

## Charles Sanders Peirce:

### *Firstness*

Peirce mapped coastlines  
from 25 locations Peirce measured  
the distance of earth to moon  
Peirce married a radical feminist  
harmony of souls Peirce confused  
with the contest of ideals she left  
Peirce fell in love with a married woman  
Peirces lived as man and wife for 8 years  
an enemy published what friends knew  
the first Mrs Peirce radical as she was  
rejected the rule of man over woman  
no divorce could follow a marriage  
that never existed except as sign  
of masculine ambition

Peirce fired for immorality  
Peirce at last exemplified  
something everyone understood  
the dangers of individuals criticizing  
convention Peirce proofread  
Peirce wrote high school math text  
Peirce gave lectures on number  
no one understood Peirce  
cynosure as object of censure  
as curiosity as confirmation  
of what all must know to prosper

### *Secondness*

a lonely life childhood  
to final years exiled

in a large, empty house  
deep in the mountains  
a house without light  
in the winter nor heat  
his companions far away  
or dead, he lives off feelings  
he inspired in the past  
food sent him from friends  
whose intelligence Peirce  
discounted as inadequate  
to understand his campaign

proud, isolate genius  
misunderstood he thinks  
barely comprehended in fact  
changing the universe  
with obsessive thoughts  
through the triad he saw himself  
whole but cut into three fragments  
each of which was cut into three  
the puzzle of how everything  
connected  
to a glorious future  
emitting from the chaos  
of the first moment

### *Thirdness*

in late fall deer nibble bark  
stripping away strings  
leaving white lines  
raw wood scars  
across the darker shell  
hunger a need to survive  
emit signs of an existence

a peculiar way of life  
whose activities say  
you know me by how I  
defeat enemies  
too many for me to know  
they fill every moment

whether deer or Peirce  
extinction stands in every shadow  
what you know hurts  
what you don't know kills

it would be easier if elves  
shepherded cosmic energy  
appealing to their sense of humor  
or to sentiment might win  
amiable cooperation  
in a world of friends  
in a world of guardians

activity needs neither elves  
nor angels

simple laws—  
nature vacuum abhors  
—pushes events without will

facts and results  
traces of existing the shape of hopes  
if (you<sub>2</sub>) see (me<sub>3</sub>) at all hunger  
physical or habit spiritual  
must have driven (you<sub>2</sub>)  
to strip (me<sub>3</sub>)  
isolate from activity

a frozen (moment<sub>1</sub>) telling what  
what {you/I}<sub>1,2,,3</sub> needed  
simply to be here