

volume is unique in adding to these a majority of authors never published before (twenty-three of thirty-four), two of them as young as thirteen and sixteen years old. Since anthologies frequently feature reprints, the reader is pleasantly surprised to find here exclusively new works.

The bulk of the book contains poetry and short stories, with five essays inserted between the two sections. Readers who expect “essays” to be of the academic literary-critical type will be disappointed. Instead, they are open-ended narratives about childhood experiences, the nature of coyote stories or kachina spirits, and an interpretation of modern-day destructive mining in terms of the evil giants of Navajo mythology.

“Circle of Motion,” a quotation from the “Eagle Poem” by Joy Harjo, connotes the intricate merging of tradition and change characteristic of American Indian life today. “The writers . . . live in many cultures—traditional, contemporary tribal, mainstream American, urban, rural—often simultaneously.” The poems range from the rhythmic prayers of Avis Archambault to the political satires of Geri Keams and the moving evocations of spiritual epiphanies by R. T. Smith. Among the short stories, Leonard G. Butler’s “The Trip to the Trading Post” stands out as an exceptionally sensitive portrayal of a child’s desires and fears, whereas Jack D. Forbes’s “Loretta” is confusing in its introductory daydream of “perfect” Navajo women which will puzzle feminists. Irvin Morris’s “The Snake of Light” is a striking portrayal of the causes of reservation alcoholism.

This volume proves that American Indian literature has some distinct features: 1) A nuance of silence. Important things remain unsaid. “All poets understand the final uselessness of words”; 2) A merging of people, animals, and landscape. Enduring humans, desert pigs, coyotes, cacti, and mountains are sometimes indistinguishable; and 3) The clear voice of the narrator or poet, contradicting all postmodern phenomena of the disappearing subject. The book deserves a better binding, but it is beautifully illustrated by Adrian Hendricks. The footnoting of some unfamiliar words is missing (e.g., “chimichanga,” “pheromones,” and some Navajo expressions). These are small flaws in an excellent work.

— Kristin Herzog

Independent Scholars’ Association, Durham, North Carolina

Leslie Marmon Silko. *Almanac of the Dead.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991) 736 pp, \$25.00 cloth.

For Leslie Marmon Silko aficionados, the “novel” may surprise them. Highly successful as a short story writer and the creator of the unusually spiritual novel *Ceremony*, Silko writes a tome, Dickensian in length and in the number of its *dramatis personae*.

It has been called a “mosaic,” as one writer classified it, a “weaving of ideas and lives.” It is a sprawling work—one that really comprises a number of

“novels.” There are long stories of characters such as Seese who becomes a companion of Lecha, a seer whose duty it is to transcribe the notebooks of a Native American “Almanac of the Dead.”

There are throughout the book various pictorializations of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico; many scenes in many of the books or parts of books are placed in Tucson. One will come to the conclusion, I am sure, that Silko has attempted to create a world. She interweaves with her fictions—histories and chronologies of the Native Americans and of the oppressions they have undergone. The story line (or lines) tends to point where the native peoples in South and Central America rise up to regain their tribal lands.

Much patience will carry the reader through the “histories” of the characters Zeta and the group surrounding her, as well as of Calabazaz and Sterling. The latter two are the outstanding Native American characters and much is told from their viewpoints.

The final product of Silko recalls generally the structure and the spread of Dos Passos’s *USA* with its myriad of characters and its mosaic of sites, people, and historic events. Reading it offers a challenge not only to fiction readers, but especially to Silko aficionados.

— Cortland P. Auser
Yorktown Heights, New York

Werner Sollors, ed. *The Invention of Ethnicity*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) xx, 294 pp., \$38.00

The Invention of Ethnicity is obviously and admittedly shaped after Hobsbawm's and Ranger's *Invention of Tradition*, published in 1986, when the essays in this volume were finished. In the meantime, much of what Sollors argues for in his editor's introduction has become accepted knowledge under the general heading of *the constructedness of identity and subjectivity*. If, however, the book has not, as might appear probable at first sight, been overtaken and made obsolete by the very success of the views it advocates—if the reverse, rather, seems to be true and to justify a belated discussion in these pages—this is so because it also affords one an opportunity to reopen questions that may have been prematurely closed.

E pluribus unum can carry many different stresses, and this volume, like much new historicist criticism that we have seen since its publication, stresses the *unum*: the sequential relationship according to which *themany* make or are made *one*, difference being abolished or integrated into a larger whole in the process. But where the new historicism has consistently and programmatically termed inventions or fictions of identity *ideological* and based its notions of unity on that of ideology, this term and concept is not central to Sollors's volume. It thereby evades certain pitfalls. In the new historicism, the concerns with ideology have embodied the historicist attempt to relate the fiction, the invention to its background; but this very background has frequently been denied historical (material) specificity by new historicist tendencies to collapse everything