

*The Durability of Scripture in the Time of Portable Media:
Innis, Scripture and Semiotic ala C. S. Peirce*

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A. Summary and Introduction: Media Technology of Extent Serving A Bias for Portability?

The overall objective here is to understand Innis' conception of the way media can serve - or at least figure in - religious fecundity, especially as the bias of certain media for presenting time and duration do in fact positively condition the religious sphere in society¹. I will look at how the semiotic or operation of sign process of the activity of reading – above all its activation of aesthetic values in the meaning of the text - affords an understanding of how contemporary extension-serving digital media can in fact serve as a condition of portability in the case of religious texts². I take the particular instance of the relative open interest that media-savy adolescents show to the engagement of scripture – to interrogate and to be interrogated/questioned by it. Having taken into account the distancing even resistance they generally maintain to institutionalizations of learning in schools, and indeed to all traditional matter, it is clear that high school students are generally ready to lend scripture reasonable attention, if not always active

¹ His essays, “A Plea for Time” and “The Problem of Space” in *The Bias of Communication* serve as the primary sources here. Some of Innis' sharpest characterization of the religious value are found over against his vigorous distaste for that “Obsession with present-mindedness” which “precludes speculation in terms of duration and time” (p. 87) so as ‘to banish all individual continuity (p. 90). He focuses on memory and a sense of time as best insuring such continuity. Innis, Harold A., “A Plea for Time” in *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964.

² In his programmatic essay “A Plea of Time” Innis foresaw such sharing of ‘technological potential’ for both time and space. He writes: “A balanced concern with space or extent of territory and duration or time appears to depend on a dual arrangement in which the church is subordinate to the state and ensures that the mobilization of the intellectual resources of the civilization concerned, by religion and by the state, will be at the disposal of both and that they will be used in planning for a calculated future in relation to the government of territory of definite extent...”: Innis Harold A., “A Plea for Time” in *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964, p. 75-76.

curiosity. As will be shown, the appreciation which semiotic provides of the dynamics Innis discriminated for communications media in economic history helps identify both ways that digital media can help mine scriptural meaning in a singular way, and suggest ways that this can be assessed and studied.

B. Innis: Oscillations Around Harmony of Communications Media of Time with Communications Media of Space – Centrifugal and Centripetal

According to Innis' observations, this media-religion relation is not direct. While he aligns religion with communication technologies operating a bias of communicating time, the organic dynamic he finds confirmed in many dozens of socio-economic circumstances is centered on a harmony between what honours the bias of time with that which manifests a bias of extent, i.e., respectively, media of duration and portability³.

All in all he finds the character of various historical situations with reference to that balance between the two biases which is permitting social peace and harmony, and abetting creative response to emerging contingencies. In fact, the historical record he surveys shows repeated failures in achieving such balance giving rise to what he benignly calls "social disturbances" filled with great sweeps of disarray and suffering⁴. Ultimately communications – i.e., its bias – or its dynamic is not set by the technologies *per se*.

Indeed media used to serve interest of extent or portability in one period can be conscripted into a bias of duration and time in another. The introduction of mechanical

³ Innis Harold A., "A Plea for Time" in *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964, p. 64.

⁴ In *Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis/McLuhan/Grant* (Montreal:New World Perspectives, 1984, p. 103) Arthur Kroker summarizes Innis' *Empire and Communication* writing, "And it was his insight that the warring tension at the heart of the "media of communication", - territory, politics, and centralization versus duration, religion, and decentralization – was precisely the fatal imbalance which led to major "cultural disturbances" in societies, classical and contemporary."

printing, for instance, in the first place broke the church's general control over space by supplying conditions for individual freedom, but then second moment energized the capacity of other powers to control territory. He writes:

...After the introduction of paper and the printing press, religious monopoly was followed by monopolies of vernaculars in modern states. A monopoly of time was followed by a monopoly of space⁵.

In the case of matter close to the theme presented here, Innis' approach affords an appreciation that while the emergence of printed text with Guttenberg making the Bible widely available qualified the **extensive** control of the church in a way that portability was favoured, the print medium was soon enrolled in programs of centralization and durability so that instead of a series of religious and so authoritative *loci* there was now but one: *sola scriptura*, or in a more catholic vein with its centralized authority wielding influence through the power of text, *sola ecclesia*. As to the way digital media may figure in scripture's communicative character, orality is perhaps the richest vein mined by Innis⁶. In his analyses religion, communication of time and duration, memory and continuity, and orality are often linked. Orality adds a creative force to the way communication of time and duration lend form to religion and its place in social configurations. For Innis, it was the flowering of culture in Greece above all that confirmed this value of media targeting the ear⁷. He traces Carolingian renaissance to the

⁵ Innis Harold A., "A Plea for Time" in *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964, p. 64.

⁶ Kroker, p. 104: "...for Innis, time, or, what was the same, the recovery of the religious sense, or some substitute thereof, against the disenchantment of the world, was tantamount to the recovery of the "oral conversations conversations and dialectics" of the early dialectics.

⁷ "As in Palestine, the oral tradition in Greece implied an emphasis on continuity. It created recognized standards and lasting moral and social institutions; it built up the soul of social organizations and maintained their continuity; and it developed ways or perpetuating itself. The oral tradition and religion served almost the same purpose. Language was the physiological basis of oral traditions, and religion was the sociological mechanism through which traditions were established, directing and enforcing the co-

role of orality⁸ among the Irish monks who mounted a missionary project that re-established so much cultural form lost during the so-called Dark Ages following the Barbarian invasions. Orality, he notes, champions the ear over the eye, although here too something of the eye can be co-opted in the continuity which orality and time forefront⁹, and so too the religious¹⁰

We return to that engagement of adolescents with scripture. Given the development and enlistment of electronic media for extent and portability, it is surprising that this digitally-saturated cohort remain, at the very least, receptive to this engagement. Is it possible to discern a shift in bias of a media technology so that what originally served values of extension, space and portability (all electronic media from the telegraph on) are now serving time and duration? What is at work in that shift? Moreover is it a quality of

operation of individuals in the interest of the community, maintaining group life, and creating a lasting organization of society independent of a living leader. "The Problem of Space" in Innis Harold A., *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964, p. 105.

⁸ Innis writes: The limitations imposed on Christianity in Ireland by the persistence of the oral tradition released its energies for missionary activity to Scotland and England and to the Continent...gave momentum to the Carolingian renaissance...The Carolingian revival of ancient Latin literature in the ninth century paralleled the revival of Greek at Constantinople in the same period and followed the outburst of activity in learning at Bagdad. These revivals did much to enable the classics to survive. "The Problem of Space" in Innis Harold A., *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964, p. 124.

⁹ "The oral tradition implies the spirit but writing and printing are inherently materialistic. The influence of the oral tradition through resort to writing and printing and a stress on its sacredness – thus paralyzing its possible rivals, turning the weapons of its enemies against them – persisted in the Bible and Homer. The accumulation of poetry under the oral tradition dominated the history of the West. Greece and Rome kept their respect for the oral tradition. A decline of the oral tradition meant an emphasis on writing (and hence on the eye rather than the ear) and on visual arts, architecture, sculpture, and painting (and hence on space and time). The significance of time persisted in the character of materials notably in the use of stone in architecture and sculpture because of their permanence and durability." . "The Problem of Space" in Innis Harold A., *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1964 pp. 130-131

¹⁰ McLuhan (and his disciple Babin) have developed this bias of oral communication for continuity, time and religion as inherent in some way to electronic media, although, as Arthur Kroker (*Ibid.*, p. 103) points out, presented with an optimism for unchecked progress that the historical record Innis assembles just does not permit. See Babin, P., McLuhan, M. *Uomo Nuovo, Cristiano Nuovo nell'era Elettronica*. Roma, Edizione Paoline, 1979. Also Babin's *The New Era in Religious Communications*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1991.

orality served by digital media which is conditioning if not permitting this shift? More formally, what is it that electronic/digital media and orality have in common and how is that common characteristic/factor activating appreciation of time, memory, the religious and its texts? Clarifying such a factor could have important social value. If activated, could such unbinding of forces through the fruitfulness of orality bring in an auspicious creativity fostering social harmony and creative resolution of numerous frightening challenges to the human community. If these interests far exceed anything to be attempted in a few pages, clarifying and giving access to a little of what could be happening in the relation between digital media users and their interrogation by the object presented in the scripture text might lend some weight to the importance and relevance of these themes.

C. Peirce: Duration and Continuity Served by Extension Based on Aesthetic in Object of Message

Innis' discriminations on the bias of communications provides a scaffold for understanding why contemporary adolescents might be open to religious texts: the oral/ear sensibility favoured by 'their' media provide a condition necessary for activating scripture and the way it helps constitute time and continuity, a condition, though, based on strategies of extension. But how does it happen that a media favouring and developed for extension could foster orality and permit duration? Something of the answer lies in the details of the semiotic character of the reading of scripture. Relevant aspects of reading scripture emerge from close attention to the ways signs are used in this activity. Here, to catch sight of what is happening in reading we will rely primarily on the semiotic Charles Sanders Peirce discriminated. A caveat is in order. To appreciate how

semiotic in its particular strengths helps catch sight in reading of how time, continuity and religion might be served by digital media it will be necessary to bracket off for the time being some current inclinations or tendencies in conceiving of reading: that it is a simple act of absorption; that the meaning is created by the reader; that interests of power and desire determine the significance of a text. It is not that he buries these factors. In fact, perhaps better than others he and those who take their lead from his clarifications honour and permit appreciation of both the objective and subjective dimensions of reading and in a way that incorporates them into an account of the reading program based on the work of the object of the text.

Overview

Given the elementary relations constituting a sign – those between a sign, an object and that which bridges them – it is relatively easy to understand how the matter or content of a communication in reading activity could involve the particular use of a sign for realizing that content – i.e., the work of the interpretant or bridge linking the sign and its object - and that that use of a sign could involve aesthetic-like sensibilities favoured by the ear in orality. However, clarifying the work of other values is not so clear: the values of objectivity in the content or matter of the communication, the value of active participation of the reader as subject, the value of the aesthetic as objective factor, of the active force of contents on ‘users’ of signs or readers. These emerge from a closer scrutiny of reading as a use of signs, even a complex one. At the risk of both an over-

simplification from careful selection and of under-evaluation of other elements set aside for a later more thorough exploration I propose the following steps in clarification.¹¹

1. Reading starts with a sign, with signs – The first condition

Reading begins with marks on a page or at least some surface, marks which have some conventional form. While writing may start with a moment of spontaneity, reading definitely does not.

2. Reading concerns an object, and more precisely a sign-object relation, involving an object that is already known - in reading the text is not the object, but a sign to the object

These marks though, and even their conventional character, do not suffice for a reading activity. In addition to the graphic matter and the social competence of recognizing (processing) the linguistic bearing/weight of this matter, there is a reality which these ‘marks on the page’ present, indicate, and in some way relate to if not refer to. The text has an object, even if it is only imaginary or hypothetical. As will become important in

¹¹ The following account of reading is developed first of all from Peirce’s general presentation of semiotic as found throughout his collected papers (CP). See Hartshorne, C., and Weiss Paul, ed., *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Vol 1-8, Belknap Press of Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass, 1960, 1958. These will be subsequently cited as CP adding the volume and the number of the relevant paragraph. Also see Houser, N., ed., *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writing*, 2 vols., Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1998; subsequently cited as EP. Specific manuscripts are cited as MS --. Additional general reviews of the theme include: Colapietro, V. M. (1998), ‘Reading as Experience’ *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* XXXIV\4, no. 4, 861-868; Innis, R. E. (1998), ‘Pragmatism and the Fate of Reading’, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XXXIV\4, 869-884; Ransdell, J. (1980), ‘Semiotic and Linguistics’, in *The Signifying Animal: The Grammar of Language and Experience*, ed. I. Rauch, G. F. Carr, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 135-185; Rosenblatt, L. M. (1998), ‘Readers, Text, Authors’, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XXXIV\4, 885-922; Sheriff, J. K. (1989), *The Fate of Meaning*, Princeton: Princeton University Press. Particular precisions outside of the general consensus found in these sources will specifically cited.

further qualifications, objects of texts need, then, not only to be factual or intellectual in the way they present generality that has duration, they also include that which awaits fulfillments.

For a sign to be usable in reading activity it must present something that is already known in some way, at the very least as something that has been referred to in another sign.

Without that minimal recognition only 'nothing' can be read, or from the perspective of the object, everything can be placed in the text. In such cases there would be a statement presenting a predicate for which there is no subject. Concerning scripture, recognizing the unknowable depends in some way then on revelation, a revelation first by the unknowable itself, and then subsequently through witnesses to whom such revelation has been given. Like all knowledge, that of scripture remains more or less vague, awaiting additional clarifications.

As a use of signs, reading scripture without having received precedent indications of the object to which it refers is an exercise of invention and/or projection. While familiarity with the object of scripture is normally provided in and by religious communities, private experience cannot summarily be excluded, either in the initial introduction nor in the subsequent expansion of understanding and knowledge.

2b. Reading is an event drawing on the activity of a sign-object relation

The object of the sign in its particularity seeks out its appropriate sign and dynamic, or more accurately, *is seeking out* the semiotic process that will present itself. In fact the sign **is** this activity of relating to an object, according to the nature of that object and the material character of the sign together with that performance it requires for grasping the object. That which basically constitutes the sign and this activity is first of all the kind of relation between the sign and its object: an iconic one of direct contact, but also often an indexical one of contiguity and concrete association, which sometimes – especially in the case of linguistic signs – presents a symbolic relation where the mindfulness conditioning the realization of the object is invoked. Of these, the use of signs involving iconic relations is most important. This capacity of language for delivering direct contact will not taken up here.¹² Signs and the relations/relating they stimulate can be used to approach the reality of the object presented in the sign. In the case of religious reality, deployment of the sign for *real-izing* such religious reality entails even extraordinary uses of signs. In the case of scripture, the object is (to use but two classic philosophical characterizations of the divine) ‘that which is not a being like other beings or things’

¹² This appreciation, as does Peirce’s semiotic of language, begins from a minority position in the philosophy of language considering language as co-inciding with the reality of which it speaks, i.e., as operating from a non-arbitrary relation. See Simone, R.(1990), *The Body of Language: the paradigm of arbitrariness and the paradigm of substance*. In R. Amacker and R. Engler (eds), *Présence de Saussure*. Genève: Librairie Droz, pp. 121-141, for a review of this position. Also see his article Simone, R.(1995), ‘Foreword: Under the Sign of Cratylus’, In Simone, R. (ed.). *Iconicity in Language*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, pp. vi-xi.

Consideration of iconicity are developed in Fischer, O. - Nanny, M., ed (2001), *The Motivated Sign: Iconicity in Language and Literature*, 2, Amsterdam: John Benjamins; Leff, M. - Sachs, A.(1990), ‘Words the Most Like Things: Iconicity and the Rhetorical Text’, *Western Journal of Speech Communications*, LIV Summer, 252-273; Midtgarden, T.(2002), ‘Iconic Aspects of Language and Language Use: Peirce’s Work on Iconicity Revisited’, *Semiotica* CXXXIX\1-4, 227-244; Muller, W.G. – Fischer, O., ed.(2003), *From Sign to Signing: Iconicity in Language and Literature*, 3, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

(Tillich)¹³, and ‘that of which no greater thing can be thought’ (Anselm in *Proslogion*).

Of the three categories of reality that Peirce discriminates and which he finds attached to semiotic structure and dynamics – existent, generality and quality – the exclusion of the first two leaves the third as the field of the religious. If the category of such (religious) reality is ‘real possibility’ and quality or feeling subsequently funding existents and concepts, the modality for apprehending and communicating it is aesthetic, and its phenomenological presentation happens in what he calls musement, a kind of non-judgemental presence to what is. Musement is the basis of his approach to the reality of God.¹⁴

3. Reading is an activity of performing what the sign requires for realizing the Object of the Text

3a. Realizing the Object in the Sign-Object Relation Calls for Interpretant, for what must be done; or more formally --- reading is achieved by/through an interpretant sign required in the sign-object relation following or determined by a lawfulness¹⁵ set by the object

Sign though is not just repetition of what is already known. They also concern that which was not presented in the circumstance from which recognition is derived. Something new is given in the sign. It surprises and for that, calls out to be used as a sign in some kind of relation to an object. Epistemologically, sign in its surprising aspect initiates a search for an explanation for that of which it is an instance, normally from what the present

¹³ Tillich, P. *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1951, pp. 172, and also 205, 236.

¹⁴ Peirce, C. S. ‘A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God’ CP 6:452-496.

¹⁵ This claim concerns the logical conditions making it possible that signs render a truthful presentation of their objects. David Savan grounds such claim in a lawfulness ruling the operation of interpretants. See Savan, D. “Abduction and Semiotics” in Rauch, I. *The Signifying Animal*, 1980, pp. 252-262: p. 257.

circumstance affords, such context including both associations with other factors and also forces of various kinds bearing on the surprising 'content' of the sign. Peirce wrote:

Thought, however, is in itself essentially of the nature of a sign. But a sign is not a sign unless it translates itself into another sign in which it is more fully developed. Thought requires achievement for its own development, and without this development it is nothing. Thought must live and grow in incessant new and higher translations, or it proves itself not to be genuine thought.¹⁶

This interpretant required though need not be primarily cognitive, it can be emotional or energetic, and in the more complex semiotic of language where the first of these three modalities predominates, the other two will still nearly always be operative to some degree. Where the epistemological/cognitive conditions of the reader's realization of the object of the text involves finding confirmation of hypotheses realized from/by logical abduction, it is the emotional qualitative character of hypothesis-for-exploration, and referenced existents in the energetic domain which permit and indicate fulfillment of relevant conditions. In all ways reading is profoundly pragmatic in that it is a performance guided by an object whose reality emerges only with such performance.

3b. Reading as Taking the 'habit of feeling' from the object available in/through the sign

As it is the character of the object in the sign relations that determines the interpretant, clarifying that achievement of/by/for a religious reality will set out the essential character of reading scripture. As that which precedes indexical reference and its generalization in the symbolic presentation of language, the basic reality found in religious objects will be 'would-be-ness', quality, overall feeling rather than factual what-is-ness or the continuity found in what-must-be. But this is not only true of the objects or religious texts and

¹⁶ Peirce, C. S., CP 5..595.

reading. In this case consideration of religious objects highlights a dimension of reading operative in all reading, not just scriptural. Reading involves more than its objects. If quality and feeling is the first nature of the object in reading and if this nature is what determines and permits the achievement of reading, it is still not the activity of reading. In what sense does the object of a text present feeling to a reader, even have a feeling that it conveys? Peirce has discriminated how such feeling and quality-aspects of certain objects might work on a reader in a way that honours and engages both the ontological character of the object and the subjectivity of the reader in the work of both ensuring its continuity and its current contribution. In other words, he catches sight of the way reading is both fully a personal act and one that honours the particularity of the object signaled by the text for readers in new contexts. Where most find feeling and quality to be emerging essentially in/from subjectivity, Peirce catches sight of their emergence from within the object and its semiotic. As responsive and responsible to the object of the text, the reader's reading will be what Peirce describes as deliberate and self-controlled. This comes close to what is truly unique about Peirce's discriminations. Feeling is usually taken as well beyond the influence of deliberation and self-control - even contrary to it - for feeling and so also aesthetic as the basis of reading are so often taken as outside the realm of objectivity and argumentation. More than noting how feeling and deliberation/self-control can co-exist, Peirce finds that feeling is essentially the condition of such deliberation and self-control. He writes,

“If conduct is to be thoroughly deliberate the ideal must be *a habit of feeling* which has grown up under the influence of a course of self-criticism and of heterocriticism; and the theory of the deliberate formation of such habits of feeling is what ought to be meant by *esthetics*.”¹⁷ EP 377-378 MS 283

¹⁷ Peirce, C. S. EP 377-378 MS 283.

First of all, to be sure, he is not talking of feeling as spontaneous perception. To be noticed, or more accurately to have been noticed, feeling must be more than a single instantaneous event or occurrence. Awareness of feeling is always of that which has just occurred and is recognized as having already occurred and having some duration or continuity, and so he speaks of *a habit* of feeling, that is, a certain tendency, disposition, predictable response to certain circumstances. In being so, feeling in some way has generality. Secondly as “feeling”, the achievement of reading concerns the matter of his first category of original presence prior its actualization in the second category and then its regulation of lawfulness or mindfulness. To read is to access fecund possibility available in the text. Thirdly, before passing to the role of self-criticism in the way that instinct unfolds in the choice of habits, this habit of feeling needs to be clarified.

Colapietro notes Peirce’s comment that “ ‘self-control depends upon comparison of what is done **with** (my emphasis) an ideal admirable *per se*, without any ulterior reason (MS 1339) more like acts of surrender to more inclusive ideals than any self-realization¹⁸ .

Before all else it is so much more than a mechanical act of processing material, “just reading” for content. It is rather, a practice ruled by an ideal, seeking realization of a certain ideal in this reading. Essentially, aesthetic guarantees access to objectivity in reading. No passive submission, the activity of reading uncovered here is closer to dialogue than listening.

¹⁸ Colapietro, V. Peirce’s Approach to the Self: A Semiotic Perspective on Human Subjectivity, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 96

From what Colapietro notes, it is clear that readers use signs by permitting signs to work on them in a dialogue, a critical give and take between the reader in his/her subjectivity and that aspect of reality --- even aspects of intra-psychic reality --- which is being presented in the linguistic/textual sign. The critical thrust or orientation of such dialogue is controlled by the reader-subject's instinct for what is logical and rational, for their attraction to the admirable in the sign, and for the means which would need to be honoured for reaching such enjoyment. In the final analysis reading happens from such normatively guided suggestive feeling that a reader has from the textual sign of an object.

Since reading here is being considered as a **use** of signs, this matter of deliberate self-control is critical. Feelings as self-controlled habits of acting stimulated by an instinct for the admirable leading us to the object of a sign by way of what would need to be done for such realization – all of this takes us far from both the subject-appropriating figure of romanticism and from the physico-organically determined subject of biological, behavioural models where feelings and sentiment are simple givens of experience. As was observed, Peirce noticed that feelings are not the beginning of a process and thought – of *being thought* would be more accurate - but rather their result. Feeling originates not in the subject but in reality. The “feeling” in reality concerns the field of aesthetic. To notice a feeling is to have already ‘been’ experienced, to have experienced a habit of feeling, to have fallen under the rule of aesthetic working to shape habits. And to permit oneself to be subjected to one thing or another is to permit a self-controlled formation of such a habit. Use of sign in reading is to let yourself be ruled by aesthetic ideals.

Summary

The material for a closer characterization of reading is available. Reading as use of signs works not from the text but from the object that the text permits. Reading is a performance that permits access to that object. Before all else, such reading performance results from a self-controlled formation of a habit of feeling displaying the particular real possibility available in the object of the text for the reader's context. This habit of feeling and display of the textual object's fecundity uncovers realities heretofore hidden.

Religious Reading

If all reading follows in the first place from the feeling and quality available in the objects of texts, this is especially so in religious objects which have their unique character exactly from that what precedes (their) factuality and generality. As already reviewed, in his essay on the reality of God¹⁹ Peirce presented musement as the performance permitting access to this reality. Although he did not identify this activity with the use of signs permitting presentation of the divine, his identification of musement's task with that of hypothesis formation from that which would-be necessary as a condition for an instance and for argumentation suggests their co-terminous character. Peirce clarified how reading requires musement not only for consideration of religious objects but indeed for all scientific argumentation.

¹⁹ Peirce, C. S. 'A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God' CP 6:452-496.

4. Reading involves *wouldbeness* and the openness of the text????? for what will present the object more fully, for the reality of the object in greater fullness

In reading, the sign --- with each of the fore-mentioned capacities of (1) direct connection, (2) reference and indication, and (3) invocation of forces of mind at work in the sign --- works on a reader first for having a feeling of/for what real possibility is suggested in the sign. Without such suggestion there is no openness in the sign to communication to/with a reader, to transfer what is set in the sign for readers in their particularity of identity and circumstance. Before there can be a *what-is* indicated by the sign and a *what-must-be* required by the sign with its mindfulness and pattern or generality of existence, there is *what-would-be*, a would-be that is at work in subsequent realizations and developments. In other words before anything can be factual now and be so in a way that is consistent with what has already been experienced, it was/is in some enduring primal phase something that really could be. In this sense reading is always the use of signs for reading back to the quality of the object of the text and so taking place only upstream.

D. Portability in Semiotic Insured by Bridging of Third Relation in Sign: *The Interpretant as Aesthetic*

We return to the question put to Peirce and the semiotic of reading his discriminations of the sign permitted

What is it that electronic/digital media and orality have in common and how is that common characteristic/factor activating (re-)presentations of time, memory, the religious and its texts?

As the title here indicates it is the realization of portability, and the continuity which it registers, which is common to both digital media and orality. Such portability permits realization of past factors in new situations and the fulfillment of the past and its texts by virtue of its interpretants, by virtue of pragmatically designated performances permitting such fulfillments. Both contribute a performance or interpretant which is more emotional than intellectual or energetic. Like all interpretants and qualifying performances, digital media and orality operate through a kind of application of the text to the current situation in a way that such application gives access to that matter or object that is being presented in the textual sign. In this way it is clear that portability is insured not first of all by technological capacity of transport across space, nor so much by constructivist creative interpretative activity of reading subjects, but by the continuity provided by that 'would-be-ness' which is part of the constitution of all things and which determines, requires, nourishes and insures faithful translations into new circumstances and signs.

Qualifications; Confirmations; Developments of Innis' Thought

This exploration of semiotic and reading and the way digital media and orality might figure in reading indicates that portability is not so much only from a bias of extension but can also be working out of a bias of time. With regards to sign process, in reading all media are portable: in the way signs '*real-ize*' the object of text by the unfolding of "would-be-ness" in new situations/interpretants every media is portable. In some cases the display of the interpretant digitally makes the object more obvious. In some cases it takes the particular attention or attending of the media to reassert the object and the

pragmatic required for coming to it. As Augustine, the early Christian semiotician pointed out, the text or Scripture is not tied to the sound of the voice and the text's recitation, but in its meaning which is available in silent reading, a practice he had learned from Ambrose²⁰. For Peirce it is not the textual object – the text with its significant marks on the page - which is the basis of portability and continuity but the realization of the object accessible in the use of signs with sign-object relations and the interpretant signs which the object requires.

As to Innis' thought itself, this understanding of his theses on the bias of communication by Peirce's semiotic permits an appreciation of his theory. Given that dynamic operation of tension between a harmony of the two it would be difficult to colour him as a media determinist. Moreover, in the way his theory is developed from history and its contingencies, it is difficult to present him as a historical determinist. The role of creative response where conditions support and permit it suggests that culture and consciousness are seen to play a role in social life, a role which he sought to serve by his years of scholarship and teaching.

E. Role of digital media in serving interests of time and religion in adolescents' approach to scriptures

Apart from the more theoretical clarifications emerging from relating Innis' communication theory to the account of reading that Peirce's semiotic discriminations provide, there are more practical aspects of the media – scripture relation cast in relief by this interface. These are offered by way of a conclusion.

²⁰ Augustine, The Confession, Book 6; also De Doctrina Christiana, 1.13.

1. The way digital media operates as a field for translation/interpretant of scripture is an instance of a shift in bias of communication technology from extension to that of duration, memory, time, continuity. Given the achievement of that shift, such media, their logics and materials can and even should be used as ‘translators’ for scripture.
2. Despite this shift from the extension and portability bias under which electronic media normally operate to the bias of duration and time, resources of portability serving extension in the former bias remain operative in the second, displaying not control over space but continuity across time. Digital media and their logic of portability are required for activating the time-duration-memory character of scripture.
3. The primary consequence of this shift of communications technology with its resource of portability to the bias of time is its implication in uncovering meaning and significance of the biblical text in contemporary contexts. The recommendation of the “digital strategy” is not driven first of all by the interests and habits of the readers and audience but rather the object or content of the scriptural text or sign. The fuller meaning of the biblical text requires – even actively seeks out – the digital linking or bridging of the textual sign to its object.
4. Digital materials – both logics and themes – share much of the quality of oral styles of communication. Even their non-linear display according to probabilities and patterns that are meta-logical mirror rhythm of conversation, debate and dialogue.

5. Given the emotional character of the interpretants provided by digital and oral media set by scriptural objects to bridge the relation of scripture textual signs to scriptural objects, the communication figuring in the reading of scripture will be initiated and be supported by the activation of aesthetic ideals. Intent of readers aimed at aesthetic appreciation will coincide with the essential nature of the text.
6. The religious character of the object of the scriptural textual signs requires an interpretant of feeling and quality set and measured by that religious object which is not a being like other beings (Tillich) and is a general or thought of which nothing greater can be thought (Anselm), a condition which digital and oral styles of communication can fulfill.
7. The operation/implication of digital media in the approach to scripture implies the activation of the iconic capacity of language to provide direct contact with its object.
8. The engagement of digital media with their roots in communication technologies 'biased' for space could be realized by means of the inner space they provide for hearing, listening to, evaluating and appreciating the scriptural text and its object.
9. Given the way objects (re-)present themselves by seeking out and determining appropriate signs and interpretant bridges, part of reading scripture includes careful attention to ways that digital media may be enlisted in that achievement.
10. The role of digital media as interpretant/bridges for spiritual objects signed in scripture co-incides with not only the nature of scripture but the substance of its messages advancing spirit **in** matter if not over it, or in other words, by a qualification of space and territory by time. To take one example from the Judeo-

Christian tradition, as Innis himself noted, “As a migratory people, the Hebrews were compelled to abandon a god attached to a site and to develop a bond between Yahweh and a chosen people.”²¹

It seems then that enduring interest in scripture across traditions owes much to energies and potentials made available in digital media and its oral styles.

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Abbreviations

EP – *The Essential Pierce*, Houser

CP – *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Hartshore and Weiss