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Review of *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today* By Leslie Marmon Silko

Alanna Kathleen Brown
Montana State University

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paste things together. . . ." This essay collection is an example of just that. Although subtitled *Essays on Native American Life Today*, the book is less a discussion of pan-Indian concerns than it is a reflection on Leslie Marmon Silko's processes as a writer, her need to have outsiders understand the close-knit family ties and storytelling culture of the Pueblo people, and her growing political activism.

Sprinkled throughout the essays are anecdotes relating to the creation of four of her works: *Laguna Woman*, *Ceremony*, *Almanac of the Dead*, and *Sacred Water*. Core to these stories is Silko's need to come to grips with a mixed-blood identity which has sometimes isolated her in Pueblo as well as non-Native eyes. But she also speaks with gratitude about teaching in Chinle, Arizona, among warm-hearted good people and of the magnificent Anasazi ruins which inspired *Ceremony*. Her references and drawings of the Giant Serpent, *Ma ah shra true ee*, help us understand how internal symbolism, visual artistic creation, and a surrender to the imaginative process were essential to the ten year evolution of *Almanac of the Dead*. The essays also convey the creative importance of *Sacred Water*. Silko was totally in control of production, and she therefore could create a work in which the tactile and visual senses were stimulated as well as the intellectual and emotional aspects of self.

The collection as a whole suffers, however, from verbatim repetition and preachifying, particularly in the newspaper guest columns. Silko's concerns are important and complex, yet her cursory summations undercut her insights into the racial backlash of the 1980s and 1990s. Nonetheless, this is a collection worth owning. The often-quoted "Interior and Exterior Landscapes: The Pueblo Migration Stories" and "Language and Literature from a Pueblo Indian Perspective" begin the collection, and new essays such as "Books: Notes on Mixtec and Maya Screenfolds, Picture Books of Preconquest Mexico" and "As a Child I Loved to Draw and Cut Paper" are very engaging. So are her discussions of the interplay

Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit: Essays on Native American Life Today. By Leslie Marmon Silko. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996. Notes. 205 pp. \$23.00 cloth, \$11.00 paper.

Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit is a surprising pastiche of Leslie Marmon Silko's non-fiction. The work offers the reader a diverse range in the quality of thought, substance, and polish. As she, herself, notes: "As a child, I loved to draw and cut paper and

among photography, light, image, and word. At her best, Leslie Marmon Silko is one of the great writers and thinkers of our time.

ALANNA KATHLEEN BROWN
English Department
Montana State University