

**UCLA**

**American Indian Culture and Research Journal**

**Title**

The Return (Poem)

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/0hk7r4bm>

**Journal**

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 4(4)

**ISSN**

0161-6463

**Author**

Allen, Paula Gunn

**Publication Date**

1980-09-01

**DOI**

10.17953

**Copyright Information**

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial License, available at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

## THE RETURN

*San Francisco, November 1975*

In the winter  
everything seems to disappear,  
leaving a lonely bird or two to sculpt the sky  
and some dry stalks of last year's grass.  
In another time we owned mutuality and kindness —  
lords and ladies who could still display themselves to fire,  
remembering in that celebration the Law,  
the Winter, the long flight of moon in the dry sky,  
the timeless movement of renewal.

It is autumn here, but strangely. We  
know of season by recall,  
and recall in ancient ceremony the beloved  
whose lost voice howls soundless  
at the sphere  
of day's reflected light.  
Crisp wheels of air trace our downward path,  
birds lost to the emptiness of day. You say  
"remember that sharing is home, not history,  
majesty of here, in this time"  
see how it holds the hills,  
hides within the light.

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 disappeared  
in scattered light.

In ancient dreams  
image and sound together made the song the dance,  
significance  
disappearance following each next rise.  
This winter or next  
we will go home again  
back to our own time and earth  
and know the silence of change and bone,  
of easy disappearance and of flight.

—Paula Gunn Allen