

## PREFACE: THE PLAY OF MUSEMENT

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Over the past 37 years, the pages of *Semiotics* have carried on the proud tradition of publishing a select record of the outstanding contributions to the annual SSA conference, a tradition established by the late John Deely in 1980. Since 2013, the publication has carried on that tradition in a peer-reviewed yearbook format, open to post-conference revisions and conference-external submissions from active members. This year marks the publication's fifth year under the editorship of Jamin Pelkey, who is joined by two new Associate Editors, Geoffrey R. Owens of Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, and Elvira K. Katić, of Ramapo College, New Jersey, as part of a set of editorial transitions precipitated by John Deely's passing last year. Geoffrey and Elvira will be stepping into the role of yearbook Co-Editors for the 2018 edition as Jamin transitions to the society's journal, *The American Journal of Semiotics*. To mark the first phase of this transition, Geoffrey has served as lead editor on the current volume with editorial guidance from Jamin and editorial support from Sari Park, this volume's co-editors.

The chapters in this volume represent substantial revisions of papers originally presented at the 42nd annual meeting of the Semiotic Society of America, at the Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla, Mexico, 25–29 October, 2017. The theme selected for the 42nd annual meeting was “The Play of Signs/The Signs of Play”, a topic touching upon Pierce's coinage of the concept of “musement” as an essential complement to both the passive absorption of one's surroundings, giving rise to impression, and subsequent attentive observation. This concept was further developed in Sebeok's 1981 book *The Play of Musement*, and presented as a topic of contemplation for a great many of the presenters at the SSA conference.

The present volume is arranged into four parts, each of which ties in directly or indirectly with the volume's themes of play and of musement. The

three contributions in the first section “Bridging and Natural and Human Sciences”, are led by keynote speaker William B. Gomes’ question: “How Can “The Play of Signs and Signs of Play” Become an Attractive Model for Dealing with Eidetic and Empirical Research?” Focusing on the semiotic reversal inherent in the aforementioned phrase, his experiments indicate that such reversals generate an ambiguity, defined not in its sense of being something unclear, but something that lends itself to multiple meanings. This served as a stimulus for test subjects to “play” with the signs with which they were presented, thus raising their levels of awareness of the phenomenological wholeness of their experiences. Zdzisław Wąsik’s contribution “Epistemology as a Semio-Mathetic Interplay of Human Organisms with Their Alterable Worlds”, explores the relationship between mathetics, “the science of order” and mathesis, the “assessment of learning”. His thesis is that it is in the semiotic process of imaginatively “playing with the images of reality” in the semiotic mind that the cognizing subject is able to mediate between the objective world of mathesis and the multiplicity of imagined and subjective worlds possible through mathetics. Both of these contributions thus envision play and musement as the possible link that distinguishes human cognition and action from that of other living organisms, offering a way of better understanding the relationship between biological and cultural evolution, which is the subject of the third contribution by Geoffrey Owens, titled “Metaphor or Metonym? The Relationship between Biological and Cultural Evolution”.

The three contributors to Part 2, “Speaking and Doing”, all to some extent grapple with the concept of performatives in language—the manner in which language not only does the work of saying something, but can also effect change in the worlds of its speakers. In some sense, performance and ritual are but a more formalized species of play. Donna West’s contribution, “Early Enactments as Submissions Toward Self-Control: Peirce’s Ten-Fold Division of Signs” pays special attention to the importance of gestures in early childhood development, particularly prelinguistic imperative gestures, that may be instrumental as staging ground for the developing child as it attempts to construct arguments built upon increasingly elaborate and complicated interpretants. Myrdene Anderson and Katja Pettinen’s chapter “Doing Things with and Without Words”, seeks to unearth the “magic” inherent in performativities. As the authors point out, speech acts do not occur in a vacuum, but are “intertwined with sensorial process” and bodily action. The careful and proper choreography of speech, gesture and movement in the context of performativity is essential to generating the felicitous circumstances under which words can do things—put another way, these are the conditions in which “magic” may occur. Gila Naveh’s chapter, “Parables as Praxis and Semiosis” focuses on the particular language attributed to Jesus in the Gospel parable of “The Wedding Feast”. Stylistically, the surface narrative seems to evoke a

world where the basic rules of behavior of the setting may range at times from arbitrary to inexplicable. But viewed as a series of isomorphic segments, it is possible that texts address an audience whose members have various degrees of capacity to decipher its coded messages about the Kingdom of Heaven, sorting the audience into the ‘many’ who are called to that Kingdom, and the ‘few’ that are ultimately chosen.

The contributors to Part 3, “The Play of Musement”, direct our attention to applications of the more contemplative aspects of musement to specific situations in the lived world. Román Esqueda’s “Design Thinking as Play of Musement” raises questions about the relationship between design and Peirce’s concept of abduction. In examining the specific case study of developing better packaging for powdered milk for newborns, abduction—now synonymous with ‘design thinking’—suggests new ways of packaging that alleviate feelings of uncertainty and wastage that come about due to the ad hoc manner in which mothers attempt to optimize their experiences in dealing with the inadequate packaging currently on the market. In Griselda Zárate’s and Sahad Rivera’s “Of Toys, Cultural Heritage and Globalization”, we learn about the semiotic history of handcrafted kitchen clay toys and wooden toy trucks, as they faced competition from mass produced children’s toys. Though starting life as children’s playthings—that nevertheless served the serious purpose of enculturating children into their adult roles—they gradually transformed through semiosis into objects valued by collectors as objects of contemplation worthy of museums. Cassandra Collier’s “Drag Queens in Play” turns to a still different topic: the semiosis of the drag queen, from female impersonation to subversive, internally and externally referential means through which queer communities can interrogate the meaning and significance of the idea of inclusiveness.

Part 4 centers around a question, posed by Elliot Gaines in the first contribution to this section, “Semiotic Distinctions: : Reality, Actuality, and Ideology in the Media”, about the extent to which (if at all) the concepts of “actuality” and “reality” overlap in an era in which contemporary information and entertainment media have been freed from constraints of time and space that often grounded it in the past. This question has become especially poignant at a time in which the phrase “fake news” has become an epithet that partisans of different ideological camps have hurled at one another in an attempt to assert their sense of the actual as also being real. And nowhere can this distinction be more clearly illustrated than with Kyle Davidson’s “Hatsune Miku and the Crowd Source Pop Idol” whose central subject, the Japanese pop star Hatsune Miku, is very “real” to her devoted followers—but diverges from most other media sensations by virtue of the fact that she is not an actual human being. Being the initial creation through Sony Corporation’s software suit VOCALOID, she breaks down barriers, not only between

the flesh-and-blood and virtual musician, but also between that of creator, performer and audience, as fans themselves have contributed in significant ways to the creation of new music, lyrics and performance contexts for Miku and her entourage. The third chapter in this section, Jayakrishnan Narayanan's "The Pure, the Divine and the Sublime", takes us to the realm of South Asian Karnatik religious music videos. This venerable genre of Indian religious music has undergone a semiosis through its being paired with visuals such as temple grounds, scenes of nature and religious iconography, transforming it into a multimedia experience for its 21st century audience. The result is a semiotic "jigsaw" that touches upon the sublime through its openness to multiple levels of auditory and visual play that serve as a catalyst for deep contemplation.

As the final contribution and coda to our volume, we have Valdenildo dos Santos' "Surprise as Trigger for Despair and Esteem in *The Force of Blood* by Cervantes". The central subject is the chance encounter between a group of young men led by Rodolfo, and the family of the Young Leocadia. This surprise encounter led to Rodolfo's companions instigating him to kidnap and rape Leocadia. For Leocadia, the encounter led to the despair that her personal honor had come into jeopardy, prospects for having a greater range of choices for marriage had diminished, and her child being put into grave danger. Though set in the context of a decadent seventeenth century Spain, the passions evoked, stemming from this abrupt, chance-laden, violent and transformative encounter, re-emerge as relevant to our present era of the "Me Too" movement.

In closing, we would like to acknowledge and express appreciation to others who have made this volume possible. We wish to thank the SSA 42 host institution, Universidad Popular Autónoma del Estado de Puebla, for making the 2017 program successful. We also wish to thank all of the scholars who contributed manuscripts, including those whose works may not have made it into this year's publication. We encourage each and every one of them to continue with their efforts to publish quality scholarship. Diana Malsky of the Philosophy Documentation Center has continued her excellent work with our authors in typesetting and preparing galley proofs. And finally, we wish to express our thanks to members of our editorial board, for their contributions of time and thoughtful service, without which this volume would not have been possible.