Hypoiconicity, Semiosis and Peirce’s Immediate Object

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Abstract
Between 1865 and 1909 Peirce established over a dozen different sign taxonomies, most of which were established using his system of universal categories, Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. Of these various systems, that of late 1903 with its universally-known icon-index-symbol division is the one most employed in the analysis of verbal and pictorial signs, as within this division the icon constitutes the sign’s purely formal, qualitative mode of representation showing how a sign might resemble its object. Now, Peirce further analyzed the icon into three more basic modes of qualitative representation, namely the hypoicons, thus enabling “finer-grained” structural analyses of signs. However, in 1908 his conception of the way signs functioned developed into a very different, universe-based, six-stage system, namely semiosis, from which the icon-index-symbol division, together with the hypoicons, was absent. Since, in view of the theoretical foundations distinguishing the three-division system of 1903 from the intention-based hexadic system of 1908, it might be thought that Peirce had introduced an unresolvable inconsistency into the two conceptions of the sign, the paper discusses ways for Peircean semiotics to accommodate, in examples of principally figurative pictorial representation, both the potential for structural analysis offered by hypoiconicity and the intentionality of semiosis. In this latter case, the role of the sign’s immediate object will be shown to be of considerable theoretical interest.
1. The Syllabus of 1903

In November 1903, Peirce began a series of eight lectures at the Lowell Institute in Boston, entitled “Some Topics of Logic Bearing on Questions Now Vexed”, and it is on two draft manuscripts, namely R478 and R540, prepared by Peirce as a supplement for these lectures, that the following exposition of the semiotics of 1903 is based. The Syllabus, as he called the supplement, was indeed published, but as a 23-page version which omitted the information detailing the theoretical background to Peirce’s very original and rapidly evolving conception of logic as semiotics. In the earlier of the two manuscripts, R478, Peirce employs his phenomenology to formulate a definition of the sign together with two divisions based on the sign and its relations with its two correlates. This was the definition of the sign, which anticipates the description of triadic relations to be found in R540:

A Sign, or Representamen, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant, to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same Object. The triadic relation is genuine, that is its three members are bound together by it in a way that does not consist in any complexus of dyadic relations…. A Sign is a Representamen with a mental Interpretant. Possibly there may be Representamens that are not Signs. (EP2 272-273)

The two divisions of signs initially described in R478 identified the sign in its relation to its object (S—O), yielding the well-known icon-index-symbol trichotomy first advanced in the years 1866-1867. A new second trichotomy set out the subdivisions of the sign in its relation to its interpretant (S—I): the resultant rheme-
dicent-argument subdivisions had composed the symbol for almost forty years but now acquired independent status in manuscript R478 (EP2 272-275). It was in R478, too, that Peirce trichotomized the icon, and in doing so defined three hypoicons, in other words, introduced three types of icon which differed in formal complexity. To understand how Peirce should have come to posit the hypoicons at all, we need to consider the theoretical framework within which he was defining the two divisions described in R478.

1.1 Phenomenology, precission and the sign
Before actually discussing the sign itself, Peirce introduced the theoretical background sustaining his semiotics at that time, namely his conception of phenomenology and its three universal categories, Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness, in the following manner:

Phenomenology is that branch of science … in which the author seeks to make out what are the elements, or, if you please, the kinds of elements, that are invariably present in whatever is, in any sense, in mind. According to the present writer, these universal categories are three … They may be termed *Firstness*, *Secondness*, and *Thirdness*. (EP2 267)

This served as the general introduction to the way Peirce intended to approach the problems of logic in 1903: whatever divisions or subdivisions of signs he established would be based upon the three categories. A further important principle validated by the categories led to the analytical process of abstraction or precission. He showed that by this form of mental separation the three were organized in such a way that

It is possible to prescind Firstness from Secondness … But it is impossible to prescind Secondness from Firstness … Everything must have some non-relative element, and this is its Firstness. So likewise it is possible to prescind Secondness from Thirdness. But Thirdness without Secondness would be absurd. (EP2 270)
Within this system of prescindent values, the more complex categories logically involve the less. As a consequence, his elaboration of the principle of precission made it possible for him to establish the important implication principle holding between the subdivisions of the various trichotomies used to classify the sign in 1903: Firstness can be prescinded from Secondness, and Secondness from Thirdness, which means that any sign identified as partaking of Thirdness can logically be assumed not only to involve Secondness, but also, by transitivity, to involve Firstness. This principle was stated quite clearly in a description of the symbol as follows:

A Symbol is a law, or regularity of the indefinite future. Its Interpretant must be of the same description; and so must be also the complete immediate Object, or meaning. But a law necessarily governs, or “is embodied in” individuals, and prescribes some of their qualities. Consequently, a constituent of a Symbol may be an Index, and a constituent may be an Icon. (EP2 274, 1903)

And this is how Peirce describes the involvement of the icon in the index later in the manuscript:

In so far as the Index is affected by the Object, it necessarily has some Quality in common with the Object, and it is in respect to these that it refers to the Object. It does, therefore, involve a sort of Icon, although an Icon of a peculiar kind; and it is not the mere resemblance of its Object, even in these respects which makes it a sign, but it is the actual modification of it by the Object. (EP2 291-292, 1903)

Since the index can involve a sort of icon, and since the symbol can involve a sort of index, it follows by transitivity that a symbol, e.g. any language sign, can involve a sort of icon. Since, too, in manuscript R478 Peirce had already trichotomized the icon into the three hypoicons, it also follows that both symbol and index can, by transitivity, involve any or all of the three hypoicons. This important principle
underwrites much of linguistic iconicity theory since it offers a means of establishing the motivated basis of verbal signs. Since symbols can be shown to involve indices, and indices icons—signs which by definition resemble their objects—it follows that at a certain level of analysis language signs, composed as they are of symbols and indices, can be shown to resemble what they stand for: in short, it can be shown that they are motivated.

1.2 Hypoiconicity

Thus, one initial distinctly Peircean semiotic approach to the image appears in R478 where Peirce completed his presentation of the icon by trichotomizing it. Given his three categories, and given the fact that the icon is qualitative in nature and therefore characterized by distinctions concerning a given sign’s form, it is safe to assume that he would necessarily at some stage have come to posit that there is more than one way in which entities might resemble one another, all the more so as the trichotomization of the icon had already been mooted in one of the Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism delivered in April that year: “Now the Icon may undoubtedly be divided according to the categories; but the mere completeness of the notion of the icon does not imperatively call for any such division” (EP2 163, April 1903). This is how he introduced the notion later that year in R478:

But a sign may be iconic, that is, may represent its object mainly by its similarity, no matter what its mode of being. If a substantive be wanted, an iconic [sign] may be termed a hypoicon. Any material image, as a painting, is largely conventional in its mode of representation; but in itself, without legend or label it may be called a hypoicon. (EP2 273-274)

For example, any painting, e.g. the Mona Lisa without its caption (Figure 1), is a hypoicon of a particular sort, while the same painting with its caption becomes multimodal and therefore semiotically more complex, in this case, an instance of a dicent indexical legisign. Furthermore, after having derived the icon subdivision
through the application of his categories, Peirce then proceeded to derive the three hypoicons by recursively applying his three categorial distinctions to the icon itself, a process recorded in the statement establishing the three degrees of structural complexity—in effect three increasingly complex grades or forms of resemblance—exhibited by the hypoicons. The trichotomy resulting from this recursive process is the definition brought to prominence as an individual paragraph in the *Collected Papers* describing image, diagram and metaphor in order of increasing complexity:

Hypoicons may roughly [be] divided according to the mode of Firstness which they partake. Those which partake the simple qualities, or First Firstnesses, are images; those which represent the relations, mainly dyadic, or so regarded, of the parts of one thing by analogous relations in their own parts, are diagrams; those which represent the representative character of a representamen by representing a parallelism in something else, are metaphors. (CP 2.277; EP2 274)

Since the recursive application of the categories to the icon yields image, diagram and metaphor, Peirce has proved that by transitivity indices and symbols, too, can involve an icon and, consequently, any or all of the three hypoicons. Table 1 sets out the typology of 1903 as synthesized from manuscripts R478 and R540. On Table 1, the correlates O and I, defined in the manuscript R540 in 1903 as constituents of a triadic relation, only contribute indirectly to the manner in which he obtained ten classes of signs. The three divisions themselves are realized as the sign, S (a trichotomy established, in fact, in the later manuscript, R540), plus the two relational trichotomies described in the earlier R478, namely S—O and S—I, which we might call, respectively, the sign’s mode of representation and its informative capacity. Note that the mode of representation doesn’t actually identify the sign’s object, and it simply constitutes the three phenomenologically distinct ways in which an object can be represented by the sign; nor does the sign’s informative capacity identify the sign’s then single interpretant, simply the nature of the S—I relation holding between them.
The icon subdivision has been further subdivided on Table 1 into metaphor, diagram and image, in order of decreasing complexity.

Table 1. A synthesis of the divisions established in manuscripts R478 and R540, 1903

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respect</th>
<th>Firstness</th>
<th>Secondness</th>
<th>Thirdness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sign</td>
<td>qualisign</td>
<td>sinsign</td>
<td>legisign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign-Object</td>
<td>icon</td>
<td>index</td>
<td>symbol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>metaphor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>diagram</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>image</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign-Interpretant</td>
<td>rheme</td>
<td>dicisign</td>
<td>argument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.3 The hypoiconic structures characterizing image, diagram and metaphor

The three fundamental ways in which the sign can resemble its object by virtue of Peirce’s categorial distinctions are represented below as Figures 1-9 (see Jappy, 2013 for a more exhaustive account of hypoiconicity and Jappy, 2017 for additional examples). In view of the fact that hypoiconicity involves the formal properties of signs, these can be conveniently described by means of much simplified graphic representations of “generic” image, diagram and metaphor and of the structure of two examples of metaphor and a simile (Figures 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9), although it should be noted that this method was never used by Peirce himself. In these schemas the “arrows” represent both the process of determination of the sign by the object and of the interpretant by the sign, and the passage of this process through an inescapably “sensible”—in other words, dyadic, existential, and therefore perceivable—medium such as airwaves as I speak, a piece of painted canvass or a wood panel, the page of a book, a TV screen, a monitor in a railway station or the blackboard in a classroom. The various constituents of Peirce’s three-correlate definition of the sign of 1903 given above are represented as ellipses in such a way as to include basic but essential content material. Note that in all these cases the sign is necessarily a sinsign or the replica of a legisign, as it has to be perceivable—were it a legisign, it would be...
of the nature of thought or habit and would entail that we communicate solely by telepathy. Note, too, that it is the sign alone which has hypoiconic structure since it is the “representing”, mediating correlate in what in 1903 was a proto-semiosis determination process.

Consider, first, Leonardo de Vinci’s painting of Lisa Gherardini, the Mona Lisa hanging in the Louvre in Paris. This, one of the most famous paintings in the world, is composed of oil pigments on a wood panel arranged in such a way that we recognize a woman with an enigmatic smile playing about her lips and seated against a distant landscape. These various arrangements, from a semiotic point of view, are assumed to correspond to features of the model.

Figure 1. Mona Lisa (cropped), by Antonforever - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=24068283

Figure 2 is a very basic representation of some of these qualities presumed to be inhering in the model which determine corresponding qualities, namely the First Firstnesses of the definition, in the painting, which is an iconic sinsign but also an image at its hypoiconic level. As Peirce suggests in the general definition of the
hypoicons given above, “any material image, as a painting, is largely conventional in its mode of representation; but in itself, without legend or label it may be called a hypoicon”, illustrates this state of affairs. Since the qualities represented are phenomenologically less complex—Firstnesses—than the Secondness of the existential medium, namely the wood panel and oils representing them, the intended representation of the qualities in the model is in no way inhibited by potential differences in complexity between the sign and its two correlates. Note that although we know from Vasari ([1568] 1991, p. 294) that the model existed and, indeed, who she was, the painting itself offers no proof of this: an image in this Peircean technical sense represents an object whether it exists or not, a fact to which numerous animated cartoons for children bear witness.

Figure 2. The generic structure of a sign with image hypoiconicity

Now, for Peirce the photograph was an example of the type of sign—a dicent indexical sinsign—which did offer proof of the existence of its object: “A better example [of a dicent, i.e. informational, index] is a photograph. The mere print does not, in itself, convey any information. But the fact, that it is virtually a section of rays projected from an object otherwise known, renders it a Dicisign” (EP2 282, 1903). In other words, it is a type of proposition in which, since there is an existential relation between the model and the photographic plate or film, the section of rays constitutes the quasi-subject of the photograph’s propositional structure while the print itself is its quasi-predicate. As a hypoicon, the photograph is a degree more complex than the Mona Lisa: dyadic existence that constitutes the relation holding between model and photograph is phenomenologically more complex than the simple, monadic possibility of the qualities representing Lisa Gherardini. Thus, while there is no proof that the
space between the eyes of the woman depicted on the *Mona Lisa* should correspond exactly to that of Lisa Gherardini herself, we understand that the space between the left and right eyes of a person in a photograph must correspond point by point to those of the model represented, irrespective of scale, camera angle and the nature of the pose: the photograph, Fox Talbot’s “pencil of nature”, owed nothing to manipulation by the photographer and everything to its existential relation to the object. Margaret Cameron’s study of Beatrice Cenci, Figure 3, is a fine example.

Figure 3. Margaret Cameron’s portrait of Beatrice Cenci, 1866, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cameron,_Julia_Margaret_-_Beatrice_Cenci_(Zeno_Fotografie).jpg

Figure 4 represents the structure of a very basic diagram, an icon composed essentially of the Second Firstnesses of the definition, namely one dyadic relation as mentioned in the definition and represented here for convenience as the single relation *le*—*re* between the two partial objects in the domain of experience represented by the sign, namely the left and right eyes and the space between them on the face on
Cameron’s albumen print, such necessarily existential relations being a step up the phenomenological scale from the vague Firstnesses composing the image on Figures 1 and 2. Other relations exist, of course—the distance between lips and chin, size of forehead, length of neck, etc. The diagram is thus an icon composed of at least one dyadic relation determined exactly by the object that it represents (CP 4.418, 1903), and such diagrammatic structures “inform” not only the illustrations from geometry manuals and the graphic instructions on how to assemble furniture, for example, but also all manner of informative exosomatic organs such as thermometers, barometers, speedometers, wind socks, etc., and on Figure 3, an early example of the photograph. In such cases, the diagrammatic complexity of the sinsign partakes of Secondness and consequently the representation of the structure of the object is, as in the case of the image, in no way inhibited by the unavoidable Secondness of the print medium by means of which it is communicated.

Figure 4. One example of the diagram structures in the Cenci photograph

![Diagram](image)

Finally, as indicated on Figure 5, metaphor is the hypoiconic structure presenting Third Firstness—a phenomenological complexity compatible with mediation, synthesis and representation and, like the symbol, requires the experience of the interpreter in the interpreting process in order to construe the nature of the association or comparison being communicated concerning at least two generally disparate domains of experience. According to Peirce’s concise definition given above, metaphor hypoiconicity informs a sign whose object is structured by a two-tiered parallelism and is thus significantly more complex than the sign itself.
The hypoiconic resemblance is established in this complex case by associating in a single sign appropriate elements “inherited”, so to speak, from the parallelism in the object. As represented on the schema, the object ellipse has two parallel lines indicated by //. In this way, the relation $a \rightarrow b$ on the top line in both object and interpretant is the basis of the comparison, a relation in some domain of experience. On the other hand, the $a' \rightarrow b'$ relation on the lower line in the sign’s two correlates represents the controversial, contentious or sometimes unknown relation in another domain of experience targeted by the metaphor. The two parallel relations can be identified, following the conceptual metaphor tradition, as the “base” and “target” domains respectively. Within the object and interpretant ellipses $a$ and $a'$ and $b$ and $b'$ are pairs of counterparts identifying the elements in each domain to be associated in the metaphor: $a$ maps to $a'$, and $b$ to $b'$. Note that domains, counterparts and mappings are not Peircean concepts, as Peirce apparently never had the time or wish to take his theory of metaphor further and therefore never developed a specific terminology on a par with that, for example, of his Existential Graphs. It was nevertheless to his immense credit that he was able to theorize the structure of signs more complex than the common diagrammatic type, signs which synthesize in the guise of a judgement elements from two quite distinct relations.

Consider, now, an early example provided by Peirce himself, a verbal sign involving the two facts forming the basis of the metaphor *This man is a fox* (CP 7.590, ?1867). The utterance is an attempt to pass judgement on the behaviour of a certain human being, and the parallelism informing the object and “synthesized” in the sign is composed of the entities represented in two distinct facts or relations.
Figure 6. The hypoiconic structure of *This man is a fox*

![Diagram of the hypoiconic structure](image)

Whereas the schema of the diagram on Figure 4 contains a single relation which is the formal structure, too, of some simple fact such as *This man is untrustworthy*, in which **a** and **b** are, respectively, *This man* and the property *untrustworthy*, metaphor as defined by Peirce presents at least two such relations in parallel in the object on Figures 5 and 6, where we also find counterpart mappings between elements from some generally uncontroversial, well-known fact or relation (**a**—∥—**b**) such as *A fox is a cunning animal* to, respectively, elements in the relation (**a’**—∥—**b’**) such as *This man is untrustworthy*, which constitutes the state of affairs that is being evaluated, judged or commented upon. The first is the fact considered to be the basis of the judgement and hopefully self-evident to the addressee or interpreter (the idea that foxes are cunning, for example, is a culturally accepted and widely known judgement, even if anthropomorphic and therefore of dubious validity), while the elements in the target relation are, as mentioned earlier, somehow controversial or contentious or not yet accepted. In the simple case on Figure 6, **a** maps to **a’** while the mapping from **b** to **b’** (*cunning animal* and *untrustworthy*) is absent from the sign. Owing to its vectorial, existential character, the spoken sign *This man is a fox* is necessarily constrained in the amount of information that it can represent in the existential medium of air, and Figures 5 and 6 show how certain participants in the original parallelism are as though “filtered out” by an unavoidable funnel or bottleneck effect caused by the sign’s being a perceivable medium: were this not the case, we should be unable to hear or observe it.

The structure of metaphor proposed in Figures 5 and 6 calls for a number of remarks. First, it should be noted that the repetition of the parallel structure of the
object in the structure of the interpretant is simply a convention for showing that the intended meaning of the sign has been understood; in other words, it is a way of showing that the metaphor has been fully interpreted. Should a child hear an adult state that a certain man is a fox, the child might reply *But that’s silly, a man can’t be a fox, a fox is an animal*. In such a case the structure of the interpretant has not realized the structure of the intended parallelism, and the utterance has been misunderstood. Any interpretation of metaphor is fully dependent, therefore, upon the experience of the interpreter, experience being that “cognitive resultant of our past lives” (CP 2.84, 1902). Second, although Peirce never used such schemas, what Figures 5 and 6 are intended to show, too, is that while the necessarily perceivable medium—the airwaves in a spoken utterance, any page on which the utterance is written or the cavass and paint marks in the case of a painting, for example—partakes necessarily of Secondness within Peirce’s theory of hypoiconicity, the parallelism in the structure of the object constitutes a Third Firstness and is therefore phenomenologically more complex than the audible, written or pictorial sign representing it. In short, metaphoric form is more complex than the medium through which it has to be communicated. This is why the elements in parentheses in the object and interpretant ellipses stand for participants that do not figure in the sign.

In this way, the representation of the full structure of the object is inhibited, with the consequence that all metaphorically informed signs are both *underspecified*—not all the elements of the original parallelism in the object find their way into the sign—and characteristically *incongruous*, as such signs perforce represent elements drawn from distinct and generally dissimilar domains reflecting to varying degrees the intensity of the judgements or commentary involved. Thus, while working within the phenomenological framework of 1903 Peirce must have come to realize that there are signs which are more complex than the common diagrammatic type, signs which represent objects structurally more complex than themselves—signs, in short, which synthesize in some generally judgmental representation elements from two distinct relations.

Finally, consider a metaphor-informed photographic montage composing a
politically motivated poster, Barbara Kruger’s *Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground)*, 1989. At the time, the Bush administration was seeking to overturn the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision guaranteeing women’s reproductive rights. The poster, which Kruger produced and helped to distribute, incongruously features a partially exposed photograph of a woman’s face appropriated from the 50s overlaid by a militant slogan and short informative statements in white on a black background. Both photograph and text have metaphor structure.

Figure 7. Barbara Kruger, *Untitled (Your Body is a Battleground)*, 1989
Poster, 84 × 59,5 cm 86 × 61,5 cm (framed)
Courtesy the artist and Sprüth Magers, Photograph Jochen Arentzen

Referring back to Figure 5 and bearing in mind that we naturally scan the photograph spatially from left to right but temporally from present to future, the base domain of the pictorial metaphor is composed of the positively exposed half of
the face on the left, a, and the present “full” autonomous status of women, b, while the target is composed of the negative exposure of the face on the right, a’, and woman’s social status reduced to a simple potentiality, b’, if the original Supreme Court decision were to be overturned. Both b and b’ are characteristically absent from the pictorial metaphor, Kruger thereby dramatically picturing the abstract concept of potential loss of social status and empowerment by means of a manipulated photograph.

Analysis of the verbal metaphor shows the base component of the metaphor to be the relation between a strategic position to be defended on a battlefield, while the target is women’s control of their bodies and their reproductive rights to be defended in the political and ideological arena in the United States at the time. The violence made explicit in the verbal metaphor is reinforced visually by the information tags on Figure 7 streaked in red over the woman’s face like war paint. Schematically, the metaphorical structure of the slogan can be summarized as follows, where, as seen in the earlier verbal example, the elements in brackets—in this verbal example a and b’—are not reproduced in the sign:

Base: (strategic position to defend = a) on a battleground = b
Target: women’s control of their bodies = a’, to be defended in (the political and ideological arena = b’)

Figure 8. The metaphorical structure of the verbal element of Your body is a battleground

If the metaphor were rewritten as a simile—similes have diagrammatic structure—all the elements involved in the disputed status of women would be mentioned: Defending women’s control of their bodies in the political and ideological
arena is like the defence of a strategic position on a battleground. This presents the simple abstract structure indicated on Figure 9, representing \( a \) is to \( b \) as \( a' \) is to \( b' \), which is communicated in identical structure to the sign and on to the interpretant. This being the case, there is no point in indicating the structure of all three correlates on Figure 9.

Figure 9. The diagram structure of a typical simile

![Diagram structure of a typical simile](image)

In this way, Peirce’s theory of hypoiconicity makes it possible to hypothesize and explain differences in structure in a number of different types of imagery. But it should be remembered that hypoiconicity is purely formal: adopting for simplicity the terminology of Charles Morris and certain currents of contemporary linguistics, the several hypoiconic formalisms described above do not—cannot—provide semantic or pragmatic information: they have no cognitive content. Peirce’s speculative grammar, which was the basis of the 1903 Lowell Lectures on logic, simply established the purely formal criteria concerning what might constitute a class of signs or any one of its subdivisions such as a legisign, an index or a rheme, with no provision at all for a logical semantics. However, structure is not the only aspect of pictorial representation that Peircean semiotics enables us to understand.

2. Discussion

Peirce’s semiotics in 1903 starts from the principle that not all signs are the same, and he initially identified ten distinct types or classes. These involved the nature of the sign itself, its relation to a single object and its relation to a single interpretant, and yet we know he was aware from his reading of Hamilton that all signs involved two objects:
But all logicians have distinguished two objects of a sign; the one, the Immediate object or object as the sign represents it, (and without this sign would not be a sign); the other Real object, or object as it is independent of any particular idea representing it. (R318 373, 1907)

As with his use of the term “representamen”, as he originally called the sign, the adoption of the two objects could be accounted for by his earlier acquaintance with the philosophy of the eighteenth-century Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid, through his acquaintance with Hamilton’s edition of his work. Moreover, we know from remarks in R478 that he was already working with three interpretants, an immediate, an indirect and an imperfect interpretant:

Although the immediate Interpretant of an Index must be an Index, yet since its Object may be the Object of an Individual [Singular] Symbol, the Index may have such a Symbol for its indirect Interpretant. Even a genuine Symbol may be an imperfect Interpretant of it. So an Icon may have a degenerate Index, or an Abstract Symbol, for an indirect Interpretant, and a genuine Index or Symbol for an imperfect Interpretant. (EP2 275, 1903)

Thus, as early as 1903 he was working with an embryonic hexadic system which he was to describe more fully in his letter to Lady Welby of 12 October 1904 in which the sign, two objects and three interpretants appear in a hexad involving not two relational divisions but five (SS 32-35). Now, within Peirce’s speculative grammar of 1903 the only correlate in the definition of the sign that could readily be identified was the sign itself— there was no way of identifying or classifying either object and even less the three unpredictable interpretants—the ten classes of signs identified in 1903 were based upon a single object, later identified as the dynamic, and a single interpretant, later identified as the final. Although all signs, even in 1903, had an immediate object and the equivalents of the immediate and dynamic interpretants, none of these entered the definition of the ten classes of signs. Consequently, access to
a sign’s immediate object being unavailable, the principle of involved hypoiconicity offered researchers their only means of analysing the internal structure of the signs in the icon-index-symbol division.

However, the “informing” of a sign in such a complex manner as metaphor in order to pass judgement, for example, is evidence of deliberation and purpose, the only possible source of which is the sign’s dynamic object: every metaphorically-informed sign, indeed, every sign, metaphorical or otherwise, occurs at a later stage in a trajectory of determination that begins with the dynamic object. As the determinations of two successive objects—the dynamic and the immediate—signs are a stage in a complex semiotic process, communicating in turn meaning thus inherited to a series of interpretants. The process involves, inevitably, linear development, and with it, a necessary historicity in the determination process, and this is as true of paintings as of any other sign. Furthermore, the various stages in this semiotic process are not only untraceable but above all the process itself is inconceivable within the theoretical framework of the 1903 system of signs and sign classes discussed above and illustrated by Figures 1, 3 and 7. On the other hand, the system introduced by Peirce in 1908 exhibits the dynamism and historicity of the process quite explicitly. Now, Baxandall (1972 1) notes in the case of a particular generation of painters “A fifteenth-century painting is the deposit of a social relationship”, and this is typically the case with the pictorial representations examined above. For example, within the theory of hypoiconicity, the painting of Mona Lisa is an image in the Peircean technical sense. But other than to identify the painting plus caption as a replica of a dicent indexical legisign and to identify its hypoiconic structure, this is about all that the 1903 system of ten classes can contribute to our understanding of the painting: any other information concerning it, that it is a commissioned portrait, for example, or the way in which it has become the deposit of a social relationship, is a consequence of a particular type of process. The process in question is semiosis, a concept that Peirce first defined in 1907, and which has since become an indispensable operational concept in a wide range of disciplines from musicology, literary theory and sociology to, most spectacularly, biosemiotics. In order to understand its contribution to the
analysis of pictorial representation, the following sections trace the various stages in
the development of Peirce’s thinking on signs following the system described in the
Lowell Lectures of 1903.

3. Semiosis in 1908

The evolution from the system of 1903 to that of 1908 is characterized by
Peirce’s frequent changes of viewpoint and approaches to the problem of the sign,
and can only be dealt with summarily in this paper. This evolution is presented
in a number of stages, these being dealt with chronologically, and they take us
to a point where the object can effectively be shown to have the sort of creative
influence within Peirce’s 1908 description of semiosis that was inconceivable
in 1903, and in this way helps to explain the complex process that resulted in the
particular materializations of the painting, photograph and poster examined above.

3.1 The sign as medium

The years 1905-1906 constituted a period of intense activity on Peirce’s part, during
which he reworked his conception of pragmatism and published two Monist articles
on pragmaticism, expanded his Existential Graphs and undertook a thorough revision
of his logic, producing six different ten-division typologies in his Logic Notebook
(R339) between October 10, 1905 and August 31, 1906. This, too, was the period in
which he began to see the sign more clearly as a medium. As mentioned above, in
the course of the Lowell Lectures of 1903 he had defined the sign within a theory of
triadic relations:

A Sign, or Representamen, is a First which stands in such a genuine triadic relation to a
Second, called its Object, as to be capable of determining a Third, called its Interpretant,
to assume the same triadic relation to its Object in which it stands itself to the same
Object. (EP2 272-273)
However, in the period 1905-1906, no doubt partly as a consequence of the expanded set of six correlates—two objects, the sign and three interpretants—and his renewed attention to pragmatism he considerably modified the status of the sign and, by virtue of integrating the two objects and the three interpretants into his conception of the process in which it functioned, explicitly attributed to the sign itself a more constrained mediating role, as we see in the following extract from RL463, a draft letter to Lady Welby dated 9 March 1906:

I use the word ‘Sign’ in the widest sense for any medium for the communication or extension of a Form (or feature). Being medium, it is determined by something, called its Object, and determines something, called its Interpretant […] In order that a Form may be extended or communicated, it is necessary that it should have been really embodied in a Subject independently of the communication; and it is necessary that there should be another subject in which the same form is embodied only as a consequence of the communication. (EP2 477)

See, too, this extract from manuscript R793 of the same year:

For the purposes of this inquiry a Sign may be defined as a Medium for the communication of a Form. It is not logically necessary that anything possessing consciousness, that is, feeling of the peculiar common quality of all our feeling should be concerned. (R793 1, 1906)

From this it follows that by defining the sign as a medium Peirce was beginning to attribute a far more explicit role to the object in the determination process, too. The determining influence of the object now overtly involves the communication of ‘form’ via the immediate object to the sign, which then communicates a version of this form to the series of interpretants, and this independently of the utterer and the interpreter as participants in the semiosis. Such a position, of course, raises the questions of what sort of entity the dynamic object is and what its semiotic scope may be.
Now the quotation from the 1906 draft and the extract from R793 insist upon the fact that the sign is a medium for the communication of a “Form”. Peirce offers a brief explanation of what he means by “form” in a variant page 3 of the manuscript:

[That] which is communicated from the Object through the Sign to the Interpretant is a Form. It is not a singular thing; for if a Singular thing were first in the Object and afterward in the Interpretant outside the Object, it must thereby cease to be in the Object. The Form that is communicated does not necessarily cease to be in one thing when it comes to be in a different thing because its being is the being of a predicate. (R793 3)

Clearly, if what is communicated from the object to the sign is an existent, “singular”, entity it would cease to be in the object once transferred to the sign, and would cease to be in the sign as soon as it inhered in the interpretant. We see that form is necessarily a quality and consequently the only type of entity that can be simultaneously embodied in sign, object and interpretant. In the abstract, the only forms that can be thus communicated are monads, dyads and triads, or combinations thereof. This is Peirce’s earlier description of them “the logical categories of the monad, the dyad, and the polyad or higher set … are categories of the forms of experience” (CP 1.452, 1896). These are the basic forms structuring, for example, the predicates of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness, the various subdivisions defined in all of his classificatory divisions and the hypoicons described above: they are to be found throughout the logic. Media defined by the 1906 statement above simply need to be perceivable and to accommodate such forms emanating, of course, from the dynamic—or what Peirce sometimes refers to as the “real”—object (e.g. CP 2.310, 1903). We return to the substantive problem of form in section 4 below.

3.2 Semiosis defined
A new stage comes with the manuscript “Pragmatism” of 1907 (R318, a nearly 700-page manuscript, parts of which are reproduced in CP 5.465-496 and in
EP2 398-433), in which Peirce announces the need for future research into the identification in logic of what he saw as all varieties, not simply of signs, but of possible semiosis, thereby associating classes of signs with the various types of semiosis producing them:

I am, as far as I know, a pioneer, or rather a backwoodsman, in the work of clearing and opening up what I call semiotic, that is, the doctrine of the essential nature and fundamental varieties of possible semiosis; and I find the field too vast, the labor too great, for a first-comer. (R318 119, 1907)

This new important stage in the development of Peirce’s conception of the action of the sign, then, comes in 1907, with the definition of semiosis. For Peirce now saw the nature of the association of what he must still have considered to be the three foundational constituents of semiosis as being the dynamic “cooperation” of three “subjects”, namely the sign, its object and its interpretant:

It is important to understand what I mean by semiosis. All dynamical action, or action of brute force, physical or psychical, either takes place between two subjects [whether they react equally upon each other, or one is agent and the other patient, entirely or partially] or at any rate is a resultant of such actions between pairs. But by “semiosis” I mean, on the contrary, an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a coöperation of three subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri-relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs. (CP 5.484, 1907)

Consider, as an example of Peirce’s newly extended conception of the sign’s object, the following version of the oft-repeated “Ground arms!” example that Peirce discussed in manuscript R318:

Suppose, for example, an officer of a squad or company of infantry gives the word of command, “Ground arms!” This order is, of course, a sign. That thing which causes a
sign as such is called the object (according to the usage of speech, the “real,” but more accurately, the existent object) represented by the sign: the sign is determined to some species of correspondence with that object. In the present case, the object the command represents is the will of the officer that the butts of the muskets be brought down to the ground… For the proper outcome of a sign, I propose the name, the interpretant of the sign. The example of the imperative command “Ground arms!” shows that it need not be of a mental mode of being. (CP 5.473, 1907)

In 1903 the object was, typically, the determinant of a photograph, the entity reflecting light back onto the film in the camera—Cameron’s model, for example—and therefore an object in no explicable way related to human intention or volition. In this text, however, we see that the object is identified as the “will of the officer”. It follows from this that intention and volition are now seen as potential determinants of signs and the origins of semiosis.

3.3 The universes of experience
What can be considered as the final stage in the development of Peirce’s late conception of the sign and the process in which it functions comes in 1908. In an early text from this particular year he describes three “universes of experience” that can host logical entities, that is, possible, existent and necessitant entities. Most importantly for the present paper, these universes now provided Peirce with a range of possible dynamic objects that was virtually inexhaustible. In this way, his late illustration of various types of dynamic objects extends considerably our conception of what sorts of entities a given sign might stand for. In this text, “The Neglected Argument for the Reality of God”, (EP2 434-450, 1908), Peirce offers the following brief and tantalizing inventory of the sorts of entities that are members of the universe of necessitants:

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)

Later that same year, in a letter to Lady Welby of 23 December 1908, and in a manner that clearly parallels the presentation in the letter to Lady Welby of 12 October, 1904, of his six divisions of signs within the framework of the phenomenology on which sign-action was then based (CP 8.327-8.333), Peirce prefaced a formulation of the stages of semiosis by a thorough description of the three modal universes by means of which he now established the subdivisions within each of his trichotomies:

It is clearly indispensable to start with an accurate and broad analysis of the nature of a Sign. I define a Sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its Interpretant, that the latter is thereby mediately determined by the former… I recognize three Universes, which are distinguished by three Modalities of Being. One of these Universes embraces whatever has its Being in itself alone… I denominate the objects of this Universe Ideas, or *Possibles*, although the latter designation does not imply capability of actualization… Another Universe is that of, 1st, Objects whose Being consists in their Brute reactions, and of, 2nd, the Facts…. I call the Objects, Things, or more unambiguously, Existents, and the facts about them I call Facts… The third Universe consists of the co-being of whatever is in its Nature *necessitant*, that is, is a Habit, a law, or something expressible in a universal proposition. (SS 80-82)

The purpose of the phenomenology in 1903 had been to establish clearly the formal elements making it possible to describe the sign as a phenomenon. This was Peirce’s goal in employing the three categories of Firstness, Secondness and
Thirdness, and although the sign was defined as being determined by its object to produce an interpretant, there was no dynamism inherent in the classes defined by the resultant three-division typology: no dynamism, no purposive agency, since of the three correlates involved in the determination process only the sign contributed to the classification, the other two divisions being relational. However, by 1908 with the definition of the sign as a medium and with Peirce’s realization that semiosis was a dynamic process, the three universes supplied the system with “receptacles” of entities—possible, existent and necessitant entities—that could function as signs and interpreants, and, most importantly, as objects.

Finally, in the same letter he expanded the triadic “cooperation” of semiosis as defined in 1907 into one involving six subjects in the following formulation of the dynamism of semiosis, which also appears to be the only mention of the 28-class, six-division typology in the Peirce canon:

> It is evident that a possible can determine nothing but a Possible, it is equally so that a Necessitant can be determined by nothing but a Necessitant. Hence it follows from the Definition of a Sign that since the Dynamoid Object determines the Immediate Object, which determines the Sign itself, which determines the Destinate Interpretant, which determines the Effective Interpretant, which determines the Explicit Interpretant, the six trichotomies, instead of determining 729 classes of signs, as they would if they were independent, only yield twenty-eight classes. (EP2 481)

This passage shows Peirce replacing the phenomenological framework mentioned in his intended Syllabus for the Lowell Lectures by what can broadly be referred to as an ontological one: a system of universes containing all that is, including necessitant entities. Whereas the three-division, ten-class typology displayed on Table 1 used Peirce’s three categories as the criteria in order to subdivide the sign and two sign-correlate trichotomies, the later hexadic typology introduced in the 1908 letter, on
the other hand, is now defined within a framework which employs three universes to establish the subdivisions of the six correlates of semiosis, specifically, a universe of possibles, one of existents and one of necessitants, in order of increasing complexity (EP2 478-479). These, when properly combined with the subjects of the typology, namely the six correlates of semiosis, generate twenty-eight very different classes of signs (Table 2).

The determination process itself can be represented more simply by the schema on Figure 6, in which the interpretants have been standardized respectively from destinate, effective and explicit to immediate, dynamic and final. Note that some authors, e.g. Savan (1988, p. 52), inverse this order, identifying the explicit as the immediate, and the destinate as the final. In view of the order established in the determination sequence in the quotation from the 1908 letter to Lady Welby this would produce the illogical situation where the final interpretant determines its own immediate interpretability. Figure 10 displays in simple form the hexadic structure of semiosis as Peirce conceived it in 1908, in which the arrow “→” indicates the process of determination of the successive “subjects” in the process, and in which the abbreviations Od, Oi, S, Ii, Id and If represent, respectively, the dynamic and immediate objects, the sign, followed by the immediate, dynamic and final interpretants:

Figure 10. Hexadic semiosis

\[ \text{Od} \rightarrow \text{Oi} \rightarrow S \rightarrow Ii \rightarrow Id \rightarrow If \]

Concluding this summary of the development of the later semiotics, we see that by defining these modal universes and the sorts of entities they can contain, including signs, objects and interpretants, Peirce had changed significantly the theoretical framework within which he now approached the problem of the function and mediating status of the sign in the process of semiosis. Moreover, since the object is now defined to be the origin or initiator of semiosis as in the case of the commanding officer’s “will”
that the musket butts be brought to the ground, the object can clearly be a source of intentionality. Thus, while the system of 1903, in which the identity of the object is irrelevant, is unable to accommodate intentionality, that of 1908 can show it to be, in the case of a necessitant object, an initiator of semiosis.

As can be seen clearly from the typology on Table 2—notable for being the only one of Peirce’s many typologies in which the order of divisions also respects the order of semiosis—since it is the dynamic object which is the logical origin of any semiosis and thus of the “form” communicated ultimately to the interpretants, it is logically possible for the sign as medium to be determined by both a dynamic and an immediate object ontologically more complex than itself: Peirce had already suggested that the dynamic object is not necessarily like the immediate in any way at all: “The immediate object of a sign may be of quite a different nature from the real dynamical object” (R339 277r, 1906). The fact that a dynamic object can belong to a more complex universe than the sign explains, too, how, in the case of the metaphorical signs discussed above, both a linear vectorial sign such as This man is a fox and a two-dimensional sign such as Kruger’s poster can represent a parallelism in a more complex object (see Jappy, 2018 for a discussion).

Table 2, for example, shows that it is logically possible for necessitant dynamic and immediate objects to determine an existent sign such as the metaphorical utterance in a combination of divisions which would identify Peirce’s example as a collective, (copulative) token (italicized on Table 2). Note, however that Peirce never developed the 28-class system, and that he never ever set out his numerous typologies in the horizontal format displayed on Table 2.

Table 2. The hexad of 23 December 1908 with divisions set out across the page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Od</th>
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<th>S</th>
<th>li</th>
<th>Id</th>
<th>If</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universe</td>
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<td>Necessitant</td>
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<td>Collective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copulant</td>
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<td>Existent</td>
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<td>Concretive</td>
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<td>Designative</td>
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<td>Token</td>
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<td>Abstractive</td>
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<td>Hypothetical</td>
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<td>Gratific</td>
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28
That a sign can be determined to represent an immediate and a dynamic object more complex than itself can thus be seen clearly on Table 2. More generally, it is notable that the hexad determining the typology on Table 2 (cf. Figure 6) approximates in Peirce’s logic of representation to our normal interpretive processes as we follow films by identifying the patterns of light and shade on the cinema screen as human beings or monsters, etc., just as we recognize parents, friends and ourselves at earlier times on photographic prints, just as we recognize film stars and despised politicians on our TVs. These are manifestations of the forms communicated to these three different media—cinema screen, photographic print and the LED displays on the TV screen—by their immediate objects, themselves determined precedently by dynamic objects which are of necessity different, if only by existing in a greater number of dimensions: the living film stars and politicians, for example, are three-dimensional while their lifeless representations are two-dimensional in the case of photograph and film and unidimensional in a narrative or a newspaper report.

3.4 The objects
This leads to an important consideration for Peirce’s development of the dynamic object, its implications for the problem of intentionality in signification, its analysis within Peircean semiotics, and, more pertinently, for the problem of artistic creation and the social relationship in which such creation can find itself. Since the dynamic object is logically the source or origin of semiosis, and since such necessitant entities as ‘a living consciousness … the life, the power of growth, of a plant … a living institution,—a daily newspaper, a great fortune, a social “movement”’ are all potential objects of signs—Table 2 above shows that both immediate and dynamic objects can be classified as necessitant—it follows that such entities can be sources of intentionality: support for a political party, a charity appeal for donations or, again more pertinently, the militant call for women to resist attempts to overturn their rights. However, to be recognized as such, these intentionalities have to be made manifest at some stage on a supporting medium, have to be “mediatized”, in a special sense of the term, otherwise no one would ever be able to recognize them. As seen above, within
Peircean semiotics it is the dynamic object which is the source of such intention, the peculiar nature and aspect of which—its form—is communicated to the sign by the structure inherited from the dynamic object by the immediate. As seen, too, from the brief introductions to Figures 1, 3 and 7, and as all art historians, archaeologists and geologists know, signs are not a-temporal—they have a history, a history to be associated with a semiosis triggered by their dynamic objects.

4. The Historicity of Signs and the Immediate Object

   The Mediate Object is the Object outside of the Sign; I call it the Dynamoid Object. The Sign must indicate it by a hint; and this hint, or its substance, is the Immediate Object. (SS 83, 1908)

In what follows, the embodiment of the form emanating from the dynamic object and communicated via the immediate object to the sign is treated as a specific stage in the semiotic history of signs, and this “mediatization” stage in the process of semiosis is summarized on Table 3. According to the letter to 1908 Lady Welby, the dynamic (mediate/dynamoid/dynamical) object is the origin of semiosis, the object outside the sign and the potential locus of intentionality; the sign is the medium or support in which the intentionality of the dynamic object is made manifest—mediatized, inscribed in a medium—while the immediate object constitutes the particular form this intentionality takes with respect to the medium: Peirce’s “hint”, in other words. For obvious reason, it is not possible to include the interpretant stages without information concerning the interpretants themselves; and in any case, they do not participate in the mediatization of intentionality—on the contrary, they are mediately triggered by it. The hypothesis developed here, then, is that the inscription of intentionality in the sign/medium, i.e. the mediatization of intentionality, is the transformative function of the immediate object.
Table 3. The three stages participating in the materialization of intentionality

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<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Universe</td>
<td>collective</td>
<td>copulant</td>
<td>type</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessitant</td>
<td>concreative</td>
<td>designative</td>
<td>token</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existant</td>
<td>abstractive</td>
<td>descriptive</td>
<td>mark</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The “semiotic history” of the Mona Lisa is relatively simple—it is an example of Baxandall’s “deposit of a social relationship”, a negotiation between patron and artist. Although the painting is renowned for the artistry displayed by Leonardo in the portrait, from the point of view of semiosis and the history of the painting from inception to production, the artist was not the agency that produced the painting but was, principally, the executor of pictorial skill—of “brush” as Baxandall has it (1972, pp. 14-17). The agency in this case was, rather, Francesco del Giocondo’s desire—an intentionality—to have his wife Lisa immortalized in a portrait. The medium was the combination of white wood panel and oils, while the particular arrangement of these oils on the panel is the realization of the form communicated to the medium by the immediate object, in other words, the “hint” or its “substance” inherited from the dynamic object.

The history of the photograph on Figure 3 is more complex. This was a study for a series of portraits by the early photographic artist, Margaret Cameron, celebrating Beatrice Cenci. Beatrice was the daughter of a Roman aristocrat who repeatedly raped her and abused his wife and sons. Beatrice participated in the murder of her father, was tried, found guilty and publicly executed by beheading in 1599, but became a symbol of resistance to the depravity and moral unaccountability of the Roman nobility. Cameron’s series of images were to capture the suffering she was forced to endure, whence the angled pose exposing the neck and the model’s pensive expression. In the sign-system of 1903 described above, the model in a photograph would constitute the sign’s object (not designated the dynamic object at this time): since the relation between the print and the object was necessarily existential, the photographic print
was indexical. However, analysis within the structure of semiosis requires us to individualize the function of the various stages in which the intentionality of the object is made manifest and in this case it is the intentionality of Cameron’s desire to capture the spirit of Beatrice’s martyrdom that determined the distribution of light and dark—the form of the immediate object—on the print medium.

Finally, consider the text beneath the vertically divided image on the original poster:

On April 26 the Supreme Court will hear a case which the Bush administration hopes will overturn the Roe vs. Wade decision, which established basic abortion rights. Join thousands of women and men in Washington D.C. on April 9. We will show that the majority of Americans support the woman’s right to choose.

In Washington: assemble at the Ellipse between the Washington Monument and the White House at 10 am; rally at the Capitol at 1:30 pm.

The poster was produced to support the Woman’s March on Washington, a protest march against the Bush administration’s attempt to overturn the Wade v. Roe decision allowing women a certain latitude in their reproductive rights and birth control. Hypoiconic analysis of the poster showed how metaphor informed both text and pictorial representation, but the poster has a social, political and ideological significance that neither hypoiconicity nor, indeed, any class of the three-division, a-historical system of 1903 can account for. This is a militant sign, as the predella-like text on the poster clearly states: it was determined by one woman’s desire to rally American citizens in defence of women’s basic rights threatened by an all-male administration, and this intense desire is the sign’s dynamic object within Peirce’s 1908 sign-system. The medium is the duplicated ink and paper poster that was plastered on walls and telephone poles at the time, while the form—the complex hypoiconic form analyzed above—is the dramatic, tabloid-style expression of this desire. The poster is typical of Kruger’s photographic artistic preferences at that time, and the characteristic combination of red, white and black inks was probably a throwback to
her professional background as a fashion designer. The (necessarily partial) semiotic history of the poster begins, then, with the desire to rally the citizens through the process of conceiving the actual design that we see in it and culminates with the production of the poster.

Now, it would be naïve and very un-Peircean to suggest that in the determination process the immediate object is somehow responsible for the materiality of the medium, somehow causes the medium to be what it is—in the cases discussed above, a wooden panel and oils, paper covered with egg-white and salt or a sheet of paper covered in ink. That is not what Figure 10 was intended to show. The immediate object is what Peirce on occasion refers to as the object in the sign, the dynamic object “hinted at” in the sign. What the analyses above were meant to show is that the immediate object has a distinct role to play in semiosis, and that the medium is only operational as a sign by displaying the form communicated when the immediate object functions as a relay of the influence of the object outside the sign, the dynamic object.

5. Conclusion

Peirce’s brief and cryptic definition of the hypoicons in 1903 provides us with the means of analyzing the internal, often imperceptible, structure of both verbal and pictorial signs. Imagic, diagrammatic and metaphoric forms are, within this theory of signs, the structural bedrock on which all representation is constructed, and constitute a triadic refinement of the binary literal-figurative distinction of traditional rhetorical analysis. However, Peirce’s intention in his speculative grammar of 1903 being to define the formal conditions of signhood, he had no reason to develop the hypoicons further. Moreover, the semiotic theory developed in the Lowell Lectures on logic made no provision for the identification of the sign’s single object and single interpretant: these were necessary correlates in the triadic relation defining the sign but had only a relational function within the establishment of the ten classes of signs. As a result, the origins and consequences of the signifying process were irrelevant.
However, signs are not simply static members of one or other of the ten classes described in 1903: they have an origin, a history and they produce reactions. It was the new approach to signs offered by a theory of semiosis with six distinct stages and which Peirce developed over the period 1905-1908 that makes it possible to analyze intentionality in signification in a way that was theoretically impossible in the triadic model of 1903. The sign within the later semiotic system is defined as a medium in the normal artistic sense of the word, a vehicle, in other words, and this makes it possible to hypothesize the features presented by a given sign, pictorial or otherwise: what we perceive in a given sign is what the immediate object has been determined by the dynamic object to communicate to it.

A number of pictorial signs were analyzed from two points of view, namely their internal structure and their intentionality, i.e. their final causation. This latter, of course, is not the only source of determination in semiosis: in addition to the twenty-one classes of necessitant-based, intention-determined signs the 28-class hexadic typology of 1908 provides for six classes of existential causation and one class involving an abstract, qualitative signifying process, too. While the 1903 theory of the sign is incapable of informing us of the stages in the signifying process and of the nature of such intentionality, we note, too, that the six-division typology illustrated on Tables 2 in no way enables us to analyze sign-structure as was the case in 1903, since the classes of signs involving icons, indices and symbols defined in terms of Peirce’s categories of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness are absent from a typology subdivided by the three modalities characterizing the universes of 1908.

In spite of such apparent incompatibilities, the paper has sought to show that, taken together, the two very different conceptions of the sign and a hypothesis concerning the role of the immediate object suggest ways of obtaining complementary insights into the internal structure and the processual nature of signs in context. And it is tempting to conclude, too, that hypoiconicity constitutes the abstract structure of the form communicated to the sign by its immediate object.
Notes
1 What follows is, of course, a personal view of hypoiconicity and there is no reason why alternative descriptions shouldn’t adopt a different approach.
2 I should like to thank Sprüth Magers of Berlin for generously allowing me to use this image by Barbara Kruger.
3 https://postermuseum.com/products/untitled-your-body-is-a-battleground (retrieved June 2019)

References
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