The Language of Protest: Acts of Performance, Identity, and Legitimation

Mary Lynne Hill, St. Mary's University, San Antonio, TX

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/marylynne-hill/3/
The Language of Protest: Acts of Performance, Identity, and Legitimacy

Rooted in the performative of Speech Act Theory, this interdisciplinary study crafts a new model to compare the work we do with words when we protest: across genres (chants, songs, poetry, prose), from different geographies (Turkey, U.S., West Germany, Romania, Great Britain, Guatemala, Northern Ireland) and from different languages (Turkish, Spanish, English, German, Romanian, Ki’che’, Irish Gaeilge). This model generates two new concepts: *pragmatic legitimacy*, when a hearer recognizes a speech act, regardless of genre, as one of protest; and *convocativity*, the effect of convoking hearers into distinct camps, creating degrees of solidarity or distance on the protest issue.

Framed by the metaphor of a neighbourhood, the book opens by defining protest, as an expression of social, political or cultural dissent, supported by a wide range of examples, and concludes with a discussion of the McLuhan dictum of the “medium is the message” as emerging in a virtual commons.