

right, and written, author-based notions of creativity versus those emerging out of oral traditions. It seems unclear, for instance, whether the incentive that Vaidhyathan talks about is economic, cultural, social, peer-related or something else, and thus on what grounds the opposition to protection arises. Surely, in many instances the protection *is* the incentive.

Yet despite these shortcomings Vaidhyathan's book is a valuable and timely step in the direction of bringing the discourses of copyright out of the courtrooms and into the public domain; the conditions of copyright are obviously historically embedded and belong to broader cultural policies, and they should be put on the agenda as such, especially since, at least in some cultural fields, legislation and social practices indeed are very poorly aligned at this 'digital moment.' For anyone wishing to delve into this discussion – whether via the fields of history, literature, ethnicity, African-American, popular music or media studies – *Copyrights and Copywrongs* is certainly a good place to start.

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Ellen L. Arnold (ed.), *Conversations with Leslie Marmon Silko*. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press Of Mississippi, 2000. 200 pages; \$18.00, paper (ISBN: 1-57806-300-0).

In 1999 Leslie Marmon Silko marked a quarter-century of published fiction with the release of her latest novel, *Gardens in the Dunes*. This collection of selected interviews with Silko provides those interested in her work with a running commentary by the author that neatly parallels her career. From a 1976 interview with Per Seystersted in *American Studies in Scandinavia*, 13 (1981), to a 1998 interview with the collection's editor Ellen L. Arnold from *Studies in American Indian Literature*, 10, 3 (1998), the collection includes sixteen interviews representing a neat cross-section of Silko's career to date.

As she attempts to make clear throughout the interviews, Silko wants to be accepted as an American author, not marginalized as only a Native American writer. A recurrent theme running through the interviews is her early motivation to write. In elementary school she would try and use the words from her vocabulary lessons in short stories. She found that writing provided a means of coping with society. Her influences were not confined to her Laguna Pueblo heritage, however, where storytelling is an essential element of the culture. She also claims to have been influenced by many mainstream Western authors ranging from Shakespeare and Blake, through D. H. Lawrence, Henry James and Flannery O'Connor, and up to Maxine Hong Kingston and Toni Morrison. She rejects the notion that Native American stories should be kept as pristine relics, untainted by modern written genre and of interest only to anthropologists. She regards the storytelling process as something that is dynamic and that should exist to serve the living. She is not concerned that written storytelling might be

construed by some as a kind of betrayal of the oral tradition of Native Americans. In fact, as she tries to make clear in *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), Native Americans did possess a written tradition, the codices, which were burnt by the thousands by the Catholic conquistadors. Nor is she concerned that her novels encompass a breadth of characters and issues that goes beyond Native Americans and embraces society at large. She attempts rather to reflect the reality of true social circumstances, a reality seen in her own Native American-Hispanic-European heritage, instead of being bound by any constraints of political correctness. Not that she does not see a connection between American Literature and Native Americans. She regards American Transcendentalism as 'the first important sign' that Europeans in America are being transformed by the land and asserts 'the influence of American Transcendentalism is still very strong, whether people recognize it or not.'

Her rejection of the straightjacket of political correctness is not to say that Silko is oblivious to political concerns, quite the contrary. Her body of literary work is a political as well as aesthetic statement. Her first inclination was to pursue a career in law, inspired by her father who had successfully pursued land claims against the federal government on behalf of their tribe. After three semesters of law study at the University of New Mexico she decided that the best way to serve her people was through her writing. She states in an interview: 'The most effective political statement I could make is in my art work. ... The most radical kind of politics is language as plain truth.' The political theme that most concerns Silko in her works is injustice: first and foremost injustice visited upon Native Americans by the invading Europeans, but also injustice in a broader sense, founded in 'evil, an imbalance and unwellness.' In *Ceremony* (1977) she deals with the problems of Native Americans returning from World War Two and the difficulty they have adjusting to being lost between two cultures. In *Almanac of the Dead* she tells about the theft of native lands. In *Gardens in the Dunes* she recounts the horrors of the Indian boarding schools. In each case her fiction serves as a vehicle to present alternative and repressed versions of history. Her vision is not that of traditional leftists however, as she states 'Big communism is no good. Big Socialism is no good.' She calls for something she terms 'bioregionalism.' Local biological integrity makes sense not only environmentally, but in the realm of the spiritual as well. Her religious leanings are admittedly gnostic, saying of *Gardens*, 'I hope this is a gnostic novel.'

Just as she wishes to avoid the Native American author label, so Silko also defies being put into a feminist box. Although her works are political, she does not believe in allowing this to make her material inaccessible to the reader, a mistake she feels some feminist authors have made. 'Politics can ruin anything. It will ruin a picnic.' Part of the craft of storytelling is making one's point while keeping the work accessible. So although her most recent novel *Gardens in the Dunes* revolves primarily around female protagonists, this has not been true of most of her work. In *Ceremony*, her focus on the male character Tayo ran counter to feminists who regarded her writing from the male perspective as being counter to the aims of the movement. In *Almanac of the Dead*, too, she crafts a plethora of strong male characters, delving

deeply into the psycho-sexual motivation of their behavior. That Silko had taken the time to read the complete works of Sigmund Freud during the gestation of the novel is evident. Proof of the acuteness of Silko's perception of inner-workings of the male psyche was the heated response of one male reviewer for *USA Today*, for whom her observations seem to have struck too close to home. Silko states she is 'quite proud to have written a novel which so disturbed the Yale professor of political science who reviewed it that he lost control of himself on paper.' According to Silko he said 'she needs psychiatric help because of her preoccupation with the male organ.' She was happy because 'it would make people read my book.' These comments are indicative of the playfulness and humor that she hopes readers will also recognize in her fiction.

Whether one is interested in researching or criticizing Silko's work, or using it in the classroom, this collection is an invaluable resource. It provides a useful reference for trying to understand not only her novels, but her poetry and short stories as well. Unfortunately, Silko was reluctant to say much about *The Delicacy and Strength of Lace: Letters Between Leslie Marmon Silko and James Wright* (1986). Published by Wright's wife after his death, Silko could not bring herself to read the work, leaving it to her friend Larry McMurtry to peruse the manuscript before publication. Hopefully Silko will continue to give interviews concerning her work, particularly about her writing from *Almanac of the Dead* through *Gardens in the Dunes* and beyond, necessitating that this collection be updated and reissued. This would correct the one minor flaw, that the interviews, being a cumulative collection from throughout her career, naturally focus more on the early part of her career than the latter. It would be gratifying to see her two novels from the 1990s, and in particular the most recent *Garden in the Dunes*, treated in the same depth as *Ceremony*. Silko has most certainly earned a place in the Native American literary canon and should be considered one of the important American authors of the last quarter of the twentieth century. This collection of interviews is a fitting companion to her work.

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Helle Porsdam (ed.), *Folkways and Law Ways: Law in American Studies*. Odense: Odense University Press, 2001. 256 pages; DKK 225 paper (ISBN: 87-7838-583-0).

This is a long overdue contribution to the field of American Studies in Scandinavia. Helle Porsdam should be commended, not only for the present volume, but also for her efforts to establish a tradition of Legal American Studies within both the Nordic and European Associations for American Studies. In recent years there has, no doubt, been some disenchantment among some members of the EAAS with the dominance of literature studies on the conference programs of the association. This has partly been compensated for by the permanent establishment of 'off-year' conferences for historians, in recent years held at the Roosevelt Study Center at Middelburg, the Netherlands. Nonetheless, efforts by the likes of Dr. Porsdam to broaden the program at