

in posthumous fragments probably reflects the influence of the Magnus-sanction against relying on Nietzsche's fascinating and illuminating notes.

*Nietzsche and the Problem of Sovereignty* is a valuable work on a central and important theme. It is thankfully a sensible, insightful, and economical treatment of a kaleidoscopic thinker.

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Kenneth Laine Ketner, *His Glassy Essence: An Autobiography of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Vanderbilt UP, 1998), 416 pp., \$39.95 cloth; and Richard A. Smyth, *Reading Peirce Reading* (Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 327 pp., \$67.50 cloth, \$28.95 paper.

Both Kenneth Laine Ketner's autobiography of the logician, scientist, and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, and Richard A. Smyth's study of Peirce's readings of his philosophical predecessors, encourage rethinking the early life and writing of one of America's most important thinkers. Ketner's first volume of a proposed three-volume set is a sourcebook of new material for the specialist interested in the formative years of Peirce's life (1839-1867) and an engaging introduction for those less familiar with Peirce's intellectual development. Smyth's study of Peirce's readings in the history of philosophy, written for Peirce scholars and students of intellectual history, provides a lesson in what Peirce's early essays can teach us about philosophers and philosophical ideas.

"A mind whose depth and impact have still to be felt – and fathomed," was Lewis Mumford's assessment of Peirce in his 1931 study of the lost intellectuals of the nineteenth century, *The Brown Decades*. While Peirce's contributions to mathematics, the natural and social sciences, and the humanities have become more apparent, they continue to eddy outside the mainstream of American thought. The reasons for his peripheral status are complex. There are continuing editorial challenges posed by the twelve thousand pages Peirce published and the additional eighty thousand handwritten pages of the corpus. Until recently, much of the extant biographical material remained inaccessible. Perhaps more determinative has been the perception of Peirce as a tragic and tormented thinker, whose labyrinthine mind and personal eccentricities led to a career best described as an interesting failure.

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the son of Sarah Hunt (Mills) Peirce and the distinguished Harvard professor of astronomy and mathematics, Benjamin Peirce. A prodigy in mathematics and the

physical sciences, Peirce attended Harvard College, graduating when he was twenty. After working as an aide in the United States Coast Survey for two years, he studied chemistry in the Lawrence Scientific School, from which he received his graduate degree *summa cum laude* in 1863. During the next forty years his professional life as a scientist included serving as assistant and then aide to the Coast Survey (1851-91), as astronomer for the Harvard Observatory (1869-72) and as a consulting chemical engineer to the St. Lawrence Power company (1895-1902). He held a brief academic position as Lecturer in Logic at Johns Hopkins University (1879-84); and, although unable to secure a permanent academic position, Peirce conducted lectures at Harvard and Boston's Lowell Institute in 1865-66 on the logic of science, on British logicians in 1869-70, on the method of pragmatism in 1903, and on the logic of inquiry in 1907.

Peirce, a practicing scientist and self-described logician, published *Photometric Researches* in 1879, which sought to determine absolute and relative stellar magnitudes as part of a large-scale effort to understand the actual shape of the Milky Way galaxy. *Studies in Logic* (1883), a collaborative effort between Peirce and his students in logic at Johns Hopkins University, proved germinal in the field of symbolic logic. Peirce published other important works in philosophy, logic, psychology, chemistry, astronomy, photometry, geodesy, mathematics, metrology, and cartography. His refinements in the design and use of gravity pendulums earned him an international reputation. (He was known to refer to himself as a "pendulum swinger"). He served as a reviewer for *The Nation* for thirty-nine years (1869-1908) and, an exacting philologist and lexicographer, he contributed numerous scientific and philosophical definitions to the *Century Dictionary*, beginning in 1889, and Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology* in 1901. Peirce also carried on an extensive and wide-ranging correspondence with many of the most influential intellectuals of his day.

Joseph Brent's 1993 *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life*, the first full-length biography, interprets these accomplishments in light of Peirce's "moral blindness" and "wayward" intelligence. However, Brent's sympathetic argument isolates certain attitudes and patterns of behavior to construct a character type – a "dandy" whose Baudelaireian predilections eroded a promising intellectual career. Kenneth Laine Ketner's *His Glassy Essence: An Autobiography of Charles Sanders Peirce* is a welcome corrective to this reductive hypothesis of Peirce as "a flawed genius." Ketner, Horn Professor of philosophy at Texas Tech University and Director of the Institute for Studies of Pragmatism, begins with a fuller body of manuscript evidence (much of which had been retained by Harvard's department of philosophy) and the voluminous notes and files of the dean of Peirce scholars, Max H. Fisch. Moreover, Ketner begins with the requisite skepticism of the "facts" and prejudices concerning Peirce's life and work handed down by generations of

intellectual historians working with partial evidence, and whose philosophical views were incompatible with Peirce.

Reasoning was for Peirce a living process, “a kind of experimentation, in which, instead of relying upon the intellectual laws of outward nature to bring out the result, we depend upon the equally hidden laws of inward association” (qtd. in Ketner 346). Ketner takes this insight seriously: he has written elsewhere that because no evidence is self-interpreting, we routinely prepare biographies of other persons, just as each of us is a biographer of our own life. Ketner’s biographical strategy exemplifies this insight and *His Glassy Essence*, as a result, reads more or less like an intellectual detective story. The story begins in the first person, with a letter from a fictional narrator, Louis E. Eisenstaat (“Ike”) – a “mystery writer by trade” and an “amateur by inclination and instinct” (3). Self-described amateur physician and devout hypochondriac, Ike despises academic professionalism. He is fifty-seven years old and a 1961 graduate of Harvard. He is married to Betsey, a graduate of Radcliffe and a nurse specializing in community health, from Milford, a small town in Pike County in northeastern Pennsylvania, which happens to be where Peirce lived from 1891 until his death in 1914. It also happens that Betsey’s grandfather, on his deathbed, entrusted his daughter with a “large and uniquely handsome ancient wooden box” he had received from Madame Juliette Peirce upon her death in 1934. The *Vargueno* is a chest whose cover opens to become a writer’s desk, and in which is found an incomplete draft of an autobiography of Charles Sanders Peirce, bearing the title “His Glassy Essence.”

The contents of the *Vargueno* – and the lines of inquiry they make possible in the *mise en scène* of *His Glassy Essence* – will confront Peirce scholars, in particular, with a number of surprises. In the course of Ketner’s (Ike’s) investigation, we discover that Peirce may have had a secret “first marriage” to Caroline Louise Badger; that Harvard’s future president Eliot’s thorny professional relationship with Peirce’s father, Benjamin Peirce, may have shaped Charles Peirce’s ill-fated attempts to secure a permanent position at Harvard and elsewhere; that Peirce may have served as William James’ tutor during the 1860s when both were attending Harvard’s Lawrence Scientific School; and that Peirce may have taken the name Santiago in tribute to his wife (rather than in tribute to James), a Spanish gypsy from Andalusia whose French name Juliette Froissy was, in all likelihood, a fabrication. Interspersed throughout this investigative narrative are Peirce’s own words, as well as those of his family, friends, and contemporaries. There are also long, unobtrusively presented excerpts from Peirce’s writings, some not previously published, that establish a parallel narrative chronicle of Peirce’s developing system of thought. “The goal,” writes Ketner, “has been to show forth the best single guide to the life and work of Peirce – Peirce himself – and to do that in a way that is both respectful and honest and fallible” (353). Ketner’s challenge was “to make

[Peirce's life] available to any reader interested enough to take up the book" (351).

I suspect every reader of *His Glassy Essence* will face the same question: does Ketner's experimental method succeed? In every case, the value of Ketner's approach to Peirce's life in particular, and to the task of intellectual biography in general, will depend upon the temperament and training of the reader. Many will reject Ketner's attempt to dispense with the biographer's pretense of mastery over the complex and amorphous data of Peirce's life. Others will object to Ketner's fabrication of a fictional cast of inquirers, his strategy of quoting long passages from the manuscripts without providing interpretive commentary, and his use of superscript symbols and page/line number citation in place of footnotes. However, Ketner's biographical project and methodology will also find admirers. The fictional frame of the book may feel awkward at first, but such awkwardness may be more accurately attributed to the reader's expectations of an intellectual biography.

The conversations and adventures of the fictional characters reveal Ketner's affinities with the late novelist Walker Percy. (Percy makes an appearance in the fictional apparatus of *His Glassy Essence* as the wise "witness"/interlocutor who knew Peirce, Leroi [Roy] Wyttnys). Before his death in 1989, Percy suggested that Ketner's intimacy with the facts of Peirce's life and his familiarity with the growth and changes in Peirce's thought uniquely qualified Ketner to undertake a biography of Peirce's life. Ketner's method is in fact part Peirce and part Percy. Ketner clearly invokes Peirce's doctrine of fallibilism, the idea that no knowledge (in this case, about a person's life) can ever be supposed to be absolutely true. And he emphasizes this method of inquiry by inviting the reader to take part in the experimental process of constructing an intelligible life. *His Glassy Essence*, inspired by Percy's masterful use of literary structure, creates an enlightening setting for exploring the nature and importance of Peirce's life. Thus he fulfills Whitman's call in "Democratic Vistas" for the reader to "himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay – the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or framework." *His Glassy Essence* provides such a start or framework, challenging the reader to become an active participant in the construction of a life. Ketner's provocation, quite simply, is to implicate the reader in the intellectual work of biography.

If one is looking for an interpretation of Peirce's writing one will not find it in Richard A. Smyth's *Reading Peirce Reading*. The book's subject is not Peirce's writing, nor is it addressed to his philosophical system. Smyth, professor of philosophy and comparative literature at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, does not endeavor to provide definitive readings of Peirce's essays. His interest is rather in what Peirce's early essays teach us about the conversation among philosophers and the evolution of philosophical ideas. For instance, Peirce's with-

ering critiques of the method of Descartes and the spirit of Cartesianism in "Questions Concerning Certain Faculties Claimed for Man" (1868) and "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities" (1868) enable Smyth's lucid discussion of Peirce reading the debate on intuition that divided the tradition of classical British empiricism (John Locke, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Alexander Bain, and Peirce's Harvard professor Francis Bowen) and Thomas Reid's commonsensism combined with elements of Kantianism (Sir William Hamilton, Victor Cousin, Henry Mansel, James McCosh).

Smyth descriptively and agilely situates the development of Peirce's ideas among the philosophers who most animated his early thinking. Smyth focuses his lens on the early published essays in the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* in which Peirce builds on his pioneering extension of Kantian philosophy in the 1867 essay "New List of Categories." At this formative stage of his thinking Peirce had become increasingly skeptical of the position that human psychology provides a secure starting point for logic. As Smyth explains, "One of the main motives behind Peirce's antipsychologism in logic is his desire to develop our science of logic prior to having settled any disputed questions in the philosophy of mind or in philosophical psychology" (9-10). Smyth details the agreements and differences between Mill and Peirce, in particular. Importantly, Peirce's reading of Mill's work in the logic of science was supplemented by reading Mill's antagonist, William Whewell, and Augustus De Morgan's essays on the logic of relations. Yet Smyth's interest is in Peirce's reading of the more obscure Richard Whatley, whose "text on argumentative rhetoric, rather than his text on logic," argues Smyth, proves most important in the study of the early essays. Smyth contends that the Aristotelian lineage of Whatley's text on the tradition of rhetoric is crucially important, given the correspondence between Whatley and Peirce's views on the relation between the subject matter of rhetoric and formal logic: "The rhetorician directs our attention to the public and visible signs of reasoning as they are or are not present there in the text before us. This gives us usable information about what the forms of and the rules of reasoning are, which it will be the business of the logician to systematize and validate" (38-39).

Such exacting and adept contextual readings are not for the general reader or one looking for an introduction to Peirce's thought. Smyth assumes a reader who is grounded in both the primary writings of Peirce and the secondary scholarship on Peirce's place in the history of ideas. For such a reader, Smyth clarifies the process by which Peirce's early studies in both logic and the philosophy of language led him to identify and reject the nominalism of classical British empiricism; and he underscores Peirce's well-known attraction to the realist tendencies of medieval scholastic philosophy as well. However, Smyth contends more controversially, "the anti-Cartesianism of the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* se-

ries, while real, has been exaggerated in Peirce studies. At the same time, Peirce's movement toward Scotistic realism, while also real, was more nuanced than appears at first glance" (164). And in linking the *JSP* series to two essays Peirce published in *Popular Science Monthly*, "Fixation of Belief" (1877) and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" (1878), Smyth makes a compelling case for the early normative turn in Peirce's thinking about logic, in particular, and for an understanding of the roots of pragmatism more generally. Indeed, in these later essays Peirce outlines a method of inquiry emphasizing the self-correcting process of reasoning – in contrast to alternative methods of fixing belief in a community of inquirers – and discusses his alternative philosophical method of attaining a higher grade of logical clarity. Peirce's mature system, then, by extension, breaks with Aristotle to agree with Kant, who believed that logic teaches "not how we do think, but how we ought to think" (168), thereby confirming Peirce's classification of logic as a branch of ethics.

Smyth's reading of the *Popular Science* series first argues that Peirce's influential essay "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" presents a "sophisticated and interesting set of answers to the question: 'Why should you or I be logical?'" (183). This rhetorical question, Smyth reminds us, is quite different from the scientific question "What are the grounds from which we can demonstrate and explain why the laws of logic *are* valid?" (195). Smyth's second contention is that Peirce's defense of the methods of science is intimately linked to a Peircian reading of Descartes' first mediation. Again Smyth is not so much interested in how to read Peirce's essays but rather in how Peirce read his predecessor Descartes. As Smyth elaborates, the goal for Descartes "is to set as a goal [indubitability] attainable by an individual with the help of God," whereas Peirce argues that "the fixation of belief is a task set for the community of inquirers" (240). Smyth then provides a reading of the pragmatic maxim, training his attention on what the opening paragraphs of the essay tell us "about what caused Peirce to write his essay" (268). Smyth argues, in brief, that if interpreted in a restricted or limited sense, the pragmatic maxim is sound.

Casting Peirce in the role of scientist as popular pedagogue, Smyth concludes with passages from "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" that suggest a turn in the discussion of practical reason "from the question of the development of mastery in the individual to the question of its development in whole nations" (275). Positing a reading of "mastery" in terms of "self-control" and "liberation," Peirce suggests a rhetoric grounded in not only Kant's second *Critique* but Schiller's *Aesthetic Letters*. Smyth concludes, "there is nothing on the surface of the pragmatic maxim that is inconsistent with the idea that the logic of abduction – or reasoning from signs – are intertwined, just as Peirce later declared" (277).

Smyth's demonstration, in this case, and as it appears more broadly in his

book, is meant “to illustrate the way in which a reading of a text can exhibit respect for the dignity of its author by respecting the author’s freedom to set his or her ultimate ends, especially in cases in which these ultimate ends may be different than our own” (269). The result is a judicious and fair assessment of the depth and breadth of Peirce’s historical sympathies that may well move us, as Smyth provocatively suggests, “to balance the well-known facts about [Peirce’s] eccentricities and abrasiveness as a person with a demonstration of his inclusiveness and community-mindedness as a thinker” (127). Smyth’s distinctive contribution to Peirce studies can be summarized by his general premise that an important philosopher incites us to read the history of thought in new ways. The singular value of Smyth’s project, then, is that it allows us to reread Peirce reading intellectual and philosophical history; his book thereby underscores the value of Peirce in helping us to understand that history, if not the motivations and methods we use to locate ourselves in it.

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Jennifer A. Wagner-Lawlor, ed., *The Victorian Comic Spirit: New Perspectives* (Ashgate, 2000), 252 pp., \$84.95.

This new collection of essays, part of a series devoted to the nineteenth century under the general editorship of Vincent Newey and Joanne Shattock, includes an introduction and a dozen chapters, each by a different author. The book is wide-ranging in both subject and approach; unfortunately (but not surprisingly) the quality of scholarship and of writing is equally wide-ranging. Of the dozen chapters, five treat nineteenth-century nonfiction prose; these five chapters will receive closer attention here. Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor’s introduction begins with the rather odd claim that to most readers, scholarly or not, Victorian humor “sounds like a contradiction in terms” (xiii). Surely readers who have read Dickens, Carlyle, or Twain will think differently. Wagner-Lawlor goes on to claim that “neo-Bakhtinian” and “neo-Derridean” cultural studies have led to a fertile critical context for the study of humor and comedy, and to claim, by way of linking the disparate chapters of the book, that each chapter supposes “that there exists a dialogic interchange between the humorous text and its culture,” that the texts “function politically by revealing contradictions in ideological discourses” and by “exposing repressed illogicalities and prejudices ... attendant to nineteenth-century ideologies of gender, class, race, [and] nationalism” (xvi).

Carolyn Williams’ examination of parody and pastiche in Gilbert and