie to believe that she can’t lead her life establishing her own identity. She is unable either to accept this fact or form her Native American identity. Ephanie tries to adopt urban life. She joins a therapy group where most of the members are white. She imitates the money-status-success oriented white life. She believes that the world is safe and within her control. This thought comforted her. But the white community did not accept her either as white or as an Indian. Ephanie has to face the problem of belonging all on her own. Ephanie feels ashamed that once she had a dream to grow up as a traditional tribal woman. A mixed-blood Amerindian, she has a feeling that even her ethnic identity is mostly a golden dream. Ephanie thinks of her grandmother Shimanna. Shimanna had white education and had married
a white man. She had been able to bring the two seemingly discrete cultures into accord in her life. All her life she was waiting for something which was not revealed to Ephanie. Waiting had been her way of coming to terms with her life and the self. But her granddaughter Ephanie has failed to inherit it. In her process toward the visionary state Ephanie is aided by her cousin Stephen and the psychic Teresa. So she takes the aid of Psychotherapist Teresa. "After all the years of death," she finally said, almost whispering so Teresa had to lean close to her, "you finally quit doing things out of anger or out of fear. You learn that mad, scared or not, some things just have to be . . . you'll see. The kids and I, we need someplace. We need some thing. We're alone too, and we're tired of it. The other day Ben asked me when he was gonna have a daddy--when I was going to give him one. He said he wanted three things. A daddy, a television, and a car." She looked for a second at Teresa, felt the familiar spasm begin around her eyes, felt the tears rising in her throat, closed them off, looked away. Act relaxed, she said to herself. Act like you know what you're saying. Surreptitiously she pinched her leg hard. She sniffed. Smiled. "Now he will have all three things." (91-92).

In this novel Paula Gunn Allen convincingly describes the power of applied mythical wisdom to cleanse, heal, and create. This novel is about the difficulties of creative work, Ephanie's search for a definition of herself and of the role of mixed-blood women which is both haunting and reassuring. Psychic Teresa and Ephanie's cousin Stephen act as shamans to initiate her into healing rituals and to transmit to her message from Keres deities until she can
communicate directly. We find the relationship of Ephanie and the psychic Teresa. The therapist enables Ephanie to express her own unconscious thoughts as well as the thoughts of her family that are necessary to her psychological progress. Teresa is a White Wiccan healer who communicates with the spirits. The complex relationships are seen between grandmother, mother, and daughter. These relationships are presented through Ephanie imaginatively. She takes their roles in therapy sessions. Allen here depicts that Ephanie’s identification with the female characters and deities is much stronger than with the male. After separating herself from each thought Ephanie moves forward to the next stage of spiritual power.

Ephanie is also aided by another Shaman-like character, a therapist. The therapist enables Ephanie to express her own unconscious thoughts and those of her family. These thoughts are necessary to her psychological progress. However, Ephanie must separate herself from each of these intermediaries in order to proceed to the next stage of spiritual power. Keres deities are descendent of Ts’its’tsinako, Thought Woman, Dream Woman, or Spider Woman. Possessing both male and female characteristics, Ts’its’tsi’nake is the origin of all creation. Similiarly Ephanie is also the descendent of Ts’its’tsi’nako. Uretsete and Naosete are the two sisters created by Ts’its’tsi’nako to assist her in making the world. Iyatiku, Corn Woman is one of the most Sacred Keres deities. Ephanie is particularly identified with Iyatiku. Ultimately Ephanie finds a way to herself, relying no longer on men but her primary connections to the spirit women of her people and to the women of her
own world. Her journey to healing is an interior journey. “She understood the combination and recombinations that had so puzzled her….First there was Sussinstinaku, Thinking woman, then there was She and two more: Uretsete and Naotsete. Then Uretsete became known as the father, Utset, because Naotsete had become pregnant and a mother, because the Christians would not understand and killed what they did not know. And Iyatiku was the name Uretsete was known by… and so the combinations went on, forming, dissolving, doubling, splitting…. All of the stories informed those patterns, laid down long before time, so far” (207-8). The shadows of these mythical women remain and always reassert themselves. Ephanie is revitalized by this native traditional faith. Ephanie has her self-realization when she discovers her roots and re-establishes her relations with the myths of her own culture. The Woman Who Owned the Shadows is a book of hope, promise, vision, and survival. Ephanie's spirit woman/tutor tells her: Pass it on, little one. Pass it on. That is the lesson of the giveaways that all the people honor. That is the story of life here where we are and where you are. It is all the same. Grow, move, give, move (210 -11).

Thus we see that The Woman Who Owned Shadow is about the self-splitting experiences of mixed blood women. The themes are confused identity, antagonistic socialization, exclusive alliances, alienation, invisibility, historical distortion, fear and rage. Allen through her writings attempts to say that women are not held down in all cultures. But in Native American culture women were never considered weak. She wants others to know this truth. In this novel we
see the protagonist, Ephanie’s spiritual birth. Keres mythology has different stories and these stories are at the base of Ephanie’s Indian heritage. Ephanie in the end receives the dream-vision. It informs her about life. The Spirit Woman informs Ephanie that a change is occurring. Ephanie is the cultural interpreter. The woman tells Ephanie to give the story to Ephanie’s sister, Teresa. Teresa thus becomes Ephanie’s co-creator and like Sky Woman and her daughter, they create a new world: And she understood. For those women, so long lost to her, who she had longed and wept for, unknowing, were the double women, the women who never married, who held power like the Clanuncle, like the power of the priests, the medicine men. Who were not mothers, but who were sisters, born of the same mind, the same spirit. They called each other sister. They were called Grandmother by those who called on them for aid, for knowledge, for comfort, for care (211). Thus Ephanie’s healing has taught her that in times of trouble there is also double pain: The curse laid upon her flesh was her gift as well. She knew that with certainty. That she was always, unendingly, aware of the pain: Of the air. Of the water. Of the beasts and the birds. She could not escape that knowledge. In every eye, in every mind, the pain lay, blossoming in bewilderment, in blood. They never knew why they suffered. Nor did she…. And they also understood the gift, the curse, some of them…. They thought she could make them well. (Annette Van Dyke 33).

The novel ends with Ephanie’s understanding of her connection to her heritage. Ephanie's newfound strength is the ability to pass on her story, and through telling her story, Ephanie makes real that potential for other women
while preserving the stories and memories that are a part of her. Ephanie’s room is filled with the spirits of the Grandmothers, she is able to join them in their dance and listen to their message. Ephanie’s destiny is showed to her-how she fits into the Double woman pattern: “It is the sign and the order of the power that informs this life and leads back to Shipap. Two face outward, two inward, the sign of doubling, of order and balance, of the two, the twins the doubleminded world in which you have lived,” she chanted (207). The healing has started: “And around her the room filled with shadows. And the shadows became shapes. And the shapes became women singing. Singing and dancing in the ancient steps of the women, the Spider Singing they stepped, slowly, in careful balance of dignity, of harmony, of respect. They stepped and they sang. And she began to sing with them. With her shawl wrapped around her shoulders in the way of the women since time immemorial, she wrapped her shawl and she joined the dance. She heard the singing. She entered the song.

I am walking Alive
Where I am Beautiful
I am still Alive
In beauty Walking
I am Entering
Not alone (213)

After Ephanie moves to San Francisco she finds her way back to herself both through the guidance of mythic spirit women, and the nourishing companionship of living women of her own culture. Atlast Ephanie establishes
her identity. Allen ends her novel depicting the aspect of importance of culture and tradition in Native American literature. She also proves that women are powerful in tribal society. Spider, the mythical figure of Native American people is a great wise woman whose powers are beyond imagining. No medicine person, no Shaman, no witch or sorcerer, no scientist or inventor can imagine the great power of spider. The power of spider is not only complete but it is also pure and clean. It is the power of thought, and of dream. The power of spider has created this world. So we can learn the importance of women in Native American society. Allen uses her cultural tradition in this novel extending traditional story into the modern form by weaving in the tribal history. She uses mythology of the Laguna pueblo to create a form of curing ceremony. The pueblo culture is based on the concept that all things inanimate and animate are related and are part of the whole. Every individual in this culture should contribute to the well-being of the group and keep the shifting balances in harmony. Allen through her novel shows how storytelling often functions as a ceremony for curing the Laguna.

Allen has discussed in her novel and also in her prose and poetry the issues of Native American women. Euro-American literatures are quite opposite to Native American literatures. Opposed to Euro-American literatures Allen’s *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (1986), deals with women’s issues, the oral tradition, lesbianism, and female deities. Her essay “The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective,” (1975) was one of the first to detail the ritual function of Native
American literatures. This essay introduces readers to a strong selection of Indian literature, and at the same time it also explains the difference between the tribal world and industrial world. The seventeen essays in the Sacred Hoop depict the significance of mother and grandmother in Native American culture. Essays such as “The Word Warriors” and “The Wilderness in My Blood: Spiritual Foundations of the Poetry of Five American Indian Women,” reveal the influence of the oral tradition on contemporary Native American literature and the conflict between a culture that professes a universal sense of belonging. Apart from the issues mentioned so far, Allen examines the issues of the lives of Native American women in a contemporary cultural and traditional setting, issues of politics, importance of lesbianism in tribal culture, tribal women’s social status, the emergence of feminism in America and the struggle for cultural and biological survival in her essays.

In the beginning of her career Allen was influenced by many poets and writers like Gertrude Stein, Shelly, Keats, Judy Grahn, Andrienne Rich and Audre Lorde. All her earlier works reflected Stein. One of her poems “Moonshot” was similar to Keats’ “Ode to a Nightingale”. Allen learnt simplifying the structures from Judy. Allen was very much impressed with Bob Creeley’s “For Love” and was thunderstruck. Thus she worked with him for two years. Later, Bob introduced her to Charles Olson and Allen Ginsberg. Ginsberg was a major model of Allen. Denise Levertov was the first poet Allen had read. Allen learnt the art of how to end the poem more effectively from Levertov. Later in 1965 Allen realized that she had enough from other poets
and now she had to establish her own identity. Hence she started writing from the perspective of a Laguna Pueblo woman from a culture in which the women are held in high respect. Allen's "Who Is Your Mother: Red Roots of White Feminism" was published in *Sinister Wisdom* in 1984. It depicts the power of Native American women. The roles and power of Native American women were elaborated by Allen. A popular idea during those days was that women’s power was never equal to men’s power. But contrary to this idea Allen articulated Native American contributions to democracy and feminism. In spite of this she has also restored the place of gay and lesbian Native American in the community. Her “Beloved Women Lesbian in American Indian cultures” (1981) is a ground breaking essay which has these ideas. Allen has written introduction notes to the stories of famous modern Native American writers such as Leslie Marmon Silko, Linda Hogan, Louis Erdrich, Anna Lee Walters, Pretty Shield and others. She has included their writings in her anthology, “Spider Woman’s Grand Daughters”. In this anthology Allen attempts to introduce the literature of tribal women to non native readers. This anthology brings the awareness that American Indian women are women at war. The writers selected by Allen are linked by tradition, by experience as women and as Indian. All the stories in Allen’s anthology cover nearly a century of tradition, the stories are arranged in such a way that they interact to form larger patterns giving the book an aesthetic wholeness.

As depicted in Allen’s *The Woman who owned Shadows* all her works including prose and poetry gives importance to the power of oral tradition
embodied in contemporary Native American literature to effect healing, survival and continuance. Through her works Allen challenges five centuries of misconceptions surrounding the role of Native American women in tribal societies. Her work abounds with the mythic dimensions of women's relationship to the sacred, as well as the plight of contemporary Native American women, many of whom have lost the respect formerly accorded to them. In this startling article, Allen articulated Native American contributions to democracy and feminism, countering a popular idea that societies in which women's power was equal to men's never existed. Allen was a lesbian. These ideas were first published in 1981 in a groundbreaking essay in Conditions, "Beloved Women: Lesbians in American Indian Cultures," and then reworked for the Sacred Hoop. Spider Woman's Granddaughters is an anthology of tales by Leslie Marmon Silko, Linda Hogan, Louis Erdrich, Anna Lee Waters, Pretty Shield, and other Native American Women. In this anthology Allen attempts to introduce the literature of tribal women to non-native readers. As such, they grow out of a collective unconscious that encompasses historical trauma and the awareness that as American Indian women, they are women at war. They write by their experience as women and as Indians. They are linked to each other by their tradition. They cover nearly a century of tradition and the stories in this anthology are written with intelligent passion. Allen divides the book into three parts: "The Warriors," "The Casualties," and "The Resistance." The introduction to the first part defines what "war" means in tribal terms. In English, the term "war" means soldiers blasting away at military targets for the
purpose of attacking or defending territory, ideals, or resources. In the tribal way, war means a ritual path, a kind of spiritual discipline that can test honor, selflessness, and devotion, and put the warrior in closer, more powerful harmony with the supernatural and the earth. Commenting on the stories an American novelist, Ursula K Le Guin says that though these stories contain violence, anger and courage in them they are not just war stories. They are hero tales about warriors. She feels that, the family, a deeper, richer idea than that of war is the central image here. Thus the characters in these stories are members of a great family, honoring the propriety of kinship, grieving when relationship is dishonored or betrayed, celebrating familiarity with people, animals, places, suffering when isolated, striving to maintain connection under the indifferent, dispersing pressure of an alien power. As importance is given to family the characters are sisters and brothers, parents and babies, uncles and nieces, grandsons and grandmothers, wives and husbands, cousins, orphans, lost children, adopted children, children of the people, of the earth. In this anthology we have Leslie Marmon Silko’s haunting story “Yellow Woman” which gathers new echoes and depths by being placed after three traditional tales of Yellow Woman, Corn Woman of the Pueblos. Women in Native American tradition had no political power and hence they tried to rule the world through their stories. Allen notes that, Pretty Shield’s story in the anthology proves this aspect. Women, as a story teller is powerful. They have the power to run the story, keep it going, hold things together, weave and reweave the ideas. Apart from these stories essays such as “Hwame,
Koshkalaka, and the Rest: Lesbians in American Indian Cultures” and several others essays collected in *The Sacred Hoop* depicts the fact that European colonizers and Western trained ethnographers erased or otherwise distorted evidence of same sex relationships in tribal cultures. Allen focuses the lesbian issue in their writings which are based on Native American theologies. She incorporates aspects of Keres and Navajo into her revisionist myths and distinguishes between hetero-sexual biological reproduction and other forms of creativity.

Women are always victimized by men. This aspect is very clearly depicted in E.Pauline Johnson’s old-fashioned and melodramatic story “As It Was in the Beginning”. It tells of the betrayal of a woman by a man. The stories written by Anna Lee Walter depict the aspect that women love and respect the men in spite of their weakness. “The Warriors” is one such story about Uncle Ralph, a drunk and a bum. He is a loser in war but his sister and her children, who watch their warrior, lose his war never cease to love and respect him. Two young sisters learn pride in their Pawnee heritage from their Uncle, a disillusioned homeless alcoholic. The women in all these stories talk together, stay together, share their ideas and feelings, and keep the tale going. Apart from these stories we have in the anthology Soge Tracks enchanting tale “The Clearing in the Valley” which is a kind of many leveled dream, like a Pueblo dwelling where one climbs up the ladder to come out into the light.

The second section of Allen’s anthology named “The Casualties” includes five tales, closing with Vicki Sears’s “Grace” and Linda Hogan’s
“Making Do”. Linda Hogan in this story writes about a woman who loses her children. This is an example of Hogan’s special ability to capture moments of bleakness and despair and fill them with rich spiritual and physical beauty. Sears story depicts the physical and sexual abuse of two small Indian children. Though it appears to be so, actually it is about the short respite of the children from that abuse. The sweetness of the children’s time with kind foster parents make their forced return to the orphanage that is much more horrifying. The stories in this anthology are full of humor and are rich in insight. They sing the songs of the tribes. Le Anne Howe’s story “An American in New York” is a good example of Indian humor which is the quietest and driest in the world. Thus the anthology clearly shows that family is the central image in all the stories. We also find out the truth that not only Allen but all the Native American women try to bring to light the aspects of women and tribal tradition through their writings. Much of Allen's work is preoccupied with her identity as a woman, mixed blood, and lesbian within Laguna and white society. These aspects are highlighted in Allen’s poetry too. Allen feels that women of her culture are imprisoned. They are not given freedom. Her poem “Off Reservation Blues” very clearly proves this aspect.

night was coming
and I had to speak
raise my hand and hit the glass
I groaned
sound too soft to hear. (The Now Day Indians 3)
Allen here has written about the Lady of Laguna, locked in a tower of defeated fantasy, earth-fearing, behind glass and above a white-skinned figure who waves but cannot hear. This poem very clearly depicts the grief of Native American women who are facing the barriers of sex, race, class, education, language and civilization. Tower is symbolic of their barriers and the women want to break the tower of racism and establish their own identity. Throughout her works Allen tries to depict the issues of mixed blood tribes. The women in Native culture are twice colonized. They are colonized as women and as breeds. Allen opines that such breeds are not accepted either by Native American Society or by European society. Her opinion is true. Allen states in “A Stranger in My Own Life: Alienation in American Indian prose and poetry,” “The Breed is an Indian who is not an Indian.” That is, breeds are a bit of both world, and the consciousness of this makes them seem alien to Indians while making them feel alien among whites” (ibid.: 3).

Allen’s opinion is true as more than half of native peoples in America today are neither Red nor White; the majority of Indians are mixed bloods living off the reservation. Fuller bloods reject these breeds on racial grounds and broken culture origins. They are alien to Indians as well as alien among whites. We see in The Women Who Owned Shadows how Ephanie is neither accepted by Indian society nor accepted by the white society. Allen writes about women to whom knowledge is forbidden or it was dangerous thing. Women live desperately when they don’t have complete understanding of
things but just they live knowing obliquely. Allen too belongs to such cross culture. Thus she defines herself:

If my language is oblique
Misunderstandable
If I confine myself
Within demands of imaged time
I saw true one night:
The keeper and the kept,
Saw myself,
How I must
Be - not in the forests of should
But actually:
This narrow pass,
This sharpness of tongue,
This blade to cut your heart out
And offer it to the sun
Must stay quiet awhile. (ibid: 3)

This poem shows her plight as a Native American Woman. Allen had to suffer because of her multicultural background. She is ready to wait instead of confining herself within the demands of her time, that is white society. She wants to express all her ideas and view but is ready to wait for the right time to speak. Allen feels that if thoughts are not freely expressed then the thoughts appear like that of dead poets, dead buffalo, dead coyote, dead waters, dead ground where understanding hangs in the balance precariously: where song is a
one-time shot, where pain and bearing in-blood make the herbs of understanding bloom, on this once new earth that is dying once again. Allen feels as women have no consciousness of this earth, the earth is dying. She says knowledge is shaded by loss. The women don’t have knowledge about being and knowing of being:

There are no shadows
to tell us where we are
but memory of yesterday’s
perfect songs, when tomorrow was sure,
a time of met images and kept fires:
winter dreams that almost disappointed
in scattered light. (ibid: 3)

Thus we see that “Return” is the poem which depicts the aspect of agony due to the loss of new awareness. In Allen’s poem “Paradigm” she writes how love recedes and proves abstract:

I dreamed
Of making love, of needing
To make love of
Not being able to. Of touching your face
In awe, of seeing the rose of life on it,
Your skin a matin in a moister place.
I dreamed of a dead cat they skinned of the Party
A striped-frey cat that decided not to die

But go up from its skinning and began to eat. (ibid: 4)

Allen tries to search herself as she is tensed from the losses of love that reflect dreams and disappointment. This poem reflects the effect of loss of love which in addition reflects dreams and disappointments back on woman’s desire to loss of love the woman is tensed to search herself. The concept here is parallel to Ephanie’s struggle to search herself due to the loss of love. The concept of The Woman who Owned Shadows is once again reflected in Allen’s poem “He na Tye Woman” where Allen writes about the different sensitivities of a woman with children, with a husband, in love, out of love, marriage, divorce and redefinition. Thus we see that all her works including her poetry are feminist.

Allen’s multicultural background, has given Allen varying poetic rhythms and structures, which originate from such sources as Country-Western music, Pueblo corn dances, Catholic masses, Mozart, Italian opera, and Arabic chanting. In her work, a finely detailed sense of place resonates with landscapes from the city, the reservation, and the interior. As discussed earlier Allen’s poetry collections like “The Blind Lion (1974),” “Shadow Country (1982),” and “Skins and Bones (1988),” often emphasize the female journey to spiritual transcendence. Apart from this aspect “Skins and Bones” is filled with lost history, wisdom and humor. Allen’s poems like “Eve the Fox,” “Taking a Visitor to See the Ruins” and “Teaching Poetry at Votech High Santa Fe, the Week John Lennon Was Shot” offer a particular mix of American Indian
humor with the raw context from which it emerges. Her writing career began in 1974 with the publication of her first book *Blind Lion Poems*. Allen's poetry has an infusion of spirits common to Native American literature, but represents not only her Native American heritage, but her multicultural heritage. She also uses her poetry to respond to personal events in her life. She explores the various breeds she encounters in her personal life, ranging from minorities to feminists. Allen’s poems explore tribal ties among not only Native Americans but about all others too. Her poems in *The Blind Lion* describe the interior journey pursued within the shadows of the searching self:

The silence I have grown carefully through the day
slides away from me
leaving me in shadows exposed-
as if the network of my silence
opened me to the soft force of lamplight. I
fall into noisy abstraction,
cling to sound as if it were the last protection
against what I cannot name. (ibid: 37-38)

This aspect is already discussed in Allen’s novel *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*. Allen ends *The Blind Lion* with her fine sonnet “Coda”:

If I had emptied all your words of tears and caught
your shadow dreams in yellow glaze and used your
blistered thought for silk displays would you have
offered caution, banked my fear? Or if I’d had the
flame of melted streets and lived in laughter sharp
as August grass, if I had woven rainbows smooth as
glass would you have stood and let me salve your
feet? Love is empty fire that voids the eyes of
fluted shadows, fused and melted tears: love,
drenched in darkness as my sight grew open in the
silence of surprise should I have fashioned futile
words to clear the cinders from your eyes and give sight?

(ibid: 37-38)

Allen raises many questions and she herself answers her questions. Here
she is questioning whether her fear would be removed and whether healing is
possible. The poem itself is the answer for her questions. She feels that no
language can heal literal blindness and no language can raise the actual dead.
She explores toward vision and finds healing within, that is through interior
journey. “Coda” is the sonnet where she induces an interior journey. This
healing is not only for the poet but for all in need of insight. Thus she says that
within the self healing can be found.

Her second volume of poetry, Coyote’s Daylight Trip published in 1978
contains a poem named The Derner Report on Camp Creek Road which
explores aesthetic possibilities within the world of disaster and defeat that
surrounded America’s racial minorities:

Take the full length of a club

and a street full of people crying
ties them together to make

a journey as long as a night of rot. (ibid: 38)

At the center of this eleven-poem collection, in a four-part poem, "Suicid/ing(ed) Indian Woman," Paula Gunn Allen interweaves moments from the stories of the mythic Iyetiko. Allen's ambition in her poetry is to give the Indian woman a voice. Poems such as "Que Cante Quetzal," "The Buffalo Dance," "Laguna Ladies Luncheon" and "Suiciding (ed) Indian Women" discuss about the brutalization of ethnic people, especially ethnic women and about the exploitation of Indians in America.

... is it a small wind

we carry in our genes?

A fear of disappearance?

An utterance that hovers

at the edges of the lips,

forever to-be-said? ("A Cannon Between My Knees." 165)

Thus this poem is about American Indian womanhood, which is also the central theme of the collection. The poem begins with an account of the myth of Iyetiko's disappearance, but ends with Allen's alternate interpretation of the myth. Allen says that Iyetiko got angry and went away. But she left the perfect ear of corn behind to remind them that she was near, to honor women, the woman in the earth, and in themselves.

it will not be like that for you,

and you know
it must unless you get away
but how divide yourself
from your flesh? Division
does not come easy to a woman,
it is against the tribe
laws which only women honor (ibid: 166).

Allen thus proposes a solution to a problem that is more implied than articulated in part III, "Delilah, Navajo".

The tangled contemporary life of breeds, the deadening consumer society of white America and the aspects of Native American past are discussed in Allen’s new volume of poetry, Shadow Country. Allen follows Native American tradition in which four is the sacred number of Southwestern tribes and thus divides her book into four parts. These four parts named, “Que Cante Quetzal,” “Shadow Country,” “Recuerdo” and “Medicine Song” also are the titles of the poems which conclude their sections. The poems, if read as a unit, explains Allen's procedures. The first poem in the collection "Creation Story," talks about the shaping of Allen’s own mythical terrain which is populated with spirits wrought from nature, Indian culture, and urban centers and from Western history. Recreating the traditional creation story, Allen focuses on the sign of four, decreed by the Goddess of the Corn. Allen's creations emerge from the earth, where those who have gone work, come four days at a time bringing the rain, coming homes. Accordingly, these two motifs appear again and again in the resulting poems, the rain multiplying its mystical
meaning exponentially, but most importantly as a sign of poetry, generation, spirituality. *Coming home* represents a return to nature, tradition, and native poetic consciousness, the true self. Many of these inspirations come to the persona as she walks the land. Allen Talks about weeding with her companion in her poem “The Garden” which actually begins with peace but ends in horror. Walking in the lands Allen was inspired by the nature and wrote poems reflecting this aspect. They are modern "walking songs." Extracting key words from the second piece, "Mountain Song," one could fashion the poet's message to her culture and her readers. Of the several poems about the creation of poetry, "Coming Out" is a poem that presents perhaps the best set of poetic transformations. In "Recuerdo," the title poem of the third section, the poet is climbing into the pure peaks where the gods live in search of lost power. Poems like "Impression: A Photograph of Lee and Ethel Francis, Christmas, 1978," operate by a kind of notation, and summarize the archivist's despair. The elderly couple is evoked as they disappear under a gray avalanche of years. They have forgotten what they are and what they wanted as their cares fall away. Similar are the faces of the old people in "Reveries," who remember the terrible year of 1851. The poems, "The Warrior," "Riding the Thunder," "Another Long Walk," observe the cruel history of the forced relocations of the nineteenth century, yet Allen sees that tribal strength and song itself comes from this walking. *Shadow Country* consists of two groups of poems that provide much of the collection's considerable power. The first deals with the plight of the alienated urban Indian and with similarly oppressed figures across
the globe. The second set focuses on Indian women, both as victims and as agents of change and salvation.

Allen’s poem "Dear World" in *Shadow Country* tells about her mother's suffering with lupus. Paula Gunn Allen connects lupus and the kind of historical invisibility and internal warring that frequently occurs within a mixed-blood Native American. "Dear World" also comments on how gender plays a role in a person’s experience of illness. The speaker describes her mother’s physical pain. The poem uses the biological mechanisms of lupus (self-attack) to create a trope for the experience of her mother and other Native Americans who are neither fully white nor fully Native American, bringing the question of identity and the construction of race to the foreground, as well as making some important observations on how the experience of disease is inextricably bound with the sufferer’s own historical and social context. Her mother being a woman must perform caring duties regardless of her circumstances. Thus “Dear World” is the poem that reflects the question of identity of Native Americans who are neither fully white nor fully Native American.

Apart from these poems, Allen has a collection of many other tender love poems, such as “Riding the Thunder, and a Savage blow at Andrew Jackson” where we find the sketches of eccentrics and portraits of friends and lovers, or the interesting bits of historical revisionism. Allen talks not just about post history but also about contemporary lives. Recent statistics indicate virtually half of all Unites States Indians live in cities especially in Los Angeles.
than in any other place. This aspect is depicted in Allen’s powerful indictment of urban America in Los Angeles which has much to say about the alienation of all urban Indians.

Almost all the works of Allen show that women are the protectors and carriers of Native American culture and tradition. Men have forfeited their heritage and this aspect is depicted in Allen’s “Deep Deep City Blues: Elegy for the Man Who Owned the Rain”. The title itself very clearly reflects this aspect. Allen’s thought to solve this problem out in writing her own work “A Stranger in My Own Life: Alienation in American Indian Prose and Poetry” which avoids the cover-up of superficial anger or sentimental nostalgia. Allen’s voice is not always serene. Her poem “The Return” by contrast shows that memory is intoxicating. Going back to her past life she remembers that she used to carve smooth rock and she yearned for the persons unknown. She reads and re-reads her childhood incidents and now for the first time understands it, as a late blossoming of early fruit. This personal archeological aspect is seen in her poems “Easter Sunday: Recollection” and “Paternity,” where she unearths dreams of a kind father but nightmares of a cruel grandfather who took potshots at his wife as she fetched water home. This poem illustrates the key principles set out in the major statement of the first poem of section III named “Approaches”. Allen finds visual and sometimes painful stimuli for poetic thought sweeping across the sand’s artifacts. Thus all the above mentioned poems very clearly shows how Allen was inspired to write her poems, inspired
by nature that is by land, peaks, sands, culture, western history. The only inspiration lacking here is the inspiration of water.

In Allen’s “Grandmother of the Light (1991),” she collects creation myths concerning Native American Goddesses. This collection is divided into three main parts, “Cosmogyny: the Goddesses,” “Ritual Magic and Aspects of the Goddesses,” and “Myth, Magic, and Medicine.” To this is added an introductory essay, a post script that explains the tribes involved, a glossary, and a bibliography. Allen in the preface has written that she has gathered the information from the vast Native American oral tradition. The stories in this collection contains information central to a woman’s spiritual tradition. They speak of the creative power of the goddesses of myth and ritual. Allen assures in the introductory essay, “The living Reality of the Medicine World,” that the stories are familiar to apprentice medicine person and they act as general guides to them. These stories, “enable the practitioners of the sacred to recognize where they are and how to function, the entities they might encounter, their names, personalities, and likely disposition toward them, the kinds of instruction they might gain from them, and how to explore the universe of power to gain greater paranormal knowledge and ability” (Quoted in CLC Vol.84 p 46). Allen has devoted this volume to an investigation of myths from the women’s shamantic tradition. Her intension in devoting the volume to shamantic tradition is to introduce a number of female entities ranging in order of being from goddess to medicine woman. Her central issue in this book is to enable women to recover Native American path to the gynocosmos which is their spiritual home. Allen has included myths from the
Navajo, the Pueblo, the Cherokee, the Haudinashone, the Chippewa, the Lakota, and the Mayan tribal traditions. According to the creation stories of the Pueblo tradition Spider is “a great wise woman, whose powers are beyond imagining. No medicine person, no conjurer or shaman, no witch or sorcerer, no scientist or inventor can imagine how great her power is. Her power is complete and total. It is pure and cleaner than the void. It is the power of thought…. It’s like the power of dream, but more pure. Like the spirit of vision, but more clear. It has no shape or movement, because it just is. It is the power that creates all that is, and it is the power of all that is ("Sorcery of Her Own," 47). The aspects so far discussed clearly demonstrate that Allen depicts complete and different sensitivities of Native American women. She shows how a woman’s role is confined to food and water, clothing and shelter, birthing and continuation. Her poems are of desire and grief, confusion and rage. Allen describes the works of a Native American woman thus:

Some make potteries
Some weave and spin
Remember
The women/celebrate
Webs and making
Out of own flesh
Earth ( "The Now Day Indians." 3)

The making of potteries is especially popular in Pueblo culture where the tribes believe that the pots catch the spirits of the dead coming back in rainfall. Pueblo women are seen remembering the old pots that cradle and carry water. They reflect ancestry, answering the people’s daily needs:
Brown hand shaping
Earth into earth
Food for bodies
Water for fields
They use
Old pots
Broken
Fragments
Castaway
Bits
To make new
Mixed with clay
It makes strong
Bowls, jars
New
She
Brought
Light
We remember this
As we make

The water bowl (ibid: 4-5)

Apart from these poems Allen has written many more poems where she discusses about people, land, spirits etc. “Nos Vemos,” is a poem which shows that the earth and spirit are working to reunite their harmony and the mythic and mundane space inevitable reunite at some point in the future. Allen sees
that each journey retraces some ancient myth. Her poem “Affirmation,” shows that Grandmother Spider’s webs and thoughts are seen throughout the world. Allen tries to understand natural harmony and to place the individual in that fusion of person, land and spirit through her poem “Jet Plane / Dhla-nuwa”. In this poem the flight on the plane is seen in scientific historical terms and in mythological terms. Her poem “Grandmother,” is also about Grandmother Spider’s efforts in creating bright, complete life and of the poet’s work. It suggests reclaiming lost tribal practices.

After her,

the women and men weave blankets into tales of life,
memories of life and ladders,
infinity-eyes, and rain.
After I sit on the laddered rain-bearing rug
and mend the tear with the string. (Karin Feuerstein)

Here the blending of mythic and personal creates perfect harmony. Her other poems such as “Surfacing in Private Spaces,” “The Last Fantacy,” and “The Kerner Report on Camp Creek Road,” show the despair and dissatisfaction of the average American reader who has lost as he searches for control, for certainty and for meaning. Speaking about the old poetry fragments which are used to strengthen new pieces her poem “Womanwork” speaks of the present day women who remember the mystic woman. Modern women are caught between two cultures and are doubly alienated. They have a marginal existence that leads nowhere:
What did I see today
nothing.

What did I see yesterday? Nothing….

Expect how I was hot
and how I was
bored
and how I was tortured
and ignored….
chained and left
and one dark drifted segment of branch on the shore,
far from home:
left to die.(Quoted in Indian Journal of American Studies. 29).

Allen here talks about contemporary Amerindian women. Love comes into Allen’s poems with its blessed partner, humor. “Durango suite” written for her father is a fine example of poetic rhythms imitating and parodying country music in order to reveal how people play with images of the American West. Humor in Allen’s poems is always gently affectionate, never cynical. To miss the role of humor would be to lose awareness of how her poetry works. All the efforts to see and understand, to forge appropriate techniques, lead the artist beyond despair to a special kind of humor. In an unpublished essay entitled “Answering the deer” Allen describes humor in American Indian Poetry in a way applicable to herself create a region of mind quite different from what exists outside of the imaginative realm. Allen writes honestly sharing her personal feelings and thus her writings affect more people with her message.