

## **In Lieu of Saussure: A Prologue to Charles Sanders Peirce's Theory of Signs**

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*Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men.*

– Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (1845-46)

*General principles are really operative in nature. . . . Words [such as Patrick Henry's on liberty] then do produce physical effects. It is madness to deny it. The very denial of it involves a belief in it. . . .*

– C.S. Peirce, *Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism* (1903)

The era of Saussure is dying, the epoch of Peirce is just struggling to be born. Although pragmatism has been experiencing a renaissance in philosophy in general in the last few decades, Charles Sanders Peirce, the “inventor” of this anti-Cartesian, scientific-realist method of clarifying meaning, still remains unacknowledged as a seminal genius, a polymath master-thinker. William James’s vulgarized version has overshadowed Peirce’s highly original theory of “pragmaticism” grounded on a singular conception of semiotics. Now recognized as more comprehensive and heuristically fertile than Saussure’s binary semiology (the foundation of post-structuralist textualisms) which Cold War politics endorsed and popularized, Peirce’s “semeiotics” (his preferred rubric) is bound to exert a profound revolutionary influence. Peirce’s triadic sign-theory operates within a critical-realist framework opposed to nominalism and relativist nihilism (Liszka 1996). I endeavor to outline here a general schema of Peirce’s semeiotics and initiate a hypothetical frame for interpreting Michael Ondaatje’s *Anil’s’ Ghost*, an exploratory or

experimental sketch of the possible uses of Peirce's still untried approach to interpreting literary texts and discourse in general.

In an article entitled "The State of Literary Theory," Francois Cusset reported that though the tragedy of 9/11 revealed the bankruptcy of French-inspired theory as practiced by American scholars, a new flourishing of "theory" may be around the corner. Of course, when the global market collapsed in 2008, Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze and company became instantly fungible. Nonetheless, Cusset believes that political resistance and intellectual autonomy today depends on "the undecidability of meaning," the "tricks of hermeneutical action" rejecting essentialist texts and unquestioned canons. He argues the partyline: "Where interpretation is obvious, where it is not [in] question, power reigns supreme; where it is wavering, flickering, opening its uncertainty to unpredictable uses, empowerment of the powerless may be finally possible" (2012, 1). Undecidability or ambiguity, for Cusset, spells the apocalyptic salvation of Fanon's "wretched of the earth." Nonetheless, the paramount authority that can interpret the U.S. Constitution against the "whistleblowers" Bradley Manning, Julian Assange, Edward Snowden and their partisans, and impose its judgment, rests not with deconstructionists but with the corporate elite controlling the State apparatus (White House, Pentagon, Supreme Court).

Despite the full assault launched by Fredric Jameson (1972) and others to expose the dire limitations of Saussure's dyadic theory of meaning, mainstream humanistic conversations are still dominated by this research paradigm as applied by Levi-Strauss, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida, Lacan, Slavoj Zizek, Alain Badiou and others. Meanwhile postcolonial academics and other "third-world" subalterns in the humanities and social sciences blindly follow the EuroAmerican trend. Why? Besides the imperial hegemony of Eurocentric theory, the distortion if not wrongheaded ascription of utilitarian "cash-value" to it (solely based on James's "radical empiricist" take on Peirce's "pragmatic maxim") turned off many intellectuals and has prevented serious appraisal of Peirce's theory as a fallibilistic alternative to Saussure's. Recently, however, the commentaries of Cornelis de Waal (2013), Susan Haack (2008), Merrell (1997), Leroy Seale (1994), and others have revived interest in Peirce's philosophy amid its notorious parodization by Richard Rorty and other apologists of neoliberal globalizing capitalism. Marxist-oriented

philosophy has also failed to derive lessons from Peirce, as Hans Joas noted in their historic encounters in *Pragmatism and Social Theory* (1993; see also San Juan 2013).

### *Saussure's Scourge*

Saussure's *Course in General Linguistics* (1916) was the Pandora's box that offered the notion of meaning as arbitrary or purely conventional. Saussure defined the sign as a psychic entity composed of signifier (acoustic image) and signified (concept), without any logical or necessary relationship between the two. Although a sound or image, the signifier is also a phenomenon in consciousness, not an extra-mental object (unlike Peirce's icons and indices). The same goes between sign and referent (the extra-linguistic object to which the sign refers), which has disappeared in the synchronic and systematic dimension of *langue* (in contrast to *parole*, the act of speech). Based on their differences, signs acquire value and meaning (for a Saussurean-based semiotics, see Culler 1981).

Post-structuralism and deconstruction operate on the dogma of the non-coincidence of signifier and signified, with Lacan arguing that signifiers always slide over their signified in a perpetual chain of signification. Derrida (1986) posits *differance* (both deferral and difference) as the reason why meaning has no origin or end; because textual differentiability is temporal, it unsettles binary oppositions by disclosing the undecidable aporia enabling structures and truthful claims. Given the Saussurean doctrine that language is a system of differences, Derrida was driven to the belief that all signifieds are in jeopardy; they cannot escape "the play of signifying references that constitute language," and, with the advent of writing, the circulation of signs finally destroys the concept of sign and its entire logic" (1978, 7). Writing trumps speech-acts and its historical contexts which are reduced to textual discourse (*écriture*). In any case, for post-structuralisms, as Mario Valdes remarks, at best "order is an open-ended catalytic agent rather than than isomorphic referential parallel" (1995, 188).

The arbitrary tie between signified and signifier, for Saussure, does not allow for what Peirce calls the interpretant, the cognizable mediation between sign and object/phenomenon represented. Indeed, the arbitrary linkage allows Saussure to posit the transcendental signified, the concept being separate from or outside the system of

diacritical signifiers. While Saussure may not have fully subscribed to this view, his interpreters have used the axiom of difference as the basis for poststructuralist formalisms in which the object or referent, what is signified, has been abolished as “too materialistic and simpleminded,” to quote Robert Scholes. Scholes upholds the “unbridgeable gap between words and things. . . . Signs do not refer to things, they signify concepts, and concepts are aspects of thought, not of reality” (24). This theory of signs entails philosophical idealism, or nominalism for which there are only names, no generalities or laws in any realm of cognizable reality.

From the onset of the Cold War up to now, under the aegis of the Saussurean dyadic schema of signifier-signified, meaning has been unfixed, shifting, undecidable. Semantic indeterminacy prevails: the signifier is always in danger of slipping, falling into the “vertiginous abyss,” losing its signified, evaporating. We can capture the experience of instability, flux, disjuncture, aporia, etc. in two aphorisms of Franz Kafka, first in “The Tower of Babel”: “If it had been possible to build the Tower of Babel without ascending it, the work would have been permitted.” In “The Pit of Babel,” Kafka writes: “What are you building? – I want to dig a subterranean passage. Some progress must be made. My station up there is much too high. We are digging the pit of Babel” (171). Freud’s suggestion that “dreams are not somatic but psychological phenomena” (100) is not much help since the intrusion of the psyche leads to either conventionalism or irresolvable disagreements about the nature of the “psyche.” But this is precisely what Peirce wants to avoid: the alternative of either relativist contingency or irrationalist, Nietzschean-inspired psychologism – Nietzsche famously proclaimed there is no objective reality, only multiple interpretations by decentered subjects. How did Peirce demonstrate the nullity of those alternatives?

### *Discriminating Pragmatisms*

First, a caveat and some observations. Although Peirce is recognized correctly as the founder of pragmatism – he calls his own theory “pragmaticism” to distinguish it from those of James, F. Schiller and John Dewey – we need to stress that orthodox antifoundationalist or anti-essentialist neopragmatism of Rorty or Fish is diametrically opposed to Peirce’s. Rorty and Fish, for example, believe that truth has nothing to do

with any correspondent reality; and whatever beliefs they come to have, they have either no consequences or are wholly subjective and private. Meanwhile, the old Soviet *Dictionary of Philosophy*, for example, defines pragmatism as a subjective idealist trend in philosophy in which truth is determined by “its practical utility” (357), this latter phrase being construed as “not confirmation of objective truth by the criterion of practice, but what meets the subjective interests of the individual” (Rosenthal and Yudin 1967, 357-58).

Recent clarifications have rectified such misleading opinions, to some extent. According to *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, pragmatism emphasizes the close proximity of theory to praxis. It “takes the continuity of experience and nature as revealed through the outcome of directed action as the starting point for reflection” (1995, 638). While reality is known through experience, “truth claims can be justified only as the fulfillment of conditions that are experimentally determined, i.e., the outcome of inquiry.” This comes closer to Peirce’s understanding of his own conception which is distilled in the maxim or principle stated in his early work, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear”: “In order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception we should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception; and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception” (Peirce 1998, 146; for later reformulations, see Peirce 1958, 204 and 1991, 247; Audi 1995, 566). Peirce elucidated his pragmatist axiom as a logical method of inquiry in later lectures, specifically in the 1903 “Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism” (Peirce 1998a, 133-241).

### *Anatomy of the Sign*

In this essay, I want to limit my focus on Peirce’s theory of signs (semiotic) and its possible application to literary criticism and critical theory in general. A sign is always a relation of three parts: the sign itself, its object (what it stands for), and an interpretant. This latter is of utmost importance: the interpretant determines how the sign represents the object. It is the meaning of the sign. While Saussure constructed his theory based on the analysis of language, Peirce’s theory springs from this analysis of thought (thought conceived as an interpretive relation) and “posits within the signifying process not only

an object and its sign but also a third element, the interpretant, or thought [for Saussure, the signified], to which the sign gives rise. The meaning of the sign is not necessarily arbitrary but may be as logical as the thought that interprets it” (Hoopes 1991, 11-12). For example, interpretants called indices (e.g., weathercock, red stop light) can represent determinate, not undecidable, relations between signs and their objects.

In his early speculations, Peirce surmised that this interpretant is another sign which in turn elicits its own interpretant and so on; later on, he theorized that semiosis (meaning-production, generator of significations) culminates in an “ultimate logical interpretant,” namely, “a change of habit of conduct,” a new pattern of belief, which is no longer a sign (de Waal 2013, 83). This implies that meaning can now be located outside the mind, identified in fact with events in the world and actions of individuals. We are directed to observe behavior and reactions in the domain of experience, to spatiotemporally determined schemes of action which we can perform for the purpose of seeing how objects will behave. Meaning resides in the operation of testing hypotheses and the sensible effects recorded; “those effects *are* the meaning of the idea in question” (Smith 9; see also Gallie 1952; Hilpinen 1995).

On the basis of the triadic character of the sign, Peirce distinguished three divisions based on 1) the character of the sign itself; 2) the relation between the signs and its object; and 3) the way in which the interpretant represents the object. These divisions reflect Peirce’s system of three ontological categories that fundamentally grasps reality: 1) Quality or Firstness; 2) Relation or Secondness; and 3) Representation or Thirdness. According to the first division, a sign can be 1) a qualisign, a mere quality or appearance; 2) a sinsign, a token or individual object or event (distinguished from types); and 3) legisign, or general type. Signs can be divided into icons, indices, and symbols, on the basis of their relations to their objects. An icon refers to an object on the ground of its similarity to the object in some respect. An index stands in a dynamic or causal relation to its object. A symbol functions as the sign of an object by virtue of a rule or habit of interpretation. Peirce’s third division, Thirdness, divides signs into: 1) Rhemes or predicative signs; 2) Propositional signs (distinguished from assertions), and 3) arguments (Liszka 1996; Peirce 1991).

In Peirce's metaphysics, Thirdness is irreducible in the sense that general phenomena (general laws) are real, not reducible to mere conjunctions of actual individual instances, as nominalists would hold. Generality subtends continuity, the notion of synechism. Peirce's critical realism is tied with his synechism, the view that the world contains genuinely continuous phenomena, something analogous to the doctrine of Scholastic realism. In the field of modalities, Peirce's basic categories are possibility, actuality and necessity. Peirce argued that reality cannot be identified with existence (or actuality), but comprises real (objective) possibilities. The future holds the validation of truth, the practical confirmation of hypotheses. This is so because Peirce realized that many conditional statements (e.g. the practical conditionals expressing the empirical import of a proposition, as in the pragmatic maxim), cannot be construed as material or truth-functional conditionals, but must be regarded as modal (subjunctive) conditionals. Peirce's cosmology holds the doctrine of tychism – absolute chance exists in the universe – and the basic laws of nature are probabilistic and inexact (Murphey 1993; Apel 1995). Contingency, the realm of chance, evolves into law-governed nature and law-circumscribed history, as implied by Thirdness or the mediatory function of signs. So much for this brief excursus into Peirce's cosmological speculations.

### *Articulating Icon and Index*

Now, from the perspective of Peirce's semiotics, every art-object is an icon (Firstness) whose aesthetic value resides in the harmony of its intrinsic qualities. Peirce's concept of art, however, accented the "play of Musement," the active invention of hypotheses, reminiscent of Schiller's *Spieltrieb* (Brent 1998, 53). Abduction also transpires in the creative dynamics of the imagination. The interpretant of the art/icon is a feeling or complex of emotions, the subjective correlative of the objective properties embodied in the art-work. E. F. Kaelin argues that the aesthetic sign is a rhematic iconic qualisign, "a quality, or a work of art under the aspect of its qualitative wholeness, serving as a sign of a distinct qualitative possibility by virtue of a similarity between the two" (1983, 226).

In John Sheriff's view, for Peirce, literary art is "a representamen of possibility experienced as Rhematic Symbol" (1989, 78). A novel, poem or story presents us with

signs of immediate consciousness, feelings, qualities, rhemes, in instants of time, as we read without sustained reflection or analysis. However, while the interpretant of an art-object are signs of ontological Firstness (Rheme), separated phenomenal elements which are merely potential, this aesthetic experience becomes an object of reflection, inference, thought. The interpretant (Rheme) becomes a new representamen that determines a new interpretant (another Rheme, Proposition or Argument). So the reader undergoes the experience of immediate consciousness in the first moment, then transforms this sign-process into a new sign, and so on.

Given the dynamic nature of signs constituting a literary text, the text as we read will continue to generate a series of interpretants within specific parameters, frames of intelligibility, or “language-games.” A sentence in a text such as “Cain killed Abel” can be read as a Rheme or Proposition depending on what ground the sign relates to its interpretant. The sentence may have the form of a proposition, but they do not refer to facts or actual existents; they function as signs of immediate consciousness registering aspects of the “It,” the knowable reality subtending experience. They are, as Peirce asserts, “symbols for a level of reality which cannot be reached in any other way . . . So the poet in our days – and the true poet is the true prophet – personifies everything, not rhetorically but in his own feelings. He tells us that he feels an affinity for nature, and loves the stone or the drop of water” (1958, 13). Art is therefore not just a set of formal properties or a repertoire of sensory data separated from the real; experience is broader than the signs in our conscious thought, an experience in the world of signs whose complex apprehension or transcription of reality is made more accessible by artistic mediation.

In reading a literary text, we move from Rheme (Firstness) to Dicent Sign (Secondness) and Argument (Thirdness). We can reason and argue on the basis of interpretants that translate the rhematic symbol, even though, following Peirce’s doctrine of fallibilism, we cannot arrive at “absolute certainty concerning questions of fact” (CSP 1:149). While there are no rules or objective standards to determine the grounds for choosing interpretants, the practice of reading/interpretation is not wholly subjective, relativist or nominalist. Why we choose a certain framework, paradigm or language-game can be explained by prior choices and commitments that can be rationally examined and



evaluated. Questioning and analysis, at some point, must come to an end for us to act on certain beliefs “and begin from there as rational human beings” (Sheriff 1989, 94).

For Peirce, the terminal goal of semiosis is the emergence of “concrete reasonableness” and its embodiment in a community of inquirers open to the impact of experience, the intractable factuality of an objective world, the historicity of life, and the influence of traditions (Hoopes 1991; Merrell 1997). This follows from Peirce’s insight that the ultimate foundation of meaning is not found in arbitrary conventions but in the rectifiable process of interpretation. Interpretation then may be viewed as a mode of historical reasoning, a process of abduction or discovery of testable hypotheses. Such a process leads to the shaping of general habits and the correction and improvement of traditions based on a “critical common-sensism” (Rochberg-Halton 1986, 50).

### *Narrative as Semiotic Process*

Let us turn now to *Anil’s Ghost* and deploy Peirce’s experimental optic. Ondaatje’s novel centers on the pursuit of truth – the structure and totality of social conditions and personal relationships in their spatiotemporal unfolding. The fable we can extrapolate from the diegetic sequence deals with the search for the identity of victims of state or collective terrorism, a quest that also uncovers the history (archaeology, genealogy) of the protagonists in the national crisis of Sri Lanka. Individual identities have so far been muddled or truncated by global and national disasters. What can be salvaged and identified? Can the ruined Buddha be restored? Yes, as the concluding section shows by describing Ananda Udugama’s performance of an ancient ritual of restoration.

The focalization of this conceptualized fable in the *mise en scene* or actual plot translates rheme and dicent sign to argument, the realm of legisign and symbol. One interpretant of the whole novel’s purport is that truth can be discovered by sacrifice and dissolution of identity in the cultural complex which survives through ordeals of civil war and internecine conflict. That, I think, is the central thematic argument of the narrative.

Anil Tissera, the western-trained forensic scientist sent by the UN to investigate human rights abuses, becomes involved with (among others) two brothers, Sarath Diyasena, an archaeologist, and his brother Gamini, a doctor treating the victims of the

civil war in Sri Lanka. She has been away for fifteen years, tied to her birthplace less by memory than by a passion to help and serve a larger good. Both brothers know first-hand the violence of torture, cruel murders, and other humiliations.

But beneath the kinship solidarity of our three protagonists, we discern the tensions and disparities complicating their relations – conflicts emblematic of the larger determining ethnic and class war raging around them. Towards the end of the novel, the anonymous skeleton of a victim that Anil and Sarath had recovered is identified as Ruwan Kumara, a rebel sympathizer. The novel does not end there; after presenting their findings before a government panel, and before the episode when Gamini confronts the corpse of his brother, a victim of official treachery and revenge, we have a short scene where the two brothers succeed in talking comfortably to each other “because of her presence. So it had seemed to her.” The point of view in this passage, that of the expatriate Anil, allows her a synthesizing angle or vantage point from which to make sense of her own detached but also involved relation with what is going on in her once beloved homeland, to her past as well as to her future:

It was *their* conversation about the war in their country and what each of them had done during it and what each would not do. They were, in retrospect, closer than they imagined.

If she were to step into another life now, back to the adopted country of her choice, how much would Gamini and the memory of Sarath be a part of her life? Would she talk to intimates about them, the two Colombo brothers? And she in some way like a sister between them, keeping them from mauling each other’s worlds? Wherever she might be, would she think of them? Consider the strange middle-class pair who were born into one world and in mid-life stepped waist-deep into another?

At one point that night, she remembered, they spoke of how much they loved their country. In spite of everything. No Westerner would understand the love they had for the place. ‘But I could never leave here,’ Gamini had whispered.

‘American movies, English books – remember how they all end?’ Gamini asked that night. ‘The American or the Englishman gets on a plane and leaves. That’s it. The camera leaves with him. He looks out of the

window at Mombasa or Vietnam or Jakarta, someplace now he can look at through the clouds. The tired hero. A couple of words to the girl beside him. He's going home. So the war, to all purposes, is over. That's enough reality for the West. It's probably the history of the last two hundred years of Western political writing. Go home. Write a book. Hit the circuit.'  
(Ondaatje 2000, 285-86)

### *Discovering the Interpretant*

Some readers have applied Gamini's sardonic remarks on the novel itself. This choice of an interpretant is grounded on the expectation that postmodern artists are more self-conscious and reflexive. But this is to dismiss the framing angle of Anil, the vehicle through which Gamini's voice is registered, preventing it from being a utopian free-flowing signifier. There is some ambiguity as to whom Gamini is directing his utterance, to his brother or to Anil; the combination "American movies, English books," a complex quasi-indexical dicent sign for Western consumer voyeurism, metonymically implicates Anil and her European sponsor. The whole scene, however, may be taken as symbolic of the novel's attempt to construct a community, beginning with the restoration of ties between the brothers up to the problematic reinscription of Anil's visit into her own life-history as an uprooted Sri Lankan, into the disrupted lives of her compatriots. We are faced with examining the novel as a legisign of the artist's (including Ananda Udugama) endeavor to oppose the terror of isolation and separation, alienation, ethnic exclusion, demonization of any person as "terrorist," and, last but not least, anonymous disappearance/death.

What needs underscoring here is the rheme of speculation, that feeling of quasi-nostalgia and regret, that Anil is experiencing as she muses on what it would be like to be already distant and removed from the scene. It is a moment of suspension that we are witnessing here, the interpretant of these signs rendering the poignant situation of Anil listening (playing the addressee) to words exchanged between the brothers. Sarath is not quoted, but Gamini is given the last words about his love for his country, and how Western visitors claiming to be experts only reveal their stupidity and arrogance. Or is that depiction of the scene from Hollywood movies and pulp fiction simply a critique of cultural taste and artifacts, not of the societies that nourish and consume them?

If we have to choose a ground that will take into account as much of the expressive and referential properties of the text, I would say that the semiotic ground has to center-stage Anil's role, her recording sensibility, and her own "take" on the fraught relationship of the brothers. Anil's sensorium as narrative point of view registers the subtle, subterranean nuances of historical vicissitudes. My view is that the ground of our interpretation needs to connect this scene with what comes after, as well as what has happened already up to this point. In that expanded horizon, Anil's mediation here prepares for Gamini's reception of his brother's body in the morgue in the next section, and her eventual disappearance from the novel.

### *Historicizing Exegesis*

A concluding remark may return us to the quest for knowledge and truth via representation. What then is the rationale for structuring the narrative in this specific manner? Numerous reviews and commentaries have converged on the judgment that the novel does not explicitly choose any side. One writer observes that Ondaatje "ensures that no side emerges unstained: the government, the Tamil separatists, or the insurgents to the south" (Singh 2000); another commends the author when he "reveals the depths of his homeland's adversity with a scientist's distance" (Barnett 2000). Another reviewer contends that the author "has no clear political position . . . and appeals to conscience only by depicting the extremes of fear and violence that war engenders" (Champeon 2003).

These opinions diverge from signs of partisanship which are ignored for the sake of endorsing a putative neutrality, for example: "Yet the darkest Greek tragedies were innocent compared with what was happening here. Heads on stakes. Skeletons dug out of a cocoa pit in Matale" (Ondaatje 2000, 11). Consider also Gamini's psychic condition as he examines his brother's lifeless body after he discovered the shattered hands: "He had seen cases where every tooth had been removed, the nose cut apart, the eyes humiliated with liquids, the ears entered. He had been, as he ran down the hospital hallway, most frightened of seeing his brother's face. It was the face they went for in some cases. They could in their hideous skills sniff out vanity" (2000, 289-90). Here, the signs of "terror,"

“terrorism,” and their cognates find their charged sensory manifestations in these rhematic symbols and their conceivable interpretants.

We can of course allude further to numerous historical and documentary accounts of the situation in Sri Lanka in the mid-1980 to early 1990s, the time period circumscribing the events of the novel. We can consult an early commentary such as *Sri Lanka: The Holocaust and After* (1984) by L. Piyadasa to test the truth-claims of propositions enunciated in the narrative. While a 1987 peace accord was signed granting regional autonomy to the embattled Tamils, the rebellion continued and worsened because the Tamil nationalists were excluded by both the Indian and Sri Lankan governments (Gurr 1993, 301). By 1998, an estimated 50,000 persons have died since the war began in the eighties (Instituto del Tercer Mundo 1999, 521).

The relevant context for understanding this art-work can be enlarged and offered for further investigation. The final interpretant – in Peirce’s view, “the effect the Sign would produce upon any mind upon which circumstances [history, artistic techniques, biography, and other contextual information] should permit it to work out its full effect” (1985, 413; see Fitzgerald 1966, 124-25) – would deploy such information provided by historical accounts as elements of the hermeneutic circle or horizon to help us appraise the cogency of all the “possibles” rendered in the narrative. As inquiry proceeds, a set of political beliefs or appropriate habits of conduct will emerge from this hermeneutic exercise, later to be revised or transformed as befits the requirement for implementing agreed social purposes, norms, programs, and moral/political objectives.

### *Concretizing Reason*

We can indeed anticipate a range of possible meanings/interpretants we can formulate for this particular scene, or for any other pivotal episode, as a representamen in a sequence of signifiers, and for the novel as a whole. As I have argued, however, that range can not be infinite nor arbitrary since the over-all principle of “concrete reasonableness” (the logic of abduction) imposes a provisional end to this phase of the inquiry (Eco 1984; 1995). The knowable reality which the art of the novel strives to represent is not an indeterminable, mysterious, noumenal “something”; to the extent that the representation exhibits the “power to live down all opposition,” the interpretant can

grasp the “true character of the object. . . . The very entelechy of being lies in being representable,” Peirce insists; indeed, “a symbol is an embryonic reality endowed with power of growth into the very truth, the very entelechy of reality” mediated through the community of interpreters (1976, 262; Apel 1995). Inquiry conduces to the habit of thought/action that mobilizes society for specific projects and programs in accord with scientific progress and sociohistorical evolution.

Knowledge and reality, “cognizability” and being, are synonymous terms for Peirce (CSP 5:257). His critique of meaning ultimately directs us to fix our attention on the habits of thinking and action precipitated by our act of reading, effects with practical bearings in everyday life. Perceptions and habits of inference generating knowledge/truth always take place within the domain of semiotic representation and rational self-controlled behavior (Habermas 1971, 98; Moore and Robin 1994). Aesthetics, for Peirce, is nothing else but “the theory of the deliberate formation of such habits of feeling (i.e., of the ideal)” which he also called “the play of Musement” after Schiller’s *Spieltrieb* (Brent 1998, 53; Feibleman 1969, 392; Schusterman 1972).

Reading *Anil’s Ghost* and analyzing the repertoire of interpretants of politically loaded terms such as “terrorism” may be said to constitute those significant practices that challenge not only our hermeneutic skills and capabilities of construing perceptions and translating perceptual judgments; they also elicit signs of whether we, and others in the collaborative enterprise, embody what Peirce calls “an intelligence capable of learning by experience” (1955, 98; Sheriff 1994; Skagestad 2004). Peirce’s “semeiotic” organon offers a powerful instrument for renewing critical inquiry into the conservative foundation of current humanistic studies and social sciences that needs urgent radical transformation.

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