

Stylized characters' speech in Thompson Salish narrative. By STEVEN M. EGESDAL. (University of Montana occasional papers in linguistics, 9.) Missoula, MT: University of Montana, 1992. Pp. xviii, 126. Paper \$10.00.

Scholars of traditional American Indian narrative have typically emphasized the mythographic task of capturing its referential aspect on paper. Egesdal, in this compact yet elaborated book, focusses rather on its expressive, performative aspect—that is, on how Thompson River Salish raconteurs accomplish perhaps the most definitive work of narrative: the entertaining and engaging of an audience. E argues that the characters' lines, the quoted speech of the protagonists themselves, are in fact the lines that carry what Dell Hymes calls 'performance load'. In particular, the smaller subset he terms 'stylized characters' speech' functions as the performative peak. (Briefly, stylized characters' lines are those which exhibit consistent phonological manipulation characteristic to particular protagonists.) It imbues narratives with drama, and has such prominence in the minds of both raconteurs and audiences that it is definitive of the genre. As E points out, the recurrence of characters' 'nonsense speech' in Western narratives is an index to its key role in them.

The database for analysis is twenty-six texts collected by E himself. In these he identifies four main categories of stylized characters' speech. Fauna speech, used by the anthropomorphized animals that are the chief dramatis personae in Thompson narrative, is the raconteurs' attempt to represent how 'animals would speak Thompson if they were able' (10) and 'reminds the audience that the characters are of a different era, when animals . . . spoke like men' (34). Predictably, onomatopoeia plays a leading role here, but raconteurs employ subtler techniques as well; Meadowlark's utterances are

patterned on the melody of the actual bird's song, for example. Special attention is conferred on the speech of Coyote, the Plateau's trickster/clown, whose distinctive, frequently vulgar forms provide comic relief while simultaneously highlighting the dramatic weight of his lines.

Foreign speech can be genuinely foreign, as when put into the mouth of Coyote on a visit to Okanagan country, or approximated, as when the raconteur is not a true bilingual and must use reduced morphology and imperfectly borrowed words (e.g., Grizzly Woman's Okanagan [ŋšx̄ɪlwɛ] should properly be [isx̄ɪlwi?] 'my husband'). Feigned foreign speech employs stereotypically foreign phonology, such as Coyote's nonsense syllable *t'ú?*, which contains the quite rare segment *t'*. Stylized child speech is put into the mouths of characters who are infantile themselves, or who are especially threatening to children in order to heighten the lines' often moralizing effect. Phonology is simplified (e.g., [k] substitutes for [q]), diminutive affixes are abundant, and archaic forms persist. Finally, rhythmic and assonant lines, which exhibit mutual structural similarities, can be used to highlight important plot twists.

The book is carefully conceived and thoughtfully written. Egesdal provides only a meager description of the native context of Thompson narrative performances, but his functional interpretations of the tales are quite apt. He pictures Thompson narrative in the broader context of the Northwest Coast and Plateau by frequent comparisons to traditional narratives of those areas, identifying areal phenomena where possible. This provocative book will be useful not only to Americanists, but also to students of folk narrative in general. [JAAN INGLE, *Louisiana State University.*]