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現代アメリカ先住民の意識と語り:レスリー・マーモン・シルコーの「イエローウーマン」

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**Retelling a Story With Contemporary
Native American Consciousness:
Leslie Marmon Silko's
"Yellow Woman"**

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I

Published in 1981, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Storyteller* demonstrates in many ways the author's challenge of restoring the lost heritage of the Native American oral tradition and reconstructing it within the contemporary context of American society. Whereas *Ceremony*, her most acclaimed work published in 1977, is a novel, *Storyteller* appears to be a fine mixture of diverse literary forms, such as essays, poems, and short stories—mostly reprinted—which also includes her personal photographs. It is indeed impossible to confine this work to a single genre; except that perhaps it can only be characterized as a collection of multiple voices from Silko's communal consciousness as a Laguna Pueblo woman of mixed-blood heritage. Retelling the stories of her family and other members of her community, she is well aware of her historical position and her role as a cultural mediator, and yet also conscious of her creative role in this work as a female storyteller living in the contemporary Native American socio-cultural reality.

Silko's identification of herself as being a storyteller as much as a writer implies cultural significance for the act of storytelling. Native American oral tradition is a different tradition from that of written texts, which has been historically central to Western culture.

For Native American people, it is the stories generated through the tradition of oral transmission that has been playing a major important role to share and sustain their cultural heritage. Asa Daklugie, who was born in 1870 and later became a representative of the Mescalero Apache Reservation in New Mexico, mentions in his personal account the significance of oratory in sustaining the communal consciousness :

We had no written language and were forced to remember what we heard or were told. Our lives depended on accurate recall of such information, and particularly upon the reliability of messages sent by a chief to his people by runners. They had to accurately record his orders in their heads.

When I was very young I could not distinguish between fictional stories told for entertainment and true stories told to teach. (143)

Daklugie emphasizes that "accurate" transmission is required in storytelling to continue the existing order of the community. The primary task of a good storyteller, therefore, is to tell the story of his/her community correctly. However, Daklugie's comments do not simply remind us of importance of accuracy in storytelling. He also speaks of how each story, no matter whether it is fictional or factual, has equal importance simply because it is told as a story to be shared by each respective member of the community. Containing the ideas and experiences of each community member, each story is to be respected in the communal consciousness. Furthermore, while storytelling serves as a site for continuing the communal history by confirming the shared memory and transmitting communal knowledge with accuracy, it can also be a potential site of creating a new story and a new communal consciousness when a speaker shares his/her stories created through imagination. Likewise, throughout *Storyteller*, communal

memory and traditional tales of her community are the most powerful sources of Silko's imagination, and simultaneously the points from which her creativity sprouts into a new language and a new story.

Creating a new story embodies the task of a good storyteller at the present moment of American society: creating a story that communicates what it means to be Native American in a new social context. Storytelling today is a conscious act toward cultural survival, as Simon J. Ortiz, an Acoma poet and Silko's contemporary, explains:

Because Indians always tell a story. The only way to continue is to tell a story and that's what Coyote says. The only way to continue is to tell a story and there is no other way. Your children will not survive unless you tell something about them—how they were born, how they came to this certain place, how they continued. (153)

By telling stories only, the socially silenced voices of Native American people become audible and recover their subjectivity. Complexities to which contemporary Native American storytellers face are found in their struggle to create the stories that are able to be understood by and make sense to the cross-cultural audience and thus enable to continue their cultural subjectivity from generation to generation.

Storytelling, where sharing between the teller and the audience is the fundamental activity, is different from mediation in which the message is usually passed exclusively from the speaker to the audience. Not only telling stories but also telling stories that are able to communicate with the audience is the only way by which culture survives. Storytelling, therefore, should be an on-going process of communication in which the storyteller always expects the listener's reaction or reception to complete his/her storytelling. As a storyteller situated in a contemporary literary setting, Silko is well aware that

she needs to attain such receptivity and communicability in her narration. In *Yellow Woman and a Beauty of the Spirit (Yellow Woman)*, for instance, she articulates her understanding of the role of a storyteller that “a great deal of the story is believed to be inside the listener; the storyteller’s role is to draw the story out of the listeners” (50). In order to accomplish her task as a contemporary storyteller, Silko needs to invent her own narrative strategies to “draw the story out of the listeners,” while she also needs to reinvent messages that can reach a contemporary audience larger than her own tribal community and to which it is harder to communicate her cultural sensibility.

II

The short story, “Yellow Woman,” in *Storyteller* is an especially intriguing text in this sense, for it represents Silko’s challenge of how to blend traditional motifs into her contemporary Native American consciousness and transform the story into a culturally communicable text without violating its traditionally respected cultural meaning. Yellow Woman stories are the traditional tales about a woman called “Kochinnenako,” and told in Keres, a tribal language of the Laguna and Acoma Pueblos in New Mexico. The stories are told in several different versions yet always with Kochinnenako as a central character of each story. According to Paula Gunn Allen, the name Yellow Woman “means Woman-Woman,” because yellow is the color for women in the Keres tradition (*Sacred Hoop* 226). Thus Allen explains: “Keres women paint their faces yellow on certain ceremonial occasions and are so painted at death so that the guardian at the gate of the spirit world, Naiya Iyatiku (Mother Corn Woman), will recognize that the newly arrived person is a woman” (*Sacred Hoop* 226). Therefore,

stories of Yellow Woman are not merely traditional Indian tales in which the main character happens to be a woman. Silko's "Yellow Woman" and traditional Yellow Woman stories historically and intertextually represent Yellow Woman as a character that epitomizes multidimensional aspects of Pueblo womanhood and the meaning of being a woman in the history of Pueblo community. Furthermore, considering Silko's "Yellow Woman" frequently anticipates the non-Native American audience, the sphere of intertextuality extends from historical to cross-cultural, whereby Yellow Woman as a representation of Native American womanhood can respond to the womanhood of different ethnicity and culture in the contemporary American society.

Interestingly enough, Silko's "Yellow Woman" is not only one of the stories in *Storyteller*, but also anthologized along with the other Yellow Woman tales in *Spider Woman's Granddaughters: Traditional Tales and Contemporary Writing by Native American Women* edited by Paula Gunn Allen and published eight years later than *Storyteller*. In this volume, Allen attempts to display the linear tradition of Native American women by presenting their stories told by themselves—not the ones dictated by the anthropologists—from diverse historical periods. She claims that Native American women's voices have been unheard or limited their recognition in such stories "generally confined to matters of menarche, childbearing, or food gathering," and tales about "lesbians, woman warriors, woman chiefs" are "viewed as anomalies or outright untruths foisted on some unsuspecting, inexperienced lore-gatherer" (Introduction 19). Allen's agenda in this volume is obviously to present Native American women's life experiences as more than just food gathering. Collecting the representative voices of women from different tribes and time periods, she attempts to establish the Native American women's literary and cultural tradition as a

counterpart of both the Euro-centric cultural tradition and the Native American masculine tradition. Yellow Woman stories in Allen's anthology, therefore, should be understood as representation of Allen's intention to introduce Silko's "Yellow Woman" as "just another in the Yellow Woman cycle," as Silko herself acknowledges (Introduction 23). In so doing, *Spiderwoman's Granddaughters* focuses on representing Silko's story as a part of the larger structure of Native American women's culture.

Although Allen admits that the group of Yellow Woman stories she has provided in the *Spider Woman's Granddaughters* "isn't the half of it" (Introduction 23), she provides in this volume a small number of traditional Yellow Woman stories before Silko's "Yellow Woman": "Evil Kachina Steals Yellow Woman," "Sun Steals Yellow Woman," and "Whirlwind Man Steals Yellow Woman." The narrative style of three stories, in addition to another version available in Allen's other book *The Sacred Hoop*—"Sh-ah-cock and Miochin or the Battle of the Seasons"—is short story. However, the stories of Yellow Woman which Silko provides in *Storyteller* besides her own—"What Whirlwind Man Told Kochininako, Yellow Woman," "Cottonwood, Part One: Story of Sun House," and "Cottonwood, Part Two: Buffalo Story"—are narrative poems, although each poem shares the basic plot with the Yellow Woman stories told in the *Spider Woman's Granddaughters* and *The Sacred Hoop*.

Clearly the difference in their styles of telling and their treatments of tradition can be attributed to the goal that each volume sets. Each volume reveals the different positions Silko and Allen enact—he former, a writer, and the latter, an editor. Both attempt to mediate the tradition of Keres womanhood, but there is a crucial difference in their viewpoints: Allen views personal experience as something that can

become “a part of the universal” and represent “the collective unconscious” (Introduction 8, 23). In other words, for her, a woman’s story always presumes the Native American women’s experience of which a woman’s story is always a part. Silko’s view of her storytelling, on the other hand, seems to focus more on expressing her personal memory than attempting to associate it with recognized tradition—Native American women’s culture—and does not seem to aim at attaining any qualification worthy of being “a part of the universal.”

Silko’s contemporary consciousness as a storyteller, therefore, profoundly relates to the way in which she liberates herself from the restrictions of comprehensive wholeness with Native American tradition and Native American women’s tradition, and from fixed notions of literary genre. The stories important for her are not a part of the outside, but rather inside her memory—what she remembers—and in order to express them she does not necessarily prioritize structurally approved ways and contents. Eventually, there is nothing “correct” or “accurate” as long as the story always comes through the storyteller’s subjectivity and imagination, as Silko suggests elsewhere: “And no matter how carefully I remember, memory gets all mixed together with imagination. It does for everybody. But I don’t change the spirit or the mood or the tone of the story” (“Stories Have a Life” 147). The story “Yellow Woman” in *Storyteller* reveals Silko’s challenge in creating a story of her community not merely as a restored communal memory, but as a story that also expresses her originality based on her own imagination and personal memory.

III

Although the Yellow Woman stories are told in diverse ways, they often share commonalties. The stories are usually about Yellow

woman and the community to which she belongs and her separation from her own community. Yellow woman's separation is sometimes caused by being stolen by a member of another community, and at other times by leaving her community of her own free will. In the case of "Buffalo Story," the source of Silko's version of "Yellow Woman," Kochininako chooses to leave her community, and at the end of the story she even refuses to return to where she came from.

The Buffalo story in *Storyteller* goes like this. People in Yellow Woman's village were starving because of a long spell of dry weather, and she decided to go out in search for water "to carry back to her family" (68). On the shore of a river, she met Buffalo Man, and he took her to the Buffalo people, the people of his community. After a while, Kochininako was found by her husband, Estoy-eh-muut, who left the village to search for his lost wife. Estoy-eh-muut kills Buffalo Man and his people and eventually kills Kochininako, too, because she expresses her willingness to be killed in order to remain there with Buffalo people. The people of Kochininako's community deplore her death, yet later go to the East where they find the bodies of the dead buffalo, which enable the people to survive.

Silko's choice of Buffalo story as a source of her "Yellow Woman" is original, in the way that she clearly makes a distinction for the cause of Yellow woman's situation in the story: whether or not there was some extent to which Yellow woman's motivation influences the action in the story, that is, whether she was only stolen by Buffalo Man or whether it was her decision to let it happen. Compared to the other versions, in the Buffalo story, Yellow Woman has more chance to choose her actions—her love for Buffalo Man and her decision to stay with his community—and it is in such a subjective viewpoint that Silko's originality comes into play when she presents

Yellow Woman in her storytelling. As explicit in the opening of the story, it is a female narrator Yellow Woman's subjective viewpoint and voice that govern Silko's story. While a Yellow Woman is referred to as "she" in other Yellow Woman stories, in Silko's story, Yellow Woman has obtained her subjective voice through the use of the first person point of view:

My thigh clung to his with dampness, and I watched the sun rising up through the tamaracks and willows.... I looked at him beside me, rolled in the red blanket on the white river sand. I cleaned the sand out of the cracks between my toes, squinting because the sun was above the willow trees. I looked at him for the last time, sleeping on the white river sand. (*Storyteller* 54)

Thus it becomes clear that the narrator in this story is a woman, but in the story it is never clear to the readers whether or not the woman in the story can be immediately identified as Yellow Woman, as it was in the traditional stories. A woman in the story, a narrator, is called "Yellow Woman" by a man named Silva, the character that can be compared to Buffalo Man in the traditional tale. At this point, she claims she is not Yellow Woman: "But I only said that you were him [the ka'tsina spirit] and that I was Yellow Woman—I'm not really her—I have my own name and I come from the pueblo on the other side of thae mesa"(55). However, as soon as Silva naturally calls her "Yellow Woman," the mythic identity given her by the stranger coexists with the narrator's self-identity. The narrator knows that she lives in the reality of the contemporary historical moment, rather than in myth, but the myth gradually becomes her internal reality because of the link that Silva made between the mythic woman and her:

I was wondering if Yellow Woman had known who she was—if she knew that she would become part of the stories. Maybe she'd had another name that her husband and relatives called her so that only the ka' tsina from the north and the storytellers would know her as Yellow Woman. But I didn't go on; I felt him all around me, pushing me down into the white river sand.... All I could know was the way he felt, warm damp, his body beside me. This is the way it happens in the stories, I was thinking, ... (*Storyteller* 55-56)

Silva is a mythic character yet with a physical reality. The narrator "feels" the myth through Silva's body, and such sensual experience makes blurred the boundary between myth and reality in the narrator's consciousness.

A sense of boundary generated by the chronological and cultural distance between the narrator and the Yellow Woman in traditional stories gradually disappears as her internal reality changes. Through Silva's existence, the narrator gradually relates imaginary womanhood of the traditional Native American woman, Yellow Woman, with her own womanhood. Silva, at this point, again plays the role of intermediary between the past and present, as well as between myth and reality, as the narrator asks :

"Have you brought women here before?" He smiled and kept chewing, so I said. "Do you always use the same tricks?"

"What tricks?" He looked at me like he didn't understand.

"The story about being a ka' tsina from the mountains. The story about Yellow Woman."

Silva was silent ; his face was calm.

"I don' t' believe it. Those stories couldn' t happen now,"

I said.

He shook his head and said softly, "But someday they will talk about us, and they will say, 'Those two lived long ago when things like that happened.'" (*Storyteller* 57)

Although Silko follows the basic plot line and asserts that she does not "change the spirit or the mood or the tone of the story," the story does change as the internal reality of the narrator develops. Silko's "Yellow Woman" story is actually not about the Yellow Woman; it is about a woman who knows about the Yellow Woman. The narrator knows that she is not the Yellow Woman but does not know how she is related to the Yellow Woman, a woman in a world of myth. It is such an ambiguous knowledge of the Yellow Woman that distances the narrator from the woman of myth, but at the same time gives more freedom of imagination and the possibility of reconnecting the narrator's self-identity as a woman with the image of the Yellow Woman that has been traditionally considered to be a representation of Native American womanhood. Given a contemporary cultural setting, the contemporary Yellow Woman is not really the Yellow Woman, but a woman who internalizes in her consciousness the sense of what it means to be a Yellow Woman in her community. As her emotion and imagination are associated with the Yellow Woman, the narrator of "Yellow Woman" gradually loses her willingness to go back home. She imagines that her mother and grandmother "will raise the baby" (59), and her husband back home, Al, "will find someone else" (59). "They [my family] will go on like before, except that there will be a story about the day I disappeared while I was walking along the river" (59), the narrator states, and the stone house she remembers that she "had meant to go home" to does not "seem important anymore" (59).

Fluidity of the narrator's identity and the blurred boundary

between the world of myth and contemporary reality also influence the sequence of the story. The plot of Silko's "Yellow Woman" does not always follow the traditional sequence in which consequences are often resolution of the problems by reuniting and harmonizing her community. The types of actions are identical in both stories, but the consequences differ, and these differences bring more ambiguity to our interpretation. For instance, in terms of the pattern of action from discordance to harmony, discordance takes place in both the traditional and Silko's story but the consequences are different. In the traditional story, discordance arises in the relationship between Yellow Woman's husband and Buffalo Man. Buffalo Man, his people, and Yellow Woman herself are killed by her husband, whose deed, however, eventually rescues starving people by providing them with Buffalo meat. This brings harmony to his community. In Silko's story, though, discordance is represented by conflict between Silva and a white rancher, placing the context in a contemporary social reality of racial conflict. Silva, who has been "hunting" cattle from a Texas rancher and selling it for money (61), is accused of stealing meat by the suspicious white rancher, who has been looking for "the thief" (61). Then, there is a fight—discordance—between them, but the incident itself does not bring any resolution to the story of Silko's "Yellow Woman." To avoid involving the narrator in the fight between the two men, Silva tells her to "go back up the mountain" (61). Urged by "something ancient and dark" in his "eyes" (61), the narrator runs off: "I slapped my horse across the flank and the sacks of raw meat swung against my knees as the horse leaped up the trail. It was hard to keep my balance, and once I thought I felt the saddle slipping backward; it was because of this that I could not look back" (61).

Silko's language, her description of this scene, never clarifies the

consequence of that conflict. Nothing turns out to be certain except that the narrator heard "four shots were fired" (61). She assumes that they were shots from Silva's gun and not from the white rancher's because the narrator previously stated the rancher "must have been unarmed" (61). The conflict that eventually brought harmony in the traditional tale was left open-ended in Silko's story. Buffalo meat, material prosperity, which saves people from starvation and enables them to sustain the community in the traditional Buffalo story, can be compared to the raw meat that Silva got from the rancher in Silko's story. However, Silko does not give any importance to this material profit. When the narrator finally stopped her horse and got off from it, she only saw that it "disappeared over the last hill" carrying "the gunny sacks full of meat" on its side (62). Silko does not seem to be interested in the relationship between the narrator, a contemporary Yellow Woman, and material gain, which has been so important in traditional stories as a way of indicating Yellow Woman's unusual contribution to her community. Silko instead emphasizes the narrator's spiritual gain: memory of the experience. Before she returns to her family, the narrator of "Yellow Woman" thus states:

I came back to the place on the river bank where he had been sitting the first time I saw him.... I saw the leaves and I wanted to go back to him—to kiss him and to touch him—but the mountains were too far away now. And I told myself, because I believe it, he will come back sometime and be waiting again by the river. (62)

The memory of the narrator's experience with Silva opens up a new dimension in her consciousness, both as a Native American and as a woman. The Yellow Woman that was previously viewed by the narrator as just another character of traditional oratory and a story

of ancient times, has become a part of her memory and has strongly connected with her sense of womanhood, which is actualized through her physical as well as emotional experience with Silva.

IV

Silko in "Yellow Woman" expresses the consciousness and subjectivity of a woman living in a contemporary Native American community by interweaving the past with the present, myth with reality, and communal memory with her individual imagination. The source of her imagination and creativity is communal memory ; her originality in "Yellow Woman" is achieved when her communal consciousness is interlinked with her individual process of storytelling. According to Silko, this process is to create "an elaborate structure of stories within stories," whereby "each word that one is speaking has a story of its own" (*Yellow Woman* 50). It seems to me this comment suggests cultural intertextuality between the traditional Yellow Woman stories and her Silko's "Yellow Woman," as well as her creative process in that story as a precise example of a story generated from such fundamental structure of "stories within stories." As every single story is told and collected as another piece of communal memory, the whole story of the community is to be restructured and revised. By exploring "stories within stories," Silko remarks, a story becomes the story that "informs contemporary Pueblo writing and storytelling as well as the traditional narratives" (*Yellow Woman* 50).

Silko's "Yellow Woman" in *Storyteller* can only be a piece among many Yellow Woman stories—the stories that have already come in the past as well as those that are yet to come. Silko speaks of it in this way:

This perspective on narrative—of story within story, the

idea that one story is only the beginning of many stories and the sense that stories never truly end—represents an important contribution of Native American cultures to the English language. (*Yellow Woman* 50)

The sense of open-endedness and fluidity that are seen in Silko's "Yellow Woman" come from her sensibility as a contemporary storyteller who creates her stories anticipating that her story will "never truly end." Every story changes, as no meaning is expected to be absolutely fixed in oral tradition. Meanings and messages change from time to time as the sensibility of the audience changes. What is to be remembered is decided by the community—the audience—who are situated in a different historical context, as Silko expresses:

The old folks at Laguna would say, "If it's important, you'll remember it." If it's really important, if it really has a kind of substance that reaches to the heart of the community life and what's gone before and what's gone later, it will be remembered. ("Stories Have a Life of Their Own" 148)

Silko's "Yellow Woman" is a product of her past heritage, and yet at the same time becomes another source of imagination, whereby stories of Yellow Woman continue.

It is perhaps not before the ending of the story that the narrator of "Yellow Woman" finally understands what her grandfather had told her when he was alive about "feeling," what it means to be Yellow Woman in the present context. Acquiring a sense of another identity, Yellow Woman, the narrator finally internalizes the meaning of the relationship between Yellow Woman and herself—what it culturally means to be Yellow Woman—deeply inside her consciousness:

I followed the path up from the river into the village.... I

got to the screen door of my house. I could hear their voices inside-my mother was telling my grandmother how to fix the Jell-O and my husband, Al, was playing with the baby. I decided to tell them that some Navajo had kidnapped me, but I was sorry that old Grandpa wasn't alive to hear my story because it was the Yellow Woman stories he liked to tell best. (*Storyteller* 62)

As Silko states, "storytelling is an ongoing process, working on many different levels" (*Yellow Woman* 53), *Yellow Woman* is not a woman character who exists only in the past heritage of Native American women's culture. Through Silko's storytelling with her contemporary sensibility, *Yellow Woman* has gained new life and a new voice, and survives in the consciousness of the contemporary Native American community. However, the story has not been completed. The story of *Yellow Woman*, the story of Native American womanhood, is still evolving through communication between the storyteller and the audience in cross-cultural settings in the contemporary American society. The discourse, which is generated may only amount to a piece of a story within stories, but becomes a source of the vitalizing the on-going, never-ending process of dialogic communication between the tradition of American literature and Native American oral tradition.

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論文要旨

現代アメリカ先住民の意識と語り： レスリー・マーモン・シルコーの「イエローウーマン」

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1981年に出版されたレスリー・マーモン・シルコーの *Storyteller* は、様々な語り的手法によって作者の共同体意識を表現した物語を集めた作品である。この論文では、*Storyteller* 中の短編小説「イエローウーマン」に注目し、ケレス語族プエブロインディアン共同体に伝統的に語り継がれてきたイエローウーマン物語を、シルコーが現代の語り部としてどのような意識で語り継いでいるかを見ていく。

ポーラ・ガン・アレンの指摘するように、シルコーの「イエローウーマン」は、確かに伝統と同じモチーフを採用しているという点で、アメリカ先住民女性の語りの伝統の一端を担う作品と言えるが、さらにシルコーの語り部としての獨創性を問うならば、過去の物語の伝統的な要素は、この物語の語り手である先住民女性の意識に顕在する作家の現代意識と融合することによって、現代社会の新たな文脈の中でのアメリカ先住民女性の新たな意識を表現していると言える。この論文では、まずアメリカ先住民にとって口承伝承がどのような文化的意義を有する伝統であったかを考察し、そうした伝統の流れの中で再び語られる「イエローウーマン」において、シルコーの自己意識が、共同体意識と連関しつつも、共同体の伝説としてのイエローウーマン物語にどのような独自性を加えていったかという過程を検証する。