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The Woman Who Owned The Shadows. By Paula Gunn Allen. San Francisco: Spinsters, Ink, 1983. 217 pp. \$8.95 Paper.

Paula Gunn Allen's first novel, *The Woman Who Owned the Shadows*, is a work that has been long overdue, not because of the many years this novel has been in progress but because for the first time we are presented with the contemporary, mixed-blood American Indian woman's quest for identity. In this quest Allen's protagonist Ephanie takes her place in the long list of male figures involved in similar journeys: Mathews' Chal Windzer of *Sundown*, D'Arcy McNickle's Archilde Leon in *The Surrounded*, N. Scott Momaday's Abel in *House Made of Dawn*, James Welch's protagonists in *Winter in the Blood* and *The Death of Jim Loney*, Leslie Silko's Tayo in *Ceremony*. Like each of these predecessors in varying degrees Ephanie's search is for harmony, balance.

Allen sharply conveys Ephanie's confusion and painful isolation in a world that has ostracized her family from full integration into Pueblo life because of the grandmother's marriage to a White man and which demands, paradoxically, that she fulfill the role of "real" Indian in White society. To her non-Indian friends Ephanie is a poor example of an American Indian princess, getting lost in the city and denying the simplistic Liberal White sentiment of the American Indian's supposed role of passive victim. Both American Indian and White cultures appear to allow no place for the complex halves of Ephanie, the complexity of the individual. "You don't seem Indian to me," a White friend says; "You talk like a New York Jew, not like an Indian at all." Allen adds, "He was disappointed in her lack of romantic appeal. She always forgot to keep her eyes cast down, to say nature loving things" (p. 67). In the village Ephanie's family is outcast: "People didn't come to their house on Feast Day, not even the relatives who would have been expected, required by duty. . . . They were shunned. Not overtly denied, confrontation was not the people's way. But covertly" (p. 151).

Allen writes here of "Halves, pieces. Halves, doubles. Halves, wholes." Doubling is the key to this novel, ". . . the sign of doubling, of order and balance . . ." which Ephanie finds eventually in the Keres stories of "Sussistinaku, The Spider, Old Woman . . . her sisters Uretsete and Naotsete . . . the double-minded world you live in . . ." (p. 207). Ephanie's quest is for

an understanding of the interrelatedness of all things, all life, for complex harmony and balance, and in the course of the novel she finds this.

Allen skillfully weaves Keres myth throughout the novel as Ephanie moves toward her epiphany. What Allen does most impressively, however, is to merge, blend, harmonize two worlds. "I mix my metaphors with care . . ." Ephanie declares to her lover-teacher-spiritual brother Stephen, after she has told him "I've seen the Thunders. . . . And they were gold. Their dwelling is the hollowed sky. I saw their chariot" (p. 37). Central to Allen's own mixing of metaphors, blending of worlds, is the apple tree that appears again and again throughout the novel, the tree from which the child Ephanie falls into knowledge and sin: "A tree of light. A blooming apple tree." After Stephen coaxes her into attempting to swing from the tree, resulting in her fall and injury, Ephanie eventually realizes that "After she fell everything changed. How she dressed. How she walked. What she thought. . . . The old ease with her body was gone" (p. 202). After the fall, Ephanie "Had cut herself off from the sweet spring of her own being" (p. 203). "Forgive me Father," she says, "for I have sinned. I jumped on the bed. I fell from the apple tree" (p. 204).

Allen ensures rather heavy-handedly that we cannot fail to note the Eden imagery here, with its cargo of male-inflicted guilt for womankind, its tragic metaphor of sexual maturation and concomitant knowledge. To doubly ensure that we do not miss this message Allen underscores Ephanie's fondness for snakes: "She wasn't afraid of snakes, and was scornful of Stephen for being afraid" (p. 199).

The apple tree with its shining blossoms is more than an Old Testament tree of knowledge, however; it is also the "tree of light" of the Keres myth of the woman who fell from the sky, impregnated with life by the tree itself, a suggestion of woman's unique fertilizing power drawn intimately from nature.

A reader comes away from *The Woman Who Owned The Shadows* with a burden of pain. The novel is about suffering, loss, displacement, alienation from self and place—and about a psychic journey toward self-knowledge and balance. Although in the end Ephanie has her epiphany and is able, in Allen's words, to restore harmony by "Re membering [sic] all the wakings of her life," one comes away from this work with the pain intact.

Part of Ephanie's journey, as both the apple tree and tree of light make clear, is a movement toward sexual identity and would seem to be one away from the male and toward the female, perhaps the androgynous female exemplified by Spider Woman. In the course of the novel Ephanie is abandoned by a first, vaguely defined husband who leaves her with two children and a rising rage. After being abandoned Ephanie moves to free herself of the stifling care of her spiritual *hermano* and teacher, Stephen, realizing that Stephen is trapping her in her dependence upon him. Later, in San Francisco, Ephanie becomes involved with and marries a Nisei man, Thomas, who is also deracinated, tortured and torturing, and who, before Ephanie leaves him, fathers her twin sons, one of whom dies in Ephanie's Oregon retreat.

Supporting Ephanie most of this time is Teresa, a White psychic and sister who seems destined to replace Elena, the lost lover of Ephanie's childhood. In the end, after Ephanie has isolated herself and awakened to knowledge of who she is and where she is, Spider Woman comes to her to complete her quest and to tell her to pass on the knowledge she has gained: "Give it to your sister, Teresa. The one who waits. She is ready to know" (p. 210).

The Woman Who Owned The Shadows is a powerful, uneven book. While the fragmented, involuted style effectively forces the reader to experience Ephanie's anguish, uncertainty and psychic fragmentation, it also makes for turgid reading at times, other times reaching a point of diminishing returns. This novel, however, marks an important place in American fiction. Paula Gunn Allen has given us, for the first time in novel form, a sensitive, sophisticated, forceful portrait of a contemporary American Indian woman, a valuable addition to the increasingly impressive list of novels by American Indians.

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Cricket Sings: A Novel of Pre-Columbia Cahokia. By Kathleen King. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1983. 162 pp. \$15.95 Cloth. \$8.95 Paper.