**Recherches sémiotiques
Semiotic Inquiry**

RS·SI

Processes of Imaging and Imagining: Toward a Pragmatic Clarification of the Image

Vincent Colapietro

Citer cet article

Colapietro, V. (2013). Processes of Imaging and Imagining: Toward a Pragmatic Clarification of the Image. *Recherches sémiotiques / Semiotic Inquiry*, *33*(1-2-3), 95–114. https://doi.org/10.7202/1035286ar

Résumé de l'article

Cet article a pour objectif une élucidation pragmatiste des concepts d'imagerie (*imaging*) et d'imaginer (*imagining*). Faisant appel à la doctrine peircéenne des trois grades de clarté conceptuelle (familiarité tacite, définition abstraite, élucidation pragmatique), l'auteur vise à rendre clairs les processus d'imagerie et d'imagination pour chaque grade. Plus précisément, il s'engage à déplacer l'enquête de la définition abstraite vers la clarification pragmatique de manière à mettre l'emphase sur les habitudes d'agents *in situ* plutôt que sur des formulations verbales considérées dans l'abstrait. Pour ce faire, et à titre d'exemple, il emprunte à Barbara Holt la notion d'artiste "travaillant à chaud" (*working hot*). Il s'agit d'un processus digne d'un examen sémiotique sérieux, où les intentions conscientes, les pulsions inconscientes, les visées cognitives et la matérialité dense (*thick materiality*) concourent pour prendre corps dans un medium perceptible. Aussi, à partir d'un survol de la théorie générale des signes de Peirce, l'auteur considère-t-il certains usages spécifiques de cette dernière malgré qu'ils n'étaient pas au coeur des préoccupations de Peirce : la production et la performance artistiques. C'est là, tout simplement, que sont mis en évidence avec le plus d'éclat les dynamiques propres à l'imagerie et à l'imagination.

Processes of Imaging and Imagining : Toward a Pragmatic Clarification of the Image

Vincent Colapietro

PennState University

"I had reached a mode of thought so remote from that of the ordinary man, that I was unable to communicate with him. Another great labor was required in breaking a path by which to lead him from his position to my own. I had become entirely unaccustomed to the use of ordinary language to express my own logical ideas to myself. I was obliged to make a regular study of ordinary ideas and language, in order to convey any hint of my real meaning. I found that I had a difficult art to acquire. The clear expression of my thoughts is still most difficult to me" – C. S. Peirce (MS 175)[1]

Introduction

In ordinary language a casual use of the word *image* will almost certainly go unremarked, but in light of the above epigram the concept *image* calls for clarification.[2] The sense that such a commonplace term calls for conceptual clarification, especially of a pragmatic cast, is arguably one of the first points to be made when considering Peirce and image. In any event, the writings of C. S. Peirce provide us with various tools to carry out this complex task. His doctrine of pragmatism might be as relevant to this task as his theory of signs. Moreover, this doctrine might be more integral to his semeiotic than many of his best informed, most sympathetic expositors appear to appreciate. My hope is not so much

to prove these claims as simply to render them plausible.

Peirce dreamt of a theory of signs so comprehensive and detailed as to provide the conceptual resources for exploring countless natural processes and human practices. While his overarching concern was to offer a normative account of objective inquiry against the background of an evolutionary cosmology, his prodigious efforts accomplished even more than this ambitious goal. Though he crafted a theory of signs principally as a means by which to articulate such an account, his theory far transcends this application. His theoretical imagination is nowhere more evident than in his very conception of such an investigation as semeiotic and in his working out, in the most painstaking, suggestive manner, the most salient details of this heuristic framework. His elaborate, nuanced classifications of signs are truly monumental achievements, but for this reason they are, given our topic, likely to command disproportionately our critical attention. A more rudimentary, less technical mode of clarification is, thus, all too likely ignored. Here I am referring to nothing other than pragmatism itself and, at first, the pragmatist "doctrine" in its humblest form, as a heuristic maxim (*i.e.*, a maxim designed by an experimental inquirer for the sake of carrying forward the communal work of deliberative agents passionately devoted to discovering what is not yet known).

In the course of this essay, I will sketch my approach to interpreting Peirce's general theory of signs, stressing the extent to which this theory is pragmaticist (see also Colapietro 2004a). I will also draw out the implications of this for the task of clarifying images and imaging. In the end, the accent must fall on semiosis rather than sign, imaging and imagining rather than image, and on self-transformative processes rather than self-contained objects. The stress on pragmatism means here, at the very least, that : "The elements of every concept enter into logical thought at the gate of perception and make their exit at the gate of purposive action ..." (EP 2 : 241).[3]

The metaphor of policing the borders of the domain of inquiry is explicit in Peirce's text, for the passage just quoted continues in this way : "and whatever cannot show its passports at both those gates is to be arrested as unauthorized by reason" (*cf.* Colapietro 2004b). This metaphor is, in turn, itself linked to Peirce's desire to secure and also to enhance our mastery over the meanings of our signs. This desire is itself explicit in one of the most famous passages in one of his most famous essays : "The very first lesson that we have to demand that logic shall teach us is, how to make our ideas clear. To know what we think, to be masters of our own meaning, will make a solid foundation for great and weighty thought" (CP 5.393). Those who depreciate this undertaking are the ones most likely to stand in greatest need of clarifying their thoughts.

Precisely because signs so mislead and overwhelm, delude and unhinge us, because they so subtly efface themselves and hence so fre-

quently escape our notice, the desire for such mastery is understandable and, in some measure, even justifiable. But we never attain anything more than an extremely limited degree of such mastery. The meaning of our own words and other signs typically outstrip our comprehension and control, driving us in surprising directions and often even forcing us into unwanted complicities. Regardless of our competency and care, signs have a life of their own (*cf.* Woolf 1942 : 198; Colapietro 2001 : 114-115). Hence, we cannot so diligently police the borders of this or that domain of inquiry that only what reason authorizes enters or exits. The cost of securing the complete elimination of illegal aliens would be all too high. The vibrancy of any culture requires the presence and provocations of aliens and bastards and other illegal and illegitimate parties. The growth of signs must at some junctures always be a wild and uncontrollable excess, a vast and varied profusion (see, *e.g.*, CP 1.12).

My sense is that Peirce's pragmatism is rooted in just this recognition. Why else would he be so anxious about the mastery of meaning? If we return to its original articulation, Peircean pragmatism is a self-conscious attempt on the part of an experimental inquirer to aid himself and others in making their own ideas clear, *i.e.*, in making their signs clearerer (since absolute clarity is an unattainable goal). The reflexive and recursive character of Peirce's thought is nowhere more evident than in his efforts to clarify first the idea of idea by translating it into sign and, then, the conception of sign itself by translating it into a role within a process. Hence, I will enlist the aid of Peirce to interpret Peirce (above all, I will use his distinction of the three grades, or levels, of conceptual clarity to clarify his conception of semiosis); more specifically, Peirce's pragmatism will assist us in illuminating his semeiotic. Pragmatically conceived (or clarified), signs dispose us to become more finely and fully attuned to the qualities, insistencies, and dispositions of the objects and, more generally, the beings we encounter in experience or simply through imagination. In addition, I will use the interpretation derived thereby as an aid in understanding the dimension of our experience related to the conception of *image* and indeed allied notions. We will see that the functional integration of categorically distinct facets evident in semiosis is also manifest in imaging and imagining. In anticipation of the upshot of our inquiry, we truly begin to glimpse the power and character of the *function* of imaging and imagining, especially in reference to artworks, when we appreciate what Barbara Bolt – drawing on Peirce – calls the performative power of the image (2004). In the concluding chapter of *Art Beyond Representation*, "Working Hot : A Materialist Ontology", she draws upon first Deleuze and then Peirce "to think through the question of how we might experience a work [specifically, an artwork] as both a concurrent actual production and a sign" (149-50) that is, a resultant sign of material processes. Her use of Peirce in this context is suggestive and indeed insightful, but requires fuller articulation than I can provide here. Even so, it is sufficiently developed and detailed, informed and

illuminating, to merit the attention of even those who have devoted considerable energy to exploring the implications of Peirce's theory for an understanding of artistic production and aesthetic engagement.

Toward a Pragmaticist Theory of Signs

Just as the point is an abstraction from the line, indeed as the line itself is an abstraction from temporality (NEM IV : 20; *cf.* Ingold 2007), so the image is an abstraction from a process of imaging and practices of imagining in which the image assumes a more or less determinate, isolatable form.[4] If this is true, then we have an answer to the following questions : Do antecedently fixed forms provide us with the ultimate principles of intelligibility, the means by which to explain the events and objects encountered in our experience? Or rather do ongoing historical processes provide us with the most adequate "forms" of explanation? For Peirce, the fixation on immutable forms needs to be replaced by attention to evolving norms conceived as immanent legisigns and emergent exemplars (*cf.* Esposito 1979 : 59). That is, an ontology of antecedently fixed forms needs to be supplanted by an ontology of historically evolved and evolving forms. Even laws are to be envisioned as the outcome of processes, not immutable forms or principles governing *from on high* these processes.

Our experience of error in particular forces upon us the realization that we are *loci* of error and ignorance (EP 1 : 20; or W 2 : 169; or CP 5.234-236; Colapietro 1989 : 42). And the sense of self generated by this experience turns out to be far more illusory, far less integrated and unified, also far less separate and private, than this self characteristically imagines itself to be (Short 1997 : 304-308; De Tienne 2002 : 34-35). This self is implicated in an onrushing series of temporal transitions and historical engagements. It is barely distinguishable, if indeed it is distinguishable at all, from this series. The salience of this is all too seldom noted, let alone underscored, by Peirceans, despite Peirce's own stress on it. "Any mind which has the power of investigation, and which therefore passes from doubt to belief [this passage or transition being the essence of inquiry], must have", Peirce claims, "its ideas follow one another in time. And if there is to be any distinction of a right and a wrong method of investigation, it [the mind] must have some control over the process" (CP 7.346). We are embodied, social actors caught up in processes and practices about which we have little comprehension, over which we have even less control. While following *after* in the temporal (or historical) sense needs to be distinguished from following *from* in the logical sense, the logical, at least as understood by Peirce, is inseparable from the temporal and historical. Not immutable but evolving forms of being and intelligibility are both the foci and instruments of effective inquiry and interpretation.

Precisely because of our fateful entanglements and experiential frus-

trations as historical actors, we are solicitous about such matters as the drawing of inferences, the formation of beliefs, and the clarification of meanings. In what is arguably his most widely known text, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (1878), Peirce distinguishes three grades of clarity : tacit or inarticulate familiarity, formal and abstract definition, and pragmatic clarification (EP 1 : 126-127, 131-132; or W : 258-260, 265-266; or CP 5). He argues in this essay that contributors to philosophical discourse have traditionally done little to move beyond the level of abstract definition. Positively, he insists upon the need to drive reflection to the level of pragmatic clarification, by deliberate (or conscientious) application of the pragmatic maxim. The argument of "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" is, however, not framed in formally semiotic terms. In addition, Peirce himself in his study of signs often seems to be content with offering what appear to be abstract definitions of his central conceptions (including the notion of sign itself). Take, for example, one of countless representative definitions of a sign : "Namely, a sign is something, *A*, which brings something, *B*, its *interpretant* sign determined or created by it, into the same sort of correspondence with something, *C*, its *object*, as that in which itself stands to *C*" (NEM IV : 20-21). The *action* of a sign is, nonetheless, included in this formal abstract definition; thereby, by implication, the *agency* of the sign itself is noted (see Ransdell 1980). The irony here is that the clarification of Peirce's own pragmatism is all too often framed in abstract, formal terms, rather than concrete, pragmatic ones. Finally, many (arguably most) of his expositors have seemingly not noted the irony here : in his semeiotic, Peirce often appears to fail at conducting his inquiry in accord with the directives of his pragmatism. And they unjustifiably follow Peirce's example in this respect. This is all the more ironic because Peirce took himself, as he announced in a letter to Victoria Lady Welby, to be "a convinced Pragmaticist in Semeiotic" (SS : 78; *cf.* Joswick 1996; Colapietro 2004a).

But, if we attend carefully to Peirce's writings from 1898 to the time of his death in 1914, we are able to see the marked degree to which his pragmatism is formally semeiotic and, in turn, his semeiotic is truly pragmatic. This is most evident in reference to the unmistakably pragmatic clarification which he offers of his central notions, including semiosis (conceived explicitly as a process). In his mature writings, Peirce often characterizes pragmatism as an attempt to translate our conceptions explicitly into processes and practices or factors having meaning only in reference to processes and practices (see, *e.g.*, EP 2 : 340). As a way of moving beyond the level of abstract definitions and moving toward that of pragmatic clarification, then, he attends carefully to the activities and, of even greater importance, the habits of action inextricably intertwined with both our most commonplace and our most technical conceptions. He ultimately relates these matters to reflexive (or deliberative) agency, *i.e.*, the distinctive form of human agency (one in which "inner dialogue" and imagined scenarios play a central and efficacious role).

In light of these considerations, it seems only appropriate to translate pragmatically our conceptions of the image into processes and practices of imaging and imagining. Some attention will be paid to Peirce's claims regarding the human imagination as an instinctual capacity, but *various* practices of human imaging will be the main topic. The critical dimension of Peircean semeiotic will come into play insofar as the historically instituted practices of human imaging and imagining are considered in contrast to the semiotically innovative endeavors of various artists (including those working with digital technologies). One might say that the artistic imagination is the human imagination writ large. In any event, this critical dimension is linked to the distinctive form of human agency and the obsistent character of the dynamical object pragmatically clarified by Peirce in his mature work. Whereas a formally abstract theory of signs systematically excludes, especially at the outset, any reference to the utterers and interpreters of signs, a truly pragmatic theory makes explicit, precisely as a result of ever thicker descriptions, the processes, practices, and indeed practitioners involved in such activities as imaging and imagining (Joswick 1996). For certain purposes, we can indeed abstract from utterers and interpreters in general, hence, from the peculiar constitution of actual sign-users. Indeed, only by doing so is it possible to articulate a purely formal, truly general doctrine of semiosis. For the purpose of offering a sufficiently thick account of human semiosis, however, the specification of processes, practices, and practitioners is not only permissible but also necessary (see, *e.g.*, CP 2.107). In the end, speculative rhetoric (or what Peirce came to call *methodeutic*) tended to eclipse speculative grammar, that is, a pragmatist orientation toward natural processes and historical practices tended to usurp the critical attention of Peirce's theoretical imagination, lessening the hold of the purely formal conditions for intelligibility.

Toward a Pragmaticist and Performative Account of Image, Imaging and Imagining

The concept *image* is a pre-theoretic one, thus a rough and ready notion, irreducibly vague and general, thereby suitable for countless purposes. Please note that quite apart from its being formally or abstractly defined, we can make intelligent, effective and indeed ingenious and innovative use of this notion *image*. Even in the absence of a definition, we can deploy this notion meaningfully and properly. The Socratic request[5] for a formal definition articulated with such precision as to be invulnerable to counterexample, is, at once, in accord and at odds with the ethics of inquiry advocated by Peirce. This request is in accord with the ethics of inquiry insofar as Peirce himself identifies formal, abstract definition as an indispensable step in the process of clarifying, for the purpose of experimental investigation, various and sundry conceptions. It is, however, at odds with Peirce's ethics of inquiry insofar as this demand is taken to imply two claims. First, if this demand

is taken to imply the complete inadequacy of our tacit practical feel (*cf.* Bourdieu 1990 : 80-86) for how to use and interpret a concept such as image, then it is at odds with Peirce's approach. We often know quite adequately what we are talking about even when we cannot offer formal, precise definitions of the pivotal terms of our discourse, the terms around which virtually everything turns. For the most part, our everyday conceptions do not need to secure their intelligibility or applicability by appeal to formal symbolizations. Rather the reverse is true.

> For ordinary purposes, [however,] nothing is gained by carrying the analysis so far [as is properly done in science]; because these ordinary commonsense concepts of everyday life, having guided the conduct of men [and women] ever since the race was developed, are far more trustworthy than the exacter [more exact] concepts of science; so that when great exactitude is not required, they are the best terms of definition (EP 2 : 433).

Second, if the Socratic demand for a formal definition is taken to imply that the level of clarity thereby attained is the highest one possible, then it is in this respect also at odds with Peirce's ethics of inquiry. A higher level of clarification is, he insists, attainable by a conscientious application of the pragmatic maxim to a notion such as image. Both images and our conceptions of them partake of generality and vagueness. (Just as we have various, not infrequently conflicting ideas of just what ideas are, so too we have diverse, and often incompatible images of just what images are.) Images are indeterminate in countless respects, though the nature and degree of their indeterminacy fails more often than not to prove a hindrance or disadvantage. Peirce's efforts to rescue the theory of signs from the clutches of such nominalists as Ockham and Berkeley encompass his endeavor to rescue our understanding of images, imaging, and imagining from nominalistic and indeed also Cartesian, subjectivist, and psychologistic construals.

At the first level of clarity, we have then our pre-theoretical conceptions and understandings of images, imaging, and imagining. At the second level, we have such formal definitions as that offered by Peirce mos famously in his 1903 syllabus (image-diagram-metaphor; see EP 2 : 273-74). But it is important to appreciate that this is but one of Peirce's attempts to define formally the concept of image. It is even more important to realize that such definitions are not ultimately adequate for conducting a fruitful investigation. Indeed, Peirce warned his readers against the snares and deceptions of abstract definitions. To conceive of images in abstraction from processes of imaging and practices of imagining is undeniably legitimate for certain purposes but ultimately deficient from a pragmaticist perspective. But to conceive of images specifically and explicitly in reference to these processes and practices is, in large measure, what it means to provide a pragmatic clarification of such images. The processes by which images are generated, also the practices by which images are formed and transformed, finally, the diverse (even conflicting) roles played by images in these processes and

practices are precisely the phenomena to which a pragmatically oriented inquiry must pay critical attention.

The imagination as a power in and through which such processes and practices are carried on (not however the imagination imagined to be an inner, individual capacity, but rather conceived to be an expressive, natural endowment) also calls for such consideration.[6] Accordingly, a number of points about Peirce's valorization of the imagination merit recollection here. Let me recall only the four most immediately relevant ones by relying for the most part on Peirce's own words. First, he readily grants that : "Mere imagination would indeed be mere trifling", but then immediately adds : "only no imagination is mere" (CP 6.286). Second, he asserts that : "the whole of ratiocination, and all that makes us intellectual beings, is performed in imagination" (*Ibid.*). Third, the role of imagination in science is emphatically affirmed by Peirce. As he puts it, "there is, after all, nothing but imagination that can ever supply him [the scientist] an inkling of the truth. He can stare stupidly at phenomena; but in the absence of imagination they will not connect themselves in any rational [or intelligible] way" (CP 1.46). Indeed, he declares : "It is not too much to say that after the passion to learn [the desire to discover what is not yet known] there is no quality so indispensable to the successful prosecution of science as imagination" (CP 1.47). He admits : "There are, no doubt, kinds of imagination of no value to science, mere artistic imagination, mere dreaming of opportunities for gain". Then Peirce immediately clarifies the distinctive form of human imagination so critical for experimental investigation – "The scientific imagination dreams of explanations and laws" (CP 1.48). Fourth, the far-reaching and deep-cutting imagination of human beings is, at bottom, part of their biological inheritance. In one of my favorite passages from all of Peirce's writings, we encounter this conjecture :

> Human instinct is no whit less miraculous [or remarkable] than that of the bird, the beaver, or the ant. Only, instead of being directed to bodily actions, such as singing and flying [and building], or to the construction of communities, its theatre is the plastic inner world, and its products are the marvelous conceptions of which the greatest are the ideas of number, time, and space... (MS 318 : 44).

A collateral point for exploration here is Peirce's account of perception. Many of the other papers in this collection on "Peirce and Image" have taken up this topic. To touch upon this topic here, I will for the most part merely point out that one of the drafts of Peirce's application for a grant from the Carnegie Institute (MS L 75 [1902]) suggests perceptual judgments are only one type of uncontrollable inference. The classification of such judgments as actually a type of inference is, in my judgment, extremely suggestive and important (CP 8.62-71). Moreover, the implication that such judgments are best understood when seen in their kinship with other species of uncontrollable judgments, in particular, ones concerning the meanings of our utterances,

our actions and our processes of imaging, deserves to be developed in detail (*i.e.*, deserves to be expanded far beyond what I am able to do within the limits of this essay). As this suggests, the other two types that he identifies in this text are also relevant to our investigation and thus equally deserve our attention. In this text Peirce claims that "the following classes of judgments are exempt from logical criticism" (that which is beyond control being, by virtue of this, beyond criticism). The practices of self-controlled exertion take place against a vast background of uncontrollable processes and the acknowledgment of this background is central to Peirce's commonsensism (*cf.* Taylor 1995). Many of these processes are not completely explicable in mechanistic terms but call for semiotic description and explanation : they are, at least, in effect judgments formed on the basis of other judgments (*cf.* Savan 1987-88 : 1-3) – in a word, they are inferences. Unlike instances of reasoning in the strict sense, however, they are uncontrollable inferences. They include processes of imagining and, in addition, processes interwoven with those of imagining, hence their relevance to the topic at hand.

The first class of such judgments, encompassing "two important varieties", is characterized by Peirce in the following manner. Since this manuscript is such a rich resource for understanding Peirce's mature thought but nonetheless a neglected one, I will generously quote from it.

> First, judgments to the effect that the content of our consciousness includes certain elements, or in other words analyses of consciousness in the form of judgments. In particular, there are two important varieties of such judgments. One of these consists of perceptual judgments. For example, when I say "The sky is blue", I am not speaking of any external reality but mean only that when I look up I have a sensation of blueness. It is conceivable that this judgment, being an entirely different sort of mental product from a sensation, should misrepresent the sensation. But if we cannot help making that judgment, and up to date there is not the slightest ground for a suspicion that we ever can make it otherwise than we do, it is utter nonsense to inquire whether it is made right or wrong. Whether we can judge otherwise or not of the percept before us is, no doubt, a question to be carefully considered. But as soon as it is settled that we cannot, criticism is silenced. Should it be proved that we cannot help judging as we do within the next three months, then until that time had elapsed we should have to treat the judgment as infallible (MS L 75).

Semantic judgments at a certain level are no less uncontrollable than perceptual judgments as they are ordinarily made and, indeed, judgments about this content of our consciousness constitute the other main division of the first class that Peirce considers in this text.[7]

> The other variety of this class of judgments which merits mention consists of judgments concerning our own meaning. Suppose, for example, I have convinced myself that I am looking at a horse, and that I explicitly make this judgment. Then, I conclude that I am looking at a perissid ungulate. For what I mean by a horse is a perissid ungulate. In other words, I analyze the meaning of the word horse, in the sense in which I use it. It is certain that

blunders are frequently committed in such analyses. Yet if I am persuaded that no amount of deliberation could cause me to judge otherwise than that what I now mean be a horse is necessarily a perissid ungulate, then that powerlessness to judge otherwise must cut off all dispute (*Ibid.*).

Peirce goes on to explain the form of powerlessness that he is calling to his reader's attention :

> The following dialogue might be imagined: "How do you know that A is A?" "Because that is involved in what I mean by 'is'". "How do you know it is so involved?" "Because, torture my imagination as I will, I cannot think of anything that I could call A and not judge that A is A". "Perhaps that is because you have not hit on the right kind of a subject to substitute for A". "Possibly. But as long as I cannot help thinking that that is what I mean by 'is', it is nonsense to question it" (*Ibid.*).

While the first class of judgments concerns the content of consciousness, above all, the content of perceptual judgments and that of our most basic meanings (*e.g.*, that the being before me is what I understand by the word *horse*), the second class concerns our dispositions to action and, inseparably from these dispositions, our intention :

> A second class of judgments that are beyond criticism consist of those which would answer the question, What would you *do* under such and such circumstances, supposing you were to act so as to be deliberately satisfied with what you were doing? A man might reply, If I were to undergo such an experience, in the light of it I might change my mind; but supposing I remained as I now am, and acted deliberately, I cannot help thinking that I should do so and so. Intentions are sunk deep in the dark lake of consciousness. A man may not descry his own, accurately. Figures on the surface of consciousness may interfere with his insight into himself. Still, if he really cannot otherwise judge his present deliberate intent, there is nothing for it but to accept his judgment of that present intention. Such judgments of how one would behave under circumstances of a general description occur every time a man reasons. For in all reasoning, there is an accompanying judgment that from analogous premises one would, if he considered the matter sufficiently, draw an analogous conclusion. Whether the facts would bear him out or not is, of course, another question (*Ibid.*).

The last class of uncontrollable judgments concerns nothing less than imagination itself, the recognition of this being at the same time an acknowledgment of the limits of our control over what is often taken to be a sphere in which there are no such (or few) such limits :

> A third class of judgments not open to criticism are judgments concerning objects created by one's own imagination. Imagine, for example, an endless succession of objects. Then there will be there two distinct endless sequences; namely that of the objects in the oddly numbered places, and that of the objects in the evenly numbered places. That this is so is not to be discovered by merely analyzing what one had in mind. The judgment is the result of a psychical process of experimentation, considerably like an induction. But it differs from any kind of reasoning in not being subject to control. It is true that after one has once lit up the idea that there are two endless series whose members so alternate, the analysis of that idea does

show that it will be applicable to any endless series; and this analysis can
be thrown into the form of a proof that it will be so. Yet this proof will rest
on some proposition which is simply self-evident (*Ibid.*).

This matter is however quite complex and, hence, we are fortunate to
have Peirce's elaboration of what is involved here.

But as long as one only has the idea of the simple endless series, one may
think forever, and not discover the theorem, until something suggests
that other idea to the mind. What I call the theorematic reasoning [74] of
mathematics consists in so introducing a foreign idea, using it, and finally
deducing a conclusion from which it is eliminated. Every such proof rests,
however, upon judgments in which the foreign idea is first introduced, and
which are simply self-evident. As such, they are exempt from criticism. Judg-
ments of this kind are the very foundation of logic except insofar as it is an
experiential science. If a proposition appears to us, after the most deliberate
review, to be quite self-evident, and leave no room for doubt, it certainly
cannot be rendered more evident; for its evidence is perfect already. Neither
can it be rendered less evident, until some loophole for doubt is discovered.
It is, therefore, exempt from all criticism. True, the whole thing may be a
mistake. The sixteenth proposition of the first book of Euclid affords an
example. The second postulate was that every terminated right line can be
continuously prolonged (MS L 75).

The three classes of uncontrollable judgments identified here pro-
vide rich material for reconstructing a Peircean account of some of the
more important roles played by images in the life of deliberative agents,
especially since such judgments in effect help to define – or redefine –
the boundaries of the controllable. The processes by which such judg-
ments are generated, sustained, and elaborated, above all, those by
which images are formed, transformed, and transmitted, point toward
the temporal and historical character of imaging and imagining (point
away from the image taken as a static form and toward it as a different
role – or array of such roles – in an ongoing process).

In a very different way, however, the self-interrogating, self-critical,
self-directed artist whose work comes to assert itself, and much more
than itself, in its inherent, propulsive performativity, illuminates other
important features of images and imagining. This partly shifts the atten-
tion from processes to practices, from affairs over which human agents
have little or no direct control to ones in which they deliberately intervene
(Colapietro 1998). But, as we will see, even practices in this context
involve forms of abandonment, of surrendering to forces emphatically
asserting themselves. It is to processes and practices precisely of this
character that I now turn, above all, because focusing on these matters
allows us to bring into sharp focus the distinctively pragmaticist cast of
Peircean semeiotic. But I will do so by drawing heavily upon the work
of Barbara Bolt, who is at once an artist and theorist. Indeed, she is a
theorist who draws heavily upon the writings of Peirce in her effort to
illuminate her own experience as an artist.

The Legible Traces of Thick Materiality : The Searing Effects of Working Hot

In *Art Beyond Representation*, a book subtitled *The Performative Power of the Image*, Bolt, who is also a painter, virtually opens her investigation by describing a process she calls "working hot". Her interior understanding of this artistic mode deserves to be quoted at length :

> At first the work [on two pieces, one entitled *Reading Fiction* (1995), the other *Reading Theory* (1995), reproduced in *Art Beyond Representation* (2-3)] proceeded according to established principles of painting practice – blocking in the shapes, establishing a composition, paying attention to proportion and [to] the shades of light and dark – a re-iteration of habits and strategies of working. However, at some undefinable moment, the painting took on a life that seemed to have almost nothing to do with my conscious attempts to control it. The 'work' (as verb) took on its own momentum, its own rhythm and intensity. Within this intense and furious state, I no longer had any awareness of time, of pain or [even] of making decisions. In the fury of painting, rules give way to tactics and the pragmatics of action. The painting takes on a life of its own. It breathes, vibrates, pulsates, shimmers and generally runs away from me. The painting no longer merely represents or illustrates reading. Instead, it performs. In the performativity of the image, life gets into the image (2004 : 1; emphasis added).

It is not possible to summarize here the argument of Bolt's book. At the outset of this work, however, she clearly indicates her overarching concern, for here she decisively turns away from art as a representative practice and toward art as performative practice. In doing so, Bolt is animated by the hope that, "by giving attention to the productive materiality of the 'performative act', we are able to commence the task of developing a theory of practice that takes into account the matter of bodies and objects" (2004 : 10). Consequently, she describes her position as materialist. But it is not in the least a reductive materialism, for one reason because it argues for "the potential for a *mutual* reflection between imaging and reality" (*Ibid.*). This means that "through process or practice ... the outside world enters the work and the work casts its effects into the world" (*Ibid.*).

As aids in illuminating this mutual transfiguration she makes use of Deleuze's concept of "flexion" and (to a greater extent) Peirce's notion of "semiosis", stressing the dynamism of the dynamical object and the materiality of the indexical sign. "In flexion... there is", Deleuze asserts (adopting an insight from Pierre Klossowski), "a double transgression – of language by the flesh and of the flesh by language" (*The Logic of Sense*, quoted by Bolt : 157). The different performances by which such double transgressions are realized – that is, materialized – involve "different intensities, different flows, and different connections" (Bolt : 156). The work of the artwork is not to bridge any alleged gap between sign and referent, but to generate such intensities, flows, and connections. In recognizing this we are in effect moving beyond what Bolt calls the representationalist understanding of representation according to which

the human being as sovereign subject stands before a perceptual object (the object being conceived by the representationalist in her sense of being ontologically separate from both this subject and that which it purports to represent). Partly what guides Bolt is Lucien Freud's claim : "I would wish my portraits to be *of* people, not *like* them. Not having the look of the sitter, [but] being them" (quoted by Bolt : 163).

In order to render this possibility intelligible, she addresses the question, "What if there were a dynamic relationship between the object and the image, instead of merely a relationship of substitution and play?" (166). She uses Peircean notions to show that in the artwork, especially such a relationship is discernible and efficacious. "A picture [be it a painting or a photograph] emerges", she insists, "in and through the play of the matter of objects (the dynamic object), the matter of bodies, the materials of production and the matter of discourse" (*Ibid.* : 178). Hence, it "is not just a play of signs"; it is an obsistent presence bodying forth its dynamical object.[8] For her, the implications of Peirce's theory of signs accords with the disclosure of our experience of the artwork : "the effect of the dynamical object ... [insinuates] itself into our being and consequently into our performative presentations, showings and manifestations" (*Ibid.* : 176). The "pressures and vibrations" of the dynamical object "erupt *as* the work of art" (*Ibid.*). The testimony of Paul Cezanne might be added to that of Lucien Freud : "The landscape thinks itself in me... and I am its consciousness" (quoted in Bolt : 176). From the perspective of a materialist ontology, however, it would be better to say the landscape in one mode of its materiality realizes itself in and through the perceptual, skillful, and stuttering body of the artist willing to abandon himself to the chaos of sensation.

In light of this and other considerations, allow me to propose that one of the functions of art is the re-education of the imagination. But the inner mutable theatre of the human imagination is no separate domain, removed from the rough and tumble of material effects. Art accomplishes this task by exploring, in inevitably unconventional ways, possibilities of imaging, such exploration being a relentless interrogation of the possibilities inherent in materiality, traditions, and the gestures, movements, and imaginings of artists.

> It would, certainly in one sense, be extravagant to say that we can never tell what we are talking about; yet, in another sense, it is quite true. The meanings of words ordinarily depend on our tendencies to weld together qualities and aptitudes to see resemblances; or, to use the received phrase, upon associations of *similarity*; while experience is bound together, and only recognizable, by forces acting upon us, or, to use an even worse chosen technical term, by means of association by contiguity (CP 3.419).

Art, precisely in its capacity to re-educate the imagination, drives us toward acknowledging the sense in which "we can never tell what we are talking about". Such acknowledgment itself drives toward the re-

alization that we can never identify in anything but crudely misleading and experientially impoverishing terms the beings encountered in and through our experience, including our experience of artworks. Indeed, the experience of the artwork is one in which, paradoxically, our relationship to the dynamical object of the artistic sign is at once ever more intimate and ever more attenuated. Our intimate, erotic familiarity with this object is inseparable from the elusive, enigmatic character of this object – so much so that no definitive identification of what functions here as the dynamical object is even possible and, indeed, the demand to ascertain definitively what a work of art is about betrays a thoroughgoing misunderstanding of aesthetic engagement. Aesthetic engagement (and I strongly prefer the term *engagement* to *contemplation*) is at the very least an ongoing process of mutual interrogation in which the identity of the self is no less put into question than that of the artwork. The ontology of the artwork, in its distinctively modern and especially postmodern forms, encompasses the irresolvable tension among the work's disparate guises, above all, its qualitative immediacy, brute insistence, and indeliminable intelligibility. Perhaps this means that the artwork is, in its firstness, never less than a qualisign, sinsign, *and* legisign; as a sign its identity is inherently unstable, a brutely insistent presence dissolving into configurations of ineffable qualities and also intimations of intelligible connections. The artwork is, in other words, a congeries of functions, wherein the dynamic, material involvement of artist, medium, and "object" is taken up and carried forward in processes uniquely configured in sensuous qualities, also uniquely instantiated in an obsistent present, dynamically intelligible in the patterns of response, interpretation, and inspiration that are inherent in its thick materiality (*cf.* Ransdell 2002).

Conclusion

The pre-theoretic competencies and skills on which the theorist of signs draws, including the complex, integrated perceptual abilities of human agents (see, *e.g.*, Mead 1938 : Part II; Merleau-Ponty 1995 : Part II, Chapter 1), constitute a level of activity and experience never completely transcended by this theorist. By the very promptings and pressures of their investigations, such theorist is driven to return, time and again, to even quite rudimentary, macroscopic processes. However much we might treat the phenomena of such processes as so many squeezed lemons, completely sucked dry of any juice, the truth is quite the opposite : they are inexhaustible resources, *topoi* to which we can profitably return countless times (CP 6.564-565). The theoretically reconfigured understanding of these competencies and skills is, for the pragmaticist at least, valuable in large measure because it enhances the exercise of them. The self-understanding of human agents is never theoretically innocent. As other forms of self-consciousness, this self-understanding is likely to be practically disadvantageous.

To paraphrase Joseph Esposito's (1979) important insight into a decisive shift in Peirce's mature thought, Peirce came to see pragmaticism, not solely as a method whereby signs become clarified in the practice of inquiry, but most adequately as a method whereby inquirers become increasing subject to the controlling influence of "living" signs (especially legisigns).[9] Perhaps what Peirce never came to realize is that this process of being increasingly subjected to norms or laws emerging out of the very processes in which identities are established, solidified, and indeed shattered is a process in which the presence and power of chance are never significantly reduced. If we are able to discern this better than he was, it is a sign of our debt to him. At one point he was led to a conclusion seemingly at odds with his deepest insights and pragmaticist sensibility. From the tendency to take habits "all the regularities of the universe would be evolved. At any time, however, an element of pure chance survives and will remain until the world becomes an absolutely perfect, rational, and symmetrical system, in which mind is at last crystallized in the infinitely distant future" (CP 6.33). In any event, the ceaseless growth of concrete reasonableness does not point toward the crystallization of mind but an interminable series of crack ups and break downs, out of which the task of reparation is taken up anew. The history of human perception is but one arena in which this complex, fateful process can be observed; that of human imagination is yet another. Within this history, the dynamism of visual imaging and imagining is an example of how form does not so much follow function as form is itself an inherently dynamic mode of functioning, the nature, varieties, and force of which are intelligible only in reference to the processes and practices in which they emerge, sustain themselves, and ineluctably dissolve.

The principle of seriality (of what we might identify as a historical continuum) is succinctly formulated by John Dewey in "Time & Individuality" (1991 : 98-114). According to this principle, "That which comes later explains the earlier quite as truly as the earlier explains the later" (102; *cf.* 103). In history, the emergent (the eventual, the subsequent, and the later under countless other guises) always possesses a retroactive power, a capacity in some measure to define or reconfigure what has preceded it. Put more strongly, history *is* the process in which this is true; any series of transitions in which the later merely reiterates the prior is *temporal* without being *historical*, in the sense being attached to these terms in this context.

On my account, meaning is for Peirce a function of history in the sense just identified. "A Sign necessarily has for its object", Peirce suggests in an unpublished manuscript, some fragment of history, that is, of the history of ideas" (MS 448 : 10; *cf.* Colapietro 2004c). Its meaning is, moreover, realized by the generation of a series of interpretations, the actual effects of efficacious actualities. In any event, we are continually and ineluctably, though often only imperceptibly and tacitly, revising

what we feel, do, and imagine. One of the roles of processes of imaging and practices of imagining is to explode the boundaries of the actual, also to interrogate the often unrecognized tyranny of seemingly admirable ideals. In particular, the ideal of being masters of our meanings needs to be interrogated in reference to the meaning of our insistence upon such mastery.

If – to use Barbara Bolt's phrase – we *work as hot* as Peirce characteristically did, we certainly have an experiential basis for calling into question any unqualified endorsement of mastery. Indeed, sovereignty over self requires, on Peirce's own account, surrender of the self to the inherently admirable. His life offers, in all its human complexity, an image of just such a surrender. Indeed, the image of such a tragically isolated, unrecognized genius engaging in heroic self-sacrifice, especially after squandering the prerogatives and the opportunities of the privileged (especially after realizing the extent to which his circumstances were the result of his own failures and vices), furiously scribbling countless words on countless pages (desperately struggling with that species of symbols he found so alien to the bent of his mind), is likely that in which the word *image* bears its most pregnant, poignant meaning. So I conclude with *Peirce as image,* the image of the indefatigable inquirer, whose vainglorious and irascible tendencies are decisively subordinated to more praiseworthy sentiments, more admirable qualities. Here is truly the image of a man who worked hot in the service of discovering what was not yet known.

Notes

1. References to Peirce's *Collected Papers* will be designated CP followed by volume number and paragraph; references to Peirce's *New Elements of Mathematics* will be designated NEM followed by volume number; references to *Semiotic and Significs* will be designated SS; references to Peirce's *Writings* is designated W followed by volume number; references to Peirce's *Essential Peirce* is designated EP followed by volume number. References to Peirce's Manuscripts is designated MS.

2. Regarding language in general and an ideal terminology, Peirce stresses that : "The case of philosophy is very peculiar in that it has a positive need of popular words in popular senses, – not as its own language (as it has too usually used those words), but as objects of its study" (EP 2 : 264-265). That is, these commonplace words and expressions are nothing less than phenomena, one of the modes in which reality manifest itself to human observers and inquirers.

3. Perception and action (or, more precisely, conduct) are not as categoreally distinct as a superficial reading of this text might suggest. On the one hand, perception is itself at the very least a rudimentary practice. On the other, conduct incorporates within itself the perception of changes consequent upon exertion and intervention.

4. Peirce proposed to give a definition of a sign "which no more refers to human thought than does the definition of a line as the place which a particle occupies, part by part, during a lapse of time. Namely, a Sign is something, A, which brings, etc." (NEM IV : 20-21).

5. Here I of course mean the Platonic Socrates, *i.e.*, the figure portrayed by Plato

in his dialogues, the interlocutor who pressed his friends and acquaintances to answer such questions as "What is piety?" or "What is justice?" In the face of these individuals to provide a formal definition of the contested term, the figure of the Platonic Socrates was disposed to charge them with ignorance (*not* knowing what they were talking about).

6. Here is one of the places where Kant's influence on Peirce's thought is notable. In his first *Kritik* (or *Critic*, as Peirce insisted upon spelling it), Kant insists : "Synthesis ... is the mere result of the power of imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious" (112; *cf.* Eco 1997).

7. As Anthony Kenny, Alasdair MacIntyre, and others, drawing upon insights from the later Wittgenstein, argue, Cartesian (or universal) doubt cannot be articulated, since the meaning of the words in which such skepticism strives to formulate itself depends on the constancy of the terms used to articulate this position (*i.e.*, truly radical semantic doubt would preclude the possibility of formulating this position). See, *e.g.*, MacIntyre 1977.

8. *Obsistence* is one of Peirce names for secondness (or brute opposition, "active oppugnancy"). See CP 2.89-91; also CP 8.291.

9. "For as Peirce began to see pragmatism, not as a method whereby ideas became clarified in the practice of inquiry, but as a method whereby inquirers become subject to the controlling influence of 'living' ideas, it became evident that pragmatism will have to have a foundation nearly as deep as metaphysics" (Esposito 1970 : 60).

Bibliography

BOLT, B. (2004) *Art Beyond Representation* : *The Performative Power of the Image*. London : I. B. Tauris.

BOURDIEU, P. (1990) *The Logic Practice*. R. Nice (trad.), Stanford : Stanford University Press.

COLAPIETRO, V. (1989) *Peirce's Approach to the Self*. Albany, NY. : SUNY Press.

_____. (1998) "Natural Processes and Historical Practices". *Semiotica* (119) 1-2 : 105-155.

_____. (2001) "Woolf on Words : Signification, Signature, and Recontextualization". In *Semiotics 2000*. S. Simpkins, and J. Deely (Eds.), NY. : Legas : 108-116.

_____. (2004a) "Truly Pragmatic Theory of Signs : Reading Peirce's Semeiotic in Light of Dewey's Gloss". In *Dewey, Pragmatism, and Economic Methodology*. E. L. Kahlil (Ed.), London : Routledge : 102-129.

_____. (2004b) "Signs and Their Vicissitudes : Meanings in Excess of Consciousness and Functionality". *Semiotica* (148) 1-4 : 229-243.

_____. (2004c) "Portrait of a Historicist : An Alternative Reading of Peircean Semiotic". *Semiotiche* (2) : 49-68.

De TIENNE, A. (2002) "The Sign in Person". In *Caderno Jornada* [First Advanced Seminar on Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics]. PUC-SP : 28-38.

DEWEY, J. (1991) *The Later Works of John Dewey*. Volume 14. Carbondale, IL. : SIU Press.

ECO, U. (1997) *Kant and the Platypus : Essays on Language and Cognition*. A. McEwen (trad.), NY. : Harcourt Brace and Co.

ESPOSITO, J. (1979) "The Development of Peirce's Categories". *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* (XV) 1 : 51-60.

INGOLD, T. (2007) *Lines : A Brief History*. London : Routledge.

JOSWICK, H. (1996) "The Object of Semeiotic". In *Peirce's Doctrine of Signs*. V. M. Colapietro, and T. M. Olshewsky (Eds.), The Hague : Mouton de Gruyter : 93-102.

KANT, E. (1929). *Critique of Pure Reason*. N. Kemp Smith (trad.), NY. : St. Martin's Press.

MAcINTYRE, A. (1977 [1980]) "Epistemological Crises, Dramatic Narrative, and the Philosophy of Science". In *Paradigms and Revolutions : Appraisals and Applications of Thomas Kuhn's Philosophy of Science*. G. Gutting (Ed.), Notre Dame : University of Notre Dame Press : 54-74.

MEAD, G. H. (1938) *The Philosophy of the Act* [The Works of George Herbert Mead, volume 3]. Chicago : University of Chicago Press.

MERLEAU-PONTY, M. (1995) *The Phenomenology of Perception*. C. Smith (trad.), London : Routledge.

PEIRCE, C. S. (1902) "Manuscript". *Application to the Carnegie Institute for a Grant*. This text is available on the website Arisbe : www.cspeirce.com/arisbe.htm (retrieved on May 29, 2008).

_____. (1931-1958) *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Volumes 1-6, C. Hartshorne, and P. Weiss (Eds.). Volumes 7-8, A. W. Burks (Ed.). Cambridge : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

_____. (1976) *The New Elements of Mathematics*. C. Eisele (Ed.), volumes 1-4. Berlin : Mouton; Atlantic Highlands, NJ. : Humanities Press.

_____. (1977) *Semiotic and Significs : The Correspondence Between Charles S. Peirce and Victoria Lady Welby*. C. S. Hardwick (Ed.), Bloomington, IN. : Indiana University Press.

_____. (1984) *Writings of Charles S. Peirce : A Chronological Edition, volume 2 (1867-1871)*. Peirce Edition Project (Ed.), Bloomington, IN. : Indiana University Press.

_____. (1986) *Writings of Charles S. Peirce : A Chronological Edition, volume 3 (1872-1878)*. Peirce Edition Project (Ed.), Bloomington, IN. : Indiana University Press.

_____. (1992) *The Essential Peirce : Selected Philosophical Writings. Volume 1 (1867-1893)*. Bloomington & Indianapolis : Indiana University Press.

_____. (1998) *The Essential Peirce : Selected Philosophical Writings. Volume 2 (1893-1913)*. Peirce Edition Project (Ed.), Bloomington and Indianapolis : Indiana University Press.

PELC, J. (1986) "Iconicity : Iconic Signs or Iconic Uses of Signs?" In *Iconicity : Essays on the Nature of Culture*. P. Bouissac, M. Herzfeld, and R. Posner (Eds.), Tübingen : Stauffenburg Verlag : 7-15.

RANSDELL, J. (1980) "Semiotic and Linguistics". In *Signifying Animal : The Grammar of Language and Experience*. I. Rauch, and G. F. Carr (Eds.), Bloomington, IN. : Indiana University Press : 135-185.

_____. (1986) "On Peirce's Conception of the Iconic Sign". In *Iconicity : Essays on the Nature of Culture*. P. Bouissac, M. Herzfeld, and R. Posner (Eds.), Tübingen : Stauffenburg Verlag : 51-74.

_____. (2002) "The Semiotical Conception of the Artwork". In *Caderno Jornada* [First Advanced Seminar on Peirce's Philosophy and Semiotics], PUC-SP : 5-27.

ROBIN, R. (1967) *Annotated Catalogue of the Papers of Charles S. Peirce*. The University of Massachusetts Press.

RUNIA, E. (2006) "Presence". *History and Theory* (45) 1 : 1-29.

SAVAN, D. (1987-88) *An Introduction to C. S. Peirce's Full System of Semeiotic*. Toronto : Toronto Semiotic Circle.

SHORT, T. L. (1997) "Hypostatic Abstraction in Self-Consciousness". In *The Rule of Reason : The Philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce*. J. Brunning, and P. Forster (Eds.), Toronto : University of Toronto Press : 289-308.

_____. 2004) "The Development of Peirce's Theory of Signs". In *The Cambridge Companion to Peirce*. C. Misak (Ed.), Cambridge, UK. : Cambridge University Press : 214-240.

TAYLOR, C. (1995) *Philosophical Arguments*. Cambridge, MA. : Harvard University

Press.
WOOLF, V. (1942) *The Death of a Moth and Other Essays*. NY. : Harcourt, Brace.

Abstract

The paper aims at a pragmatist clarification of imaging and imagining. Using Peirce's doctrine of the three grades of conceptual clarification (tacit familiarity, abstract definition, and pragmatic elucidation), the author tries to clarify our processes and practices of imaging and imagining by considering them in light of these distinct levels. Above all, he endeavors to push the discussion from the level of abstract definition to that of pragmatic clarification, thereby focusing on the habits of agents *in situ*, not simply verbal formulations offered in the abstract. Borrowing from Barbara Bolt, he uses as one of his examples that of an artist "working hot". A process wherein conscious intentions and unconscious drives, cognitive designs and thick materiality, conspire to embody themselves in perceptible media is one especially worthy of examination. Hence, from an overview of Peirce's general theory of signs, the author turns to some of the specific uses of that theory, uses not central to Peirce's own interests. Artistic production and performance are foremost among these uses. These are, after all, ones in which the dynamics of imaging and imagining are often more vividly on display than elsewhere.

Résumé

Cet article a pour objectif une élucidation pragmatiste des concepts d'imagerie (*imaging*) et d'imaginer (*imagining*). Faisant appel à la doctrine peircéenne des trois grades de clarté conceptuelle (familiarité tacite, définition abstraite, élucidation pragmatique), l'auteur vise à rendre clairs les processus d'imagerie et d'imagination pour chaque grade. Plus précisément, il s'engage à déplacer l'enquête de la définition abstraite vers la clarification pragmatique de manière à mettre l'emphase sur les habitudes d'agents *in situ* plutôt que sur des formulations verbales considérées dans l'abstrait. Pour ce faire, et à titre d'exemple, il emprunte à Barbara Holt la notion d'artiste "travaillant à chaud" (*working hot*). Il s'agit d'un processus digne d'un examen sémiotique sérieux, où les intentions conscientes, les pulsions inconscientes, les visées cognitives et la matérialité dense (*thick materiality*) concourent pour prendre corps dans un medium perceptible. Aussi, à partir d'un survol de la théorie générale des signes de Peirce, l'auteur considère-t-il certains usages spécifiques de cette dernière malgré qu'ils n'étaient pas au cœur des préoccupations de Peirce : la production et la performance artistiques. C'est là, tout simplement, que sont mis en évidence avec le plus d'éclat les dynamiques propres à l'imagerie et à l'imagination.

VINCENT COLAPIETRO is a Professor of Philosophy at the Pennsylvania State University. One of his main areas of historical research is the pragmatist tradition, with special emphasis on Charles S. Peirce. A main focus of his systematic work is the articulation and application of a general theory of signs. Though devoted to developing a semiotic perspective rooted in Peirce's seminal work, Colapietro draws upon a number of authors and perspectives other than Peirce and pragmatism (including such authors as Bakhtin, Jakobson, and Bourdieu as well as such movements as phenomenology, hermeneutics, and deconstruction). He is the author of *Peirce's Approach to the Self : A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity* (1989), *A Glossary of Semiotics* (1993), and *Fateful Shapes of Human Freedom* (2003) as well as numerous essays. He has served as President of the Charles S. Peirce Society, the Metaphysical Society of America, and the Semiotic Society of America. At present, he is completing

a book on pragmatism and psychoanalysis, while continuing his research on literary theory, intellectual history, and other topics.