

The Legacy of Dell Hymes: Ethnopoetics, Narrative Inequality, and Voice (Encounters: Explorations in Folklore and Ethnomusicology)



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The accomplishments and enduring influence of renowned anthropologist Dell Hymes are showcased in these essays by leading practitioners in the field. Hymes (1927–2009) is arguably best known for his pioneering work in ethnopoetics, a studied approach to Native verbal art that elucidates cultural significance and aesthetic form. As these essays amply demonstrate, nearly six decades later ethnopoetics and Hymes's focus on narrative inequality and voice provide a still valuable critical lens for current research in anthropology and folklore. Through ethnopoetics, so much can be understood in diverse cultural settings and situations: gleaning the voices of individual Koryak storytellers and aesthetic sensibilities from century-old wax cylinder recordings; understanding the similarities and differences between Apache life stories told 58 years apart; how Navajo punning and an expressive device illuminate the work of a Navajo poet; decolonizing Western Mono and Yokuts stories by bringing to the surface the performances behind the texts written down by scholars long ago; and keenly appreciating the potency of language revitalization projects among First Nations communities in the Yukon and northwestern California. Fascinating and topical, these essays not only honor a legacy but also point the way forward.

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