


Class 2c

Technologies, Religion & Meaning-Making

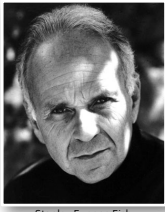


Outline

- the instability of "texts" in the postmodern moment
- the role of interpretive communities
- the role of media
 - definition
 - types
 - relation to religious belief and practice
 - "logistical media"
 - calendar
 - clock
 - tower
- Your paper for Monday

The Instability of "Texts" in the Postmodern Moment

Is There a Text in This Class?
The Authority of Interpretive Communities
(Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1980)



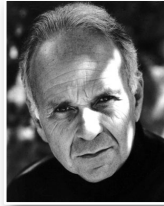
Stanley Eugene Fish
1938-

- Meaning does not reside in a text, as if our role as readers is to learn what "it" says.
- Nor is the author of the text the arbiter of its meaning
- Readers are the creators of meaning when they interpret the text
 - *So are there as many meanings as there are readers?*
 - *Are all interpretations equally valid?*
 - *Are there any principles that we can agree on? Is anything true?*

The Instability of "Texts" in the Postmodern Moment

Mine is not an argument for an infinitely plural or open text, but for a text that is always set; and yet because it is set not for all places or all times but for wherever and however long a particular way of reading [interpretation] is in force, it is a text that can change.

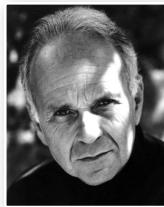
Is There a Text in This Class, 274



Stanley Eugene Fish
1938-

The Role of Interpretive Communities

- "Ways of reading" or styles of interpretation impact how we read
- We learn these sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously, from the culture around us
- Interpretive communities shape the interpretations and we choose (or find ourselves part of) those
- Everything is already in context; the context shapes meaning



Stanley Eugene Fish
1938-

The Role of Media

- Defining media:
 - From Latin *medium* – in between
 - The means of conveyance of communications

Types of Media

- speech
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

The Oral vs the Written Medium

Plato



Plato
428–348 BCE

- The advantages of oral
 -
 -
- Disadvantages of written
 -
 -
- *Pace* Plato, are there advantages to the written?

Relation to Religious Belief and Practice



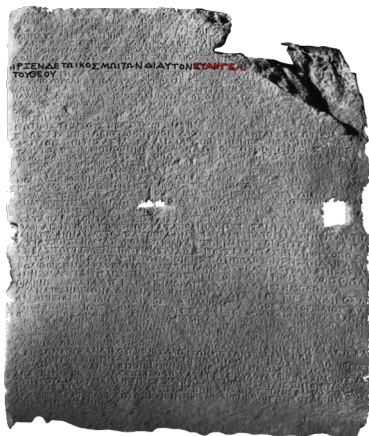
- Religious practices are multi-modal, making use of multiple technologies
- Religious texts are ONE such technology, emerging from historical contexts that are culture-specific and reflect many modes, even if they appear to be in one mode (written)
- Religious texts are *interpreted* in specific historical contexts and in media that differ from the original modes and meanings

Logistical Media

- Technologies so basic we tend not to think of them as media at all
- They arrange people and property into time and space
- They lack content, but form the grid for other communication
- Examples: Calendar, Clock and Tower



Priene Calendar
Inscription
9 BCE



Priene Calendar
Inscription
9 BCE

*The Greeks of Asia resolve to
reset their calendar from a
lunar calendar to a solar one,
beginning on the birthday of
Augustus Caesar*

since [the birthday] of the god
was the beginning of the
good new[s] for the world
that came by reason of him

<p>Gospel of Luke 75–110 CE</p>	<p>Priene Calendar Inscription 9 BCE</p>
<p>^{2,1} In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered.... [So Joseph travels from Nazareth down to Bethlehem with his pregnant fiancé Mary.] ⁶ While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷ And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.</p> <p>⁸ In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹ to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹² This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,</p> <p>¹⁴ "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"</p>	<p><i>The Greeks of Asia resolve to reset their calendar from a lunar calendar to a solar one, beginning on the birthday of Augustus Caesar</i></p> <p>since [the birthday] of the god was the beginning of the good new[s] for the world that came by reason of him</p>

Calendar, Clock, Tower

- With a partner and with your assigned technology (calendar, clock or tower, discuss and write answers on one sheet of paper to the following questions:
 - How does your technology extend human "power over," and over what?
 - How was or is your technology related to formal religion?
 - Consider your technology for calendar, clock or tower in our own secular society; how does the use of them still convey or shape "spiritual" concerns (over ultimate meaning, our place in the cosmos, our hopes in time)?
 - What "logistical media" do you personally use?

Your paper for Monday

- Create an image and write an accompanying paper that present the "sacred" moments in your life.
 - For your image, follow the pattern of the Tavola of St. Clare, with *your* image in the center and scenes or symbols of the sacred moments from your life around the periphery.
 - In your accompanying 3-page, double-spaced paper,
 - explain the perimeter scenes—what each is and why each is so significant for you
 - close with a statement about what all the scenes have in common—that is, what makes a moment in your life sacred or significant, and
 - define what the term "sacred" means to you.
- Format it properly
- Upload it to Camino before class.

Defining Your "Sacred"

- What makes events in your life stand out as *the most significant*?
- Which of these experiences might be further defined as *sacred*?
