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Interpretation, Worldviews and the Object

In the previous chapter a number of signs were analysed within the theoretical frameworks of the 1903 and 1908 sign-systems in order to assess their differences. In this final chapter, we examine a number of features of Peirce's late semiotics in its own right, investigating primarily the importance of the object as he developed it during the years 1908 and 1909. It is universally admitted that his introduction of the concept of the interpretant and the profound revisions it was subjected to over a period of nearly fifty years were one of Peirce's greatest contributions to logic. Less chronicled is the fact that his conception of the object also underwent an important evolution, and thus it is the principal objective of the chapter to explore and exploit its interest for semiotic analysis. The major problem, already alluded to towards the end of the previous chapter, concerns specifically the semiotic status of the dynamic object, its relation to the way it is represented in the sign by its immediate object and the interpretations it gives rise to. For example, it was suggested that there was no reason not to employ the structure of hexadb in *a priori* fashion as a publicist might: planning the public image to be given of some product, its carefully planned form as it is to appear on a given support or medium (hoarding, television spot, advertisement in a newspaper etc.). Such a strategy raises the problem of the status and nature of the dynamic object of such a campaign, given that the dynamic object is, after all, the determinant of the sign: the image the team of publicists wishes to give of the product or the sponsor or, perhaps, the product itself as it appears on the advertisement, or perhaps some more nebulous object involving marketing dynamics. It is essentially to this complex relation holding between what actually constitutes a dynamic object and the way a sign represents it that the following sections are devoted.¹

The problem

Considering once more Susan Sontag's remark in *On Photography* to the effect that 'one's first encounter with the photographic inventory of ultimate horror is

a kind of revelation, the prototypically modern revelation: a negative epiphany' (1977: 19), the question arises as to what the dynamic object of this particular photographic inventory might be. Is it the emaciated faces or bodies of the victims of these atrocities, is it some more general agency or is it, as Sontag suggests, 'ultimate horror'? Yet another example is to be found in the previous chapter: when introducing the two photographs representing, respectively, an individual man and woman (Figure 4.7) and the two classes of men and women (Figure 4.8), it was suggested that the partial objects they represented characterized the clearly recognizable universe of existence of violence against women. The reader, indeed, may have thought that they were both different representations of the same problem – domestic violence. In either case we have two dynamic objects considerably more general than the references to men and women. The general potential of the dynamic object can be illustrated, too, by any of the analyses to be found in Hariman and Lucaites's *No Caption Needed*, a meticulous study of the ideological implications of what they call 'iconic images', that is, 'famous pictures from the news media' (2007: 6). They show, for example, a photograph of the Kent State University massacre of 1970 to be far more than the representation of a screaming, kneeling female student beside the body of her dead comrade (2007: 139–60). For what we see in many images, whether photographs or paintings, cannot simply be reduced to what is 'literally' represented. These three examples, the Sontag extract, the Uelsmann photograph and the Kent State massacre photograph² are all, in various ways, interpreted to represent an object more complex than the 'contents' of the image, in spite of the fact that their respective immediate objects can only communicate parts of that object to the sign representing it; and they all are ideologically charged. This relation between object and ideology must also be accounted for.

A less contentious example of how the object of the sign can be interpreted as being different from what appears to be the object depicted is to be found in the discussion of a Dutch painting titled *A Young Man and Woman Making Music*, c. 1630, by Jan Miense Molenaer. The painting was the subject of part of a podcast from the National Gallery of London devoted to an exhibition titled 'Vermeer and Music: the Art of Love and Leisure'.³ The curator of the exhibition, Betsy Wieseman, describes the painting to a visitor towards the end of the podcast, and in the course of her description of what the musicians are wearing, and how the painting relates to the period, she remarks that what it really represents is not so much a couple making music together but, rather, 'a sort of *joie de vivre*': 'I always have the sense that they've just reached the rousing chorus of the song ... that they're really into it and they're having a good time

and the music has taken over. *It really represents a sort of “joie de vivre”*. And Molenaer communicates that in such a vivid way’ [emphasis added].⁴ In short, the painting really represents not so much a couple playing music but the joy of living, a warm feeling of enjoyment of life, exuberance and youthful high spirits. The sentence containing the adversative value of the adverb *really* suggests that what the observer is looking at is somehow different from the figures and their pose represented on the canvas: what we are looking at, in fact, is more complex than what is to be identified superficially by an inventory of the partial objects represented on the painting. Such representations seem somehow to redirect the observer or the reader to the real object.

The problem for Peircean semiotics, then, is to account for this discrepancy between what we see and what the painting, photograph or other, not necessarily pictorial, sign *really* represents and how it does so. Other examples of this particular type of indirection are ‘it actually represents ...’, ‘what it actually represents is ...’, ‘what it really represents is ...’. Such expressions, which on any Internet search turn out to be too numerous to quote, represent differences in interpretation, no doubt, but, above all, a perceived disparity between what is apparently represented, or what has already been proposed as an interpretation, and what someone thinks is really, or actually represented: in Peircean terms a difference or tension between the immediately perceived object – in a representation, in an action, in almost any *significant* aspect of everyday life – and the real object, the object which the observer/speaker thinks is really/actually/ in fact the case, the real or actual determinant of the sign. The problem, then, is not to decide who is right or what the correct interpretation is, but to discover, as in the case of the photographs and text mentioned above, the semiotic principle behind this very frequently encountered tension between the perceived entity and what it represents.

Symbols

One possibility of accounting for the special form of indirection implicit in Wieseman’s remark above within the 1903 paradigm is the symbol, since this is a sign which within the semiotics represents general objects. This Peirce had defined in 1903 in an extract already discussed in Chapter 1:

A Symbol is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas, which operates to cause the Symbol to be interpreted as referring to that Object. It is thus itself a general type or law,

that is, is a Legisign. As such it acts through a Replica. Not only is it general itself, but the Object to which it refers is of a general nature. Now that which is general has its being in the instances which it will determine. There must, therefore, be existent instances of what the Symbol denotes, although we must here understand by 'existent,' existent in the possibly imaginary universe to which the Symbol refers. (CP 2.249)

Now various forms of symbolism are, no doubt, to be found in all cultures. For example, peaches symbolizing longevity are a common symbol in Chinese art, appearing in depictions or descriptions in a number of fables, paintings and other forms of art, often in association with thematically similar iconography such as deer or cranes. In itself, a peach represented in an image or offered as a gift is, on one 'literal' level, a simple piece of fruit, but can on a second, more general, level, like the representations of deer or cranes, refer or redirect the interpreting mind to a more general object – longevity or immortality. In a similar manner, the Ancient Greeks believed the flesh of the peacock to be imputrescible – it was held not to be subject to decomposition after death, and thus became a symbol of immortality, and later figured in much early Church imagery and architecture (in iconostases, for example) as a symbol of the promised afterlife.

What is common to all symbols, as understood in the above manner, is the fact that their instances represent themselves as existent entities, and, at the same time, as something general. Yet another example of a symbol can be seen in the little dog which accompanies the music-making in Molenaer's painting mentioned earlier: by a form of indirection a dog can often be found in much Christian imagery as symbol of fidelity in marriage and, by extension, in religious faith: see, for example, van Eyck's *Arnolfini Portrait* in the National Gallery or Carpaccio's *Vision of St Augustine*. The instances Peirce's definition identifies are existent instances of general types or laws. The best examples of symbols in this sense are the words of any natural language – nouns and verbs in English, for example. As we saw in Chapter 1, from his earliest writings on signs until 1902, symbols were either arguments, propositions or terms, the traditional matter of logic. In 1903 he established these in a separate division, the Sign-Interpretant division discussed in Chapter 1, and maintained their verbocentric bias (EP2 275–76).⁵ To qualify as symbol a sign has to be a legisign, a sign that is interpreted in a regular, law-like fashion. This is the case with peaches, peacocks and little dogs, even though they don't enter into complex legisign patternings in the manner of a verbal sign such as a definite article and the common noun with which it is associated. Nonverbal symbols are the creations of habit and experience and are no less law-like than a rule of grammar,

a fact which determines the sorts of object they represent. The problem is that although the little dog in Molenaer's painting may be for us and for the Christian Church a symbol of fidelity, this doesn't enable us to explain how the painting really represents an object other than the participants represented in the music-making. In fact the reason is quite simple: anyone observing a painting with a dog in it, for example, and judging it to be a symbol of 'fidelity', is clearly using the term 'symbol' in the Peircean sense of 1903, but, and this is an important point, is identifying the object 'fidelity' by means of the 1908 system. A symbol is defined to be a conventional *way of representing* an object – it doesn't *identify* that object. To do this we look in 1908-fashion 'directly' at the forms which the sign's immediate object has communicated to it. In this way the immediate object functions as a logical filter 'shifting' part of the dynamic object's form to the sign, irrespective of the universe to which it belongs, and enables us to attempt to identify the dynamic object. In short, the symbol of 1903 doesn't enable us to identify an 'indirect' object of the sort exemplified in statements by Sontag, Hariman and Lucaites, and in the Molenaer painting, the identification is obtained in a different way.

There remains another possibility of accounting for what, in the system of 1903, a given sign might *really* represent, and for how it might represent something other than the object represented by the sign as in Molenaer's painting, and this can be sought in Peirce's conception of the hypoicon, which was exploited in Chapter 4. Since through the implication principle, an index can involve a sort of icon and a symbol can involve a sort of index, it was seen that from this a symbol can by transitivity involve a sort of icon, and, necessarily, one or other of the three hypoicons. The problem is that when we identify the metaphorical or diagrammatic status of a sign we are again simply stating how it is organized internally – iconicity cannot tell us *what* the sign represents, only *how* it represents it, since iconicity is the 'sub-form' of any sign's mode of representation. In this respect the hypoicons are no different from the index and symbol: these inform us not of what the object is, or of what it might be *really*, but simply of how it is represented, by physical contact or by convention. For instance, when Peirce tells us that 'Examples of Indices are the hand of a clock, and the veering of a weathercock' (EP2 274, 1903), he is talking about these as signs, indicating *how* they represent their objects but not the objects themselves, for example, the time of day or the direction the wind is coming from. He does give many examples of the objects of signs but they are not obtained from the mode of representation. Consider, too, at this point, this extract from 'New Elements': 'It will be observed that the icon is very perfect in respect to signification, bringing its interpreter

face to face with the very character signified' (NEM4 242, 1904). In fact, from the point of view of the 1908 hexad, what the interpreter is brought face to face with is, rather, the form inherited from the immediate object for which the sign functions as the medium. It seems reasonable to conclude, then, that even when a symbol in the Peircean sense is informed by hypoiconicity, whatever the *real* object of that sign may be, whatever it *really* represents, hypoiconicity on its own cannot provide a satisfactory explanation of this form of indirection, which is why we need to review the various stages in the theoretical development of the object in semiosis.

A brief historical review of the object

The first stage is formed, of course, during the period from the mid-1860s to 1903. This, as we saw earlier, was a period in which Peirce had defined a single division with the subdivisions of likeness, index or sign and symbol. The latter was, until 1902–03, subdivided into term, proposition and argument before these became explicitly an independent division at the time of the Lowell Lectures in 1903. Returning to a passage of which a part was already discussed in Chapter 1, we can see how the object participated in the single division in 1866:

As relations separate into two kinds on account of the double reference they contain, so representations from containing a triple reference separate into three kinds. For the relation of a repraesentamen to its object (correlate) maybe a real relation and, then, either an agreement or a difference, or it may be an ideal r[elati]on or one from which the reference to a correspondent (subject of representation) cannot be prescinded by position. (W1 355)

The object was a non-predicable 'substance' or IT or 'thing', as Peirce was later to refer to it in 'On a New List of Categories' (CP 1.547, 1867), an idea which corresponds to later definitions of the dicisign in which the subject is not a predicate, of course, but can be associated with one. Note, too, that what was later to become the 'second correlate' in Peirce's formal definition of representation (EP2 290, 1903) had already also been defined as a correlate: 'A ground is that pure abstraction, the embodiment of which makes a quality. A correlate is a second substance with which the first is in a comparison. An interpretant is a representation which represents that which is referred to it as a representation of the same object which it does itself represent' (W1 524, 1866). This was the situation by 1903, one much more fully documented in Chapter 1. A second

stage comes in 1904, which is an important year for two reasons. This can be seen first in this long extract from the text 'New Elements':

A *sign* is connected with the "Truth" i.e. the entire Universe of being, or, as some say, the Absolute, in three distinct ways. In the first place, a sign is not a real thing. It is of such a nature as to exist in *replicas*. Look down a printed page, and every *the* you see is the same word, every *e* the same letter. A real thing does not so exist in replica. The being of a sign is merely *being represented*. Now *really being* and *being represented* are very different. Giving to the word *sign* the full scope that reasonably belongs to it for logical purposes, a whole book is a sign; and a translation of it is a replica of the same sign. A whole literature is a sign. The sentence "Roxana was the queen of Alexander" is a sign of Roxana and of Alexander, and though there is a grammatical emphasis on the former, logically the name "Alexander" is as much a *subject* as is the name "Roxana"; and the real persons Roxana and Alexander are *real objects* of the sign. Every sign that is sufficiently complete refers to sundry real objects. All these objects, even if we are talking of Hamlet's madness, are parts of one and the same Universe of being, the "Truth." But so far as the "Truth" is merely the *object* of a sign, it is merely the Aristotelian *Matter* of it that is so All these characters are elements of the "Truth." Every sign signifies the "Truth." But it is only the Aristotelian *Form* of the universe that it signifies. (NEM4 238–39, 1904)

According to the Editors of EP2⁶ this text was probably written early in 1904. Consequently we find no trace of the distinction between immediate and dynamic objects Peirce was to develop in his letter to Lady Welby the following October. Nevertheless, as the quotation shows, the text anticipates the three universes described in the letter and drafts to Lady Welby of December 1908 and the universe of existence defined in a draft letter to William James of February 1909 (EP2 492–97). The notion of a universe of existence as such is not developed in the passage – what we have here is a universe of being presenting, in its reference to the object of a sign being the 'Truth', a more metaphysical than ontological character, which suggests that Peirce had the three types of inference in mind when he was working on this part of the text (cf., for example, CP 2.229, CP 2.253, 1903). Nevertheless, we see Peirce already contemplating the idea that the object of a sign is the universe which is determined by the 'real' objects which are members of it, these real objects becoming the 'partial objects' of 1907 and the 'special' objects of 1909; and there is, too, the reference to Hamlet's madness that we find in a draft letter to William James of 1909.

In this context, then, the letter of October 1904 also heralds a new stage in the development of the object, for as seen in Chapter 2, within a year of giving the Lowell

Lectures Peirce had expanded the original triad of correlates to six: two objects, the sign and three interpretants. Concerning the two objects he made this highly relevant remark: 'I'm now prepared to give my division of signs, as soon as I've pointed out that a sign has two objects, its object as it is represented and its object in itself' (CP 8.333). Another way of describing them, and one highly pertinent to the present topic, is, as we saw in Chapter 2, to distinguish between the object as it informs the sign and the object as it *really* is independently of its representation. The very *possibility* that a single sign should be capable of representing an object other than the one perceived as in the examples discussed earlier in the chapter thus stems from the now explicit distinction between the immediate and the dynamic objects, a distinction reiterated by Peirce on too many occasions to cite. What we need now is a means of ascertaining the sorts of dynamic objects of which the immediate objects might be the determinations. In short, we have to distinguish clearly between the two, and yet this has proved to be highly problematic with Peirce scholars. Consider, first, a statement by Thomas Short:

However, while no sign represents its dynamic object completely, many signs, such as pure icons and pure indices, cannot misrepresent their objects. For the object of such a sign is exactly whatever is presented or indicated. As no further representation is made within that sign that might be false of that object, the sign cannot be mistaken or misleading. In that respect, while there will be differences, there can be no discrepancy between such a sign's immediate and dynamic objects.

A last word on this distinction: the immediate and dynamic objects are not different entities. The distinction pertains, rather, to how one and the same object is considered. The immediate object *is* the dynamic object *as* it is represented, however incompletely or inaccurately, in a given sign. (2007: 196)

While, in light of the material discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, we can simplify the situation by accepting that the 'immediate object is the dynamic object *as* it is represented',⁷ it is nevertheless logically incorrect to consider the two as facets of one and the same entity. Consider now, an extract from Haussman (2012), an extensive attempt to identify and isolate the specific characteristics of the dynamic object:

I also describe this distinction [between the immediate and dynamical objects] by saying that there is one referent of a sign and that the referent has two sides or aspects. Perhaps it is helpful to say that the referent of a sign consists of two interactive objects, the immediate object and the dynamical, or real, object, a distinction to be considered later.

The dynamical object seems to be the object that functions as the beginning of and basis for semeiosis or the interpretive process, for it is that which is to be interpreted. And, as I mentioned earlier, the immediate object is the interpreted dynamical object. It is the outcome of interpreting the initiating object. (2012: 81)

The author, like other Peirce scholars, has adopted the distinctions and terminology of 1904 for the two objects but has declined to consider the lessons of the draft of 1906 or the way the two are integrated, along with the three interpretants, into the six and ten divisions of 1908. In the later systems it is simply not possible for immediate and dynamic objects to be, as Short also appears to think, aspects of a single object, or for the immediate object to be an 'interpreted dynamical object', since it follows the dynamic object in semiosis and precedes both the sign and the three interpretants: the immediate object can't interpret the dynamic; it receives form from it, which it communicates to the sign, which then generates the sequence of interpretants.

The immediate and dynamic objects are, as was seen in Chapters 2 and 3, clearly quite different entities – they instantiate different trichotomies within the six- and ten-division typologies established by Peirce after 1904, and can be referred to one or other of the three completely distinct universes in the classification of a given sign.⁸ Moreover, by 1907 Peirce had begun to refer to the requirement of collateral observation, experience or acquaintance of an object in the interpretation of the sign. The concept of 'collateral observation' seems to have been first introduced in the 'Pragmatism' text discussed briefly in the final section of Chapter 2 (e.g. R318 601, 611, 613, 623; CP 8.178; EP2 493), while 'collateral experience' (EP2 480, 493, 495 and 498, CP 8.183) and 'collateral acquaintance' (EP2 496, CP 8.183) figure in many definitions of the sign thereafter. Recourse to such collateral experience in order to identify the dynamic object is surely proof of the very real theoretical difference between the two: how else should we know that Cindy Sherman's film stills simulate a genre that simulates real life? Classifying them as *dicent sinsigns* or as *gratific, sympathetic, categorical concretives* tells us little or nothing about the object represented, although in the second case we have to take it into account in order to classify the sign as such. It is Peirce who has the last word: 'Say the Interpretant is that which the Sign brings into correspondence with the Object. The Object is plainly Twofold. The Dynamic Object is the Real Object according to the above definition [that which determines the sign]. The Immediate Object is the Object as presented in the Sign' (R399, 276r (H522)). And here, too: in a letter to William James of 14 March 1909, he summarizes his position concerning the two objects with the following statement discussed earlier:

We must distinguish between the Immediate Object, — i.e., the Object as represented in the Sign, — and the Real (no, because perhaps the Object is altogether fictive, I must choose a different term; therefore:), say rather the Dynamical Object, which, from the nature of things, the Sign *cannot* express, which it can only *indicate* and leave the interpreter to find out by *collateral experience*. (CP 8.314)

However, in spite of these notable advances in Peirce's understanding of the object, another stage occurs between 1906 and 1908 and begins with the draft letter to Lady Welby of March 1906, which was discussed at length in Chapter 2. I will simply summarize the important points. In addition to the distinction between immediate and dynamic object, Peirce also redefines the sign as the medium for the communication of a form originating in the dynamic object and introduces important distinctions concerning the interpretants (SS 97). In the present context what is important is that by defining the sign as a medium he attributed a greater role to the object in semiosis: it communicates form via the immediate object to the sign, which then communicates it to the series of interpretants, the form in question being the realization of one or other or all of the categories of the forms of experience (CP 1.452, 1896), and this independently of the utterer and the interpreter as participants in the semiosis.

If we consider anew the description of the Molenaer painting given earlier in the chapter, it is possible to see how it would fit into the scheme of 1906. The persons represented can be seen as the artist's models, the apparent dynamic objects of this complex, portrait-like painting. The representation which an observer sees finished but which must have advanced in various stages of completion is a determination of the immediate object – that is, the models, the musical instruments and furniture and so on, *as represented*. The piece of canvas itself is the medium – the material entity which receives the compound form communicated by the immediate object and conveys it to whatever potential interpretant sequence the image may produce. In this case, having immediately interpreted the marks on the canvas as humans, dog, instruments and furniture, Wieseman proffers the potentially surprising remark that it represents a sort of *joie de vivre*. It was this *joie de vivre* that determined the painting, in other words, not the artist. As was suggested in Chapter 2, the artist, a version of Peirce's utterer, is outside the process. He executes the painting, but in doing so he is simply the vector of the artistic trends and public and private ideologies of the age and, if there was one, the desires of the patron paying for the work: according to Peirce's conception of the sign as medium in 1906, it is the dynamic object which structures the representation on the sign, not the artist.

From the 1906 draft on, then, in theory only the object can determine the sign, since the 1906 redefinition of the sign simply as a medium had the effect of diminishing the importance of both the sign itself and the utterer and interpreter in semiosis. These are indispensable agencies in any semiosis, for there would not be a sign in the first place without them. Note that the structure of the sign can only come from the object since the utterer is simply a vector: in the case of music or non-figurative art, for example, we feel that it is the composer or artist who creates the sign, but like the utterer and interpreter in Peirce's examples, these are 'outside semiosis', so to speak, as indispensable but 'inefficient' quasi-minds. It is the object which 'efficiently' structures the sign. Any wave of Puccini orchestral sound or any patch of colour on a non-figurative canvas must be the determination of an orchestra and its sets of instruments and musicians or of a brush and paint. If the qualities of these sounds and images were classified as 'abstractives', they would be 'possible' objects and we should be unable to perceive them.⁹ Just what sort of objects might determine such works, and any others, and just what role the utterer might ultimately have in the process Peirce was to review to in 1908 and 1909.

Summarizing the evolution of the object so far, we find, first, that Peirce has now introduced the crucial distinction between the two objects, a distinction to be found in all future definitions of the sign and, more importantly, a distinction which makes it logically possible for the dynamic not to be at all like the immediate. Second, we find that the material from the 1906 definition of the sign as medium had the effect of diminishing the importance of the sign in semiosis, and at the same time it gave the immediate object a specific representative status as a sort of filter, communicating parts of the form or structure of the dynamic object to the sign. Third, the 1908 letter to Lady Welby set out a new way of classifying the sign with reference to three universes instead of the three categories of 1903, with the object as the initial determining element in the semiotic sequence, as illustrated in Table 4.2.

The final stage in the development of Peirce's conception of the object concerns the two ways in which he expanded its scope in 1908 and 1909. Indeed, his final statements on the universes of necessitant, existent and possible entities and the types of subjects these universes 'hold' or contain enable us to establish just how it is that the interpreter, like Susan Sontag looking at images of Bergen-Belsen, Hariman and Lucaites analysing the importance of the screaming student in the image of the Kent State massacre and Betsy Wieseman in the quotation from the beginning of the chapter, actually identifies an object which is not necessarily like its representation. This final part of our review of the development of the

object and of our examination of what signs might *really* represent involves two lines of enquiry. The first is Peirce's conception of the three universes mentioned in the 1908 letter to Lady Welby and their modes of being as they were described in Chapter 3, and second, as seen in the previous chapter, the idea that the object itself constitutes in fact a universe of existence.

In the case of the three universes, Peirce is quite explicit as to their different modes of being in the same letter. However, with the exception of the oversimplifying remarks concerning the English common noun *beauty*, he gives little indication of the sorts of objects that are members of each of the three universes and in terms of which signs can be classified as, for example, collective, concretion or abstraction. However, as seen in Chapter 3, in a draft to Lady Welby dated two days later, which presumably was never sent (CP 8.366), he illustrated the range of dynamic objects of signs according to the universe to which they belong: possibles (signs of such objects being abstractions), existent objects (individuals and the facts concerning them, signs of these being concretions) and collections or classes (signs of these being collectives), thereby giving us some idea of the sorts of entities these universe might be the receptacles of.

In the first case the objects are qualitative entities represented by colours, mass, texture and so on; in the second, existents such as humans, animals, tables, individuals and named individuals such as Napoleon, Charlemagne and Dean Moriarty; finally, in the third, general classes such as mankind, prime numbers, classes, categories, habits and types. However, in another text of 1908, 'The Neglected Argument for the Reality of God', he breaks new ground, describing the three universes and, more importantly, the sorts of objects they comprise in greater detail. The least complex, the universe of possible objects, 'holds' ideas; the second universe is composed of existent objects – occurrences and the facts containing them; and the third and most complex universe comprises more general objects:

Of the three Universes of Experience familiar to us all, the first comprises all mere Ideas, those airy nothings to which the mind of poet, pure mathematician, or another *might* give local habitation and a name within that mind. Their very airy-nothingness, the fact that their Being consists in mere capability of getting thought, not in anybody's Actually thinking them, saves their reality. The second Universe is that of the Brute Actuality of things and facts. I am confident that their Being consists in reactions against Brute forces, notwithstanding objections redoubtable until they are closely and fairly examined. The third Universe comprises everything whose Being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different

Universes. Such is everything which is essentially a Sign, – not the mere body of the sign, which is not essentially such, but, so to speak, the Sign's Soul, which has its Being in its power of serving as intermediary between its Object and a Mind. Such, too, is a living consciousness, and such the life, the power of growth, of a plant. Such is a living institution, – a daily newspaper, a great fortune, a social “movement” (CP 6.455)

It follows from the sections above that what we see when we look at an image of any sort, or what we hear when we process an utterance of any sort, or what we read in a text of any sort is, of course, what their immediate object has filtered through to them from the object they represent. We also know now that by 1908 Peirce had defined the range of possible dynamic objects to be virtually inexhaustible, and that the dynamic object is not in any way necessarily like the immediate. Peirce's late illustration of various types of dynamic objects – ‘a daily newspaper, a great fortune, a social “movement”’ – not only opens up our understanding of how others interpret signs but also liberates our own conception of what a sign might stand for. Barely three months later in a draft letter to William James, Peirce offered a frustratingly brief description of the relation holding between the universes and the objects which determined them, a topic referred to in the previous chapter.

The object as universe

The 26 February 1909 letter (EP2 492–497) raises a delicate problem already alluded to in the Introduction. It is a draft letter, and as we have seen throughout the book, there are a number of antecedent drafts that have raised important theoretical issues but which, for various reasons, were probably never dispatched to their intended recipient. For example, the draft of July 1905 to Lady Welby dismissed the representamen from Peirce's theory of signs of the period, and yet we know that he subsequently re-used the term in at least one of his final texts. The draft of 9 March 1906, like several other texts of that period, introduced the idea that the sign was a medium, but Peirce never really developed the theoretical potential of the idea, and, judging by the contents of Ogden and Richards' Appendix D, the letter of which we have the draft was never sent. There were drafts of December 1908 that contain most of what we know of the ten divisions supposedly yielding sixty-six classes of signs, but they were never sent either, although Peirce in a letter of 14 March 1909 does admit to Lady Welby to having found one of them in his portfolio, and expresses the hope that he had actually sent it (SS 109). As in the case of the draft letter to

William James, one wonders whether these were never sent because Peirce had forgotten them in his portfolio or had simply lost interest in the theoretical points they contained. Whatever the reasons why the draft to James was never sent, it nevertheless constitutes a remarkable statement on the object of the sign. As mentioned briefly in the previous chapter, he now associated the object with one or other of the three universes – not the categories, note – subdividing the divisions to which signs were referred in the course of classification. This is a useful opening statement:

A Sign is a Cognizable that, on the one hand, is so determined (i.e., specialized, *bestimmt*) by something *other than itself*, called its Object (or, in some cases, as if the Sign be the sentence “Cain killed Abel” in which Cain and Abel are equally Partial Objects, it may be more convenient to say that that which determines the Sign is the Complexus, or Totality, of Partial Objects. And in every case the Object is accurately the Universe of which the Special Object is member, or part, while, on the other hand, it so determines some actual or potential Mind, the determination whereof I term the Interpretant created by the Sign, that that Interpreting Mind is therein determined mediately by the Object. (EP2 492)

Peirce's problem here is to distinguish the parts from the whole. For example, in an earlier version of the theory the model in the portrait in Figure 2.2 is what we assume to be the dynamic object of the representation on the artist's sketch pad. Now that the object in 1909 constitutes by itself the universe of existence the theoretical status of that model becomes problematic. Peirce's answer is in the new vocabulary that he employs. Cain and Abel are now both 'partial objects', a term which, as mentioned earlier, he seems first to have used in 1907.¹⁰ The strategy here is somewhat reminiscent of the way Peirce describes the *disisign* in 1906. This latter class of signs has the advantage of being composed of two readily identifiable parts: in the 1903 system the proposition, a *disisign* obviously, was defined as a double sign associating an index and a rheme (CP 2.251). In the relatively informal epistolary statement of 1906, these two terms are abandoned and Peirce simply refers to the 'part appropriated to representing the object, and another to representing how [the] sign itself represents that object' (RL 463, 28); in other words one part representing the sign's partial objects (the indexical element of 1903), and another signifying the form of the *relations* holding between these partial objects. The theoretical entity we are dealing with now is, of course, far more complex than a proposition or *disisign*, but Peirce makes an analogical distinction between the components of the universe and the universe itself.

The term 'partial object' is simply a syntactical convenience – both Cain and Abel are 'subjects' of the example sentence in the Peircean sense, whereas, grammatically speaking, Cain is the subject and Abel the direct object; both, too, are partial objects in the new terminology. However, he introduces for the first and only time as far as I have been able to tell, the term 'Special Object' to refer to the erstwhile dynamic object. In the case of the sentence 'Napoleon is lethargic', both Napoleon and lethargy are partial objects, but of the two, lethargy surely cannot be the special object – the universe would be too great, comprising not only Napoleon but also many politicians, university administrators, a few students and so on, whereas we surely interpret Napoleon as being more 'thematic' and therefore the special object. This is the case, too, with the wrecked train in Figure 4.6: although there are other partial objects on the photograph – windows, an awning, pillars and so on, it is surely the locomotive itself which is the special object of the photograph, while in the case of Cain and Abel both must be special objects. So much for the special object, what follows is equally innovative:

In the sentence instanced ['Napoleon is lethargic'] Napoleon is not the only Object. Another Partial Object is Lethargy; and the sentence cannot convey its meaning unless collateral experience has taught its Interpreter what Lethargy is, or what that is that "lethargy" means in this sentence. The Object of a Sign may be something to be created by the Sign. For the object of "Napoleon" is the Universe of Existence so far as it is determined by the fact of Napoleon being a Member of it. The Object of the sentence "Hamlet was insane" is the Universe of Shakespeare's Creation so far as it is determined by Hamlet being a part of it. The Object of the Command "Ground arms!" is the immediately subsequent action of the soldiers so far as it is affected by the molition expressed in the command. It cannot be understood unless collateral observation shows the speaker's relation to the rank of soldiers. You may say, if you like, that the Object is in the Universe of things desired by the Commanding Captain at that moment. Or since the obedience is fully expected, it is in the Universe of his expectation. At any rate, it determines the Sign although it is to be created by the Sign by the circumstance that its Universe is relative to the momentary state of mind of the officer.

The Sign creates something in the Mind of the Interpreter, which something, in that it has been so created by the Sign, has been, in a mediate and *relative* way, also created by the Object of the Sign, although the Object is essentially other than the Sign. And this creature of the Sign is called the Interpretant. It is created by the Sign; but not by the Sign *quâ* member of whichever of the Universes it belongs to; but it has been created by the Sign in its capacity of bearing the determination by the Object. (EP2 493)

Like the extract from 'The Neglected Argument for the Reality of God' discussed above, this extract introduces a series of examples of how a universe is determined by the partial or special objects that are members of it. For one thing, as we saw in the previous chapter, it neutralizes neatly and economically the conventional distinction between fact and fiction, between cases where the universe is 'real' and where it is 'fictive' as in the quotation from EP2 498 above. The universe determined by Napoleon's being a member of it and the universe determined by Hamlet's being a member of it are logically the same sorts of universe; this means, too, that Neal Cassady and Dean Moriarty determine their respective universes, and *from a logical point of view* there is absolutely no difference between them, either. Note, too, that without indulging in any form of psychologism, Peirce has redefined the participation of the utterer in semiosis: whatever motivation he or she has, the object of the motivation is in a universe defined by that very object – desire, expectation, volition: this is an important statement which in no way invalidates the earlier principle that there is nothing in the sign that doesn't originate in the object or in the universe defined by that object.

We also have in this passage from the draft a partial theoretical explanation of the strategies of interpretation when people read a novel or a newspaper or watch a documentary on TV or a wildly imaginative science-fiction film at the cinema: they become involved in, bored or thrilled by, a universe of existence determined by its protagonists. Since such universes are always anthropomorphic and thus composed of events of everyday experience, we come prepared to novel, newspaper, documentary or film with a store of collateral experience enabling us to follow events and to disregard the boundaries between fact and fantasy.

The determination by its members of a universe of existence also enables us to explain another important difference between the hexad of 1908 and the 10-class system of 1903. The icon was then defined in such a way as to be able to represent an object but, unlike the index, not to be able to offer any proof of its existence: it is a sinsign whose relation to its object is purely qualitative, not existential: Figure 1.3, the drawing of Cheyne Walk beside the Thames, is an iconic sinsign. However, when examining the very same image from the point of view of the hexad, the sign is necessarily concreate: it represents humans, trees, a river and boats, buildings and so on, all of which determine a universe of existence, even though certain or all of the characters and trees represented never actually existed. As suggested earlier, in its very simple way Peirce's theory of the object as it is presented in the draft to William James is an embryonic theory for an ontology in the modern sense: it is not a theory of being or existence in the

conventional philosophical sense, but a skeletal theory of the sorts of realizations of objects and relations occurring within particular representational genres such as film, novel, poetry, photography and so on.

We come now to the final stage in Peirce's development of the object and its implications. The reader will probably be wondering what sort of logic enables Peirce to claim that a newspaper or a social movement can be the dynamic object of a sign, and what sort of sign that might be. It is to the answers of such questions that we turn now through the analysis of three case studies. Since the universes of existence were discussed as analytical instruments in the previous chapter, the remainder of this one will be devoted to Peirce's late inventory of the diverse classes of dynamic objects as described above. But first we need the logical justification for such an inventory. As in the cases studies in Chapter 4 exploiting the universes of existence, the purpose is not to suggest or to provide a new methodology for the arts, but is, rather, an attempt to apply Peirce's late definitions to a variety of complex signs.

The fundamental semiotic principles involved can be established if we return briefly to hexadb as represented in Table 4.2, from which we can infer that unlike a universe of existence such as the one determined by Napoleon's being a member of it, or the one determined by Dean Moriarty's being a member of it, the universe determined by 'a living consciousness, the life, the power of growth, of a plant a living institution, – a daily newspaper, a great fortune, a social "movement"' enjoys a more complex logical status: these are objects from the universe of necessitants, and therefore the signs representing them are to be classified, at that point in the hexad in Table 4.2 (**Od**), as collectives. However, as the table also shows, while a given sign can be classified as a collective in reference to its dynamic object, at the immediate object stage (**Oi**) that same sign can be classified as either copulant, designative or descriptive. Now if the sign is designative or descriptive, the immediate object will necessarily belong to a different universe from that of the dynamic. Furthermore, even if in the immediate object division the sign is copulant, to be physically perceivable at all it will have itself to be a token at (**S**): a given sign can therefore have both an immediate and a dynamic object more complex than itself. The possibility for a sign to be classified according to objects in different universes from itself, as in the case of a collective designative hypothetical token, clearly bears out Peirce's earlier remark in the Logic Notebook to the effect that the immediate object may not be at all like the dynamic: 'The immediate object of a sign may be of quite a different nature from the real dynamical object' (R339 277r (H523), 1906).

It follows from this that in the case studies with which we engage below, the signs are necessarily tokens and that what we shall be examining is the way they have been structured by their respective immediate objects. It follows, too, that even if the immediate objects are in these cases existents, making the sign a designative, this doesn't prevent their dynamic objects from being necessitant and not perceivable: such objects are general and hence can only be inferred. For these reasons, the case studies are based on two premises: first, that the dynamic objects represented can logically be more complex than the signs and immediate objects representing them, and second, consequently, that such dynamic objects may not be at all like the immediate objects that they determine.

Worldviews and social movements

Westward the course of empire

We begin with a concrete example, Figure 5.1, artist Emmanuel Leutze's study for the mural *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* located in the House

Figure 5.1 Emanuel Leutze, *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, 1862, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Bequest of Sara Carr Upton 1931.6.1

wing, west stairway of the US Capitol. It is a stirring depiction of a wagon train formed of a group of pioneer settlers and their scouts heading westwards through a mountain pass. Beneath the main image is a cartouche showing their destination, San Francisco Bay. This is the exhibition label proposed by the Smithsonian American Art Museum accompanying the study:¹¹

Leutze's mural study for the Capitol in Washington celebrated the idea of Manifest Destiny just when the Civil War threatened the republic. The surging crowd of figures [on the mural] records the births, deaths, and battles fought as European Americans settled the continent to the edge of the Pacific. Like Moses and the Israelites who appear in the ornate borders of the painting, these pioneers stand at the threshold of the Promised Land, ready to fulfill what many nineteenth-century Americans believed was God's plan for the nation.

Figure 5.1 reproduces the study rather than the mural for reasons of legibility and simplicity.¹² What this and other similar images seem to represent is not so much the almost religious notion of the Manifest Destiny, as the exhibition label for the Smithsonian study has it, but rather the project of a new, hopefully just, expanding empire to be created on American soil in the New World.

Frances Palmer's *Across the Continent: 'The Course of Empire Takes Its Way'* (Figure 5.2) echoes the title of Leutze's mural and study, and displays a later, more aggressive image of western expansion: the coloured lithograph is divided diagonally by a railway line and displays contemporary signs of the social, technological and transportation superiority of the settlers from the East – a school and log cabins, a railway line, roads, covered wagons and the telegraph – on one side, and on the other a wilderness with a group of Indians on horseback engulfed by smoke from a locomotive.¹³

The image clearly illustrates contemporary perceptions of westward expansion and the idea Frederick Turner was later to give of the frontier as 'the outer edge of the wave [of westward expansion] – the meeting point between savagery and civilization'.¹⁴ Four years later, John Gast executed *American Progress* (Figure 5.3), a more complex allegorical painting which displays a female figure floating westwards above yet another representation of the superiority of the means of transportation and techniques for the exploitation of the land issuing from the East with the advent of the settlers over that of the soon-to-be-overcome hunter-gatherer, nomadic Indians.

If, in Table 4.2 once more, we neglect for convenience the series of interpretants and work back from the sign division, we classify all three images as, of course,

Figure 5.2 Frances Flora Bond Palmer, *Across the Continent. Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, 1868, Philadelphia Museum of Art, Hand-colored lithograph, Image: 17 5/8 × 27 1/4 inches (44.8 × 69.2 cm) Sheet: 21 5/16 × 30 1/8 inches (54.1 × 76.5 cm), Gift of Kathy and Ted Fernberger, 2009 2009-215-2

tokens, and the fact that they may have been duplicated many times is of no logical import. As far as the **Oi** division is concerned, Leutze's study and mural and Palmer's lithograph are designative. The allegorical *American Progress*, on the other hand, which associates a spirit of progress with the various means of transportation and so on, is interpreted as copulant with respect to the **Oi** division: we observe a physical sign in which the complex association of a wraith from one universe of experience has been combined with groups of humans from another, quite distinct, universe of experience by an immediate object necessarily more complex than the painting itself. Now the protagonists of all three images are human, suggesting that they all should theoretically be classified as concrete signs. However, as the exhibition label suggests, Leutze's study – the other two images likewise – celebrates something far more general than the sum of the beings that we can see on them. What these three very different images represent is surely more than settlers supplanting the indigenous populations on American soil – they validate an idea, an idea which itself legitimated westward

Figure 5.3 John Gast, *American Progress*, 1872, Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

expansion – and so all three are collective signs at **Od**.¹⁵ The exhibition label for Leutze's study for *Westward the Empire Takes Its Way* suggests that it celebrated the idea of Manifest Destiny, a concept owed to the journalist John O'Sullivan. However, although O'Sullivan was to coin the expression in an article titled 'Annexation' in 1845, in an earlier text he had suggested that America should turn its back on the Old World model of empire:

How many nations have had their decline and fall, because the equal rights of the minority were trampled on by the despotism of the majority; or the interests of the many sacrificed to the aristocracy of the few; or the rights and interests of all given up to the monarchy of one? ... So far as regards the entire development of the natural rights of man, in moral, political, and national life, we may confidently assume that our country is destined to be *the great nation* of futurity. (1839: 426)

What philanthropist can contemplate the oppressions, the cruelties, and injustice inflicted by the monarchies and aristocracies of antiquity and, by implication, contemporary European nations on the masses of mankind, and not turn with moral horror from the retrospect?

America is destined for better deeds. (1839: 427).¹⁶

What the Indians and the African slaves would have made of these clearly idealistic remarks is not hard to imagine, but they formed nevertheless the basis of a very powerful set of expansionist ideas. The idea of the empire as one way of dominating a territory was not new. While the title of both of Leutze's works is probably an innocent quotation from a poem of 1727 by Bishop Berkeley, there is clearly a reference to the inevitability of the fall of Old World empires as described in Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* in O'Sullivan's rejection of the earlier instances of such empires. Furthermore, the rise and fall of such empires had been illustrated only a few years earlier by the five tableaux of Thomas Cole's *The Course of Empire* (1833–36), which seem to have inspired the title of Leutze's mural and study. The concept of empire was clearly in the air of the times, especially, no doubt, in the sense of a country or territory not owing allegiance to any foreign power or influence. So what these images seem to celebrate is not so much a 'Manifest Destiny' as the ideal of a new form of empire, for which, by celebrating it pictorially, they provided a legitimacy. The three images may seem quaint, even innocuous, to us today more than a hundred and fifty years later, but at the time their object was nothing less than a propaganda effort, for they are militant images, determined not by real pioneers and Indians but by the concept of a new empire whose sovereign was held to be the people, in short, determined by a dynamic object of a very complex type. As vehicles of this propaganda, they were nevertheless far less extreme than other images determined by the same object – for example, James Earl Taylor's *Scrapbook* sketches of heroic cavalry officers and settlers, the outnumbered victims of indigenous savages and these designative tokens, too, were a particular determination of the same general object.

The Lady of Shalott

Another case of a much more general dynamic object than might first be thought is provided by a painting from a series by the British painter John William Waterhouse. It is the last in the series of three, but the first in relation to the sequence of events in the medieval tale made famous earlier by the poet Tennyson. The ballad recounts the tragic plight of the heroine of a medieval legend, the Lady of Shalott. The story, briefly, is as follows. The Lady of Shalott has been cursed for some unspoken reason. She has been condemned to live alone in a tower, where she weaves a magic web and is only able to look at the world outside by means of a mirror which reflects people passing along the road

to Camelot. She becomes dissatisfied with her lonely existence. The following relevant short extract is from the 1842 version of the poem:

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often through the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed;
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

One day the handsome Sir Lancelot rides by. She stops weaving and looks directly out of the window at him instead of using the mirror, thereby defying the curse. She leaves her castle, finds a boat and drifts downriver to her death. Ostensibly the story is about the female victim of a curse – she is the principal dynamic object, the ballad's 'special' object, but there are, of course, other partial objects (Lancelot, the town of Camelot, for example) in the poem – but that is not the only way the poem has been interpreted. The following is a sample of the critical opinions quoted in Wikipedia concerning what the poem really represents. Feminist critics, it is claimed, see the poem as dealing with issues of women's sexuality and their place in the Victorian world or with the temptation of sexuality, where the Lady of Shalott's innocence is preserved by death. The act of leaving the tower is considered as an act of defiance or a symbol of female empowerment, or is thought to allow the Lady of Shalott to break free emotionally and come into terms with her sexuality. The depiction of her death has also been interpreted as sleep, with its connotation of physical abandonment and vulnerability. Yet other critics have suggested that the poem is a representation of how a poet like Tennyson lives separated from the rest of society, and that the mirror functions as a filter, providing a form of artistic licence.¹⁷

These divergent interpretations once more raise the problem of what a poem, novel or pictorial representation really represents, as in the cases mentioned earlier in the chapter. We approach the problem not by means of the poem, but from an artist's depiction of one of the episodes. Waterhouse's painting (Figure 5.4) in fact represents the earliest. Such serial paintings were not unusual in the Victorian era, although this one, paradoxically, is Edwardian. In Waterhouse's case the first visually dramatic episode is from

Figure 5.4 John William Waterhouse, “*I am half sick of shadows,*” said *The Lady of Shalott*’ (Alfred, Lord Tennyson, *The Lady of Shalott*, Part II), 1915, oil on canvas, Overall: 100.3 × 73.7 cm (39 ½ × 29 in.) Art Gallery of Ontario, Gift of Mrs. Philip B. Jackson, 1971, 71/18, © 2016 Art Gallery of Ontario

1888: on display in the Tate Gallery, it depicts the Lady of Shalott drifting downstream to her death.¹⁸ The second, from 1894, catches the heroine at the fateful moment when she sees Lancelot in the mirror and turns to look

directly out of the window at him, thereby breaking the curse. Waterhouse's representation of the Lady of Shalott in this final version of 1915 shows her sitting in front of her loom with the mirror on the wall beside her. She is gazing reflectively into space, having just seen the 'two young lovers lately wed' at the bottom right of the mirror. This leads her to question her life without love in the isolation of the tower.

Referring to Table 4.2, the painting as a piece of canvass has to be classified as a token, and indeed is actually hanging in an art gallery in Toronto, Canada. Working back, there are two possibilities: the sign at **Oi** can either be a copulant, like Jerry Uelsmann's photograph from the previous chapter and Gast's painting, or else designative. If designative, as is more likely, the sign at **Od** either represents a necessitant object – a class or collection or some other general entity – making it a collective, or else represents an existent, making it a concretive like the photograph and the drawing from Chapter 1. In view of the materiality of the subject, the latter seems initially to be the more likely option, and yet this would be to disregard one of the most pervasive themes of Victorian paintings. This is immediately obvious when Waterhouse's image is compared with Figure 5.5. Richard Redgrave's very different painting, *The Outcast*, depicts

Figure 5.5 Richard Redgrave, *The Outcast*, 1851, © Royal Academy of Arts, London; Photographer: John Hammond

yet another aspect of the predicament of women in the Victorian era, but in a far more realistic manner. We are presented with the daughter of a middle-class family and her illegitimate child being driven from her home by her stern and unyielding Old Testament father, oblivious to the supplications of the other members of the family.

In spite of their obvious differences, the paintings can be construed as two representations of middle-class Victorian anxieties concerning female sexuality. Within this pervasive ideology the possibility for the sexual freedom of females to be on a par with that of males represented a danger to the fabric of family and society, and was, as paintings by Redgrave and others and the novels of Dickens, Eliot and Hardy in particular show, often severely repressed. Augustus Egg, for example, produced a series of three paintings depicting the downfall of an unfaithful wife and her baby titled *Past and Present* (all of 1858).¹⁹ The persistent influence of this moralizing worldview was absorbed more or less consciously by contemporary painters such as Holman Hunt – his *The Awakening Conscience* (1853)²⁰ and John Stanhope's *Thoughts of the Past* (1859)²¹ portray, respectively, a mistress with her 'gentleman' and a prostitute in a room beside a port, two variations on a much-worked Victorian stereotype, namely the fallen woman – while its influence is to be seen antithetically in its rejection by artists such as Whistler and Beardsley.

In view of this, Waterhouse's late depiction of the Lady of Shalott is more likely to be collective than concrete, copulant than designative: Arthurian legends clearly interested him as they did other Pre-Raphaelite painters, but beyond the illustration of a medieval tale the series of paintings can be interpreted, as was the poem, as an allegory of female containment and repression within a stern and severely patriarchal Victorian middle-class ideology.²² If this is the case the heroine in the image represents allegorically, and therefore indirectly, not an individual but, rather, the 'collection' of Victorian middle-class females, while the general object of the series is this very ideology, and in particular

that compulsive masculine fantasy one might call the official Victorian attitude [to the socio-sexual division]. Its other side, the darker side of the male attitude, can be found in fiction, and especially in poetry. The dark woman, the period avatar of feminine evil, lurks there in subterranean menace, stationed at intervals all the way from Tennyson's verse to the more scabrous pornography of the age. (Millet 1972: 122)

In other words, Victorian middle-class fears of the havoc that unbridled female sexuality might wreak on the stability and social cohesion of family and country alike determined more or less conscious creative responses – signs, therefore – from novelists like George Eliot, poets like Tennyson and artists like Waterhouse.

A Sunday march

Finally, the reader is invited to examine the photograph on Figure 5.6, which records some of the forty thousand and more people walking quietly but determinedly through a French town in the winter sunshine.

If we adopt the system of 1903, the dynamic object of this photograph, as in the case of all photographs, is composed collectively by the protagonists of the image – the people we see on the photograph. According to Peirce's definition for the *Syllabus* the photograph is a quasi-proposition; the section of rays (projected from an object, Peirce says in 1903, 'otherwise known') constitutes the quasi-subject while the print is its quasi-predicate. The 1906 definition of the *disign* examined briefly above would, if applied to a photograph, define the section of rays as the part appropriated to representing the object and the print as the part

Figure 5.6 A crowd walking peacefully through a French town

representing the way the sign represents that object. But these definitions, in view of the later development of the status of the object, together constitute too simple a view, for this is not what the image really represents.

Even if we momentarily forget that this is a photograph and go 'behind the frame' as Meyer Schapiro invites us to (1994: 7), and in imagination join the walkers, there still remains the question of what caused a third of its population to be walking around a town on a Sunday morning in the south of France in winter. The photographer is the vector not so much of a culture's obsession with using its mobile phones to take innumerable images of the self, monuments and the here and now, but in this case of a worldview that was brought violently into being four days before the photograph was taken. This is 11 January 2015, and throughout France citizens marched through their towns, motivated by a sympathy for the victims of the 7 January 2015 massacre of the Charlie Hebdo journalists, and by their resolute defence of the principle of the freedom of speech. What the photograph represents, and indeed what the crowd itself represents, is, according to Peirce's wide-ranging late inventory of the entities that can constitute necessitant dynamic objects, nothing less than a social movement. It is this general social movement, then, that the photograph *really* represents, not just a collection of individuals: the individuals represent collectively a complex general object, which the photograph records at two removes.

How do the foregoing analyses relate to the hexad in Table 4.2? If correctly classified as representing a necessitant object, all the images in this chapter are collectives. However, there are significant differences between them. The crowd photograph is necessarily literal and Redgrave's painting is likely to be a literal representation of the fallen woman: at **Oi**, then, both are designative. On the other hand, Leutze's mural and study, judging by their respective exhibition labels, are not to be taken simply literally, while the paintings by Gast and Waterhouse are both clearly allegorical (the latter represents a contemporary female predicament by means of a medieval legend). In this case, their immediate object, which communicates a complex structure to the sign it determines, is necessitant, and these works, like Jerry Uelsmann's photograph from Chapter 4, are all copulant at this stage of the classification process. As they are all necessarily tokens (a wall, canvases and photographic prints with arrangements of pigments on their surfaces), Redgrave's painting and the crowd photograph are collective designative tokens, while the others are copulant (collective) tokens. What their respective interpretants are, or have been, is, of course, impossible to determine.

Summary and discussion

When Peirce defined logic in 1903 as the philosophy of all representation, 'so far as representation can be known without any gathering of special facts beyond our ordinary daily life', the logic had a restricted definition of the sort of entity that an object might be. In order to show how the later semiotics expanded this conception, the chapter has traced the evolution of Peirce's conception of the sign's object through two important stages: first, the distinction between the immediate and the dynamic object, a significant development in its own right, but, more importantly, making it theoretically possible for there to be a representational discrepancy between the two; second, the extended inventory of potential dynamic objects established in the years 1908 and 1909 which reflected the virtually limitless potential of the three universes. Indeed, as these case studies have shown, the late conceptions of 1908 and 1909 provide the researcher with a very powerful range of necessitant objects which all participate, at times imperceptibly, in our ordinary daily lives. On the other hand this extensive expansion of the 1903 system might, for some, mean that Peircean semiotics has now reached a stage of formal break-up where 'anything goes'. There are at least three answers to such a charge.

First, we note that Peirce's conception of the final interpretant underwent a series of revisions contemporaneous with those of the object once he had expanded his interpretant system from one to three. In 1906 in 'Prolegomena to an Apology for Pragmaticism', for example, in an early reference to the concept, he defined the final interpretant in the following manner: 'Finally there is what I provisionally term the Final Interpretant, which refers to the manner in which the Sign tends to represent itself to be related to its Object' (CP 4.536). Examination in Chapter 2 of the various typologies Peirce established in the years 1904–1906 showed great hesitation in the naming and status of what was in 1909 to become the final interpretant, and in most cases at the time this was associated, as in the definition above, with the way the sign represents itself to be related to the object. However, definitions from 1909 suggest a much broader view, in which what might be called the 'consensual' logical status of the final interpretant placed the onus of interpretation on the community of interpreters rather than on the intrinsic manner in which signs tend to represent themselves to be related to their objects, as in the definition of 1906. The following is from the draft letter to James dated January 1909 discussed above:

As to the Interpretant, i.e., the “signification,” or “interpretation” rather, of a sign, we must distinguish an Immediate and a Dynamical, as we must the Immediate and Dynamical Objects. But we must also note that there is certainly a third kind of Interpretant, which I call the Final Interpretant, because it is that which *would* finally be decided to be the true interpretation if consideration of the matter were carried so far that an ultimate opinion were reached. (EP2 496, 1909)

To this we can add a similar definition in a letter addressed to Lady Welby two months later: ‘the Final Interpretant is the one Interpretative result to which every Interpreter is destined to come if the sign is sufficiently considered ... The Final Interpretant is that toward which the actual tends’ (SS 111, 1909), by which we understand that the purpose of signs for such an interpretant must, at **If** in Table 4.2, be self-control. By this time, however, Peirce appears to have dropped the strict formality of previous definitions – the definition of hexadic semiosis and the ten-division classification postulated in the letter to Lady Welby of 23 December 1908, for example – in favour of a more relaxed, even anecdotal approach in his late correspondence. This is confirmed by the following definition addressed this time to William James a further month later: ‘The Final Interpretant does not consist in the way in which any mind does act but in the way in which every mind would act’ (EP2 499, 1909), where by the expression ‘the way every mind would act’ we are to understand the establishment of a ‘communal’ habit (he is discussing yet again the ‘Ground arms!’ military command, here with respect to the three interpretants).

A second reason to reject the notion that the late systems have reached a stage where interpretation has become anarchic and idiosyncratic lies in the very nature of representation. In view of the fact that the hexad of 1908 involves a very different approach to signs from that of 1903 – in the case of an image, for example, the system of 1908 invites the semiotician to examine the form inherited from its immediate object and draw up an inventory of its ‘contents’ – the analyses given above might be mistaken for the methodology developed by Barthes in *Mythologies*, ‘Rhetoric of the image’ and ‘Éléments de sémiologie’ (Barthes 1970, 1977, 1964, respectively), in which he identified the signifying elements in a court trial, advertisement, magazine cover and so on, and, by means of a complex semiotic superstructure, censured the bourgeois ideology which had, he thought, determined them. But Peirce was no proto-structuralist, and the analyses conducted in the course of the case studies above were not informed by any ‘semioclastic’ intention any more than Peirce’s own discussions of example signs. It is simply that, rather in the manner of Eco’s *opera aperta* principle, once a representation has been made public and recognized

as such, there is no theoretical limit to the interpretations it can stimulate, irrespective of what the original sign-producer intended. And so it is only in the long run, if ever, that any consensus can be reached by any single group – a social ‘commens’ – concerning a given sign’s appropriate final interpretation and with it the identification of its dynamic object, namely, the identification of what it really represents. Sontag, Hariman and Lucaites and Wieseman in the examples given earlier interpreted photographs and a painting by looking at their immediately perceivable objects and then drawing conclusions based upon their experience, that ‘cognitive resultant’ of their past lives, as to what the images mediately represented, which, in every case, turned out to be something more complex than the elements immediately displayed: ultimate horror, the tension between individual rights and collective obligations – ‘the concepts of democratic citizenship and dissent’ (Hariman and Lucaites 2007: 48) – and *joie de vivre*. They may have been mistaken in their interpretations, but that is beside the point: they posited a concept, a necessitant object, for very existential signs independently of any theory of semiotics: these were genuine interpretations. For similar reasons, the very obvious lack of consensus in the various critical responses to Tennyson’s ballad culled from Wikipedia and quoted above is evidence that interpretation of the work is far from complete and that any final interpretation lies in a probably distant future. But this is not a situation to deprecate or to combat on some anxious theoretical front; it is a perfectly normal situation and one for which Peirce’s late conception of the interpretants provides a logical explanation.

Finally, it is important to realize that Peirce’s late sign-systems and the broadening of the scope of the dynamic object has developed our understanding of what was identified above as an ideologically charged object following Peirce’s extension of the list of necessitant objects in ‘The Neglected Argument for the Reality of God’. Now, it is obvious from the logical possibility of concretion and abstractive signs that not every object is necessarily necessitant, and even when necessitant, not necessarily ideological in nature. Nevertheless, the criterion Peirce offers concerning objects belonging to the universe of necessitants is to be found in this extract from a quotation given earlier: ‘The third Universe comprises everything whose Being consists in active power to establish connections between different objects, especially between objects in different Universes’ (EP2 435). Any object of this universe has at least to be systematic, that is, to belong to a set of entities interconnected by some relation: ‘Now, a *class* is a set of objects comprising all that stand to one another in a special relation of similarity. But where ordinary logic talks of classes the logic of relatives talks of *systems*. A *system* is a set of

objects comprising all that stand to one another in a group of connected relations' (CP 4.5, 1898). Consider in the light of this two definitions, both from the *OED*: 'Ideology: 4. A systematic scheme of ideas, usually relating to politics or society, or to the conduct of a class or group, and regarded as justifying actions.' Returning to the examples it would surely be gross naivety to think that the Lady of Shalott serial paintings are simply a pictorial reworking of a medieval Italian tale of a young woman mysteriously imprisoned in an ivory tower, ignoring the Victorian capitalist ideology that allowed owners of factories and mills not only to exploit women (and children) in complete impunity but also to keep their females as though in a gynaeceum. And the *OED* has this for propaganda: '3. The systematic propagation of information or ideas by an interested party, esp. in a tendentious way in order to encourage or instil a particular attitude or response. Also, the ideas, doctrines, etc., disseminated thus; the vehicle of such propagation.' And so it would also be gross naivety to think that Leutze's mural and study, Palmer's lithograph and Gast's painting are simply ingenuous records of the movement westward and its attendant dangers: they were, rather, contributions to, and determinations of, what was in fact imperialist propaganda.

By focusing on the object of complex signs such as advertising, slogans, Internet blogs, paintings, photographs and written documents past and present and so on, it is now possible within Peircean semiotics to identify and examine their ideological determinants.²³ Although analysts adopting the 1903 system obviously have little difficulty in inferring the ideology behind a given sign, that particular system is not entirely suitable for ideological analysis: there is no class of signs in the system which enables us to identify the sign's dynamic object – such a strategy requires recourse to the 1908 28-class system since this provides access to what a given sign's immediate object has communicated to it and thus to 'contents' from which to infer the possibly necessitant object, and offers a theoretical approach much closer to our everyday engagement with signs both familiar and unfamiliar.

Should there be readers still in doubt as to the ideological character that certain signs can present, they might like to decide whether the first two lines of a recent poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti refer to a bucolic world of nymphs, shepherds and sheep or, rather, to something more sinister: 'Pity the nation whose people are sheep/And whose shepherds mislead them.' They might also like to identify the sort of object John Goto's photographic tableau *Deluge*, number VIII in the series *High Summer*, really represents.²⁴ The final word goes to Peirce: 'A Sign necessarily has for its Object some fragment of history, that is, of history of ideas' (R849, 1911).