Semiotic Review 11: Ostension | article published April 2024 |
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71743/p0qnts58 |

Revisiting Ostension in Folkloristics

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Abstract: Semiotic analysis in folkloristics usefully centers on iconicity, ostension, and indexicality as modes of representation active in performances of expressive culture. In this essay I focus on the semiotic mode of ostension, wherein a thing is used to represent itself, which I have found helpful in thinking about the efficacy of artistic performances at the heart of my ethnographic research over the years. Here I draw on my previous work with a child's fantasy play and with verbal narrative performance to signal the enormous analytical potential that lurks in this somewhat neglected member of the triad. In both of these instances, the turn to ostension stands in contrast to the enveloping framework of iconicity, representation through likeness, a move, I contend, that opens possibilities for an epiphany, a transcending of normally discrete ontological sectors. I close the essay with a treatment of ostension in a ritual setting, the *mesa* or ritual table of an Andean day of the dead ceremony, where it works in tandem with iconic and indexical elements to create a dynamic model of the cosmos, but with the specific mission of fostering remarkable levels of immediacy.

Keywords: semiosis; performance; play; narrative; ritual; immediacy; epiphany

Introduction

My purpose in revisiting ostension is to rehearse past practice so that we may anticipate future rewards; my method is to frame this conceptual element as a somewhat overlooked and underappreciated resource for those of us who wish to fathom the specific affective qualities of traditional expressive culture. I contend that the concept of ostension is, if not

the folklorist's holy grail, surely a valuable piece in our analytical repertoire. After constructing a framework for my commentary, I reflect on two appearances of ostension in my own work, and then inspect a promising application of the concept to a richly documented instance of ritual practice.

Jeffrey A. Tolbert and Ian Brodie (2019:2), in their handy SAGE entry on ostension, tell us that it is "communication via the showing or demonstrating of something directly, as opposed to referring to it or representing it indirectly." They point to a curious disconnect between common and scholarly usage: whereas "ostensibly" is commonly taken to mean "not really" or "not fully," ostension in philosophical and semiotic discourse, where it has its origins, leads us to an encounter with real things in themselves, without mediating strategies. Citing the thinking of Bertrand Russell (1948), Ludwig Wittgenstein (2009[1953]), W. V. O. Quine (1950), Ivo Osolsobě (1971), and Umberto Eco (1979[1976]), Tolbert and Brodie set the stage for a folkloristic intervention in the conversation. They see folklorists turning the ostension lens on narrative, crediting my old friends and former colleagues Linda Dégh and Andrew Vázsonyi (1983) for introducing this approach, captured in the phrase "unmediated or direct experience of the content of a traditional narrative" (Tolbert and Brodie 2019:3). A valuable insight to be had here is the special quality of experience in legend-tripping, whereby people seek direct contact with the otherworldly protagonists of their legend narratives.

In their précis on ostension, Tolbert and Brodie (2019:4) note that ostension, in philosophy, semiotics, and linguistics, "is primarily a form of communication," and it is to this root affordance of the term that I wish to return as I take up, somewhat anecdotally, my own adventures with ostension. I will briefly detail two apparitions of ostension in my published work, and point to a third promising application, all in an effort to contribute, from my store of analytical endeavor, to the excitement still attaching to this oft overlooked member of the semiotic triad, iconicity, indexicality, and ostension. Significantly, this excursion will include a stop-over in narrative, but it will embrace a wider field of communicative interaction by popping into domains of children's fantasy play and ritual as well. The subtext here is that ostension and its semiotic cousins hold the key to critical folkloristic knowledge, helping us understand why we and others are incurably drawn to and into performances of expressive culture.

As far as I know, I am the first among folklorists to tread in the world of ostension. I recall Linda Dégh playfully chastising me for getting there ahead of her and her husband Andrew – "You beat us to the punch!" – as my article, "Beyond Iconicity: Ostension in Kamsá Mythic Narrative," appears in *Journal of the Folklore Institute* in 1982, while their seminal article, "Does the Word 'Dog' Bite? Ostensive Action: A Means of Legend-Telling," appears a year later in *Journal of Folklore Research* (the same journal, renamed).[2]

I ask myself: How did I get involved with ostension? I had encountered Ferdinand de Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* in my student days at the University of Texas, working with Richard Bauman, among others. Arriving at Indiana University in 1975, I became acquainted with Thomas Sebeok who was a Fellow of the Folklore Institute and also directed the Semiotic Studies Institute. Semiotics was in the air, and I found it useful to work with the concept of signification – the notion that the sign, the sensible token of communication, consists of linked components, the signifier and that which it signifies, the signified – in thinking and teaching about expressive culture. Pursuing my fondness for Saussure's model of signification, I embraced (more through academic osmosis than careful exegesis of the source material, I will confess) the triad of signifier-to-signified connections under inspection here.[3]

On this foundation, it was figuring out how stories work that led me to the iconicity of narrative, and then, it was trying to sort out the performative efficacy of quoted speech in narrative performance that led me to ostension. All of this figuring led me to propose the thesis of narrative epiphany, the transcendence of ontological boundaries accomplished in the presence of affective storytelling. More to come on this.

"Collage of Colors": Ostension in Child's Fantasy Play

But I am getting ahead of myself. When I canvass my written work for the presence of the term "ostension," I find two instances. One, the earlier instance, is the 1982 piece "Beyond Iconicity," to which I will return momentarily. The other is a more recent piece, "Collage of Colors: Processing Place through Fantasy Play," published in *Children's Folklore Review* in 2018. I begin this ramble on "ostension" with the more recent one, as it offers a simpler instance of ostension than the earlier one, an actual as opposed to a virtual activation of ostension. In "Collage of Colors" I present an account of fantasy play by my son Michael, then five-and-a-half years of age, who recreates in an inventive scale-model the landscape of southwestern Mexico where we were living at the time, specifically, in the environs of Tepoztlán, to which I had retreated with my family, briefly, to make sense of the ethnographic materials I had gathered during several months of fieldwork on Mexico's Costa Chica. Michael arranged a fairly detailed model of the terrain as he perceived it, ranging from the Mexico City-Acapulco highway to the volcanos of the zone (see my sketch in Figure 1). In this child-constructed representation of a lived environment, a thrilling dinosaur drama unfolded, but you will have to read the article to follow the plot, featuring the demise of "those awful mice" and concluding with the sensible moral, "Don't eat other people's things without asking."

The concept of ostension enters the picture as I seek to describe and differentiate the logics of representation that guide Michael's recreation of the Tepoztlán landscape. The prevailing mode of signification in this process is iconicity – Michael seeks out objects

close to hand that exhibit some visual features of the objects they are intended to represent. A sheet draped over a chair, for example, provides a convincing image of the volcanos that rise sharply from the valleys in this region of Mexico. A strand of blue cloth represents a stream; a piece of cloth with stripes on it stands in for the farmers' fields. Three model cars are on the highway (and each gets loving attention from Michael, who notes, with Godlike authority over his creation, that "they are driving very fast. But I made it so they are not moving"). Where's the ostension? Among the items that fuel the recreation of this landscape are a piece of volcanic rock and a pinecone – in these representations, the object signifies itself; there is no claim to iconicity at all, but rather one of ostension – and the hint of indexicality that readily attaches to objects due to the associations we bring to them (more on this when we take up ritual signification, in the final section of this essay).[4]

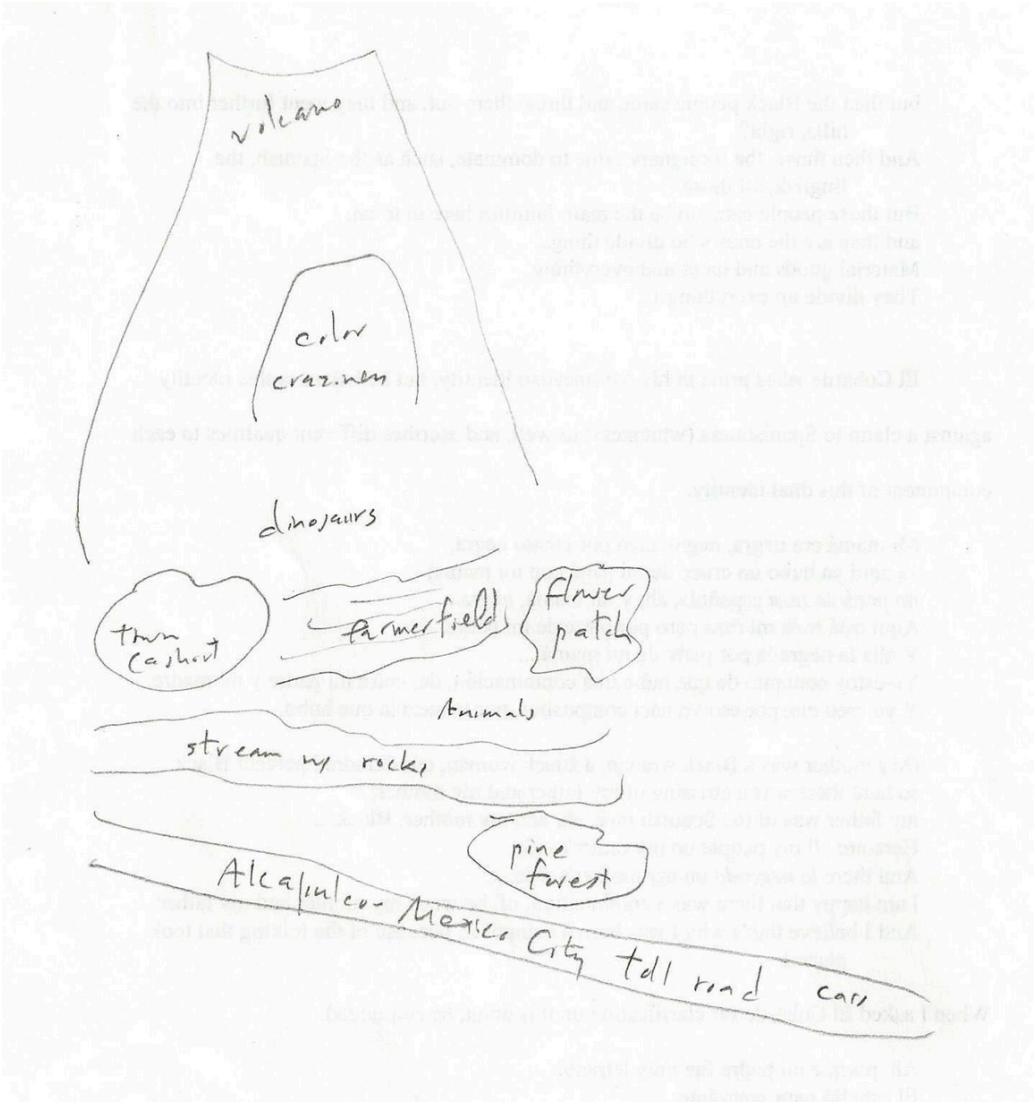

Figure 1. My sketch of Michael's Mexican microcosm

I articulate these contrasting modes of representation as follows:

> "Equally interesting is the fluidity and flexibility of the modeling logic connecting signifier to signified. In two instances, the volcanic rock and the pine cone, an object signifies itself, activating the semiotic mode of ostension. In all the other instances, we move into the realm of iconicity, precise in the case of the cars and animals, for which toy miniatures serve as signifiers, much looser in the case of the pine trees and town, where the sense of iconicity is much attenuated" (McDowell 2018, 62-3).

Indeed, the pine trees are among the least convincing of Michael's modeling of reality – he must rely on some tissue paper scattered in what is meant to be a forest area to signify its trees, but the pinecones placed on the paper definitely help to overcome this liability in his representational technique. And the piece of volcanic rock placed on the strip of blue cloth confirms the veracity of a signifier that already held considerable value.

In my description of Michael's fabricated theatrical arena, I pair ostension, and contrast it, with iconicity in an attempt to capture the logic of signification underlying Michael's modeling of the southwestern Mexican landscape. As you can gather from the previous paragraph, degrees of iconic veracity are also pertinent to my analysis and indeed turned out to be central to my exegesis of child cognition. Working this parameter offers me a bridge into a key issue in child cognition, the interplay of assimilation and accommodation in children's symbolic play. Jean Piaget, the Swiss pioneer in this line of inquiry, argues that in symbolic play the child "transforms reality in its own manner without submitting that transformation to the criterion of objective fact" (1971:338). My analysis of Michael's reconstructed landscape enables the following observation:

> Surfing this spectrum of iconicity is one way to measure the relative degree of assimilation and accommodation in Michael's microcosm of Mexico. Where the iconicity is strong, the prevalent operation is accommodation – the signer has activated the real properties of objects. Where the iconicity is weak, the child has willfully assimilated objects in the world to his own designs. (McDowell 2018:63).

To this observation we can now add that, where ostension replaces iconicity, we have moved beyond the scope of assimilation and accommodation; instead, the child has engaged the real properties of the world, and allowed objects to represent themselves. One take-away is that the child, like the so-called "savages" that Lévi-Strauss writes about, like all of us, I suppose, is a bricoleur, one who uses resources at hand, across a spectrum of representational logics, to accomplish his purpose, that of replicating,

approximately and in miniature, the landscape in a foreign domain to which his parents have brought him, so that he might perform the epic dinosaur drama that he titles, “The Collage of Colors.” Fortuitously, the pinecone and chunk of lava are close to hand and lend the scenario a note of unmediated reality.

“Beyond Iconicity”: Virtual Ostension in Performing Narrative

I have saved this instance for second, although it emerges earlier in my published work, because it is the more convoluted, and perhaps, the more interesting to contemplate, of my two excursions into ostension.

As a graduate student at the University of Texas in the early 1970s, I read a good deal of the literature on mythology, from Max Müller to Claude Lévi-Strauss, from Malinowski and Boas to Joel Sherzer, one of my professors there, and Dell Hymes – so it was a thrill to find myself doing ethnographic work in Indigenous communities that nurtured a living mythology, and one that had not been widely documented. In the Sibundoy Valley of southwestern Colombia, I was received by Inga and Kamsá friends, and generously offered access to their company and their cultures, including tales of culture heroes, animal suitors, and the masters of natural elements. I had numerous opportunities to sit in on storytelling sessions where elders held forth about ancestral times, where mothers told their children stories about exemplary precursors, and where children shared stories about mischievous animal tricksters. I sought out the performers of mythic narrative and became submerged in the discourse of mythic happenings. So pervasive was this mythic ambience that at one point, the young marble players, who always seemed to be lurking nearby, began exclaiming, in Kamsá, “Cha ndoñe chrischian!” (“He is not a human being!”), in response to a player’s remarkable maneuver with the marbles – this being the phrase that brings to climax a set of stories about animal suitors who are eventually unmasked and denied entry into human families.

Over a period of two decades, I gathered and processed this store of Indigenous mythology, publishing two books (McDowell 1989, 1994) and several articles on it. Among the articles is “Beyond Iconicity: Ostension in Kamsá Mythic Narrative,” part of an ongoing effort to make sense of the materials I had brought back from the field: Who performs these narratives, and to what end? What do they mean to the Kamsá people? What is the special power that they wield? This last query is the motivating factor behind the “Beyond Iconicity” article. The article is dedicated to Taita Mariano Chicunque, who had recently passed away, a consummate Kamsá storyteller who befriended me when I lived in the Sibundoy Valley (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Taita Mariano Chicunque, left, in conversation with Justo Jacanamijoy, Sibundoy Valley, 1976 (photo by the author)

I open “Beyond Iconicity” with this citation of Roman Jakobson’s work:

“The chain of verbs – Veni, vidi, vici – informs us about the order of Caesar’s deeds first and foremost because the sequence of co-ordinate preterits is used to reproduce the succession of reported occurrence” (from Jakobson 1960:350). This sets the scene for my argument that spoken narrative is a verbal icon of experience, an argument resting on William Labov’s and Joshua Waletzky’s thesis about temporal juncture as the essential feature of narrative; their idea is that narrative clauses encode necessary temporal sequencing reflective of the sequencing of experience the narrative seeks to represent (1967). By virtue of capturing in utterance phrases the temporal structure of an experiential substrate, real or alleged, narrative discourse is fruitfully viewed as an iconic signifier, replicating the temporal order of an experienced event. There are a number of required caveats to make this model work – for example, the experiential substrate can be fictional, and the discourse can re-arrange the order of things (as long as it provides clues for successful reconstruction of it) – but these details need not concern us here.

Instead, we can turn our attention to the semiotic mode of ostension, which interrupts the iconicity to deliver a virtual encounter with the experiential substate itself. As I have noted, I turned to ostension in an effort to get a handle on the particular qualities, and special efficacy, of quoted speech in narrative performance. In Kamsá mythic narrative performances, the passages of quoted speech are often decisive in energizing a dramatized re-enactment. “Cha ndoñe chrischian!” is articulated with the vehemence the

dire circumstances require – animal imposters cannot be allowed to enter the human family, as this will disturb the precarious spiritual equilibrium achieved by following in the footsteps of the ancestors (see McDowell 1989). These intertextual moments – when words spoken by the narrator are presented as facsimiles of words spoken by story protagonists – offer storytellers the opportunity to inhabit story characters and to vocally animate them, thereby diminishing the perception of intertextual gap (Bauman 2004), that is, the perceived distance between original utterance and subsequent rendering of it.

I refer to the breakthrough from the plane of narrative discourse to the plane of substrate experience as narrative epiphany, drawing both on James Joyce's notion of epiphany as the whimsical revelation of the true nature of a thing, and on the religious concept of epiphany as a breakthrough from the divine plane to the human – that is, from one ontological level to another. As I note in the 1982 article, "Narrative epiphany has the potential to precipitate a 'sudden spiritual manifestation,' a moment of radiance in which the essential point of the story 'leaps to us from the vestment of its appearance'" (James Joyce, *Stephen Hero*, New York: New Directions, 1944, p. 214, cited in McDowell 1982:134). It is an easy step to extend the category of ostension in narrative performance to segments of quoted self-address, and then not difficult to see that sound symbolism, the imitation of acoustic effects in the experiential substrate, offers additional routes across the divide between experience and discourse about it. My conclusion in the 1982 article is this:

> Narratives exploiting these two modalities of semiosis, iconicity and ostension, enable the listener or reader to approach their experiential substrates from two contrasting perspectives, one remote and the other intimate. Narratives thereby acquire a kind of three-dimensionality, similar to that of material objects. Iconicity in narrative locates the audience members unequivocally outside the frame of the experiential substrate, while narrative epiphany places them in the midst of the action, as witnesses to events rather than as witnesses to the description of events (McDowell 1982:134).

It is reasonable to inquire: What is gained from such close observation of nuances in narrative performance? The goal is to find a way of thinking about and talking about how we experience narratives in the crucible of verbal performance. As in Michael's Mexican microcosm, the difference between ostension and iconicity is not necessarily highlighted – the creators of these representations may not even be conscious of it. My argument is that we, as students of artistic performance, need to calibrate our analyses to comprehend these often-subtle features of creative expression in order to account for the communicative efficacy – for the power – of the cultural artifacts that fascinate us. Ostension as a counterpoint to iconicity, or as pathway to a transcending of it, plays an

essential role in making communication effective – whether by validating a child's panorama or adding presence and verisimilitude to a storytelling performance. In either case, the result is a communicative event with the capacity to draw the recipient into a convivial state of suspended disbelief, or possibly, into a virtual communion with the artifact's experiential substrate.

Signification in Ritual Events

This mention of communion provides a segue into another performative space where I can imagine a fruitful application of the semiotic mode of ostension, a space where indexicality, the somewhat silent partner thus far in our ramble, takes its proper place alongside its cousins, iconicity and ostension – I refer to the rich domain of signification in ritual. In my work with spiritual practitioners in the Andes, I have noticed the proliferation of material objects, as well as verbal formulas, in effecting their tasks, whether healing individuals experiencing spiritual sickness (McDowell 1989), curing the hands of the women who plant corn to assure a good harvest (McDowell 1998), or acting as intermediaries with the spirit world on behalf of the community (McDowell 2021). Ostension is featured in many of these activities; for example, among the Otavalos of northern Ecuador, actual corn cobs are displayed in a ritual activity at the San Juan sacred spring meant to encourage a good corn crop for the community (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Tied corn tassels displayed during ritual at San Juan sacred spring, Imbabura, Ecuador (photo by Patricia Glushko)

But let's take up a case study replete with ritual signification, described artfully in Joseph Bastien's classic study of Andean spirituality, *Mountain of the Condor: Metaphor and*

Ritual in an Andean Ayllu, first published in 1978. In this study we accompany Joe and his wife Judy as they travel to a remote corner of Bolivia, near the border with Peru, and are accepted into the Kaata *ayllu*, a village community with extensions at different levels of the mountain. There they are adopted into an Indigenous family, participate in the cycle of life with them, and become acquainted with the practices of local diviners and healers. In chapter 10, "The Feast with the Dead," Bastien writes about the extensive ritual activities associated with All Souls Day among the Quechua-speaking Kaatans. We learn that they assemble *mesas*, ritual tables, in the cemeteries, designed to honor the recently deceased within families. Figure 4 reproduces Bastien's sketch of this ritual assemblage:

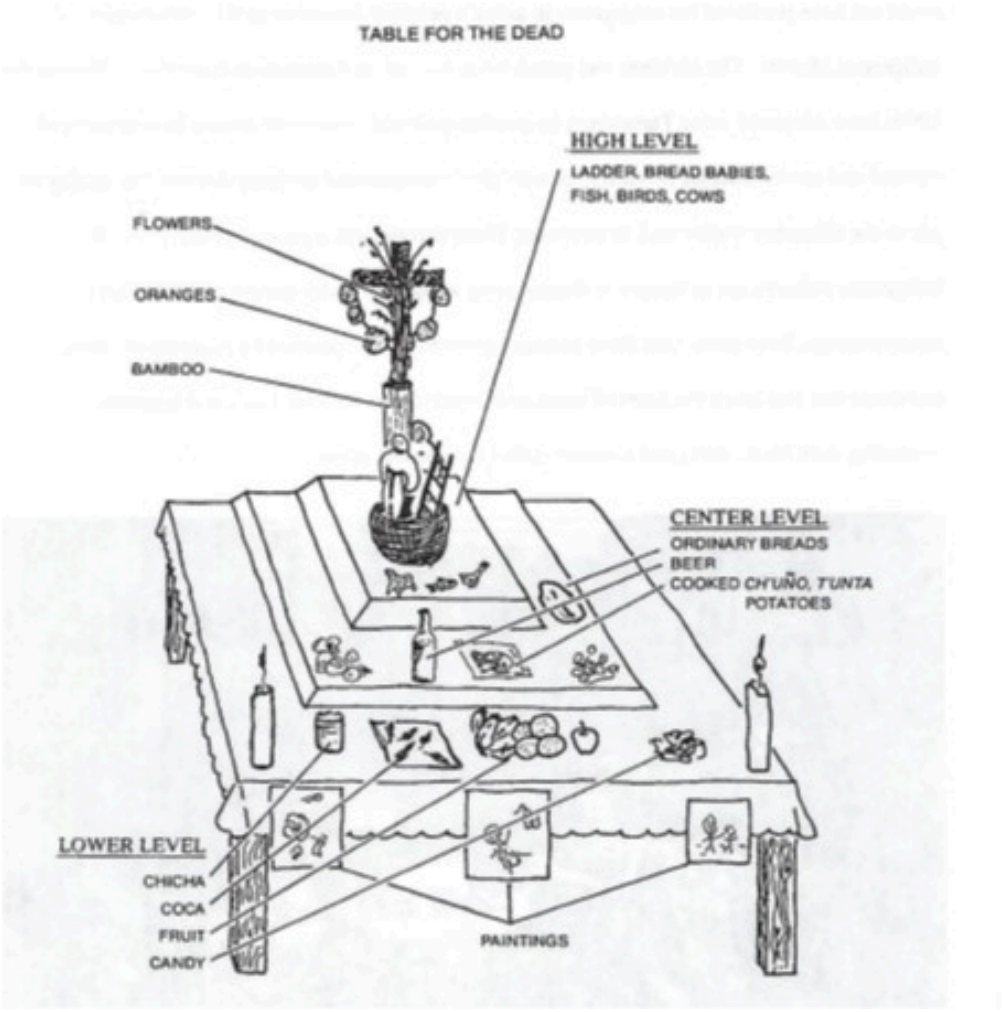

Figure 4. Table for the Dead. Reprinted by permission of Waveland Press, Inc. from Bastien, MOUNTAIN OF THE CONDOR: METAPHOR AND RITUAL IN AN ANDEAN AYLLU. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., ©1978; reissued 1985. All rights reserved.

The day of the dead ritual in Kaata functions to affirm what Bastien terms "the mountain metaphor," the conceptual unity of human settlements at three levels of Mt. Kaata – a lower level in a warm ecological zone, where corn is the primary product; a center level,

with a cooler environment, where potatoes are grown; and a high level, where the Aymara-speaking Apachetans herd llamas and alpacas. The communities on these three levels have worked together historically to ensure the exchange of goods and services, but this collaboration is threatened of late by nation-state tendencies to think horizontally rather than vertically. Still, in Bastien's account, the mountain metaphor continues to be activated in ritual events that symbolically assert the three levels as home to one ayllu, that is, to one human community.

What would a semiotic analysis of signification displayed on ritual tables in the Kaatan's Feast with the Dead look like, and what could we learn from it? As can be observed in Figure 4, the ritual artifacts on the table are arranged on three levels, coinciding with the three levels on the mountain comprising the integrated ayllu. For the lower level we see chicha (maize beer), coca, fruit, and candy; the center level features ordinary breads, beer, and cooked potatoes; and the high level features a ladder, bread babies, fish, birds, and cows, as well as a carved bamboo receptacle with a cross bedecked with oranges and flowers. The semiotic intensity of this ritual table is too much for us to unpack in its entirety, so let me draw attention to a few sample items in order to the illustrate the productive interplay of the three modes of signification linking signifier to signified, iconicity, ostension, and indexicality.

We can begin by observing that the vertical stratification of the table is an iconic representation of the vertical integration of the ayllu's three levels. Moreover, most (but not all) of the ritual objects placed on each level are associated with the ecology of that particular level. Chicha, the home-brewed maize beer, is a specialty of the lower level, where corn can be grown and harvested; chicha plays a vital role in the ritual proceedings, according to Bastien, who observes: "For the Feast with the Dead, Kaatans always place a glass of chicha on the dead's table, and when the Apachetans pray for the dead they sprinkle chicha on the earth asking the dead to drink .... Although cane alcohol is drunk at the feast, chicha remains the primary drink for both the living and the dead" (Bastien 1985[1978]:180).

Like chicha, coca leaves are also associated with the lowlands – they are harvested in hot areas adjacent to the lowland communities; and like chicha, coca leaves play a significant role in both the everyday life of Kaatans and in their ritual activities. For our purposes, we should note that chicha and coca leaves represent themselves in this ensemble – hence, we can adduce that the semiotic mode of ostension is in play. But each, as well, stands in an indexical relationship to the lowland ecology, and thereby signifies indexically the fertile, temperate land on the lower slopes of the mountain, friendly to the cultivation of corn and situated in proximity to the source of coca leaves.

A similar analysis can be made of tokens at the other two levels on the table, though with some adjustments for the third level, representing the "head" of the mountain. The center level, for example, is made to exhibit *ch'uño* and *t'unt'a* potatoes,[5] emblematic food products cultivated by the mid-level community on the mountain, and hence indexical of this particular ecological zone. At the same time, exempla of the actual foodstuffs are present – not modeled iconically – so they are there to signify themselves in the mode of ostension. The top level of the mesa is a more complex assemblage of ritual tokens; it features rough miniature icons of llamas, the prime indexical sign for this pastoral setting, as well as a number of signs, spanning the iconic, indexical, and ostensive semiotic panorama, since the Kaatan cosmology entrusts the Apachetan ritualists, pastoral herders of the highlands, with the responsibility to conduct the spirits of the dead back to the highland lakes where they can be returned to the eternal cycle of life through rebirth.

Two things should be readily apparent from this brief coverage of ritual symbology in Joseph Bastien's account in *Mountain of the Condor* of the Kaatans' Feast with the Dead: one, that ritual activity is alive with symbolizing capacity, and two, that it employs overlapping and intersecting modes of signification, wherein ostension combines with iconicity and indexicality to generate powerful fields in which the process of semiotic reference moves through cosmic evocation to spiritual invocation. And fittingly, within these supercharged fields, remarkable things happen – in ritual systems all across the globe, societies are shaped and individuals are moved through their structures; and, in Kaata, the dead are properly transported to their place of origin so that the cycle of life, death, and rebirth can continue unabated.

As Roy Rappaport (1979, 175) reminds us, in ritual "the most abstract and distant of conceptions are bound to the most immediate and substantial of experiences," and we can see that this is accomplished by activating the complete triad of signifier-signified relations to create complex signs with multiple semiotic surfaces. In the Kataan ritual table, the immediate and distant are connected as objects represent themselves, as one object is shaped to resemble another, and as an object is signaled by the presence of another object customarily associated with it. In this instance as in other comparable instances, ritual practices bring into vivid presence entire cosmologies through this intersectional semiotic display (see Tolbert and Rupert 2019).

Conclusion

This brief reprise on ostension in folkloristics, with its gesture to future promise, seeks to elevate the concept of ostension to a prominence equal to that of iconicity and indexicality, its semiotic mates that have received more attention in the humanities. I believe that further work with ostension can animate our thinking, rejuvenate our analyses, and populate our writing with abundant insight. Speaking for myself, as one who has

drawn on ostension to grapple with nuances in children's fantasy play and to account for the efficacy of spoken narrative, I can say that this mode of analysis offers a passageway into essential dynamics of human mentation. The need to represent is fundamental to human communication, which is in essence a praxis of coded representations. Zeroing in on ostension, and juxtaposing it with iconicity and indexicality, draws our attention to mental processes at the heart of human expressivity. The many explorers in semiosis who have gone before me have fashioned for folklorists an interpretive matrix that holds recurring prospects for capturing, in our cumbersome way, the flashes of creative inspiration that traverse, often seemingly effortlessly, the spaces between expressive artists and their often rapt audiences.

Endnotes

1. Tolbert and Brodie (2019) treated this topic in brief in a recent encyclopedia entry. The present article continues and expands the comparison of semiotic and folkloristic ostension begun in that piece. The authors are grateful to Mary Ellen Cadman, Todd Suomela, and Catherine Tosenberger for their thoughtful input. Special gratitude is due our two anonymous reviewers, whose thoughtful comments were invaluable in developing our thinking about the "virtual" distinction and its relation to other linguistic/semiotic concepts, particularly in the area of reported speech. ↩

2. The story of *JFI*/*JFR* is a side story but perhaps of interest. According to Wikipedia: "The journal was established in 1942 as the *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin* and continued in 1945 as *Hoosier Folklore*. It was renamed in 1951 as Midwest Folklore and continued from 1964 to 1983 under Richard Dorson as the *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, obtaining its current name in 1984." I was present on the editorial board for the re-christening of the journal to *JFR*, the *Journal of Folklore Research*; the redoubtable Linda Dégh insisted that *JFI* was outmoded, and that the journal could not be taken seriously until it acquired a serious name. She proposed *JFR* and her motion carried. I should also note here that Dégh and Vásonyi state in a footnote to their 1983 article that it derives from a conference paper delivered in Montecatini Terme, Italy, in 1978, and published in Florence in 1981, so perhaps I will have to concede priority to them, though I can still lay claim to slipping in ahead of them in the pages of the *Journal of the Folklore Institute*/*Journal of Folklore Research*. ↩

3. My pathway, as best I can reconstruct it, leads from Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1959[1916]), through Roman Jakobson's "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics" (1960[1958]), to Umberto Eco's *A Theory of Semiotics* (1979[1976]). Remo Gramigna (2016) reminds that ostension enters the current semiotic panorama through the work of Roman Jakobson, Umberto Eco, and Ivo Osolsobě – the latter of these I encountered only indirectly, in the work of other scholars. ↩

4. A reader for this article cleverly points out that the pinecone, as well as representing itself, also synecdochally represents the evergreen forest, posing an intriguing intersection or overlapping of semiotic strategies. ↩

5. These are essentially freeze-dried, or de-hydrated potatoes, made with recourse to the sun during the heat of the day and the freezing temperatures at night.↩

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