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On Dicentization

Diverse phenomena in sociocultural life are analyzed with recourse to Peirce's concept of the dicent interpretant. Attention to the semiotic role of the interpretant, itself a sign that articulates with connected signs in the generative process of semiosis, contributes to expanded understanding of ritual and attendant anthropological objects. I discuss how semiotic ideology makes possible, and makes real, a particular transformation of potentials of form expressed as likenesses into actual existents represented as contiguities. I develop an indexical treatment of such transformations that I label dicentization. Indexicality and iconicity have become central to linguistic anthropology and dicentization offers an account of how they work together beyond language in cultural semiosis. The article generalizes and applies the resulting explanatory model to a range of social phenomena described in the literature, including Aboriginal Australian iconography, Medieval Japanese asceticism, Homeric and Freudian psychologies of rage, and traps and primitivism in African and modern art. The analysis contributes to a semiotic realist conception of the continuity of representation and reality.

[dicent, interpretant, ritual, indexicality, semiotic realism]

> *Our ability to perceive reality means that reality realizes (actualizes) itself in us; that this in turn is the only way that we can realize (appropriate through understanding) the fact that reality is so realizing itself in us; and that in so doing the self-realization of reality itself takes place.*
>
> Keiji Nishitani "*Religion and Nothingness*" (1982:5)

> *The real, then, is that which, sooner or later, information and reasoning would finally result in, and which is therefore independent of the vagaries of me and you. The very origin of the conception of reality shows that this conception essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY, without definite limits, and capable of an infinite increase in knowledge.*
>
> Charles Sanders Peirce "*Some Consequences of Four Incapacities*" (1868:239)

Introduction

Ritual produces in participants the feeling of connection; social connection to one another, and often also cosmological connection to the supernatural. The connectivity effect of ritual was identified long ago by Durkheim (1912) as "collective effervescence," and it has been an abiding topic of symbolic and linguistic anthropology. Ritual has increasingly been seen less as a functional outcome than as a performative achievement that works to break down divides, between signs and referents, between the human and nonhuman (Stasch 2011; Tambiah 1984; Tomlinson 2014; Yelle 2013). I build on that inquiry here by developing a semiotic anthropological account of how

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people realize, in the sense of coming to know and at the same time bringing into existence, contiguity with the world. How do actors make indexical connections where before they were not present, only latent, or invisible?

The semiotic anthropological approach to communication in culture taken here is informed by the work of logician and philosopher C.S. Peirce (Mertz 1985; Parmentier 1994; Peirce 1932; Singer 1984). The Peircean concept of the dicent interpretant is a sign that construes another sign as an index, and I use *dicentization* to describe this process of indexical interpretation.

> **Dicentization**: *A process of signification wherein a likeness or a conventional relation is interpreted as actually constituting a relation of physical or dynamical connection. Dicentization is both a moment in which indexicality is created and it is itself a form of creative indexicality.*

Dicentization creates indexes out of other signs and it also has indexically performative entailments that follow it because according to Peircean semiotics, signs grow. One sign vehicle, in relation to its object, generates an interpretant, which in turn is a sign vehicle that generates an interpretant, and so on infinitely. Ritual's efficacious establishment of connections may be generalized out from what might be considered ritual per se to wider fields of engagement, toward an historical and processual semiotic of thought and communication.

Peirce's philosophy utilizes one and the same toolkit to describe both thinking and speaking. All thought is dialogue, mediated by signs, with an immediately prior self, and all communication with others is calibration of interpretants—wherein I get you to take the same relation to an object as I do, such that my words make you a sign of my thought. Just as we all are signs: "The word or sign that the man uses *is* the man himself. For as the fact that every thought is a sign, taken in conjunction with the fact that life is a train of thought, proves that man is a sign; so, that every thought is an *external* sign, proves that man is an external sign" (Peirce 1984[1868]:241).

Peirce's view that our lives are caught up, even constituted, in sign processes that bridge the "internal" and "external," by accounting for continuity between human thought, communication, and the world of things, holds an important lesson for linguistic anthropology. The lesson is that Peircean realism offers a challenge to nominalism in the philosophy of language, linguistics, and anthropology: specifically the assertion (or assumption) that only individuals exist, and the separation in dualistic fashion of an internal domain of words from an external domain of particular things (Bialecki 2012; Kockelman 2005; Kohn 2013; Parker 1998; Thompson 1953). As Peirce (1992[1885]:227) said, "the actual world cannot be distinguished from a world of imagination by any description. Hence the need of pronouns and indices." Thus it is Peirce's inclusion of indexicality as the pathway to referents in the logic of propositions that "supplies the realist component of his anti-Cartesian epistemology" (Lee 1997:98).

The resulting "semiotic realism" (Silverstein 2004:651)[1] admits the social, group-reflexive basis of concepts in relation to objective reality. It offers a pragmatic account of how thinking and speaking are sign processes that ground us in the real world. Due to the fact of indexicality, representations of the world are a part of the world in no uncertain terms. Linguistic anthropological research on the way indexical iconicity grounds people's ritual and other discourse and textual practices has been working through this frame for a long time. Dicentization is a practical development of this basic approach to the extent that we can use the concept to interpret signifying practices as constitutive of reality. This essay, then, begins with ritual, moves through discussion of four sociocultural and historical scenes of dicent semiotic encounter, and concludes with this semiotic realist realization.

Ritual meshes iconic similarity with indexical connectivity (Goffman 1976; Stasch 2011; Tambiah 1984). In this way it is poetic, belonging to the functional domain of communication in which, according to Jakobson (1960), the axis of selection (paradigm/similarity/iconicity) is projected into the axis of combination (syntagm/

contiguity/indexicality). As a multimodal phenomenon, ritual consists of action buttressed by semiotic ideology (Keane 2003) that makes possible and real, a particular transformation of potentials of form expressed as likenesses into actual existents represented as contiguities. What is depicted comes to pass. Yet as the comparison to poetry suggests, ritual is not the only domain of human action in which such processes are found. Ritual is not a domain so much as a process itself, a process anchored by its image-to-connection transformative efficacy. A poetic account of ritual in turn implies a ritual account of poetics: the way that relations of formal similarity are actively and effectively transformed by actors into contiguous relations. This is an important aspect of the process that is here labeled dicentization. In this view, virtually any manner of activity may be ritualized by degrees, turned into a process of active interpretation that is at the same time a performative process of actualization, a poetically structured text that uses iconicity to generate indexical connections (Silverstein 2004:626).

In this article I apply the explanatory model of dicentization to four studies described in the literature that cover a range of social phenomena that include Aboriginal Australian iconography, Medieval Japanese asceticism, Homeric and Freudian psychologies of rage, and traps and primitivism in African and modern art. The goal is to show the utility of semiotic anthropological analysis in domains ranging from history, to literature, classics, ritual studies, religious studies, and art criticism and to theorize the practice and institutionalization of connectivity in social life. Each of the textual and ethnographic examples discussed in the course of this article raises its own fundamental questions about how people connect to elements of reality such as their ancestors, their youth, their prey, objects of art, landscapes, religious doctrines, even to nowhere or nothing at all.

The empirical focus of this essay thus addresses the following questions: What difference does drawing in the sand versus drawing on the body make for Aboriginal Australian Walbiri women (Munn 1973)? Why did Japanese worshippers of mountain religion fashion the Kunisaki peninsula in the form of the Lotus Sutra and what did they hope to achieve in so doing (Grapard 1989)? What distinguishes Homer's *Iliad* and Salman Rushdie's novel *Fury* with respect to the psychological causes of rage (Most 2009)? And, what is the difference between modern art and so-called primitive art and how are both traps (Gell 1996)? Taking as a point of departure these questions as raised by the cited authors, the present analysis is an ethnological meta-analysis of these four diverse situations in which we can identify a difference that makes a difference (Bateson 2000:459). The productive difference found in all of these apparently diverse cases is dicentization.

Dicentization as Semiotic and Social Action

Peirce maintained a basic ontology of three (potential, actual existence, law), which he then applied to his sign theory, producing three trichotomies. Among Peirce's most influential concepts have been the sinsign versus legisign distinction (also discussed as token versus type) that distinguishes between unique occurrences and law-like regularity of signs,[2] and the classification of signs as icons (representation by similarity), indexes (representation by contiguity), and symbols (representation by convention). Each of these concepts belongs to a trichotomy, the first and the second trichotomies, respectively. Peirce's third trichotomy has heretofore received less attention in semiotic anthropological theory, and this article seeks to address that gap.

Where the first trichotomy outlines the character of signs as existent entities, and the second trichotomy describes the relation between a sign and its object, the third trichotomy involves the representation of the relation between sign and object by an interpreting sign, called the interpretant. The interpretant is a crucial component of Peirce's theory of signification, thought, communication, and the universe. It accounts for how humans know and represent the world without requiring an ontological divide between thought or language and reality, and it allows for what we might

consider the definitional characteristic of human reason; fallibility, or alternatively, creativity. Interpretants for Peirce are signs, in our mind for example, that represent to us the character of other sign relations, situating them at the level of meta-semiosis and reflexivity.[3]

My analysis highlights the processual aspect of semiotic mediation through attention to how interpretants may creatively re-represent the connection between a sign vehicle and its object, what Piece called the "ground." I focus on interpretants that represent their objects—which are themselves prior grounds or sign vehicle-to-object relations—as indexes, and I contrast this in all cases with alternative or possible interpretants that would see the same object sign relations as icons. In Peircean terminology the sort of interpretant that takes its object as an index is called dicent or a dicisign, and the sort of interpretant that takes its object as an icon is rhematic or a rheme.

Importantly, dicentization, as a process of interpreting signs as indexical, can be put to goal-directed social uses. That is to say, ceasing to see a sign as merely an image or likeness as in rhematization and instead seeing it as revealing some hidden cause, affording passage through space and time, or transforming the nature of our being in a sudden and gripping way through dicentization is an identifiable semiotic process with recognizable social consequences. Of course the process is complemented by rhematization in many social settings, such that at one time or from one perspective things may seem quite naturally innocuous and then powerfully consequential. Dicentization as an often strikingly achieved break from what is typical, mundane rhematic understanding has been extensively ethnographically documented, yet it has been undertheorized as a common and productive practice of meaning making in precise semiotic terms.

The dicent interpretant comes from Peirce's third trichotomy, where it is located in the ontological category of Secondness (actual existence), in between the rheme and the argument (Table 1). In order to understand how an interpretant can be at once a semiotic product and creator it is necessary to recognize the bidirectional vectors of semiosis, the vector of determination and vector of representation. The third trichotomy importantly involves the vector of representation. Interpretants are semiotically creative entities in that they may bring novel understandings to existing sign relations (Parmentier 1994). As objects determine interpretants through the sign vehicle on the vector of determination, interpretants in turn cast their own view of the object to sign vehicle relation that generated them in the first place. This representation by the interpretant of the ground as object generates a ground that is itself a potential object for a further interpretant and so on, expanding semiotic mediation in a potentially infinite process (Figure 1).

An interpretant can, within limits, mis-interpret a prior sign-to-object relation (the ground), which we might see as leading to misrecognition, secondary rationalization, or false consciousness. When an interpretant takes a sign (ground) as an icon it is rhematic. When an interpretant takes a sign (ground) as an index, in a relation of contiguity or causal connection that points to an object of actual existence, it is dicent. When an interpretant takes a sign (ground) as a symbol it is an argument.[4] I focus on rhematic and dicent interpretants.[5]

Table 1
Three Trichotomies

	1st trichotomy	2nd trichotomy	3rd trichotomy
Firstness	qualisign	icon	rheme
Secondness	sinsign	index	***dicent***
Thirdness	legisign	symbol	argument

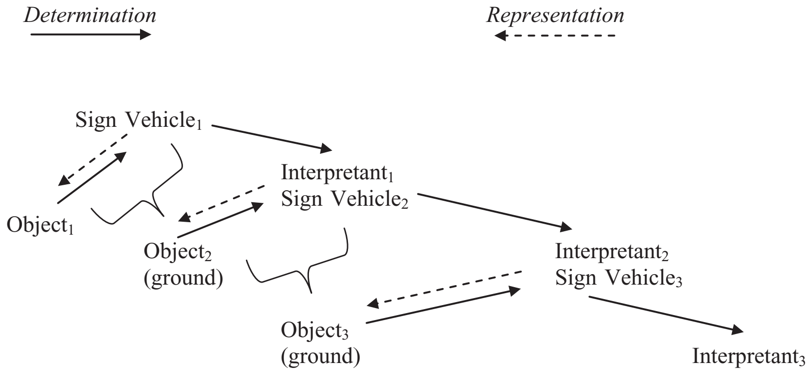


Figure 1
Interpretants as sign vehicles represent grounds as objects

Parmentier elaborates how the third trichotomy allows for the same sign to be taken differently in different contexts. He cites Jappy's (1984) example where elements of a 15th-century Italian painting receive differing interpretations then and today. The use of an expensive and rare aquamarine pigment can be interpreted by a knowledgeable Renaissance Italian viewer as an index (-ical dicent sinsign) of the wealth of the patron who commissioned the work. For the average modern museum-goer, however, the same pigment is interpreted rhematically as standing for its dark blue object through resemblance and no more. As Parmentier points out, the complexity of the interpretation is reduced over time, a process he calls downshifting. Such rhematization can also be understood in terms of naturalization, where conventional and indexical signs are seen to naturally express formal characteristics of their objects.

Irvine and Gal's (2000) discussion of iconization provides an example of this naturalizing process. Iconization has been highly productive in our understanding of language ideologies, especially the ways in which they regiment ethnolinguistic and political boundaries in part by casting biased images of social groups as natural and clear depictions of them. Irvine and Gal have since reformulated iconization as rhematization (Gal 2005, 2013), and in so doing they shift the analysis away from changing signs to actors' changing interpretations of signs. Same signs, different interpretants. As Gal (2013:34) puts it, "In short, the relation of sign and object is taken to be not (only) indexical but (also) a similarity. The concept of rhematization captures the way registers that are taken up as indexes of social personae from one ideological perspective can also be construed as icons, or can be construed as icons in another ideological frame." This shift in the labeling of this naturalizing process from iconization to rhematization is more than mere terminological adjustment. The concept of the rhematic interpretant is a precise means of describing, within the Peircean semiotic framework from which it comes, the reflexive moment in which relations that are contiguous or arbitrary are, seemingly effortlessly, naturalized.

What of interpretation that goes in the other direction? Parmentier points out that the logical organization of Peirce's theory permits only downshifting, such that an index (a second) can be represented as an icon (a first) but not the other way around. Dicentization, in which a first is represented as a second, should not, in theory, be possible. However, says Parmentier, we can also empirically observe *upshifting* in the "conventionalization" of relatively motivated signs such that they are interpreted as symbols (Agha 2007:76–77; Parmentier 1994). Similarly, in looking at the empirical examples in this article, when relations typically seen to be based in formal similarity are instead seen to be relations of actual connection or indexicality actors experience dicentization. We thus may situate dicentization in between naturalization,

where relations are seen to be essential, and conventionalization, where relations are seen to be arbitrary: in dicentization relations are seen to be contiguous.

Like the conventionalization of icons or indexes, the dicentization of icons, interpreting a first as a second, is a sort of upshifting that Peirce did not predict (Table 2). Dicentization applies to situations in which images are perceived to come alive, either through some external agency or our own, whereby relations of identity, otherness, and existence are invoked and made actual. If the ideological work of Irvine and Gal's rhematization is ultimately to establish boundaries, between social groups or between ways of speaking, the social effect of dicentization is to break boundaries down, to open pathways of connectivity.

Through dicentization, contiguity is asserted in interpretation and comes into existence semiotically. Deities normally experienced in pictorial or written depictions are felt *to be here now*, or, by connecting past events previously seen as unrelated the subject may be led to revelation and be fundamentally *changed as a person*, or, arrested by its beauty the viewer sees in a work of art that it not only represents, but that it *embodies* its subject. The dicent interpretant projects an underlying causal connection of sign vehicle to its object, effectively reading it as an index, and the experience of this difference from the rheme may be transcendental for sign users. The following case studies, diverse as they are in appearance, are united by this process.

Walbiri Iconography as Indexography

Munn's (1973) analysis of Australian Central Desert Walbiri iconography exemplifies dicentization. *Djugurba* is the Walbiri term for dreams, ancestors, and ancestral space-time, as well as the genre of the "sand story." Munn compares two kinds of graphic art produced by women; *djugurba* sand paintings, and *yawalyu* designs that are painted with red ochre, charcoal, and white paste on women's bodies after a dream and on other occasions. At issue is the question of how the two forms of action produce different semiotic effects, a difference that I account for with the presence of dicentization in body painting and its absence in sand drawing.

Sand paintings represent a story about ancestral times. Sessions of *djugurba* sand drawing are spontaneous, vary in length, and are popular with children. Both the context of storytelling and the content of much of the stories is casual social life such that there is a maximum of formal (iconic) parity between the mundane now of narration and the depiction of the mundane happenings of ancestral everybodies. Munn (1973:87) further describes the signs regularly employed in this genre of visual accompaniment to oral narrative as primarily "iconic" in the sense that they pick out simple perceptual qualities of the forms of objects and acts that they denote, and "'translate' these into graphic media." *Djugurba* as narrative practice does not tie specific individuals now to specific individuals or events in the past. The narrated participants are simply generic ancestral people, not localized in geographic space. As one Walbiri narrator told Munn (1973:77), they are located in "no place—*djugurba*." The resulting interpretation of the text is in terms of a pictorial representation of how for Walbiri, daily life now has many parallels with the daily life

Table 2
From Naturalization to Conventionalization

Interpretive process	**Naturalization / Rhematization**	**Dicentization**	**Conventionalization**
Semiotic product	Similarity	Contiguity	Stipulation
Direction of shift	Downshifting	Upshifting of icons Downshifting of symbols	Upshifting

Plate 3. Woman marking the sand during storytelling. The fingers may be held in various stylized positions.

Figure 2
Walbiri sand painting (Munn 1973:60)

of ancestors in general. It is an iconic set of signs communicating an iconic message, and in terms of the interpretant that frames and closes this text as an event of communicative semiosis, it is predominantly rhematic. It is like Peirce's own example of a rhematic iconic sinsign: a diagram, by which he means a sign vehicle in which the configuration of parts stands for the configuration of parts of the object.

Compare Munn's account of the graphically related but semiotically distinct genre of Walbiri female art called *yawalyu*. Here a woman dreams of specific ancestral subjects, events, and places and subsequently paints her body together with her campmates in order to tell the story (Figure 3).

The graphic signs in this case "evoke," as Munn puts it, events of the dream and ancestral time. They still represent *djugurba*, but in a different semiotic modality. Rather than being painted in the sand at the narrator's side, this text is grounded in this specific narrator's body, linking the person directly to the depicted content, it is a "visible modification of the body that temporarily changes some overt qualities of outer form through which a woman relates herself to the world beyond her body" (Munn 1973:103). It is relatively *causal* in that the dream is an actual connection to *djugurba*, and the *yawalyu* painting on the body mediates between specific human agents and *djugurba*.

Many of the same formal sign vehicles are used in both graphic idioms, such as lines for tracks, arcs for people, and circles for water holes (Figure 4). But these are interpreted as dicent signs, as indexes, when they are painted on bodies because of

Plate 6. Two old women painted with designs at a *yawalyu* ceremony. The designs represent the charcoal women sitting at a *yawalyu* (see Figure 5B). The woman on the left has just taken the headbands from the stone where they were placed with other sacra during the ceremony; she is preparing to return them to their wrappings.

Figure 3
Yawalyu body painting (Munn 1973:100)

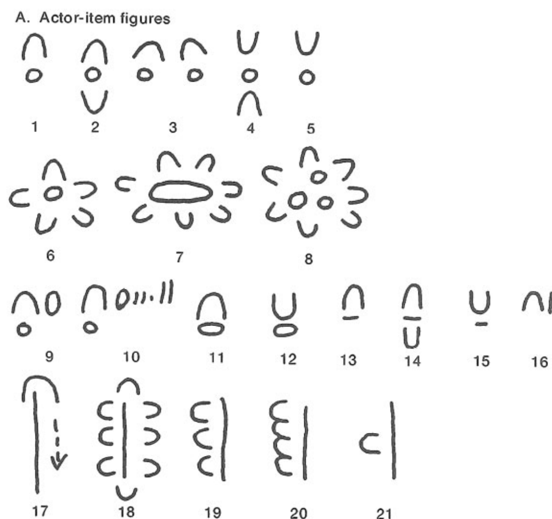
dreams, where they are interpreted as having the power to put those bodies back in those dreams. The nature of the sign vehicle has not changed, but the nature of interpretant has, from rhematic to dicent.

It should not be surprising that *yawalyu* painting on bodies is causally effective in many ways, whether in preventing and curing disease, attracting mates, encouraging pregnancy, or assisting in hunting and gathering success (Munn 1973:41–43). The signs here are seen as links, they "can help to collapse the separation between the actor and the *djugurba* events because they do not simply refer to those events but are also felt to be components of them" (Munn 1973:117–118). Walbiri semiotic ideology sees the same sign vehicles as essentially rhematic in sand stories and as essentially dicent signs in the embodied dream(time) of *yawalyu*. Note that this hermeneutic choice is not only mental or psychological but a matter of practical action in that what one does with the signs, putting them in the sand or on bodies, makes the difference.

Lotus in the Mountain, Mountain in the Lotus

Among Allan Grapard's accounts of the religious history of Japan is "The Textualized Mountain—Enmountained Text: The Lotus Sutra in Kunisaki" (1989). This is also a story of ritual inscription and desired transformation of subjectivity. Here an image or icon of the Lotus Sutra in the mountainous landscape of western Japan's Kunisaki peninsula is read as providing access to and contiguous connection with the *Dharma*

Figure 3. Actor-item and enclosure figure types in the sand story



1. A man or woman sitting at a water hole; a woman sitting digging for yams, etc. 2, 3. A man and woman sitting at fires; two women digging for yams, etc. 4, 5. Actors sitting with backs to the "item."

6. A number of actors—for example, women dancing around a fighting stick or people sitting at a fire. 7. Actors sitting around large rock hole (elliptical form of the circle). 8. Women plucking fruit—circles in a group are not likely to be water holes.

9. A woman sitting with water carrier at her side and water hole in front of her, digging for water; a man with his shield, etc. 10. A set of weapons at the side indicates the actor is male. 11. A shield or receptacle in front of the actor. 12. A shield or receptacle at back. 13–16. A stick or spear shown in different positions relative to the actor.

17. An action line: for example, a man throwing a spear. 18–21. Different arrangements of actors around or beside another actor lying down, or, less commonly, around some elongate object (e.g., a large fighting stick). 18. A common way of depicting dancers and singers grouped around an actor (the sleeper) in a dream. 20. Slurring of U element is common when a line of persons is shown.

Figure 4
Walbiri iconography (Munn 1973:79)

Blossom.[6] Why did devotees craft the built environment of Kunisaki to resemble the Lotus Sutra? Putting the Lotus in the mountain such that one could experience the image as immanent served as a vehicle for grasping the landscape as a dicent interpretant, which was key to spiritual enlightenment for practitioners.

The time period of Kunisaki's "classical" efflorescence was the Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods (Grapard 1989:162).[7] The history of Kunisaki is bound up with the building of the Japanese nation-state and relations with others to the west in the Korean peninsula and China at a time when religious and other cultural flows brought new ideas and technologies to Japan. Grapard's insistence that scholars should focus not on sects and lineages, but on sites, places, and practices in their cultural, historical, and political contexts is regarded as an important contribution to religious studies (Moerman 2005:3). This is in part a project of shedding off labels for communities of practice that were convenient for various political reasons at different points in history. In Japan this means, for example, the syncretization of Buddhism and Shinto, and their attempted retroactive separation later under modernization (Grapard 1984). Kunisaki is an historical exemplar of how one religious and political site blended named traditions through ritual activity including asceticism and pilgrimage.

> From its inception, the cult (at Kunisaki) was a ritual and cultural system marked by highly elaborate and systematic associations between Buddhist, Shinto, and Taoist entities and ritual practices. The terms Buddhism, Taoism, and Shinto might lead one to think of them as

> separate, but this would be incorrect, for the ritual and cultural reality of Kunisaki was essentially a combination of specific entities rather than of sects and doctrines, and was inscribed within certain discursive practices and ideological formations whose relation to "Buddhism" or "Shinto" is not altogether clear. (Grapard 1989:165)

Furthermore, Grapard is careful to note that not only are the ritual, discursive, and ideological practices and formulations he describes difficult to pin down as doctrinal, but also as only religious as opposed to political. Just as local practitioners sought union with the supernatural, they were in part supported and funded by state interests promoting a parallel union of "ruling agents who were seen as the native manifestations on earth (*suijaku*) of Buddhist figures (*honji*)" (Grapard 1989:187).

The building of the Kunisaki landscape was promoted locally by the nearby shrine at Usa and the emerging Japanese nation-state and it modeled the Lotus Sutra's textual structure at several levels. First, temples were planted at varying distances from Usa and divided into three categories; *moto yama*, *naka yama*, and *sue yama*. The *moto yama*, or "base of the mountain" group was dedicated to study by monks, the *naka yama*, or "middle of the mountain" group was reserved for ascetic ritual practice, and the third *sue yama*, "end of the mountain" group was dedicated to engaging parishioners through proselytization. These divisions diagram the "introduction," "exposition," and "means of dissemination," the three main sections of the Lotus Sutra's text and its intended use as a vehicle of the Way. Second, the number of main temples distributed across these groups throughout the landscape of the peninsula was 28, the same number as the number of chapters in the sutra. Finally, stone towers and effigies of many distinct shapes and sizes numbering some 69 thousand were fashioned and distributed around the mountain as an icon of the 69,380 Chinese characters in the text (Grapard 1989: 172–173). Why? The answer lies in the relation of the book as artifact to the wisdom of its message for adherents on the one hand, and their effort to iconically model the book in the landscape to make the teachings accessible through it. Right practice in the right place could thus potentially connect the practitioner with the truth of the sutra and effect right mind.

> According to the Lotus Sutra, perceptions of the world that lead one astray must be 'corrected' in order to deliver an adequate representation from the point of view of nonduality. This correction is achieved mainly through a purification process associated with penance (*sange*). The purification of the sense organs then leads to an undefiled perception of the cosmos, which is said to be that of the Buddha. It is a quest for vision. And it was that vision that the followers of the Lotus Sutra projected onto the geographical area of Kunisaki, realizing it concretely in the establishment of temples, of a 'sacred' geography, and of practices that were derived from the Lotus Sutra and from indigenous rituals of purification. (Grapard 1989:168)

Practitioners constructed the peninsula in the image of the sutra with the explicit purpose that through ascetic practices of perception one might see beyond the image to the "concrete" location of Buddha mind in this body for the benefit of all beings—the main tenet of Japanese Esoteric Buddhism.[8] In effect it is a semiotic project, whatever else it may be for participants and whatever other consequences it may have for the cosmos and all beings. It sets up and then erases the rhematic interpretant that the mountain appears similar in form to the lotus, whereby one may see clearly that the mountain and the lotus are one and that furthermore, the practioner's (heart-) mind, the now dicent interpretant, is also contiguous with the landscape and the knowledge of nonduality such that all are unified. Grapard (1989:180) refers to this sought after totalizing vision as "Mountain-Being-Text: A Unified Triad."[9] The invitation to see this as a triadic sign process is irresistible (Figure 5).

The ground of the mountain-to-text relation is primarily iconic and the interpretant that frames the observer's view is rhematic when it is seen as such. The mountain diagrams the sutra. The ritual goal of dicentization in this case would be to render that ground indexical, releasing the consequences of the connection so established: the unification of interpretant, sign vehicle, and object, of being/mind, space/place, and

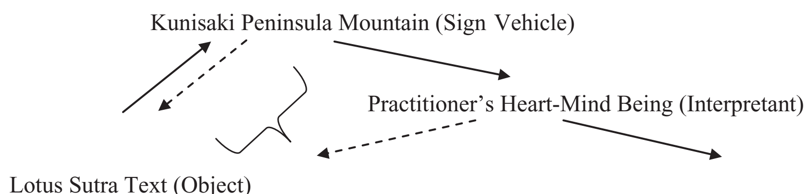


Figure 5
"Mountain-Being-Text: A Unified Triad" in dicentization

dharma/time. There is also the curious effect that, according to Buddhist doctrine, realization would nullify them.[10] No mind, no place, no time. Again, dicentization is a way to ritual achievement of alternate realities as in Walbiri "no place: *djugurba*."

Freud's Achilles' Heel?

Homer's *Iliad* (1990) begins with the image of rage, and Salman Rushdie's novel *Fury* (2001) also begins with this emotion. Classicist Glenn Most (2009) treats the Homeric depiction of the warrior Achilles and Rushdie's story of an enraged professor as related moments in the Western literary tradition. Most identifies in the two works a fundamental difference in the classic Greek vs. modern Western understandings of the psychological development and growth of the subject and asks what causes it. The difference is, in short, that the moderns have adopted a dicent interpretation of the subject through the life course, specifically between childhood trauma and problems in adulthood, where the ancients had none.

Most's discussion focuses on "diagnostic" interpretations in the post-Freudian world that explain adult pathology through attribution of causes originating in childhood trauma, versus interpretations in terms of "resemblance" that characterize interpretations in antiquity of child-to-adult personality development. I suggest that the resemblance theory is iconic or rhematic, while the diagnostic theory asserts an indexical connection and is thus dicent. I do so in the spirit of Paul Friedrich's (1997) analyses of Homeric verse as "part of a larger anthropological search for the deeper levels of meaning, be they individual (here Homer), specific to a culture (archaic Greece), or universal, that is, panhuman."

Let us begin with one of Most's examples of Achilles' psychological state:

> Anguish gripped Achilles
> The heart in his rugged chest was pounding, torn . . .
> Should he draw the long sharp sword slung at his hip,
> Thrust through the ranks and kill Agamemnon now?—
> Or check his rage and beat fury down?
> As his racing spirit veered back and forth,
> Just as he drew his huge blade from its sheath,
> Down from the vaulting heavens swept Athena
> (1.88–95; Homer 1990:83–84) (Most 2009:444)

Achilles' fury is such that his hand needs to be steadied by divine intervention. Could the disproportionate, perhaps pathological anger of Achilles be understood as stemming from his known abuses in childhood?

> For eyes that can see, all the materials necessary in order to construct Achilles' psychoanalytic family romance are abundantly available: we can easily envision how the parents' acrimonious marriage and their neglect and maltreatment of the child, compounded by his upbringing at the hooves of an inhuman centaur in the desolate wilderness of Thessaly, by his uncertainties about his sexual identity, and by his obsessions with his own mortality might well have created psychological traumas resulting in the extraordinary mixture of narcissism,

> uncontrollable rage, lack of self restraint, vindictiveness, violence, unswerving loyalty to his friends, and boundless pity for himself that make up the charming personality of Achilles as an adult. (Most 2009:449)

Not all eyes see alike. Most draws upon his familiarity with classical commentary to conclude that precisely this connection between the adult's observed rage and the child's known traumas was not made in the way we might expect.

> Achilles' anger was sometimes excessive and hence inappropriate, but no one in antiquity ever seems to have suggested that Achilles was simply ill. What is more, no one in antiquity ever even hinted that Achilles' notoriously excessive anger might have been the result of having had an unhappy childhood—indeed, the very notion that some Greek or Roman might have even imagined making such a suggestion seems just as ludicrous to us as such a suggestion would doubtless have seemed to them. (Most 2009:448)

Not only was the causal connection not made, but an iconic relation of similarity seems to have been preferred: ". . . no ancient, Greek or Roman, as far as we know, ever made this specific causal connection between Achilles' childhood sufferings and his adult personality. Instead when they imagined Achilles as a child, they imagined him as being just like the adult Achilles, only rather smaller" (Most 2009:449). The classical theory of personhood, says Most, described people as pretty well endowed with all their character traits at birth, with possibilities for refinement or embellishment through experience, but without great differences between child and adult. The ground of the relation between adult character as sign vehicle and childhood as object is iconic, represented as such by a rhematic interpretant. There is no perceived indexical clue in the adult's enraged character pointing back to a childhood cause, only a formal correspondence between the bigger and smaller versions of the same heroically enraged person.

Contrast this with Most's description of similar behavior experienced and witnessed today, where rage is read not as a natural characteristic of the person, similar in form with past signs due to its constancy and irrevocability, but rather as an index of past trauma. The object of the sign is abuse, the sign is rage, and rage taken as diagnostic of abuse is a dicent sign. Rushdie's *Fury* is the story of a man surprised by his own uncontrollably enraged responses to trifling daily situations that come to take over his life. To illustrate the rage of Rushdie's modern protagonist, Dr. Solanka, Most offers passages such as this one that depicts his inappropriate reaction to a stranger in the park:

> A great roaring rose in Malik Solanka's breast. It would be good now to tear this young man's tongue out from that vile fleshy mouth. It would be good to see how those muscled arms might look when detached from that highly defined torso. Cut? Ripped? How about if he was cut and ripped into about a million pieces? *How about if I ate his fucking heart?* (Rushdie 2001:147–148)

As Most studies the novel's plot, he focuses on Solanka's "case history," how his rage is a "mental ailment" for which he is desperate to find a cure. The cure comes suddenly when his lover puts her hand on his head:

> The spell broke. He laughed out loud. A large black crow spread its wings and flew away across town, to drop dead minutes later by the Booth statue in Gramercy Park. Solanka understood that his own cure, his recovery from his rare condition, was now complete. The goddesses of wrath had departed; their hold over him was broken at last. (Rushdie 2001:219)

The moment of cure is a moment of realization for Solanka, the realization of a repressed memory that accounted for his rage. He remembers suddenly that he was repeatedly sexually abused as a child by his stepfather. Solanka is able to see his current personality (disorder) as related to trauma in his childhood. This explains it and at once releases him from its grip. The diagnosis is a dicent interpretation of the relation between the rage of the adult and the same person's childhood abuse.

Dicentization is diagnosis and cure. And as Most says, this is not Rushdie's sole invention, rather it reflects wider shifts in what we may identify as semiotic ideologies.

> In the case of successful and influential authors such as Homer or Rushdie, the stories they tell about their fictional characters seem plausible to us not only because the correspond in their general ethical structure to the ideas that we already had about the behavior of human beings before we came to their texts, but also because their fictions have helped to shape the ways we understand ourselves and one another even before we encountered them: they are not only canny observers of the social world, but also important contributors to its self understanding. It might be said that we moderns live in a world that is Rushdiean, at least in part (which of course does not mean that Rusdhie's novels, including this one, have not been the subject of vigorous criticism for all kinds of reasons), but also, to a certain extent, still somewhat Homeric, whereas the Greeks lived in a world that was largely Homeric and not at all Rushdiean. (Most 2009:446)

The catalyst that Most identifies for the difference between the classical and the modern worlds is Freudian psychoanalysis. He is careful to qualify that it is an oversimplification to suggest any one historical actor is solely responsible for such an effect, or that Freud's own contributions to intellectual history are monolithic, or that our society can be adequately characterized as simply a Freudian one, etc. Indeed, according to Foucault, rather than a discovery "marked by Freud—or someone else," there was a "progressive formation and transformation" of Western psychology since the 18th century and before that it was Freud's genius to put in historical place (Foucault 1978: 158–159). Still, Most (2009:457) surmises that "the post-Freudian understanding of the importance of traumatic childhood experiences in helping to shape adult human character differs from the pre-Freudian one," and it does so profoundly.

We can see that the difference he asserts between the ancients and moderns hinges on rhematic versus dicent interpretation of the relation between adult rage and childhood trauma, generalized to the "resemblance and continuity" model versus the "traumatic" model of human development. Furthermore Most's selection of Freud and post Freudian diagnostic interpretations as the cultural historical watershed that makes the difference between these two related yet distinct psychological cultural worlds is itself an effect of dicentization. For Most's analysis casts the relation between the historically prior institutionalization of psychoanalysis and the plausibility of Rushdie's plot for modern readers, not as merely similar, but as causally related. Most's dicent assertion is that we are culturally who we are because of Freudian psychoanalytic interpretants, which were themselves dicent.

Caught in an Artful Trap

Alfred Gell (1996:17) begins his article "Vogel's Net" with an account of a New York art show entitled ART/ARTIFACT held at the Center for African Art in 1988. Anthropologist and curator Susan Vogel chose to place a Zande hunting net, wrapped in a bundle, in a well-lit white gallery as the exhibition's opening piece. The purposeful juxtaposition raises the question of what counts as art and what counts as artifact, and for Gell it provides a frame for his exploration of that question in the terms of traps. He asks what unites African traps and modern art, and the answer lies in the apprehension of both as furnishing an intersubjective encounter, a connection that turns on dicentization.

Art as trap, or trap as art—this is significant at two levels. First, Gell argues that traps can be read as art, not just as images of something else—though they may be that as well— but as working models of life and death. I add that when they are interpreted in this way they are taken as dicent. Traps take the form of the victim as they take the form of the hunter (iconicity), but they also index the relation between hunter and victim, the contiguity of two or more nervous systems connected through

a proxy nervous system, the taught trigger wire. A trap is an image (iconic modality) within a nervous system, a system of chained trigger mechanisms (indexical modality). Second, Gell tells us, art writ large can be read as a trap, such that the art lover's engagement with any work can arrest the viewer and hold her gaze. Directing attention in this way is a function of indexicality, so getting lost in, or as Gell would put it, trapped by, a work of art is in fact a dicent reading.[11]

Gell utilizes the ART/ARTIFACT exhibit's catalogue essay by Arthur Danto (1988) to think through theories of what constitutes the boundary between the two terms of the exhibition's title. Danto rejects the Zande net as a work of art. Gell presents excerpts from Danto's essay as he describes the argument behind the philosopher's exclusion of the primitive artifact. He critiques and attempts to recontextualize several of Danto's positions. For example, he laments Danto's ignorance of ethnological data and his reliance instead on thought experiments involving imagined African tribes (to be expected from a philosopher says Gell).

> When you come down to it, the reason that Danto excludes the 'net' as art is that he cannot imagine a wise man who might be able to tell him a tale sufficiently compelling to induce him to think otherwise; he assumes that because it is a net, and nets are used for hunting, and hunting is a means of obtaining food, ergo, the net is a mere tool, like a cheese grater. (Gell 1996:24)

Now at this point one could simply argue that in its cultural context the net has more meaning than this, but Gell (1996:25) puts forward a more nuanced problematic. "Let us leave wise men out of it for the present and ask ourselves what animal traps reveal about the human spirit, even in the absence of native exegesis." He thus posits a question of interpretation—how would a viewer encounter such a thing?—and in this he has not yet strayed so far from the speculative philosopher. "Remember that Danto says that looking at a work of art is like encountering a person; one encounters a person as a thinking, co-present being by responding to his or her outward form and behavior—similarly one responds to an artwork as a co-present being (Gell 1996:25). He offers an intersubjective theory of the art encounter in which the image can be grasped as something embodied.

Traps are of course intersubjective engagements as well, between human and animal. Traps typically reflect some formal aspect of their victim, its shape for example, or they may also formally model some aspect of the victim's typical mode of interaction with the environment. We might recognize traps as artistic in the sense that they may be representations in relief made by people of the animal world and its conditions, as in what Gell labels the "comical Giraffe trap" (Figure 6).

But there is much more than formal resemblance to the victim at work here. Like modern "concept" art such as Damien Hirst's (1991) *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living* (Figure 7), which is a shark in a glass case of formaldehyde, traps play on "our power to immobilize elemental forces" (1996:30), forces that are always at risk of escape and thus overpowering us in turn (see Figure 7). Who can look at the giraffe and not imagine its (attempts to) escape? Gell (1996:30) comments on Hirst's shark, that though it is "as dead as a dead thing can be, (it) is still residually alive, watching and thinking, or seems to be, because it keeps its eyes open and stares at us. One day it is going to get out."

Through comparison with modern installation art such as Hirst's, Gell proposes his own thought experiment by asking what a contemporary museum-goer would make of an installation such as an arrow trap (Figure 8). "There would be nothing amiss, I think, should the imaginary visitor to our exhibition see here, in the arrow trap, a representation of human being-in-the-world" (Gell 1996:26).

Like the trapped dead shark, or perhaps even more evocatively, the potentially trapped animal victim stands in relation to the human designer of the trap, for which the whole assembly is a proxy.[12] Gell (1996:27) characterizes the trap as an automaton with a nervous system composed of a sensory transducer and a centralprocessor that releases stored energy to "produce action-at-a-distance (the victim's death)."

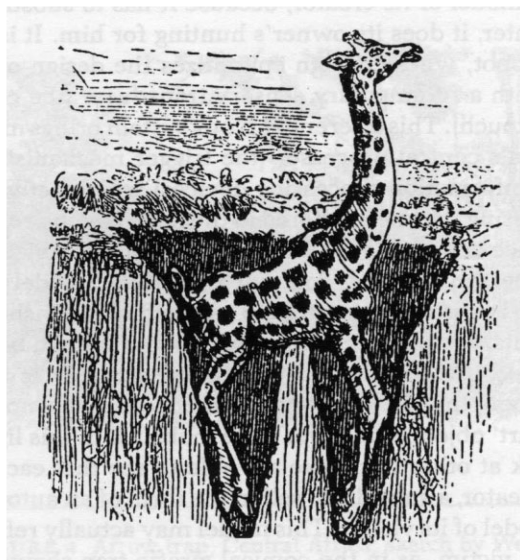


Figure 6
"Giraffe trap drawn by Wood" (Gell 1996:28)

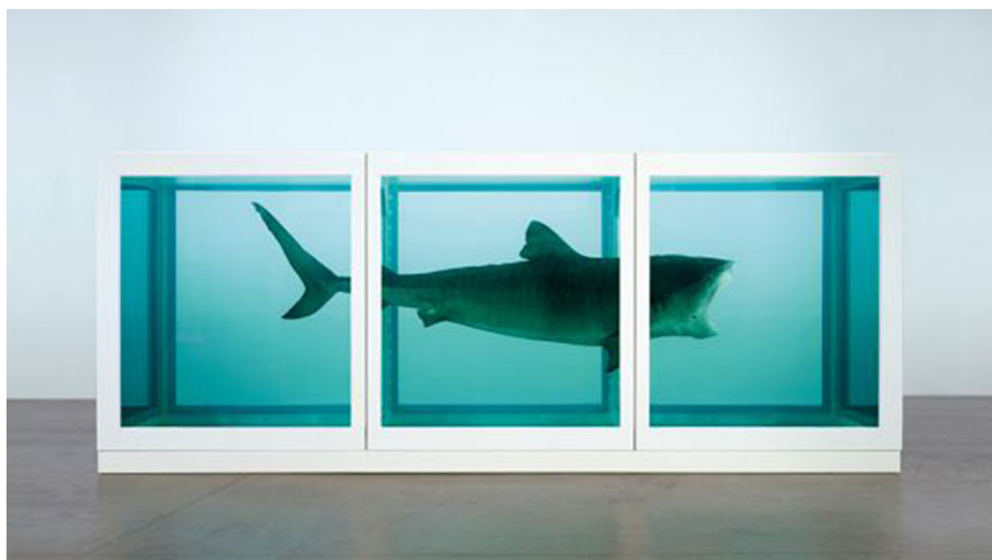


Figure 7
Damien Hirst, 1991. *The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living*.
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Photographed by Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd.

Traps are narrative in the sense that the drama of the protagonists unfolds in time and is necessarily suspenseful. Gell sees in this narrative the "hubris" of the tragic victim, lulled into a false sense of complacency, who faces his "nemesis," or is in the end his own nemesis and the author of his own downfall in the "sudden catastrophe" of closure (Figure 9). "The trapper is God, or the fates, the trapped animal is man in his tragic incarnation" (Gell 1996:29). Do we hear echoes of Homeric tragedy?

Figure 8
"Arrow trap, Central Africa; sketch by Weule" (Gell 1996:26)

Figure 9
"Hippopotamus trap drawn by Boteler" (Gell 1996:29)

Trap as working model, then, is a better representation of a person, or of the human condition than the carved figure or mask we might expect as typical of African art—due in part to Picasso, as Danto (1988) remarks—but we simply do not see the trap as art so we miss it. Gell sums up his thought experiment by at once reclaiming

the designation of art for traps (and nets) and at the same time puts forward his own criterion for the definition of art.

> Traps communicate the idea of a nexus of intentionalities between hunters and prey animals, via material forms and mechanisms. I would argue that this evocation of complex intentionalities is in fact what serves to define artworks, and that, suitably framed, animal traps could be made to evoke complex intuitions of being, otherness, relatedness. (Gell 1996:29)

If we were to see (interpret) the trap as art it is not as an image of a person (rhematic interpretant), but an encounter instead that evokes the "static violence of the tensed bow, the congealed malevolence of the sticks and cords (as) revelatory in themselves, without recourse to conventionalization" (Gell 1996:26). With recourse, instead, to dicentization.

The dicentization of traps as art relies upon the related notion of art as trap. If we are to grasp the intersubjectivity in the trap, we must be intersubjectively engaged with the work ourselves. Art in this way fits Gell's description as evocative of complex intentionalities. "Every work of art that works is like this, a trap, or a snare that impedes passage; and what is any art gallery but a place of capture, set with what Boyer calls "thought-traps," which hold their victims for a time, in suspension?" (Gell 1996:37). Encounter with an art object in this modality generates a dicent interpretant.

Discussion

The cases analyzed in this article demonstrate how interpretants may represent a sign relation at one semiotic moment in a different way that this relation could be, or was represented at a previous moment. This introduces an element of dynamism in the process of chaining signification underlying thought and communication. Consideration of such back-and-forth rhematic and dicent modulation of signs is crucial for an anthropological account of language and culture that concerns itself with multiplicity in points of view, especially when trying to analyze the positionalities of multiple voices in society and also within individual thinking, speaking, and hearing subjects.

What we might consider the dividing line between rhematic and dicent interpretation has been gestured at in classical anthropological and linguistic theory. In Jakobson's (1990 [1956]) analysis of metaphor and metonymy, metaphor signifies by resemblance (iconically) while metonymy signifies by contiguity (indexically). Jakobson depicts these as two poles of language, the first paradigmatic, the second syntagmatic. He points to a Western cultural bias toward the axis of selection and metaphor over combination and metonymy. Jakobson claims, for example, that this is manifest in literary theory's extensive treatments of metaphor while metonymy gets less attention. It is also worth noting that linguists such as Saussure (1916) and Sapir (1921), each in his own way, recognized that folk ideology portrays language as nomenclature that, if organized at all, is so in terms of paradigmatic similarity. It took the structuralist linguistic approaches that they and others developed in Continental and Americanist versions to fully explore systematicity in contiguous syntactic combination.

Jakobson also explicitly links the metaphor versus metonymy contrast to Frazer's (1974[1922]:49) distinction between homoeopathic magic that operates on a principle of similarity where like produces like, versus contagious magic that operates on a principle of contiguity where "things which have once been conjoined must remain ever afterwards," even across an apparent divide. Evans-Pritchard's (1937) analysis of Azande magic and witchcraft famously turns on the rigorous application of the principle of causality, and contiguity, to homeopathic similarities. In turn, Tambiah (1984) reanalyzes Evans-Pritchard and brings in Austin's (1962) speech act theory in part to make the point that ritual is not subject to claims of truth or falsity, but felicity. Dubois (1992) critiques speech act theory to add that in ritual discourse felicity is not dependent upon speakers' intentions. The picture that emerges of ritual

performativity—basically creative indexicality—is that it is subject to conventional norms and authority, or the bona fides of the ritual specialist.

Anthropological objects of study including explicit ceremonial activity, place-making, the social construction of the subject, and the production and consumption of works of art, inasmuch as they have been approached with respect to the ways that they are meaningful representations, have long been discussed as symbolic (Geertz 1973; Ortner 1984; Schneider 1977; Turner 1967). Linguistic anthropology has exposed the inadequacy of previous humanistic and social scientific symbolic approaches in capturing the complex range of sign functions manifest in social life. By developing the thesis that the cultural organization of meaningful practice, and ultimately language, is functionally metapragmatic we have focused attention on the legisign level regimentation of indexical signs (Silverstein 1976). At the same time, linguistic anthropology has taken up the mantle of seriously theorizing the constitution of denotation and reference in relation to the semiotics of culture in terms of processes of ritualization through empirical attention to "local forms of the dialectic among semiotic structure, praxis, and ideology" (Silverstein 2001:601). This project includes investigation of how signs in ritual and other modes of action are semiotically transformed by social actors from icons or relations of similarity into indexes, or signs of actual contiguity through dicentization.

I have attempted to highlight different conditions and functions of dicentization. It can provide diagnostic information. It also actualizes rites of passage (van Gennep 1960[1909]) by concretizing images in phases of liminality. Both of these are crucial to the constitution of subjectivity in many social contexts. Dicentization contributes to definitions of rapturous human experience of a religious and artistic nature. It furnishes a semiotic answer to questions such as how one comes to grasp the truth behind the canvas, or in the landscape, to be transported by the image, now grounded in an arresting way that shocks the attention. At the level of individual subjectivity, then, the contrast between (presupposing) rhematic understandings of sign relations and (entailing) dicent interpretants may be experienced in terms of transformation, often profoundly so. Dicentization can offer a portal to alternate time-spaces, collapsing, as Munn puts it, the separation between actors and events located elsewhere by bringing them into spatiotemporal contiguity. Dicentization thus mediates social relations among sign users, and in ritual or other transformative settings it may be the vehicle of the mutual attainment of intersubjective connection, itself a complement to connections with the sacred proffered by ritual practice.

The dialectic of rhematic and dicent interpretants in social structure may serve as the basis for institutional elaboration. This commonly occurs to ritual frames in circulation in space and in repetition through time, and the relation of dicentization to the authoritative, conventional aspects of ritual institutionalization may strengthen or ultimately weaken attributions of contiguity. Finally, at the level of cultural elaboration, dicentization—as a semiotic development of rhematic understanding that is potentially transformative of the individual subject, publically available for negotiation of social relatedness, subject to specialization and refinement in institutions of connection—can generate and reinforce semiotic ideologies that foster and support contiguous generativity as a social fact.

Having said all of this, one may ask how one can recognize dicent interpretants in diverse situations of encounter. The dicent sign described the proposition in Peirce's theory of logic, a sign capable of being asserted. Like a grammatical sentence, whether it is "Interrogative, Imperative, or Assertory . . . such a Sign is intended to have some sort of compulsive effect on the Interpreter of it" (Peirce 1934[1906]). Peirce offers a litmus test: "The readiest characteristic test showing whether a sign is a Dicisign (dicent interpretant) or not is that a Dicisign is either true or false, but does not directly furnish reasons for its being so. This shows that a Dicisign must profess to refer or relate to something as having a real being independently of the representation of it as such, and further that this reference or relation must not be shown as rational, but must appear as a blind Secondness. But the only kind of sign whose

object is necessarily existent is the genuine Index. . . . Consequently a Dicisign necessarily represents itself to be a genuine Index, and to be nothing more" (Peirce 1998 [1903]: 275–276). Objects of dicisigns present themselves to us as true, through interpretants' representations of their relations to their sign vehicles, without explanation.

The specificities of dicentization should be understood within a larger linguistic anthropological project that argues for the dialectic between representation and reality in the spirit of semiotic realism. This project has roots in the realism of Peirce's metaphysics, which encompasses his logical semiotic and his scientific epistemology (Parker 1998, Rescher 1978). Peirce argued against nominalist philosophies inasmuch as "nominalism assumes and realism denies that 'reality is something independent of representative relation' "(Peirce 1868 quoted in Thompson 1953:51–52). Realism does not only consist in the claim that reality and representation are one. In addition, against nominalists who assert that only particulars exist and who hold the "metaphysical figment" that beneath cognition there is a "thing in itself, an incognizable reality," Peirce asserts that "generals must have a real existence" (Peirce 1984 [1868]: 239). The commitment to generals, not only particulars, extends to a commitment to community, not only individuals. Consider how prescient of anthropological bedrock is Peirce's own 1871 claim of realism's relevance as he sides with *the social* over individualizing reductionism in respect of human life.

> Though the question of realism and nominalism has its roots in the technicalities of logic, its branches reach about our life. The question whether the genus homo has any existence except as individuals, is the question whether there is anything of any more dignity, worth, and importance than individual happiness, individual aspirations, and individual life. Whether men really have anything in common, so that the *community* is to be considered as an end in itself, and if so, what the relative value of the two factors is, is the most fundamental practical question in regard to every public institution the constitution of which we have it in our power to influence." (Peirce 1984[1871]:487)

Peirce's consistent "emphasis on the community, over against the nominalist doctrine of individualism" places social inquiry at the base of his philosophy (Roberts 1970:71–72).

If the analysis presented in this article accurately captures a commonality in the cases discussed, and points to yet others out there, then one of the most important take-away lessons is that dicentization is achieved through goal-directed social action and institutionalization. It is a feature of community. Future explorations of how dicentization is situated in Peirce's theory of an open relational continuum of signification[13] should be dedicated to precisely how it is regimented at the legisign level of law-like generality. This concerns the extent to which it may be a universal semiotic phenomenon, on the one hand, and on the other, how dicentization is organized in specific social and cultural contexts according to and contributing to varied linguistic and semiotic ideologies.

Jakobson (1960) stresses the impossibility of ever fully removing the veil, what Peirce (1931) called the "diaphanous" medium, of semiotic mediation. The contiguity that dicentization often allows us to experience as immediate is of course always mediated. But by describing how it is mediated, we may understand something of the semiotic bases for meaningful human experience across sociocultural and historical contexts. We should do so with an eye to understanding their universal legitimacy, and also the particular specificity and contingency that makes the personal and social experience of realizing the reality of contiguity consequential in all our lives.

Notes

Acknowledgments. I would like to thank this journal's editors and two anonymous reviewers for their comments. Alejandro Paz, Shunsuke Nozawa, and Nicholas Harkness all provided valuable commentary on different versions of this article. Any and all errors are of course my own.

1. Following Michael Silverstein, the lesson of semiotic realism "is the one that all varieties of realism have been urging with less or more explicitness for a long time: that we should learn to relax about the "cultural" condition of all human "conceptual" life, not to be shocked anew or dejected by each fraught revelation of unattained—unattainable!—Cartesian purity. Semiotic realism, which is a positively constructive enterprise, would have us, then, accept the inherently reflexive, sociocentric component of coming to conceptual grips with the universe of even "objective things," those valued in discourses of Science with a capital S. Thus might we become comfortable with the fact that the "Science of Humanity," anthropology, is itself endeavoring to conceptualize an aspect of that universe very much from within" (Silverstein 2004:651).

2. For exploration of the other member of this trichotomy, the qualisign, see Harkness and Chumley (2013) on *Qualia*.

3. However, as Kockelman points out "interpretants are often taken to be mental entities (say, a thought in the mind of the addressee), or another's response that is itself a verbal sign (say, an answer to a question). This is not correct: most interpretants are non-mental and non-verbal, and are embodied in actual behavior, the results of such behavior, or dispositions to behave more generally" (Kockelman 2005: 251). Kockelman relates this to Peirce's broader stance that it is not so much that thoughts are in us/our minds such as we/our minds are in thought.

4. One of the important things about the argument relation is that it is self-evident or intuitively compelling (as in consent), what Kant called "apodictic" as opposed to (dicent) propositions that are "assertoric" (Alejandro Paz, personal communication).

5. Space prevents me from discussing Peirce's classification of interpretants into Immediate or Emotional, Dynamical or Energetic, and Final or Logical Interpretants (Lee 1997:127–129). A tentative application of this would be to say that dicentization yields Immediate/Emotional interpretants (firsts) as well as Dynamical/Energetic interpretants (seconds). As Kockelman (2005:275) characterizes these, the first is a bodily, the second, a behavioral, response. To the extent that dicent signs come to be regularized or conventionalized at the level of thirdness, they may also yield Final/Logical interpretants, as in learning. Elaboration of this will be useful in the subsequent development of dicentization.

6. The Lotus Sutra refers to itself as "this Scripture of the Dharma Blossom" (Hurvitz 1976: 264–265).

7. My account here is based on Grapard's historical work, though I also have familiarity with Kunisaki through ethnographic fieldwork I conducted there in 2008, 2012, and 2013.

8. Kukai, ninth-century founder of the esoteric Shingon sect, introduced the concept *gensei jodo* "Pure land in this world." This was a tenet that Grapard (1989) states was in full effect in Kunisaki, and that sums up the dual religious and political dimensions of the possibility of attainment of purity for adherents and for the Japanese nation.

9. Grapard's (1983) own analysis, while semiotic in its own way, gravitates to a Foucauldian interpretation of medieval epistemes of resemblance. Without dwelling on the utility or the content of this theory here, my analysis in the terms of dicentization attempts to build on the recognition of the importance of iconicity (resemblance) through explicit accounting of how it is put into action. It was as an undergraduate student in Grapard's UCSB proseminar on sacred geography where I was first exposed to semiotics and to Kunisaki, for both of which I owe him a great debt.

10. Kyoto School philosopher Keiji Nishitani's (1982) comments on "the English word 'realize,' noting its twofold meaning of 'actualize' and 'understand'" (see epigraph above) are especially germane to a dicent analysis in that interpretation is both representational and creative semiotically.

11. See Arnaut (2001) for a broader exploration of the role of Peircean semiotics, as well as Maussian exchange theory, in Gell's anthropology of art. My account differs from Arnaut's in that one of his main conclusions is that Gell's use of indexicality is limiting because his analysis focuses on ethnographic "contexts in which artists and recipients share the necessary common ground to grasp what the objects are about" (2001:14). From this common interpretive ground he surmises that there is "no radical change in 'interpretant' " (2001:14). Arnaut suggests that only big changes in contexts, such that objects "confront" viewers as "alien," license big changes in interpretants. As should be clear from this account, shared interpretive frames do not prevent such consequential changes in interpretants. Quite the opposite, minor semiotic shifts may yield (radical) dicentization.

12. This makes traps interesting signs, says Gell, because they are designed to be hidden.

13. I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this phrasing.

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