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# Landscape Performance Theory, an Introduction

No matter how sophisticated you may be, a huge granite mountain cannot be denied—it speaks in silence to the very core of your being.  
—Ansel Adams, *Yosemite and the High Sierra*

But is it possible to conceive the nervous system as living apart from the organism that nourishes it, from the atmosphere in which the organism breathes, from the earth which that atmosphere envelopes, from the sun round which the earth revolves?  
—Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*

The formations of the choreographic are many, expanding beyond the field of the aesthetic.  
—André Lepecki, *Dance and Politics*

## Introduction

This book is about Yosemite National Park, the oldest preservation area in the United States, the original inspiration for the American conservation movement, and the template for the U.S. National Park Service as a whole. It is also a book about performance, both broadly and strictly speaking. It is a book about athletic performance and touristic performance, about human and nonhuman performance. Most especially, it is a book about cultural performance and choreographic forms of it in particular.

Yosemite is not a small place. It inspires thinking on a relatively grand scale. In this regard, I seek in the chapters that follow to address in rather ambitious terms the very large issue of Yosemite's cultural significance. I do so, however, in a way that compels attention to the very smallest details of the landscape's char-

acter, through the standard ethnographic method of participant observation of visitor performances, including my own.

The chapters gathered together in this volume illustrate certain kinds of visitor performance that I observed to be occurring regularly in Yosemite National Park during a series of twenty-two visits I made into it beginning in 2004 and ending in 2012.<sup>1</sup> They are performances that differ somewhat in character from the kinds of cultural performance typically studied by ethnographers. They tend to be relatively informal, individualistic, and improvisational—more like jokes than like operas, to borrow Richard Bauman's sociolinguistic terms (1977). In some cases, they push at the boundaries of what "performance" as a concept might best reference, as they often occur without any conventional sort of rehearsal process and without any human audience other than the visitors performing themselves. However, as with any cultural performance, whether it be something as spectacular as a masked *Karneval* parade in Upper Swabia or a god-dancing Cutalaimatan festival in Madras, or as rich in virtual meaning as a Balinese cockfight, Yosemite's performances involve public displays of symbols popularly understood to be emblematic of given ways of life.<sup>2</sup> They are enactments by means of which people—"visitors" in the park's conventional discourse—express "what they believe themselves to be," to borrow Lloyd Warner's original phrasing (Warner 1959: 107; cited in Singer 1984: 110). They express it passionately, ethically, imaginatively, and spiritually, as well as ideologically.

I studied Yosemite National Park as a *stage* for the enactments of what anthropologist Milton Singer termed the "great and little traditions" of cultural performance (Singer 1984: 165). I became interested in the littlest of the littler of these, as well as in the most energetic and newly minted, although I partook of as wide a variety as possible. It was with the performance of minor, often coincidental or unintended movements and gestures that I became the most concerned. These were acts as small as tripping over a tree root, flicking a pine needle off of a camper's tent, or slamming shut the door of a bear-proof storage box that wouldn't latch any other way. They were the kinds of small, but densely layered, ubiquitous facts of visitor experience that might have become the raw material of a work of choreography about Yosemite's visitors had that been the project at hand. Indeed, they literally did come to serve that purpose, although not in any conventional sense of the term.

Whether great or small, cultural performances provide the park's visitors with what the pioneering anthropologist of performance Edward Schieffelin once identified as "cultural scenarios" (2005 [1976]: 3). They constitute culturally salient patterns of activity in which visitors may come to terms not only with who they have been meant to be, symbolically speaking, but also with who they, in point of undeniable fact, actually are—with the "stuff" of which they are made, as living organisms and as forms of human life.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps most significantly, however, these performances enable visitors to encounter who (and with



*Figure 0.1. Visitor Anna Reck choreographing a “small fact” of visitor experience inside a living oak tree in Yosemite Valley, 4 July 2005.*

Photo by Erich Reck.

whom), they may be becoming as well, as far as their futures, both more and less vivid, are concerned. In this latter regard, Yosemite also serves as a stage—in both the spatial and the temporal sense of the term—for performance processes that, in their emergent, transformative character, bear a vague family resemblance to

those that anthropologist James Peacock, in his landmark study of the *ludruk* “rites of modernization” of mid-twentieth-century Surabaya, Java, observed and documented as well (1968). They also relate even more closely, however, to the incipient “events-in-the-making” created initially in 2006 for the Technologies of Lived Abstraction Series at the University of Montreal, Canada, and collaboratively “folded into” theoretical writing by Erin Manning (2009: 1–3).

I have termed the particular type of performance I studied in Yosemite National Park “landscape performance.” It is admittedly an awkward phrase. However, it is so in part because it is designed to forge a new kind of connection between ideas that are normally kept apart. So, it vexes. On the one hand, the phrase can be understood as similar in meaning to “landscape painting” or “landscape architecture.” Landscape performance, in this sense, references kinds of performance that may take landscape as their primary subject matter. This sense of the phrase is relatively straightforward. On the other hand, however, the phrase is also meant to be understood in the way that phrases such as “musical performance” or “theatrical performance” or “dance performance” are. In this sense, landscape performance identifies landscape *itself* as something that is a kind of performance, something that is itself capable of performing. This is the definition that jars the most—unless it is taken as a relatively poetic expression (“performance” being read figuratively), or unless it is interpreted as identifying landscape as a discursive formation that determines the experiences of the human subjects who may be located and defined in relation to it—perhaps along the lines articulated by critical theorists such as Judith Butler or Michel Foucault. Neither of these interpretations, however, is my own. I seek to take the phrase as non-metaphorically as possible, and I do not define landscapes in general merely as human-made discursive formations. It is one main effort of this study, in fact, to demonstrate that such critical theoretical definitions are inadequate to the task of understanding exactly the kinds of performances that are here most at issue. Discursive definitions are not wrong, as far as they go, but they do not tell the whole story of landscape performance, either what it is or how it can come to mean all that it generally does, especially to visitors in Yosemite National Park.

When both senses of the phrase are taken together, “landscape performance” begins to function in a way that is something like the duck-rabbit image made famous by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953). That is, it can be understood to exhibit the character of a “multi-stable object” in the terms of phenomenological discourse (Downey 2004). It becomes a symbol that sustains simultaneously at least two equally valid understandings, the recognition of which depends on the particular perceptions and purposes of its various interpreters.<sup>4</sup>

I would characterize landscapes in general—and Yosemite National Park in particular—as colossal multi-stable objects in their own right. From some points of view, in relation to some kinds of experience, and for some purposes, they may be recognized as discursive formations—as essentially representational, so-

cietally constructed, “textual” objects or hermeneutic palimpsests.<sup>5</sup> From other perspectives and for other purposes, they may be understood and experienced as geological formations, as nonhuman material realities. From still others, they may be perceived and *lived* as divinely inspired creations of pure light and energy, perhaps enlightening, perhaps maddening.<sup>6</sup> The list could be extended indefinitely. A landscape will invariably come across as many things to many people, sustaining innumerable perspectives, experiences, and lines of thought simultaneously and through time.

This multi-stable definition of the symbol “landscape performance” is not altogether unlike those more typically employed in ethnographic studies of landscape, although it is substantially different from them as well. Ethnographic conceptualizations of landscape tend to identify it either as the (at least partly) natural environmental context of a human cultural group or as a symbolic construct created through culturally specific practices (Bender and Winer 2001; Feld and Basso 1996; Low and Lawrence-Zuniga 2003). In its recognition of the symbol’s inherent multiplicity of interrelated meanings, the definition of landscape performance here employed is similar to the “processual” definitions of landscape developed by Eric Hirsch (1995) and David Crouch and Charlotta Malm (2003). However, in its recognition of the virtually innumerable variations of meaning the symbol can represent, it also resonates strongly with David Crouch’s later definition of landscape as a creative and emergent spatial “pregnancy of possibility” (2010: 1) as well as with Mark Dorrian and Gillian Rose’s definition of landscape as a “zone of transaction between multiple interests” that “needs to be understood in terms of what it does” (2003: 16). In this latter, doing-oriented respect, the symbol also bears a limited resemblance to Tim Ingold’s definition of landscape as the qualitative, heterogeneous, temporal and embodied, moving form of a “taskscape” (2000: 190–200). It recognizes, as does Ingold’s conceptualization, the basic relation between purposive habits of interaction (“dwelling” in Ingold’s terms) and the variability of a given landscape’s definition. However, the closest definitional parallel is evident, perhaps, with respect to Erin Manning’s “metastable” conceptualization of the plastic, virtual-real, “relationscape,” a topological milieu rhythmically unfolding through its “living coordinates”—durations that embody the convergence of movements of thought still in the process of taking form (2009: 5–11, 159, 181, 183, 197, 228).

Despite the limited correspondences to all of these definitions, the variability and inclusiveness of the multi-stable definition adopted here is greater than any of these alternatives allow. It argues that no single definition individually, *and no human definitions collectively*, can represent all that “landscape” or “landscape performance,” understood pragmatically, can come to mean, despite the probability that any definition is likely to be valid in some limited respect and optimal for certain purposes.<sup>7</sup> This said, landscapes and their performances are *not* all things to all people. They are not everything and therefore nothing in terms of their

definitional character and meaningfulness. Yosemite National Park, as this book documents, is a spectacularly elaborate case in point of a landscape that exhibits and performs the character of a highly distinctive multi-stable object. While its variability of perception is rivaled only by the intensity with which beliefs about its true character tend to become fixed, regardless, all of its various visitors, if they were inclined to agree about anything, would probably agree that there is no landscape in the world remotely like it. Its distinctive features—its three-thousand-foot granite cliffs, domes, and spires; its enormous waterfalls, towering pines, and massive black oak trees; its officially “wild and scenic” Merced River—all of these elements of the landscape are instantly recognizable and unmistakable to those who have spent any significant time among them. As Rebecca Solnit, one of the park’s most astute and critical interpreters, has observed, “Yosemite is a singular place onto which are mapped myriad expectations and desires” (2005: ix). And as Leonard McKenzie, one of Yosemite’s chief naturalists during the twentieth century, once remarked, “Among the Earth’s distinctive places, this showcase occupies a distinctive niche in the human spirit” (cited in Neill and Palmer 1994: 15).

It is only in conceiving of landscape in general, and of landscape performance in particular, in this multi-stable, vexed way that these concepts stand a chance of moving the study of cultural performance (one might now want to put quotations marks around the word “cultural” here) into some relatively unknown fields of meaning-making. Only in this way can the concepts lead thinking toward encounters with certain stages of performance, cultural and otherwise, that have gone relatively unnoticed in performance research, but which may be seen to bear, at times tellingly, on kinds of performance that definitely have not done so. My hope, in this regard, is that the phrase’s awkwardness is temporary. As its definition becomes more familiar, it may acquire a certain admirable quality and value in its own right, as may the somewhat unconventional kinds of performance it seeks to illuminate.

## A Rhetorical Semeiotic Approach

There are a number of theoretical sources employed and engaged in this book. Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the post-phenomenologists who have extended his work; Henri Bergson and the “Bergsonism” that informs Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory, as well as the vitalism of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari—all of these figures loom large throughout the pages that follow. So do certain anthropological luminaries such as Gregory Bateson, Victor Turner, Tim Ingold, Arjun Appadurai, and Saba Mahmood. Theorists of choreographic performance André Lepecki and Erin Manning are also crucial to the mix. All assist variously in the complex project of working through diverse facets of landscape performance. However, the theorist who plays the greatest role, although not always the most visible, is the sign theorist and scien-



*Figure 0.2. Visitors performing on boulders beside the trail to Lower Yosemite Fall Viewpoint, April 2009.*

Photo by Sally Ann Ness.

tist/philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce. It is through Peirce's pragmaticist semeiotic that I have come to see the relevance and the value of the other approaches herein employed.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, it is in relation to Peirce's sign theory that I have identified some of their limitations. Although Peirce's semeiotic and his rather formidable terminology are not always on the surface of these chapters, they are invariably there at their depths and in their collective core. They undergird the

larger, choreographic vision of cultural performance that is advanced throughout. As Umberto Eco once acknowledged with regard to his debt to Peirce, if there is anything of value in the work presented here, it is Peirce who deserves the credit, even if the connections to his writings are not always as lucid and rigorous as they ought to be.

In this regard, these chapters, as a collection, are intended to advance a theory of cultural performance that contributes to Peirce's pragmaticist semeiotic. In so doing, they are intended to increase and enhance the theoretical diversity of research on human performance most broadly considered. However, and moreover, they seek to demonstrate that adopting Peirce's pragmatism does not entail abandoning other, more widely used approaches to the study of performance, be they those of critical theory or (post-)phenomenology, interpretive ethnography or some other anti-essentialist branch of constructionism, hermeneutics, or textualism, feminism, historical materialism, Actor-Network-Theory, or variations of vitalism or affect theory. Peirce's semeiotic is not cast here as a superior substitute. To do so would be to undermine the basic spirit of its pragmatism—the spirit that seeks always, as movement analyst Irmgard Bartenieff once urged, to “use what you find [and] go with what works” (1980).

Peirce's theory, instead, is intended to serve in an articulatory capacity. It is brought into play so as to complicate rather than to replace insights that have been gained from other approaches to performance theory.<sup>9</sup> It does so by relating them to a relatively general, inclusive, more widely applicable theory of performance—a theory of *sign* performance, or *semiosis* in Peirce's terms<sup>10</sup>—“sign” here being conceptualized, again, in the broadest possible terms. Human beings themselves, in Peirce's framework, qualify as signs (*EP2*: 324). Human performance is itself but one variety of semiosis. Performance, for its part, is understood from this pragmaticist perspective, as one mindful way of making things *lively* when they might not necessarily otherwise be so—of making them *matter* when they otherwise might not, and of making them somehow consequential in a world whose consequences may seem always already overdetermined. The pragmaticist semeiotic is meant to function, in this regard, as a platform that expands the conceptual horizons of more well-established theoretical approaches currently employed in performance research of all kinds, better elucidating their explanatory power, granted including some constraints thereon.

This pragmaticist semeiotic of performance, in its breadth of application to nonhuman processes, as well as in its focus on mindful “alivening” or “mattering,” is unlike conceptualizations of performance that can be traced to Austin's speech-act theory, to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, to Saussurian structuralism and its post-structuralist descendants, to Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogism, and to all other theories of performance that depend on humanist models of symbolism or meaning-making. It is aligned to some degree with Victor Turner's etymological and ethnographic understanding of performance, which foregrounds the creative



dynamism (or “play”) evident, both along the symbolic spectrum of human performance that stretches from ritual to theater, as well as in the ludic nature of the performance environment itself (Turner, 1982). However, this semeiotic of performance also, as previously indicated, parallels somewhat Richard Bauman’s executional theory of performance, in its intent to define performance, not in terms of an array of qualified genres, but rather as an aspect evident in the full spectrum of meaning-making practices under consideration (1977). Perhaps its closest kin would be found in the respective works of Richard Schechner (1985) and Joseph Roach (1996). Schechner’s definition of “restored behavior” recognizes the fundamental character of recurrence that is also posited as basic to performance considered semeiotically (1985: 36–37). Roach’s conceptualization of performance in terms of a vexing, transgenerationally continuous process of reproduction and substitution or *surrogation* also parallels the understanding of performance here advanced as a kind of communication whose being necessarily transcends, even while it also depends on the lives of individual performers whose identities may be radically diverse (1996: 2–4).

In attempting this semeiotic articulation, it should be noted that the kind of inquiry undertaken here belongs to a specific area of Peirce’s philosophy that is separate and fundamentally different from those more typically explored in Peirce scholarship. I situate it within what Peirce viewed as the relatively neglected “Rhetorical” branch of his pragmatism, rather than in its Logical or Grammatical (formalist or taxonomic) branches (*EP2*: 327).<sup>11</sup> In this rhetorical regard, this book makes no attempt (as does the majority of philosophical work on Peirce’s semeiotic) to preserve a focus on the general character of signs, as that may be evident in abstract, heuristic scenarios and definitions. Rather, it bases its arguments in what Peirce studies scholar Vincent Colapietro has described as “thick descriptions of actual practices”—a strategy indicative of rhetorical inquiry, as Colapietro has characterized it (2007: 19).<sup>12</sup> This book addresses the communicative practices of specific, historically situated human agents, as well as nonhuman actants,<sup>13</sup> who in this case are present and active in the Yosemite National Park landscape. It concerns real-life visitors and waterfalls, rangers and trails, concessionaires and even actual bears, and a great host of others, all of whom are caught up in particular interactions and performative pursuits.

Rhetorical inquiry, pragmaticistically defined, is a preoccupation with “the adaptation of the forms of expression of [a piece] of writing [or other mode of symbolization] to the accomplishment of its purpose” (Peirce *CN3*: 180; cited in Colapietro 2007: 17). This “adaptation” entails a process of sign change or modification, a tailoring of the sign to a particular contextual purpose or application. Rhetorical analyses are intended to foreground a kind of “sign-in-motion” aspect of a given semeiotic event and to illuminate the effect of a given sign’s adaptability in relation to its intended, also-moving, also-living, also-mattering receiving sign or “Interpretant” (in Peircean terms).

Rhetorical analyses, in other words, focus directly on the active *performativity* of signs. They foreground their efficacious persuasiveness—their ingenuity and innovation—as well as their ability to impart pleasure or some other comparable quality or feeling (Colapietro 2007: 35; *EP2*: 326). Such analyses may be as much concerned with the creation of identity as with processes of encoded communication between fully formed subjects, as several chapters in this volume seek to illustrate. Rhetorical inquiry, as Colapietro observes, is also more prone than logical or grammatical inquiry to work toward the discovery of previously unknown forms of sign performance, rather than marking the limits of meaning-making inherent in given grammars or established logics (Colapietro 2007: 19, 31, 35). As Peirce phrased it, rhetorical inquiry seeks to understand how “one sign gives birth to another, and especially one thought brings forth another” (*CP* 2.229). Several chapters, in this respect, focus on visitor experiences that involve creative, initiating processes of meaning-making, or what may be termed “semio-genetic” performances (Chandler 2012).<sup>14</sup>

Most important for the purposes at hand, the rhetorical semeiotic approach, given its focal interest in observing how signs go about “bringing forth” or “giving birth” to new signs and thoughts, illuminates the ways in which signs are inherently changing and dynamic figures. The rhetorical approach, in sum, is the approach that gives the greatest degree of attention to the processual primacy of semeiotic activity as Peirce conceived of it. It underscores Peirce’s insistence that, regardless of all else, sign phenomena must be understood as always already and continually transforming in character. It foregrounds the ways in which all signs are works-in-progress, demonstrating with especial clarity the unfolding, “passing-on-ness” or temporal “forward-ness” of semiosis as it gives shape to new kinds of sign performance and performers. This is so even when the temporal focus of rhetorical analysis may be aimed “backward” as it were, on the relationship between signs and their various sources (or “Objects”) of inspiration, as is the case in the study of Peircean symbols—which, as the discussion that follows elaborates, happens to be the case at hand.

Peirce’s later work gave increasing critical attention to this rhetorical branch of his semeiotic (Colapietro 2007: 17, 30). The majority, if not the entirety, of ethnographic work on cultural performance that has employed Peirce’s semeiotic theory to date has done the same, although more in a de facto than an explicit manner.<sup>15</sup> My present aim follows this ethnographic path as well. I seek to “trace out a trajectory,” as Colapietro has characterized the effort, of Peirce’s rhetorical branch as that trajectory may be seen to form in relation to landscape performance (Colapietro 2007: 18). It is a trajectory that requires some adaptation or modification of the standard logically and grammatically oriented terms representing Peirce’s semeiotic. This is necessary given that rhetorical inquiry entails the specialized study of certain aspects of signs—emergent, creative, evolving aspects—that are not at issue in these other branches. In general, it entails the

study of signs as they proceed or *move* into human awareness and learning, via active, embodying performing—a kind of study more than a little bit familiar to choreographers the world over.

In this rhetorical regard, I am concerned in all of the chapters that follow with the many ways by which the signs of the Yosemite landscape perform so as to realize a particular purpose: that of persuading visitors to bond with the park and to feel and act and think and *live* as though the park belongs individually and personally to them and they to it. This is no mean rhetorical feat when one considers that Yosemite is a place that currently receives over four million visitors a year, the great majority of them coming only between the warmer months of April and September. Moreover, most of these masses visit only an area known as Yosemite Valley (or just “the Valley”), which is hardly more than seven miles long and just one mile wide at its widest point. While visiting, their conduct is so strictly regulated by the policies of the National Park Service that they are allowed only a small margin for creative, individualistic, or idiosyncratic behavior—the kind of behavior that might induce a person to believe that they, in fact, have some kind of special, unique, or personal connection to the park environment, despite the huge crowds with whom they typically must share it.<sup>16</sup>

Despite these adverse circumstances, however, personal and individual connections to the landscape are regularly (though not unfailingly) forged and deeply felt. Yosemite, as Ralph Waldo Emerson famously observed upon his first view of Half Dome, is in a touristic class by itself to the extent that it “comes up to the brag and exceeds it” for more of its visitor population than its observable circumstances might lead one to expect (cited in Sargent 1971: 3). Yosemite remains one of the most attractive ecotourism landscapes in the world, as it has been for more than a century. It does so as much, if not more, for the manner in which it stages and secures “ceremonies of connection,” as Solnit has identified them, as it does for its capacity to afford encounters with pristine, untrammelled wilderness (2005: 106).

In the research visits that I have made to the park since 2004, I have witnessed and documented this bonding occurring in countless cases, among visitors who vary in virtually every imaginable respect—age, ethnicity, nationality, sex, economic class, gender, religion, occupation, and on down the list. I have witnessed it occurring in the performance of both great and little traditions as Singer conceptualized them: in the playing of card games by flashlight on rainy nights and in the summiting of massive granite domes and peaks on cloudless summer days. Despite the overcrowding, the regulations, the commercialization, and the generic character of visitation practices—and sometimes even *because* of them—subjective connections to the landscape happen. They also endure, at times for generations, as the oral historical research on which this study is also, in part, based confirms unambiguously.<sup>17</sup>

How does the Yosemite landscape perform this persuasive feat, when so much would seem to be working against it? This is the underlying analytical question

that motivates each of the chapters in this volume. The answers vary. Some relate to discourses of beauty, nature, desire, and nationhood. Others relate to transcendent spiritual experiences and dreams. Some connect to immediate sensations of pleasure or pain, others to embodied constructions of virtuosity or the lack thereof. Still others concern experiences—acted and imagined—of freedom, power, family, and/or community. And some relate simply to the living of life itself (or, better, it-self). Each chapter affords a glimpse of the multi-stable variability that the Yosemite landscape sustains and proliferates in visitor performance.

This rhetorical concern with the Yosemite landscape entails giving critical attention not only to the means by which the landscape achieves (or fails to realize) its purpose, but also to the purpose itself—to why it is that the landscape is capable of performing in this particularly persuasive way and to what the consequences of this are, not only for its visitors, but for all who participate in the life and in the operation of the park. There are many in the social sciences—too many to cite—who would argue that these capabilities and consequences are predominantly political and economic, de-individualizing (if not dehumanizing) and manipulative in character—and, of course, essentially *human* in design. They would assert that the landscape's performativity merely reiterates meaning in an institutional, "top-down" sort of way, persuading visitors to conform to large-scale politico-economic interests and to conduct and construct themselves accordingly. However, I argue in every chapter that the situation in reality is not so simple. There is far more to the symbolic life force of the Yosemite landscape than such societally oriented theories can recognize, let alone explain or predict.

To be sure, top-down perspectives on meaning-making in Yosemite demand attention. However, there are also always ways in which landscape performance initiates in its ecological relations what André Lepecki, following the work of Jacques Rancière and Steven Corcoran (2010), has identified as dissensus in visitor experience. Landscape-initiated dissensus, "the rupturing of daily habits," short-circuits precisely the kinds of societal meaning-making to which sociological perspectives assign priority (Lepecki 2013: 153; see also 2012c). Landscape performance, in this regard, has the capacity to de-subjectify culturally constructed subjects, producing in visitors what Lepecki has argued for choreographic performances generally speaking: a kind of subjectivity "that always exceeds predetermined acts and intentions ... composing ... a particularly singular actualization of what really matters" (2012c: 38).

What "really matters" on and in the stages of the Yosemite landscape are movements of significance more powerful and complex than human social and cultural institutions and their discourses and policies can fully command and control. The politics of landscape performance, in this regard, is a politics that holds in its balance the relation between social consensus and ecological dissensus, between institutional power and subjective freedom. This is in large part why visitors, no matter how carefully policed, regulated, crowded, and managed,



*Figure 0.3. Amna Shiekh climbing on the Columbia Boulder, October 2008.*

Photo by Sally Ann Ness.

continue to bond with the landscape in extraordinarily profound, subjectively liberating ways. In their performances of great and little traditions alike, they become signs—creatively evolving signs—of the very real freedoms as well as the controlling social discourses (not to mention the laws of nature) that together, in their own respective manners, constitute the park landscape.

Peirce's rhetorical branch of semeiotic is of critical value in advancing the relatively expansive interpretive agenda identified above. In the remaining sections of this introduction, I seek to clarify how and why this can be the case. The justification lies primarily in the extraordinarily broad definition accorded to the concept of semiosis and to the pragmatist concept of the sign. These concepts, rhetorically adapted, can be understood as rooted in a kinetic and, I will argue, non-metaphorically choreographic, dance-like theory of reality.<sup>18</sup> It is a theory that situates humankind in a universe composed of significant occurrences literally brought to life in embodied relations of performative movement. As such, the rhetorical project undertaken here is extensive, seeking to understand, in Peirce's terms, "just what the processes are whereby an idea can be conveyed to a human mind and become embedded in its habits" (*EP2*: 329, 330).

### **Performing at the Interface of the Cultural and the Nonhuman: The Semeiotic Symbol**

Of all the myriad sign classifications that compose Peirce's semeiotic, the most critical one for the study of landscape performance, and perhaps the most challenging of all, is that of the semeiotic "Symbol." Peirce developed a precise, technical definition for the symbol that is in some respects extremely unusual. It may even seem to border on the nonsensical or the ridiculous at first pass, since its conception is so different from comparable definitions advanced in other, more widely employed sign theories.<sup>19</sup> However, the validity of the pragmatist symbol, unpalatable as it may seem at first, becomes increasingly compelling the deeper one ventures into the heart of Peirce's rhetorical semeiotic. The deeper one ventures, the more clearly it manifests how radically expanded are the possibilities for human performance when its significance is comprehended not in relation to the possession or conveyance of information, but in relation to the staging of intelligent movements.

Perhaps the most challenging feature of the pragmatist definition of the symbol is that it must be understood as not being applicable exclusively to signs that have been invented and that are governed entirely by human beings and their social and cultural institutions and conventions of signification. Such a specifically human class of signs does not exist anywhere in the classifications of pragmatist theory, as understood by any of its branches. This is a very basic feature of Peirce's semeiotic. Its consequences for the symbol, and through it, for landscape performance, are vitally important.

Pragmatist sign theory, in brief, does not grant human minds the sole rights to the production, recognition, and employment of *any* category of sign performance, even those, such as the symbol, that include human language and mathematics. Peirce's semeiotic is not "humanist" in this particular respect, as are the most influential and widely employed sign theories today. As Peirce scholar Joseph Ransdell once observed, Peirce's semeiotic does not even formulate a con-

cept of a specifically linguistic (and so assumedly distinctly human) sign. Ransdell elaborates in this regard:

It is often thought that [Peirce's] conception of the symbol is more or less the same as the conception of the linguistic sign. But this is not so: there are entities which we ordinarily regard as words which are not symbols, and there are symbols which can by no reasonable stretch of usage be rightly called "words." (1997: 16)

In high contrast to sign theories oriented by the concept of the linguistic sign, pragmaticist sign theory proceeds on the assumption that the relations of significance that inform every general type of semiosis are to be found both within and without human thought and human minds. If the extra "e" in the Peircean spelling of "semeiotic" could be assigned a specific encoded meaning, in this regard, it might best be read as signaling this post-humanist orientation of Peirce's theory.

Colapietro summarizes the pragmaticist perspective on this inclusive character of semiosis in relation to environments created and governed by nonhuman elements and processes as follows:

At least in some cases, we are not the initiators of but the respondents to a world that is always already meaningful to some degree. The world of our experience is always already constituted as a realm of signs. If we have a sufficiently general grasp of the nature of signs, we cannot avoid concluding that at least some phenomena are signs of nature. To understand the nature of signs ultimately ought to lead us to see the signs of nature. We are in a continuous dialogue with the natural world as well as with other humans. (1989: 21)

Symbols, in this respect, may be considered to *inhere* in reality, human as well as nonhuman. In the terms of Peirce scholar Frederik Stjernfelt, they may be considered its "natural inhabitants" (2014: 1). They may be conceived and performed by humans, but they may also be encountered in experience and discovered by human beings. They may persist in reality, whether or not they are ever so discovered. Their emergence, as well as their evolution and cultivation—their *thoughtfulness*—is not necessarily tied to human mental or cognitive processes. As Peirce himself observed:

Thought [i.e., the development of signs] is not necessarily connected with a brain. It appears in the work of bees, of crystals, and throughout the purely physical world; and one can no more deny that it is really there, than that the colors, the shapes, etc. of objects are really there. (*CP* 4.551; cited by Colapietro 1989: 19; the bracketed insertion is from Colapietro)<sup>20</sup>

This, in brief, is what may be called the ecological orientation of Peirce's pragmaticist semeiotic. It makes the symbol, as Peirce conceptualized it, exceedingly difficult to comprehend from humanist semiotic orientations. While the conventional sign productions of human social and cultural discourse may often qualify as symbolic in Peircean terms, so may the signs of nonhuman animal communications and even the semiosis of bio-semeiotic signs that plant life-forms exhibit as well. These various kinds of sign processes and the circulations of information, or in-forming-ness, they enable and facilitate are, of course, not identical in every respect. However, it may be the case, in some instances, that the general character of performativity they all exhibit—the basic processes of evolving intelligence they accomplish—form a spectrum, widely varying at its extremes, to be sure, but nonetheless a spectrum of symbolism that is continuous.

The pragmaticist concept of the symbol thus rejects the assumption that human symbolic performances, even of the most sophisticated varieties, occur in a realm of meaning-making that is governed or determined only by their own uniquely human design and character. On the contrary, whether great or little, all human symbolic conventions have the capacity to interface with—literally to communicate with—nonhuman signs of symbolic varieties, to be influenced by them and to articulate with them, as well as to influence them in turn. Human beings, in pragmaticist terms, are symbol translators par excellence. They move continually between and interweave intelligently environmental, organismic, and sociocultural forms of semiosis (to name but a few), becoming constituted by and constituting them in so doing. Such coordination permeates virtually every aspect of human life, even the most culturally elaborate. Landscape performance is but one example of this kind of cross-spectrum coordination of symbolic performance.

Such claims regarding the Peircean symbol and symbolic semiosis, as I have already been at some pains to acknowledge, may seem fantastically naïve or nonsensically broad from the perspective of humanist, linguicentric semiotic theories. However, they are justifiable and productive when viewed in light of the precise, ecological definition of the pragmaticist symbol on which they are founded, and that light, I will argue, emanates most brightly from Peirce's rhetorical branch. The relatively large, inclusive spectrum of semiosis defined by the pragmaticist symbol is conceivable because of its own relatively general, fundamentally choreographic character, the character best foregrounded in rhetorically oriented forms of semeiotic inquiry.

### **The Rhetorical Conceptualization of the Semeiotic Sign/Symbol**

In embarking on this argument, it must be noted at the outset that in its most fundamental character, the semeiotic symbol is, before all else, a kind of semeiotic "Sign." The sign is the most basic, all-inclusive conceptual formation of the whole of Peirce's pragmaticist semeiotic. Whether they operate by rules, resem-



blances, or contiguities, whether they are interpreted politically, aesthetically, economically, religiously, logically, or otherwise, whether their character be that of a diagram, a gesture, or a royal decree, all vehicles of meaning-making imaginable are still, first and foremost, *signs* from a semeiotic point of view. This is as true for the symbol in all its diversity as it is for any other kind of meaning-relating phenomenon. To understand the symbol, from any branch of Peirce's semeiotic, one must first understand what it means to claim that it is, as Peirce understood it to be, a sign.

The particular rhetorically adapted characterization of the pragmatist sign that I advance here is not one that has been stated previously in the terms employed, either by Peirce himself or by any of his interpreters. Some, admittedly, might find it controversial. Peirce, however, gave many definitions of the sign concept, allowing for some latitude on the subject. The relatively underdeveloped status of the rhetorical branch of Peirce's semeiotic, I argue, allows for considerably more. In formulating the present definition, I have "rhetorized" two definitions that come from Peirce's later writings, neither of which was identified by him as specifically or particularly rhetorical in character. These were formulated in 1903 and 1906 respectively. Drawing on both of them, I define a pragmatist sign, approached rhetorically, as "an agent of intelligent, or at least intelligible, relational movement."

The 1903 definition that inspires this rhetorical conceptualization was given in part of Peirce's *Syllabus*, in an essay titled "Sundry Logical Conceptions" (*EP2*: 267–88). This "mature" definition of the sign, as it is sometimes called (*EP2*: 325), is phrased in the terms of Peirce's ceno-pythagorean Universal Categories (*EP2*: 272), or "Universes of Experience," as he eventually termed them (*EP2*: 435; 1908). In this definition, Peirce characterizes signs as "facts of Thirdness" (*EP2*: 272). As such they manifest as "triadic" relations. These are relations whose being consists in "bringing about" connections between more basic (monadic and dyadic) *relata* that previously were unrelated in the particular way that the sign connects them (*EP2*: 267, 269).

In that they belong to Peirce's Universal Categories, signs are essentially relational in character. This characteristic I identify in the rhetorical definition of the sign above, specifying that the movements signs perform are "relational." In their capacity to bring about or make manifest triadic relations, signs may be characterized as relationship instigators (logical and grammatical discourses more often characterize them as "determiners" or "informers"). In this respect, they are agentive, as the definition specifies. And, in that Peirce identified all triadic facts as "intellectual" (*EP2*: 171), or possessing entelechy, a concept Peirce took from Aristotle, they have the capacity, if not the demonstrated and/or recognized ability, for intelligent or at least intelligible (potentially intelligent) performance. As Peirce wrote, "Thought plays a part" in all cases of Thirdness (*EP2*: 269), and "wherever there is thought there is Thirdness" (*EP2*: 269). The 1903 *Sylla-*

*bus* definition, in this manner, identifies three of the four characteristics specified in the rhetorical definition here conceptualized: relationality, agency, and intelligibility/intelligence.

The second, even later definition, formulated in 1906, was given in a letter Peirce wrote on March 9 of that year to his English colleague Lady Victoria Welby. In this formulation, Peirce defines a sign as “any medium for the communication or extension of a Form (or feature)” (1977; *EP2*: 477). This definition identifies two characteristics corresponding to the 1903 definition. As a “medium,” the sign is relational, and in its embodiment or manifestation of some form or feature, it is intelligible if not intelligent.

The fourth and most distinctive characteristic that the rhetorical definition above also identifies—the processual or *moving* character of the sign—may at first seem lacking from these 1903 and 1906 definitions. Here, it must be remembered that from a rhetorical perspective, as Peirce himself defined that point of view, any “form” involved in semiosis (or any feature or fact or thing or bit or unit or atom for that matter) is always apparent as a form *in process*, a form whose being is that of “bringing forth.” That is, forms, rhetorically conceived, are understood as *living* forms, as forms whose being is “being-born,” so to speak, or *form-ing*. A sign’s identity as such a “form-ing”—which is what matters most about the sign, rhetorically conceived—is what I have termed “movement” in the rhetorical definition given above.<sup>21</sup> Peirce himself characterized such form-movement as the “essence” of semiosis, at times speaking of “thought-motion” as that which signs, particularly those of Logic, functioned to describe (1906, cited in Stjernfelt 2014: 78).

The rhetorical definition of the Peircean sign here conceptualized, then, does no more than identify from a rhetorical vantage point the four fundamental distinctive features Peirce attributed to signs according to their particular categorical classification as “facts of Thirdness.” It recognizes their relationality, their agency, their form-ing-ness, and their thoughtfulness. While it may read very differently from more standard logically and grammatically oriented definitions, it is nonetheless as consistent with Peirce’s pragmaticist orientation as they are and might arguably be seen to better represent what is most foundational to his thinking—“processuality,” if there might be such a term—despite its emerging from a relatively neglected area of his semeiotic.

The Peircean symbol is *not*, in this rhetorical regard, necessarily the transmitter of some kind of meaningful content that “it” conveys. Although many sorts of symbols, and other pragmaticist signs as well, conform to this definition, it is not their most basic identifying character. Peirce’s pragmaticist sign is even more fundamentally general in reference than such a definition would allow. Perhaps only Victor Turner’s definition of a symbol as “a positive force in an activity field” rivals Peirce’s as far as the applicability and referential inclusiveness of the conceptualization is concerned (1967: 20). From a rhetorical regard, a Peircean sign

is basically kinetic rather than substantial. Whatever else it may be, a pragmatist sign is always *moving* in a certain way. It is a “moved mover,” in Colapietro’s terms (1989: 22). Its agentive, performative character is born in movement, not in content. It emerges in activity—in transition, transformation, transmission, or translation or in some other kind of changeful process. Again, if the “e” in the Peircean spelling of “semeiotic” might be encoded with yet another meaning (multi-stably), it might also be read as signaling this kinetic performative identity of the rhetorically approached Peircean sign.

A semeiotic sign, in performance, moves movingly, as it, in its turn, has been so moved. This triple moving-ness is the source of its performative identity—its *energeia*,<sup>22</sup> or actualizing capability—as well as its meaningfulness and intelligence. One could say, in this regard—indeed one *should* say—that the pragmatist sign’s most basic performative character is dance-like. It is so in the sense that it is its thoughtful moving-ness that enables all of its relational capabilities. All other identities—intellectual, substantive, aesthetic, executive, political, argumentative, conceptual, placial, persuasive, *all of them*—emerge out of and remain continuous with this most basic dance-like identification.

A semeiotic sign may be a movement itself. It may be as simple as a mule-packer’s jerk on the reins of his horse, or the raising of a deer’s head at the sound of a shotgun, or a column of smoke rising into the sky above a forest fire. Signs, however, may also be inherent in material objects—in “things” of virtually any kind.<sup>23</sup> If they are so inherent, however, they invest objects and/or the places of their being with a certain capacity to perform—to inspire or to bring about some kind of significant relational change. A giant boulder sitting in the middle of the Merced River, as it affords a means for visitors to jump into cool water on a hot summer day, plays host to a sign in this manner. The sun’s warmth, when it enables campers to get out of their sleeping bags and start their day, becomes a sign as well, as do the words of cheerful greeting that campers may employ with their neighbors while they are arising. “Beautiful day!” “Excuse me, can I heat some water on your camp stove?” “The summit will be out of the clouds by 9:30, don’t you think?” Such words and phrases inspire and move along processes of emotional, logical, imagined, and also physical significance. Linguistic speech acts, too, in this regard, are pragmatist signs in their capacity to serve as agents of intelligent relational movements.

As a consequence of their kinetic conceptualization, the rhetorical processes of semeiotic signs—the symbol included—are understood to achieve significance in a manner that is not necessarily dependent on anything they have or possess. Their intelligent life depends instead on how the movements they inspire and/or perform bring new relationships into being. A sign is significant in that the movements it produces make relationships happen, and these relationships forge or sustain connections that matter in some intelligible way. They are relationships that “have roots and bear fruits,” as Colapietro somewhat playfully characterizes

them, relationships that are both “grounded and growing” (1989: 22). To borrow from Gregory Bateson’s more abstract cybernetic framework, which closely parallels Peirce’s semeiotic, the signs of Peircean pragmatism create moving “patterns that connect” (1979: 10). In so doing, they generate differences “that make a difference,” intelligently speaking (Bateson 1972: 453; 1979: 250).<sup>24</sup>

So it is that the scent of frying bacon becomes a semeiotic sign as it connects a hungry bear to a source of food. A small pile of stones becomes significant as it brings a lost hiker together with a hard-to-find section of a trail. A rocky ledge becomes vitally meaningful when it enables a precariously balanced climber to achieve a more secure position on a rock wall and avoid taking an injurious fall down a treacherous granite face. Any trail, path, road, or route in its capacity to move travelers into new relationships within an environment they seek to explore performs as a semeiotic sign. Likewise, any linguistic concept that moves a user into a new relationship to the world it references performs as a sign as well, as does any part of speech that enables its users to make connections between concepts in the language to which it belongs.

The kinetic, relational conceptualization of the Peircean semeiotic sign produces a relatively large sphere of adaptability to both human and nonhuman processes in one all-important respect as far as the symbols of landscape performance in particular are concerned. It is a respect that Peirce made explicit only in his later, most rhetorically oriented work. The definition characterizes a sign’s most fundamental agency (or performative character) as being one of *mediation* rather than *representation*. While in his earlier (and more often cited) writings Peirce defined signs in general as having the capacity to “represent” or “stand for” something,<sup>25</sup> in his later work Peirce determined that the concept of representation was itself too narrow to characterize all of the many ways that a sign, as he conceived of it, could operate and perform as such. He wrote of this transition, “I did not then know enough about language to see that to attempt to make the word *representation* serve for an idea so much more general than any it habitually carried was injudicious. The word *mediation* would be better” (CP 4.3; cited in Colapietro 1989: 18; emphasis in text).<sup>26</sup>

Mediation, as Colapietro observes, is “deeper than interpretation,” just as semiosis—the full range of sign performance—is “wider than representation” (1989: 25). Although many semeiotic signs indeed conform to the “standing for” representational definition, others achieve significance without necessarily performing in a manner that, strictly speaking, could best be characterized as representational. Mediation, rather than representation, describes, for the later Peirce, the full range of intelligent processes that the signs of pragmatist semeiotic theory in all its branches can be understood to enable. Mediation may involve what Peirce characterized as a “quasi-mind” as opposed to a specifically human mind. A quasi-mind, minimally, is “capable of varied determination” in relation to the sign’s intelligible movement (EP2: 544n22; cited in Fuhrman 2010: 171).

Here, again, the pragmaticist semeiotic presents a basic and challenging theoretical formulation—one that borders on the unthinkable from humanist semiotic perspectives.

The shift from representation to mediation also reinforces the dance-like character of the pragmaticist sign, rhetorically conceived. It foregrounds the choreographic identity of semiosis in general by asserting that the play of relationships-in-movement in which all kinds of signs participate agentively can matter—can “bear fruits” or make differences, intelligently speaking—even when that play entails nothing that could be identified as a representational, “standing-for,” sort of process. Signs—even symbols—do not have to *stand* to make sense. They can move (in-)formingly as well.

Such an enlargement of the conceptual spectrum of what can be conceived of as sign performance has critical consequences for landscape performance. Once the sign spectrum is so extended, it gains the capacity to define as semeiotic experiences, activities, and processes whose influence on conventional cultural performances would otherwise go unrecognized. The Merced River, for example, as it may mediate vital relationships between bodies—human and nonhuman alike—once they are caught up in its currents, can achieve significance as an actant in a nonrepresentational but meaningful process of semiosis. A mouse in Curry Village, when it leaves droppings inside the insulation of tents that bring campers into contact with the deadly *Hantavirus* lung disease, does the same. So does a campfire, when its light draws strangers into new relationships with one another. The Yosemite Valley landscape, in its capacity to attract people from all over the world and to move them, along with all of the landscapes and places to which they are themselves related, into new relationships with one another, performs on a monumental scale as a mediating, nonrepresentational sign. It may also function simultaneously (and multi-stably) as a representational sign in its capacity to “stand for” an ideal wild and scenic, quintessentially American image of landscape.

In part, the chapters that compose this volume seek to illuminate in landscape performance just these kinds of mediating nonrepresentational sign performances in the Yosemite environment and to identify some of the ways in which they interface and integrate influentially with more conventional representational and unambiguously cultural kinds of performance processes. In this regard, this book documents some instances of the genesis and modification of representational signs as such rhetorical processes may be observed to be occurring in relation to “broader and deeper” processes of nonrepresentational mediational semiosis. These processes involve nonhuman actants in critically influential ways.

A semeiotic symbol, then, simply by virtue of its definition as a Peircean sign, is conceptualized as an agent of relational movement, mediating or representational, and not necessarily of human design and inspiration. In these most basic respects, it is adaptable to the analysis of a relatively broad array of perfor-

mative phenomena. However, the Peircean symbol, approached rhetorically, is also relatively general with regard to its own particular semeiotic character. That moving character is defined as emphasizing one main quality, and again, it is not one that humanist sign theories would foreground. It is not arbitrariness or conventionality or intelligent (human) superiority that defines the pragmaticist symbol as it compares and contrasts with other kinds of semeiotic signs. Rather, it is the symbol's capacity for enduringly creative, intelligently relational *recurrence* that identifies it as such. This definition, in its own way, further enlarges the pragmaticist symbol's conceptual adaptability, its rhetorical efficaciousness. Once again, this enlargement has critical consequences for landscape performance in Yosemite National Park.

### The Performativity of the Semeiotic Symbol

Peirce conceived of the symbol as nothing more and nothing less than a sign that is itself and relates specifically to a regularity, rule, law, or habit. In 1895, he wrote:

The word *Symbol* has so many meanings that it would be an injury to the language to add a new one. I do not think that the signification I attach to it, that of a conventional sign, one depending upon habit (acquired or inborn) is so much a new meaning as a return to the original meaning. Etymologically it should mean a thing thrown together... (*CP* 2.297; emphasis in text)<sup>27</sup>

A symbol, rhetorically approached, is a semeiotic sign that performs as such when the habit that constitutes it becomes an agent of intelligible relational movement vis-à-vis some habitual or regularly reoccurring phenomena—some *generality*. In this regard, it is the kind of sign—the only kind—that can enable memory. It is the only kind of sign that can be an agent of reproduction and also of reiteration. A symbol can itself perform and embody evolutionary processes—processes of gradually changing and cumulative, generalizing intelligence. From a pragmaticist perspective, this is as true of conventional human symbols, such as those of human language, as it is of symbols moving in nonhuman environments and processes. Peirce argued emphatically in 1904 on this issue:

A symbol is an embryonic reality endowed with the power of growth into the very truth, the very entelechy of reality. This appears mystical and mysterious simply because we insist on remaining blind to what is plain, that there can be no reality which has not the life of a symbol. (*EP2*: 324)<sup>28</sup>

Symbols continually grow, their own intelligence modifying and compiling with each new relational movement made in each new application or instance of per-

formance. Their growth processes determine with gradually increasing clarity their definition. Wittgenstein's image of a concept as being like a thread in its interweaving of diverse strands of grammatical practice aligns closely, in this regard, with that of the temporally extensive semeiotic symbol (1953: section 67). Peirce identified the nature of the symbol—human and nonhuman alike—with the living action of thought in precisely this kind of continuum-producing patterning. “The body of the symbol changes slowly,” he wrote in 1903, “but its meaning inevitably grows, incorporates new elements and throws off old ones” (*EP2*: 264). The threadlike continuity of a symbol's living, changing form is made possible by the recurrence of its multiple acts of determination, acts of recognition based most primitively upon the feeling and re-feeling of similarity (or, in the most basic life-forms, of re-membrance; *EP2*: 320, 322).

A semeiotic symbol may be constituted by a cultural rule of recognition, such as the linguistic convention that consistently associates the combined English language phonemes /d/, /i/, and /r/ with the various species of animals all understood to belong to the genus *Cervidae*—the deer family. The various operations of human languages that are based in habits of recognition, composition, and application, among many others, qualify as symbols in pragmaticist terms as well. The habit or regularity that constitutes a semeiotic symbol, however, can also be a social convention related to reoccurring performances of physical activity, such as the social convention of driving on the right and passing on the left when conducting a vehicle on an American roadway. Such an action-oriented conventional symbol may acquire the character of “tradition” if it develops into relatively elaborate practices, as with Milton Singer's great and little traditions of cultural performance.

Any cultural performance, ethnographically speaking, is necessarily constituted by semeiotic symbols, insofar as it is passed on regularly from senior to junior members of a cultural group. The Firefall tradition of Yosemite Valley—a nightly summertime performance staged between the years of 1872 and 1969—is, perhaps, the greatest and most famous example of such a symbol in Yosemite National Park. The Firefall was a performance that consisted of pushing the burning embers of an enormous bonfire off the edge of the Valley's most popular panoramic viewpoint, Glacier Point—a granite cliff 3,214 feet high.<sup>29</sup> The legendary Firefall remains one of the most deeply loved, rhetorically potent symbols of Yosemite National Park. Although park policies currently prohibit its enactment, the Firefall lives on in the experience of countless visitors, both those who actually witnessed and remember its performance as well as those who have learned to imagine it through the representations of others. The Firefall tradition illustrates the semeiotic symbol's capacity for endurance and adaptation, even across diverse ontological modalities of relational movement. It is a symbol that originated in actual transformative habits related to material objects but persists and recurs in relationships—no less moving—of remembered and imagined sign performance.

In addition to symbols of tradition that exhibit very high degrees of regularity, even to the point of “ossification,” as Stanley Tambiah (1979) identified in some of the most extreme cases, semeiotic theory also recognizes relatively creative and incipient processes of sign recurrence as symbolic forms of semiosis as well. A contemporary project of rephotography undertaken in Yosemite between 2001 and 2003 by visual artists Mark Klett and Byron Wolfe in collaboration with Rebecca Solnit, for example, illustrates this relatively generative end of the spectrum of symbol semiosis. Eventually titled *Yosemite in Time*, the project consisted of five separate expeditions into Yosemite, during which the photographers methodically staged acts of exceptionally exacting photographic recurrence (Klett, Solnit, and Wolfe 2005: xi). That is, they returned to locations where some of Yosemite’s most renowned photographers—Carleton Watkins, Eadward Muybridge, Ansel Adams, and Edward Weston among others—had made a number of their most influential images. There, they reenacted the work of the original artists as precisely as the existing conditions would allow. Wolfe and Klett retook the earlier shots, not only in exactly the same places in the landscape, but also at the same times of the year and even at the same times of day, when possible. Their intent was to duplicate not the image that had originally been made (sometimes more than one hundred years previously), but rather the *taking* of the original image itself. Their goal, in other words, was the perfection of recurrence in relation to certain highly original photographic performances. As a consequence, the project illuminated in magnified form not only the ways in which the Yosemite landscape had changed, sometimes dramatically, over the passage of time, but also the performative aspects of the earlier photographers’ creative processes.

*Yosemite in Time* also entailed a “Third View” aspect in which the recurrence of rephotography was itself reenacted. This strategy was employed to move beyond the “then and now” binary that a single retaking was limited to representing. The again-retaken images became integral to the composition of layered panoramic composites that were one eventual outcome of the group’s collaborative process. With the incorporation of these “third views,” rephotography, as a creative strategy, became capable of suggesting, in Byron’s words, “the idea of a continuum” that presented an “understanding of change as continuing beyond our own time” (cited in Solnit, 2005: xi). In this regard, *Yosemite in Time* exposed in its third-view collages of the park landscape the earliest stages of symbolic growth in relation to certain originary practices of landscape photography. In their creation of a continuum of recurring imagery, the rephotographic performances of Byron and Wolfe constituted the birth of semeiotic symbols—symbols capable of representing the endurance of a photographic intelligence as well as depicting ongoing, nonhuman processes of change occurring in the landscape over time.<sup>30</sup>

These examples of conventional semeiotic symbols, whether they are located at the ossified or the incipient end of the symbolic spectrum of recurring performance, are basically comparable to those typically recognized in humanist sign



theories of symbolism. However, the pragmaticist symbol category is not limited to the study of such conventional human symbols alone. As Ransdell has emphasized this point, “the symbolic and the conventional cannot be identified, in any case, at least as regards the way in which Peirce construes the nature of symbolism” (1997: ¶54). Pragmaticist symbols are also conceivable that are not the products of societal traditions and distinctly cultural forms of law- or rule-following.

Peirce was quite insistent on this point, although he typically focused his own, predominantly logical, analyses on conventional societal symbols. He repeatedly noted in his definitions of the symbol and its component elements that conventional symbols formed only one part of the symbol’s larger spectrum of semiosis. In 1902, for example, his definition of the symbol specified that a sign could be considered to qualify as a symbol, “whether the habit is natural or conventional, and without regard to the motives which originally governed its selection” (*CP* 2.307).<sup>31</sup> In 1908 he observed that “the power of growth” characteristic of the symbol was manifest in all “living” signs, whether those of plant life or of distinctly human “institutions” such as “a daily newspaper, a great fortune, [or] a social ‘movement’” (*EP*2: 435). As Peirce studies scholar Gary Fuhrman has summarized Peirce’s perspective, the symbol concept leads to the understanding that “organisms, persons, and social institutions alike can now be regarded as living systems [of information]” (2010: 179). This understanding aligns with Peirce’s later definition of the symbol—that it is “a living thing, in a very strict sense that is no mere figure of speech” (*EP*2: 264; 1903).<sup>32</sup>

Habits of relational movement performed by a living human being, in this regard, can be understood to constitute a semeiotic symbol, according to Peirce’s definition, even if such habits are unrelated, in whole or in part, to societal conventions and rules. When nonconventional habits of performance acquire significance by accomplishing connections that matter in some way—that “make a difference” in Bateson’s terms—to otherwise unrelated regularities, human or nonhuman, they, too, qualify as Peircean symbols. In the case of the Yosemite landscape, such symbols may play pivotal roles in emergent processes of self-landscape identification and subject formation, relating visitors to non-human regularities in the landscape in enduring, memorable, and profoundly moving, subjectively unique ways. They may even serve to influence and redefine the meaning of societal symbols, becoming actants in processes of “conventionalization” in their own right. In this regard, nonconventional human/nonhuman symbolic mediations can be of paramount importance in the rhetorical study of landscape performance.

### **A Case in Point: Chewing Apricots**

I experienced the emergence of such a nonconventional semeiotic symbol when I was on the summit of Half Dome in June 2012. As I approached the summit, I felt a slight catch in my throat that caused me to cough. It was a very windy

day, and there was a lot of granite dust blowing in the air. It seemed like nothing at first, but it didn't go away. As I reached the summit, I was coughing very strongly. Susto, a student who had come along with me, gave me his hat and told me to breathe into it only through my nose and to exhale into it as well so as to create moisture. I did so and felt the cough stop worsening. However, it did not go away. We found a small cave at the rim of Half Dome's face, where I started sipping some Emergen-C powder that Susto mixed into some of my water. We opened a package of dried apricots, and I started eating them very, very slowly.

As I ate, I became aware that a new kind of chewing habit was evolving in my mouth. It was not one I had intended to perform, but one I found myself performing nonetheless. I became aware that recurring movements of my jaw, mouth, and throat were now starting to feel *similar* to one another as they happened, and in some ways that I did not remember in relation to previous eating habits. This was a way of chewing whose distinctive features of action—only now being felt as distinctive—seemed to relate both cumulatively and with exceptional specificity to the present condition of my throat and to what felt at the time like the life-or-death need to produce moisture so as to calm the coughing action. The chewing habit quickly became partly intentional, but it also involved processes of my organism, and of the apricots as well, processes that were not subject to conscious control.

This new chewing habit was a patterned activity that related the apricots to my breathing in a way that mattered, a calming, moistening way that gradually changed my breathing's character significantly as it diminished the severity of the cough and restored relatively normal processes of oxygen intake and exhalation. I had never chewed in quite this way before—with what I came to understand as such a careful deceleration of the jaw. I had never focused so intently on how my teeth could make the most out of the food's soft, slightly juicy quality, squishing it in a way that produced what felt like the maximum amount of saliva in my mouth. I had never concentrated so completely on the feeling of slowly swallowing the liquid as it drained down into my parched windpipe—a windpipe that evidenced (or “indexed” as Peirce might say) the atmospheric patterns of the landscape on that day. This new habit of chewing was invented and performed largely, though not entirely, by parts of my organism that were operating on their own physiological, biosemiotic terms. It was reoccurring in relation to processes that “I”—the intending subject—did not completely govern or control. However, to the extent that that “I” could participate in the coordination process, I was fully involved in performing it as well.

In this last respect especially, this partially involuntary habit that was cultivated on the summit of Half Dome was not a habit that had conventional social rules fully determining its performance, although it was, of course, not absolutely unrelated to cultural conventions of eating, speaking, clothing, and even the apricot agribusiness. All the same, there is no great or little Yosemite tradition gov-

erning the chewing of apricots in this particular manner at this particular place for this particular purpose—or of breathing through a hat in the way that I did. I have never heard reports of Half Dome hikers developing the kind of coughing problem that I did, let alone responding to it in the way Susto advised me to do. The windy conditions on that day were highly unusual. In sum, this was not a cultural performance in the standard sense of the term. In Gilbert Ryle's categories, made famous by Clifford Geertz, the chewing habit that had been developed was far more of a behavioral blink or involuntary twitch than it was a culturally constructed wink (Geertz 1973: 3–30).

The new habit, however, was an instance of landscape performance as I here define it. It also qualifies as symbolic action of a mediational, nonrepresentational semeiotic sort. It related methodically one type of emerging regularity, my transforming throat condition, to another, the circulatory patterns of air and dust occurring repeatedly at the summit of Half Dome. The emergence of the apricot-chewing habit constitutes a semio-genetic event. It exemplifies as well Fuhrman's concept of "interhabitation," as all landscape performances do—a "coupling of human habits with their living context (the biosphere) as guided by mutual interaction and communication between members (instances, manifestations) of the global human bodymind" (2010: 194).

The chewing technique as I continued to perfect it on that day gradually proved to be an enduring agent of meaningful and intelligible relational change. It effectively lessened my coughing enough so that I could manage to begin speaking a few words of reassurance to Susto and the other students who had come with me. Eventually, it enabled me to breathe well enough to descend safely from the summit to the Valley floor some forty-seven hundred feet below. Eventually, it gave new meaning to the act of chewing apricots altogether, as well as giving rise to a new habit of chewing them on subsequent hikes in other places in a comparable manner.

Eventually, this nonconventional symbol became increasingly integrated with a variety of culturally conventional forms of sign performance. As it did, it revised somewhat my thinking about what a wool hat, a dried fruit, and a student could mean, not only in Yosemite, but in the world at large. The slow, moisture-focused apricot chewing that I—as an intentional subject—learned to coordinate on Half Dome's summit also has come to serve as a commemorative process—a symbol that has moved some ways down the continuum toward fully conventionalized representational status in its own right. Whenever I enact it, it re-presents and re-members in and through all that can be recognized as "me"—involuntary organs included—the extraordinary relationships that were at play when and where I first found myself to be practicing it and preserving my life through its performance. It might someday achieve the status of a conventional cultural performance as well, although that certainly is not the case at present. However, the possibility of it becoming even a little, if not a great, tradition can-

not be dismissed completely. The very character of recurrence, the intelligible regularity of any semeiotic symbol's moved moving-ness, provides the conditions for processes of adaptation, recognition, modification, and remembrance to occur and reoccur in and by its very performance. By so doing, its performance transforms intelligibility into intelligence, and mediational continuity (*standing*—as in persisting—*through* a series of relational moves) into representational “standing for.” Any kind of symbol, in this respect, is “conventionalizable”—even one as humble as the chewing of dried apricots.

## Conclusion

The chapters in this volume attempt to provide more examples like the one above of various kinds of nonconventional and hybrid forms of symbolic semiosis. Landscape performance, summarily defined, is just such an interweaving, metamorphosing, and choreographic coordinating of diverse human and nonhuman symbol mediations, representational and otherwise. It is a kind of performance conceivable only in the terms of the relatively inclusive, broadly applicable, rhetorical conceptualization of the pragmaticist symbol, both as a dance-like, kinetic, semeiotic sign and also as a sign whose identity is grounded in creatively evolving recurrence.

Clarence King, the eminent nineteenth-century geologist and mountaineer whose expeditions into the Sierra Nevada mountains yielded some of the most influential literature on American wilderness landscapes ever produced, once derisively characterized Yosemite-inspired authors as an “army of literary travelers who have planted themselves [in Yosemite] and burst into rhetoric.” He sardonically called to would-be Yosemite writers, “Here all who make California books: dismount and inflate!” (cited in Bergon 1994: 136). King’s words give any author of an interpretive bent more than a little pause before taking up the subject of Yosemite. Even guidebooks to the park acknowledge that Yosemite has been the target of more “gushing adjectives” and excessive hyperbole than any other Californian destination—and probably any other western American destination as well (Whitfield 2002: xi). Its inflated touristic and nationalistic rhetoric has served, among other things, to obscure the harsh realities of land-use conflict and control that are central to the landscape’s actual cultural and historical character (Solnit 1994).

In my efforts to avoid the pitfalls of such romantic excess, I have endeavored to emulate the work not of King, but of his contemporary, the explorer and ethnologist John Wesley Powell. Though vastly different in theoretical and ideological orientation, my expeditions into the park—if they can be seen to merit such a label—nonetheless have not been altogether unlike Powell’s. I have sought, as he did, to discover the landscape’s character, to collect samples and recordings of it. I endeavor now to present these findings to an audience who might have preferred to do the exploring and discovering (and performing and choreographing) for

themselves but, for one reason or another, were not able to come along on the journey. However, my visits, as Solnit has written of her rephotographing expeditions, were not focused on the discovery of “the untouched and truly unknown,” as were Powell’s. Rather, they explored, as Solnit also identifies, “conjunctions, overlaps, patterns, [and] meanings in the steep, intricate, hallowed, scarred landscape of Yosemite” (Solnit 2005: xiv). In my case, all of these were to be found not in visual images, such as Solnit collaborated in rephotographing, but in various relatively energetic types of visitor performance.

Powell’s geographical representations of his explorations of the American frontier won the admiration of Wallace Stegner, arguably the greatest twentieth-century author of western American landscape literature. Stegner was so impressed by Powell’s technically exacting accuracy and his careful attention to detail that he honored Powell’s work with the designation “art without falsification” (1954: 191). If I engage here in a rhetorical project, it is with the intention of meeting that same exacting standard of description. My effort is hopefully more akin to Powell’s or to Stegner’s own—or to that of Klett, Solnit, and Wolfe—than it is to those of the more popular stylists Yosemite seems prone to attract. The reader alone, of course, is left to judge the results.

## Notes

1. The visits were of three to ten days in length—typical of overnight visitor practice and within the maximum length-of-stay limits set by the park management.
2. While the concept of cultural performance is most often associated with Clifford Geertz (1973), my use of it here comes directly from Milton Singer’s work (Singer 1984). Singer adopted the concept as developed by Lloyd Warner in Warner’s studies of Yankee City celebratory practices (1959) and treated it as an explicitly semiotic concept, applying the theory of signs developed by Charles S. Peirce to the description and interpretation of its ethnographic referents. In this respect, Singer’s approach and his definition of cultural performance, paraphrased above, are most closely aligned with those employed in this study.
3. The reference here to Wittgenstein’s enigmatic concept of a “form of life,” both a culturally relative and a humanly general way of living, is intentional (Wittgenstein 1967; 1953: 206).
4. I have discussed in earlier work the utility of the duck-rabbit image in relation to dance performance specifically as well. See Ness 2008b.
5. See Crouch and Malm (2003: 253) for a discussion of landscape defined in such textualist terms.
6. See, for example, Lyotard’s discussion of the “scapeland” of the lost traveler (1989) and Adrian Ivakhiv’s account of the Sedona landscape as understood by New Agers (2003).
7. For an overview of the different conceptualizations of landscape forthcoming from geography, anthropology, and the visual arts, see Hirsch (1995: 1–30) and Dorrian and Rose (2003: 13–19).
8. The writings of Peirce will be cited in this volume using abbreviations standard in Peirce scholarship. *EPI* and *EP2* refer to *The Essential Peirce, Volume 1 (1867–1893)* and *The Es-*

*sential Peirce, Volume 2 (1893–1913)* (Peirce Edition Project 1992 and 1998 respectively). *CP* refers to the *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Volumes 1–8 (1931–1958)*. *CN* refers to *Charles Sanders Peirce: Contributions to The Nation, Part Three: 1901–1908*. The term “pragmaticist” refers specifically to the philosophical approach Peirce developed and which he contrasted with other philosophical work, particularly that of William James, that has also been identified under the more well-known rubric of “Pragmatism.” “Semeiotic” is used to refer specifically to Peirce’s sign theory, as he did himself (*CP* 8.343; cited in Colapietro 2007: 18), and to distinguish it from other sign theories that go by the more well-known labels “semiotic” or “semiological.” See James Hoopes (1991), James Liszka (1996), and Cornelis de Waal (2001) for summary overviews of Peirce’s semeiotic that are beyond the scope of this introduction. Daniel (1987) also provides an excellent introductory overview adopting a cultural anthropological perspective.

9. The concept of articulation as it is here employed is drawn from Mark Franko’s use of the term in an address given at the conference Weaving Politics, in Stockholm, Sweden, 2012.
10. “Semiosis,” it should be noted, is typically defined in Peirce scholarship in terms that do not explicitly employ the concept of performance. Definitions approaching the concept from logical and grammatical perspectives more often characterize semiosis as the “action,” “activity,” and/or “information processing” of signs (Colapietro 1989: 19; De Tienne 2006; Fuhrman 2010; Stjernfelt 2014: 40, 118). While Colapietro does not include the term “performance” in his etymologically focused definition, I employ it here as the concept that most accurately characterizes the way in which the transformative movements of semiosis are foregrounded in Peirce’s rhetorically oriented arguments. The concept of performance is here posited as the conceptual parallel, from a rhetorical approach, to those of “exformation,” “transformation,” and “metaformation” that André De Tienne has identified in relation to the logic of “information” explicated in Peirce’s writings, both early and late (De Tienne 2006: 3). “Performance,” in sum, is the concept that best characterizes the most basic and general identity of semiosis as it appears from the rhetorical standpoint here adopted.
11. All technical terms taken from Peirce will be capitalized initially to indicate their belonging to Peirce’s semeiotic. After their introduction, the terms will no longer be capitalized unless it would create confusion not to capitalize them, but they will be employed as technically defined unless otherwise noted.
12. Despite the similarity in terms, Colapietro makes no reference here to Geertz’s renowned conceptualization of “thick description” (1973). The phrase is used simply to refer to the kind of observational analysis that is typical of semeiotic inquiry.
13. “Actant” is a term used by Bruno Latour (2005) to identify agentive participants in an assembled network that may or may not be human subjects.
14. “Semio-genesis” is defined by Jerry Chandler as simply “the process of creating signs” (2012). Chandler distinguishes between “intentional” and “natural” forms of semio-genesis, which are seen to produce “cultural” (or “human”) and “natural” forms of semiosis, respectively. It is one main contention of this study that landscape performances may constitute hybrid processes of intentional-natural semio-genesis as well. In focusing on such creative processes of sign initiation, it should be emphasized that the signs “born” are not absolutely or entirely new in every conceivable respect, as no sign, semeiotically conceptualized, could be (*EP2*: 328). Nonetheless, it is in the respects in which they are creative and in which they manifest the performance of *initiative* that they are considered

- semio-genetic. On the political significance inherent in this capacity to initiate significant movement, see Lepecki (2012c: 34).
15. See, for example, Stanley J. Tambiah (1979); Roy A. Rappaport (1979); E.V. Daniel (1987, 1996), Webb Keane (1997, 2007), Richard Parmentier (1987); Sally Ann Ness (1992), J. Lowell Lewis (1992), Diane Mines (2005), Carol Hendrickson (2008), and Eduardo Kohn (2013). All focus on thick descriptions of actual practices, looking at processes of sign transformation as they provide insight into actual cultural and historical contexts. None self-identify as specifically “rhetorical” (or logical or grammatical), but rather claim simply to employ Peirce’s theory of signs without indicating any specific branch of it. This claim is discussed in more breadth in Ness (2012).
  16. The entire area of Yosemite National Park is much larger than Yosemite Valley. In its entirety the park is 1,169 square miles, or roughly the size of the state of Rhode Island. However, 94 percent of the park’s land is designated wilderness area that can only be reached on foot along some 800 miles of trails (Swedo 2011: 1; Medley 2002: 8). It is estimated that 95 percent of Yosemite’s visitors go only to Yosemite Valley (Wells 1998: 1).
  17. The oral historical dimension of this research, the Yosemite Visitors Project, took place between 2005 and 2012. More than sixty interviewees have participated in the project, which seeks to document the diversity of visitor experience among individuals who have family histories of visiting the park for three generations or more.
  18. In stressing the “non-metaphorical” character of this choreographic identification, I adopt the general perspective of Lepecki and the cultural theorist Andrew Hewitt, who have recognized that such a non-metaphorical identification has substantial political consequences for the study of performance. The perspective leads to the recognition that, in Lepecki’s words, “choreography is, in itself, the very matter, indeed, the very matrix, of politics’ ‘function’” (Lepecki 2013: 155). This function, as Hewitt has phrased it, is politics’ “disposition and manipulation of bodies in relation to each other” (Hewitt 2005: 11). See Lepecki (2012a, 2012b, and 2012c) for further discussion of this perspective.
  19. The most obvious and critical “other” in this regard would be the semiotic sign theory of Ferdinand de Saussure as it can be seen to undergird (post-)structuralist and critical theories of sign production. The second most critical comparison would be to the theory of Ernst Cassirer, whose work was of fundamental importance to the interpretive ethnography of cultural performance as developed by Clifford Geertz. The discussion in this section orients itself primarily in relation to Saussurian semiotic theory, although the positions taken could be opposed to Cassirerian theory as well. A full explication of these contrasts must await future publication.
  20. Peirce’s view here on the development of signs is particularly closely aligned with Henri Bergson’s view on the location of images as they relate to human consciousness (2007).
  21. Eduardo Kohn has advanced a somewhat similar pragmaticist definition of form that also identifies it as fundamentally processual. Kohn asserts, “By ‘form’ here, I am referring to a strange but nonetheless worldly process of pattern production and propagation, a process Deacon (2006, 2012) characterizes as ‘morphodynamic’—one whose peculiar generative logic necessarily comes to permeate living beings (human and nonhuman) as they harness it” (2013: 20). For a detailed discussion of how the Form of the Sign can be understood processually as it relates to “Information,” see Fuhrman (2010).
  22. Lepecki, following Aristotle, has employed the term *energeia* as “energy that energizes,” or “movement that in moving, triggers action.” “Energeia,” Lepecki elaborates, “qualifies

- movement (*kinesis*) not only as something that moves, but as motion that *acts*” (2012c: 32). The source of a semeiotic sign’s capacity to perform as such, in this regard, is a particular intensification of energy originating in its distinctively triadic moving “signature” rather than in any content or material it might also possess or “carry.”
23. The use of “thing” here to indicate an object that has acquired the character of a Sign is intended to invoke Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory definition of “thing” (an object that has acquired performativity and becomes an actant in an assemblage) as well as that utilized by André Lepecki in his inter-subjective movement/action-constituted conceptualization of the “political thing” (2012b, 2012c). Lepecki’s notion of the “political thing,” in particular, parallels closely the definition of a semeiotic symbol (of certain political kind). Lepecki writes, “The *political thing* is a difficult, ever-evolving commitment, it is less an object and a subject than a *movement* defined by inter-subjective *action*—one that, moreover, must be learned, rehearsed, nurtured, and above all *experimented with, practiced and experienced*” (2012b: 3; emphasis in text). It should be noted that Lepecki’s definition of a political thing corresponds specifically to what is termed a Symbol’s Qualisign in Peircean sign theory, that aspect that conveys its qualitative “essence.” On Latour’s definition, see Jane Bennett’s discussion of “thing power” as it relates to Actor-Network-Theory (2010).
  24. The close alignment of Bateson’s cybernetic theory of mind with Peirce’s semeiotic has been recognized and explicated in greater detail by Gary Fuhman (2010), Jesper Hoffmeyer (2008), and myself (Ness 2007, 2008a, 2008b). As Hoffmeyer notes, Bateson’s definition of information as differences that make a difference “comes so close to a genuine triadic Peircean sign as to be nearly indistinguishable” (2008: 42; cited in Fuhman 2010: 188).
  25. See, for example, Peirce’s 1897 essay “Division of Signs” (CP 1.228), which gives the often cited definition “A sign, or *representamen*, is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity.” See also Peirce’s 1899 note on his 1867 landmark essay “On a New List of Categories” (CP 1.564–65). He writes, “A representation is that character of a thing by virtue of which, for the production of a certain mental effect, it may stand in place of another thing.” He goes on, however, to acknowledge that his conception of such a “representation” was not general enough to cover all of the classes included in his idea of the sign. Likewise, in his 1902 definition of “Represent” for the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology*, Peirce wrote that to represent was “to stand for, that is, to be in such a relation to another that for certain purposes it is treated by some mind as if it were that other” (CP 2.273). Here the notion of “being in relation” gains prevalence over the relatively specific trope of “standing for.” Likewise, in his 1902 definition of “Sign” for the same dictionary, Peirce specified that a sign was “anything which determines something else (its *interpretant*) to refer to an object to which itself refers (its *object*) in the same way, the interpretant becoming in turn a sign, and so on *ad infinitum*” (CP 2.303). Here the idea of “standing for” has been completely omitted from the definition in favor of the idea of “determining”—which I modify for rhetorical purposes to the idea of “agentively moving into a relationship with.”
  26. The editors of *The Essential Peirce* note that “the conception of a sign as a medium of communication becomes very prominent in Peirce’s 1906 writings” (EP2: 544n22). Colapietro notes that Peirce’s comment quoted above was made in reference to his category of “Thirdness.” However, Colapietro also asserts that the comment could have been made “with equal justice” about semiosis, which is how it is interpreted here, in accordance with the categorial definition that grounds the rhetorical one here employed.



27. In 1902, Peirce defined a Symbol similarly as a Sign whose character “consists precisely in its being a rule” and gave as examples “words, sentences, books, and other conventional signs” (*CP* 2.292). He elaborated, “A Symbol is a law, or regularity of the indefinite future” (*CP* 2.293).
28. The manuscript that contains this passage (#517) is titled “New Elements” and is dated to 1904. It is considered by some to be one of the most important statements of Peirce’s later conceptualization of his semeiotic (*EP2*: 300–24).
29. For an overview of the history of the Yosemite Firefall tradition, see Huell Houser’s documentary *California’s Gold with Huell Howser #706: Yosemite Firefall*.
30. To view images from the Yosemite in Time project, visit the website: <http://www.klettandwolfe.com/2009/10/yosemite-in-time.html>. In the technical terminology of Peirce’s semeiotic, the kind of symbolic process created by the photographers was one that entailed both *Sumisigns*—simple substitutive signs (so that a later retaken image could be recognized as substitutable for an earlier one)—and *Dicisigns* or quasi-propositions—informational signs (so that a later image could be appreciated as presenting contrasting information to an earlier one). See Frederik Stjernfelt’s investigations of “diagrammatology” for a more detailed discussion of the latter in relation to visual imagery more generally (2007, 2014). If the process of retaking were in actuality to be continued, and if the accumulated imagery were to show predictable patterns of change in the landscape location that was rephotographed (or a clear lack thereof), the continuum could then be said to have a persuasive (rhetorical and rational) character that would be identifiable as that of a *Suadisign*, or *Argument Symbol* type. Given the incipient stage of the symbol formation, however, this last character is still vague. The particular orientation of the project’s rephotography, focusing as it did on the duplication of particular instances of renowned photographic performance and particular famous images, would also be characterized in semeiotic terminology as directed toward the creation of *Singular Symbols*, as each continuum of recurring photography was developed in relation to individual, existent photographs (*EP2*: 275). Singular symbols may originate, in Peirce’s observations, in “either an image of the idea signified, or a reminiscence of some individual occurrence, person, or thing, connected with its meaning, or is a metaphor” (*EP2*: 264). The rephotographing project originates in both the images and the occurrences of original photographic performances.
31. With regard to the Symbol’s first correlate or *representamen*, as well, which Peirce identified as being of the class he termed *Legisigns*, Peirce wrote, “Every conventional sign is a legisign [but not conversely]” (*CP* 2.246).
32. While it is unambiguously prominent in Peirce’s later writings, the post-humanist character of Peirce’s concept of the Symbol is not one typically recognized in research on cultural performance. Eduardo Kohn’s study of Runa semeiotics is perhaps the most recent example of a more standard cultural anthropological reading of Peirce’s theory of the symbol (2013). While Kohn identifies the Icon and Index as sign modalities operating in nonhuman environments and bases his own claims to a post-humanist approach to anthropological inquiry on that recognition, he remains humanist in his discussion of the Peircean symbol (2013: 8, 133, 168). The great majority, if not the entirety, of semiotic anthropologists to date have done so as well, at times equating Peirce’s concept of the symbol with that of the Saussurian linguistic sign. This humanist cultural anthropological treatment of Peirce’s symbol concept, which is challenged in this study, recently has

begun to receive some critical scrutiny, even within the discipline of anthropology (see, for example, Pandian responding to Kohn, 2014). However, it remains the prevailing interpretation until the present time. In Peirce scholarship, however, Peirce's claim that semeiotic symbols are not restricted to human sign use is receiving increasing attention. Frederik Stjernfeldt's work *Natural Propositions: The Actuality of Peirce's Doctrine of Dicsigns* (2014) is perhaps the most detailed and elaborate example of this interest in articulating the continuity between human and nonhuman/biological symbolic semeiotic processes. For examples of nonhuman symbolic processes, pragmaticistically defined, see Stjernfeldt (2014: 142–61).

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