Thomas Fabisiak (October 2008) on

Vernon K. Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*

In *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, Vernon Robbins argued that the metaphors by which texts were understood in the dominant modes of historical and literary biblical criticism needed to be shifted. Already then, before conceptual blending theory had become an explicit point of contact for the study of ancient texts and their imbrication in a network of social, textual, ideological, and religious textures in SRI, Robbins seems to have understood the importance of metaphorical and imagistic reasoning. It seems to me, in fact, that this 'understanding' is not merely fortuitous: *Tapestry*, especially in the way that it reconfigures literary modes in terms of rhetoric, precipitates Robbins' work towards the study of rhetorolects as it has eventually come to be articulated. Of course, Robbins had described rhetorolects in an early form in 1996. I would maintain, however, that their development and gradual elaboration over the next ten years or so did not only emerge from an empirical study of textures; it also was undergirded by theoretical developments and questions that were already being worked out in *Tapestry*. I will try to elaborate some of these questions and developments as I proceed.

The metaphorical shift in question was from texts as windows and mirrors to texts as networks of threads that formed patterns, that is, as *tapestries*. The dominant mode of historical interpretation, cultivated throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in biblical studies, saw the text as a window, that is, as a point through which one could access the true object of interpretation, namely the historical reality lying behind it. The dominant mode of literary interpretation in biblical studies, which was much more recent and undergirded by new critical work, saw the text as a series of mirrors, a closed space in which mutually constituted reflections operated on one another to create meaning. Thus there was a tension between modes that saw the text as a means to an end and those that saw the text as an entity onto itself to be interpreted in its own right as a closed and self-referential system. The two modes emphasized the autonomy of the historical world and the text, respectively, and at the limit they operated to produce 'history' and 'the text itself' as 'given' entities whose self-evidence could not be called into question.

The first and probably the most productive effect of the metaphor of 'tapestry' is to shift interpretation away from the self-evidence of the objects under consideration. A woven text, after all, is always only a little more than the sum of its threads, and these threads can be traced

in a number of different directions. The 'text itself' is always bound up and determined by a network with which it is always in a structured and structuring relationship, namely a relationship that determines and constrains it, but that it also works to elaborate and reiterate in new ways. The 'historical reality' to which the text gestures is only one set of threads and one series of patterns that can be discerned; what's more, because they are dependent on other networks, including the network that I'll risk temporarily designating as 'the text itself,' the apparent autonomy of historical objects always remains in question and to be determined. Thus the metaphor already implicates literary and historical work in one another in a way that keeps them from functioning as apparently autonomous and self-evident (if "apparently self-evident" makes any sense) entities.

There is a kind of work of unraveling that takes place then, as the center by which a text could be designated is gradually shown to be nothing more than an effect of patterning, as the dark or empty space against which a network of relationships drams a more or less visible constellation. This unraveling implicates the text and history in one another, and it also gradually implicates them in other 'threads,' namely in a social and cultural world and, eventually, in the world of the interpreter: By emphasizing the contingency and multiplicity of possible 'patterns' that can emerge, *Tapestry* turns interpretation back onto itself in a incessant need for self-reflexive elaboration. If, that is to say, the pattern that emerges in my analysis of a tapestry is contingent on the way in which I look at it, for example whether I look at it in a historical or literary mode, then I and whatever interpretive and ideological resources I bring to the text are also bound up in a new tapestry that insinuates itself into the first tapestry. This new tapestry, in turn, would remain to be investigated. Seeing, as Robbins will say later following Wittgenstein, is always *seeing-as*. That is, we always understand that which we see through the 'language games' or other frames of reference or fields in which the object we see and we, ourselves, are intimately bound up, and that operate constraining forces on our vision. Some of these fields, frames, or games will likely always remain to be problematized or brought to consciousness, and will operate at a pre-reflective level at least since they were inculcated in early childhood. However, there are some that can be investigated and brought to a level at which they can be scrutinized, reorganized and reiterated along new lines. I would argue that this desire for a *prise de conscience* is the fundamental, driving movement of *Tapestry*, that it stems from the interest in rhetoric, that is, in a constantly shifting locus in which a tripartite

relationship between speaker, speech, and audience takes place; and that it precipitates us toward rhetography, conceptual blending, and critical spatiality theory (CST from now on) inasmuch as it drives us always back from the level of the discursive act in question, from *logos*, to locate it within a never fully definable network that often operates at a pre-reflective level, for example at the level of yet-to-be-articulated mental images or at the level of our body's imbrication in a social, textual, cultural, ideological, and religious world. That is to say that *Tapestry* and the later work on rhetorolects share in common an interest in rhetoric that shifts us away from the *logos* of the speech in question to their implication in the *pathos* of an audience and the *ethos* of a speaker. Underlying this shift is a suspicion of the narrational voice, whether it comes from a text, a discipline, a subject, a god, or ourselves, and this suspicion always returns us to a network that has yet to be defined. There is, I would say, using language that Robbins and others have used, a powerful centrifugal force at work here that can always be evoked in the hopes of dispersing any 'center' whatsoever, even as there are countervailing centripetal forces that still seek, through the provisional elaboration of boundaries, to describe the shape that is slowly taking form under their auspices. Because of the emphasis on weaving, on networks, and on systems, this form is constantly shifting: each time that I announce or describe a feature of a given pattern, I have already altered and shifted that pattern with my new rhetorical act, producing a new narrational voice that remains to be called into question and a new network that remains to be described.

One of the centrifugal effects is to move SR criticism into constant and constantly evolving conversation with other disciplines. Modes of interpretation can, to a certain extent, be scrutinized and brought to consciousness. Robbins is especially concerned with unproblematized forms of exclusion in disciplinary conversations, especially the exclusion by which interpreters operating in a theological or historical mode are able to exclude other modes on the basis of their 'irrelevance.' By developing a "broad-based interpretive analytic," Robbins seeks to allow the effects of research from other disciplines to be felt within the world of biblical study in a way that tries to take those disciplines seriously 'on their own terms'. Conversely, SR criticism does not seek to exclude historical or literary biblical criticism, but to incorporate important insights from them alongside insights being developed through social scientific criticism and feminist criticism, for example.

For Robbins, disciplinary boundaries are, like the boundaries between the ancient Mediterranean world, the world of the interpreter, and the text in the diagram at the beginning of *Tapesty*, best described as dotted lines. That means in the first place that they are artificial and instituted. At the same time, however, they are absolutely necessary as the social and discursive context in which any dialogue or analysis can take place. Thus their 'artificiality' is never relative to a 'natural' or immediate relationship between disciplines, texts, cultures, etc. that could be delineated once and for all. Boundaries are necessary, and boundaries are constraining, but boundaries are also the basis of any communication whatsoever; a world without boundaries is, in fact, *nothing*, and not even a nothing that would be any thing whatsoever. The centrifugal and centripetal impulses of SR criticism can thus be understood in terms of these dotted lines, as the desire to allow *as much dialogue as possible to take place*, to keep from foreclosing on the continued 'meaning effects' that might unexpectedly traverse the boundaries in question, but still not to accede to a naieve notion that all voices might eventually be heard or all texts read in a utopian simple and pure dialogue.

I wanted to insist on these centrifugal and self-reflexive forces, and to insist on the fact that in any interdisciplinary dialogue something will always remain to be said, in part to counter what I would see as a naieve reading of *Tapestry*. I felt, and I say this with a great deal of trepidation of my own, that in reading *Tapestry* one always risks acceding to a modified scientific positivism, by seeing the *prise de conscience* in which one recognizes disciplinary boundaries as aritificial or instituted as the basis for a more rigorous objectivity. If I see boundaries as artificial or instituted then I can recognize the mystifications produced by literary and historical analysis, for example, and move beyond them in a now more scientific mode. I recognize that certain of *Tapestry*'s narrational voice's formulations move towards colluding in this kind of reading. There are times when, by wanting to include different interpretive modes on 'equal terms', for example, SRI would do a great injustice to those modes that are always incommensurable or that must always exist in a relationship that could only be problematically described as 'equal dialogue' (feminist criticism and scientific positivism, deconstruction and ideological criticism, for example) and whose very possibility is founded on that exclusion, incommensurability, or opposition. An attempt to reconcile these modes 'once and for all,' could only, like a last judgment, create some new damages that would have yet to be litigated. I would submit, for example, that by arguing that certain forms of intertextual analysis, namely

intertextual analysis that does not limit itself to texts comprised within the scope of a given text's immediate context, "confuse" ideological, social and cultural, and ideological textures *Tapestry* does not take seriously the possibility that this 'confusion' has its own particular mode of articulation and effects that would remain uncognizable within the framework of SR criticism. Nevertheless, I would want to insist against taking this as a criticism of SR criticism as it is described in *Tapestry*, for two reasons: first, as I said, *Tapestry* contains within its own texture significant resources for resisting these kinds of foreclosures. Second, SRI has its own specific subversive and critical ideological effects that proceed from its mode of interdisciplinary work, that need to be taken seriously, and that always turn it back into a self-reflexive interpretive analytic. As I've already sought to insist here, not only ancient texts, but also modern interpretive texts, as well as the social, cultural, religious, and ideological textures in which these are constantly bound up always remain to be analyzed under the auspices of such a 'broad-based interpretive analytic.' Ultimately, any production of the SR analytic can be brought under its auspices, and we can imagine a kind of infinite regression here, in which there would always be one more analysis to take place since each new analysis would demand another analysis to analyze it. This would defer any last judgment whatsoever.

I hope that this digression has helped to articulate some of the ways in which I think SR criticism as announced in *Tapestry* opens itself to other disciplines and modifies literary analysis. I don't think this modification, that is to say, is merely a modification of analytical *methods* that provides more and more scientific resources; it effects a more profound modification by shifting from disciplines, objects, and subjects as 'given' to *rhetorical disciplines, objects, and subjects*. There is, relatedly, a kind of anti-hermeneutical movement, in which meaning would never be the simple or unproblematized object of interpretation, but would always be an effect of textural ideological, social, cultural, and textual networks. By returning to the symbolic dimension of language, rhetoric locates meaning in a constantly shifting multiplicity of discursive iterations. The study of rhetoric opens onto a constantly shifting interaction between speaker, speech, and audience, and this has the relentless self-reflexive and centrifugal effects that make SRI properly *methodological* rather than just being a *method* among others.

To demonstrate that this reconfiguration of literary themes in rhetorical terms is more than just a shift in methods and objects, I think it suffices to recall the frequently mentioned distinction in *Tapestry* between *poetic* and *rhetorical* boundaries. What I find really fascinating

here is that Robbins actually turns the notion of 'poetic' boundaries back onto itself in a way that redefines poetic boundaries as rhetorical loci *par excellence*: he points out that 'poetic' would mean artificial, instituted, or created boundaries, like the boundaries I mentioned above, as in the sense of *poesis*. The fact that boundaries are instituted, artificial, and created means that they are always *social* rather than *natural* or *given* entities and as such are always open to rearticulation. One of the recurring motifs in SRI is a return to the social, not only as a new object of analysis, as in social scientific criticism, but as the basis of boundaries in general. The social nature of boundaries here is related of course to the social nature of language. We receive the social and linguistic boundaries that condition our experience and speech passively, from generation to generation, as cultural memories and inheritances that often affect us at a pre-reflective level as *unthinkable givens*. In *Tapestry* Robbins has yet to articulate these interesting complicities between the rhetorical, literary, and social aspects of discourse in the rigorous way that language borrowed from CST and conceptual blending theory will later allow him to do. Nevertheless, I would announce this here as at least an implicit problem or object of scrutiny.

For example, 'Robbins,' i.e. the narrational voice in *Tapestry* (and I'll dispense with the quotes from here on out) describes two axes of communication that take place in a structured and structuring relationship: a rhetorical axis and a mimetic axis. The first axis points us always back to the fact that communication takes place and has taken place between real beings; the second points us to the fact that this communication is always inflected and mediated along an axis of representation, language, and images that keeps communication from ever being simple or immediate. Thus, in effect, Robbins does modify literary analysis with recourse to rhetorical and social theory, but he also modifies rhetoric as conscious communication by pointing to its mimetic dimension. As a result, I would see this as yet another prefiguration of the interest in CST and conceptual blending. As in his work on enthymemes, Robbins is realizing here that argument, discourse, etc. never take place abstractly as a rigorously definable logical interchange between two strictly delimitable real presences, for example, but are always mediated through images and language that seem to precede consciousness. In other words, the literary dimension, as much as the rhetorical dimension, turns *Tapestry* incessantly back unto a pre-reflective level at which consciousness and communication have always already been mediated, interrupted, and inflected by language and images. The 'implied author' and 'implied reader' in the chart demand an account of communication, that is to say, that would locate it more rigorously than as

the simple interchange between two full and present consciousnesses. This demand precipitates us toward the body, toward cultural and social memory, and towards socially inscribed cognitive categories, all of which are loci for the social and cultural dispositions that inflect communication of all kinds. Thus in a way SR criticism is working out problems developed in the matrix of early linguistic theory and classical social theory, namely how to locate those ambiguous points or dotted lines that are the socially inscribed, pre-reflective boundaries that make thought, discourse, or dialogue possible.

This return to the body and to the social emerges in part out of a dialogue that SR criticism had established with anthropological and sociological theory. For SR criticism, this return to the messy, mundane, and diverse world of social, quotidian existence was a way to move beyond a text's claims about itself. I just want to mention, before getting into the textures, one more feature of SR criticism as described in *Tapestry* that emerges from this interest in the social world "beyond the text itself" (although SRI would always call this 'beyond' and this 'text itself' into question) and that is critical for the later work on rhetorolects: the particular narrational voice that SR criticism sought to bring into question was a narrational voice that emerges out of what others have labeled the Lukan-Eusebian narrative of Christian origins. The key text here is Acts, which describes a monolithic Christianity spreading across the ancient world and which only hints, at best, at the real differences and diversity that undergirded Christianity's gradual emergence. This narrative, which is also a Christian cultural memory, is in fact a mystification that still works in our own context to suppress diversity and enable certain hegemonic constraints. In the same year that Robbins published *Tapestry*, he also published a piece on the 'dialectical nature of early Christianity' which followed out the insights of historical critics since F.C. Baur, who have noted that Christianity was originally at least dual, although Robbins modified these insights with a recourse to the study of rhetoric, anthropology, and socio-linguistics. The six rhetorolects emerge here as part and parcel with a desire, one that had already been clearly articulated in *Tapestry*, to describe various kinds of early Christian discourse on their own terms, rather than subsuming them under a more or less artificial narrative of monolithic origins. Thus as well as preparing the way for the study of rhetorolects on theoretical grounds, this work prepared the way for their study on ideological grounds, as a way to rewrite Christian origins as originally consisting of multiple and heterogeneous discourses, albeit discourses about certain key figures in particular.

SR criticism's dialogue with sociology then, does not only secure resources for understanding the objective social world, it also assumes responsibility for one of the often implicit forces at work in a great deal of sociological analysis, namely the turn to the undifferentiated 'masses' of history. Sociology typically returns to those who have not emerged as extraordinary individuals or writers and who therefore escape the glance of the historian whose empathy is often only empathy with the historical victors. Sociology was articulated classically against certain forms of idealism, and located human culture, history, individuals, and even reason within a social matrix; Marx turned from the ruling classes and the ideologues to the proletariat; Durkheim and French Sociology turned to 'primitive' forms of religion and collective, aneconomic rituals as the basis of all culture in general, including our own. Sociology thus often has ideological implications inasmuch as it still breaks down the hegemony of the victors who write and research history by returning to the quotidian aspects of the lives of those who were put to work or silenced in the past, and who are still put to work in the present when the historian evokes their ghosts for the sake of elaborating continuing forms of hegemony and mystification. We could say, I think, that SR criticism pays attention to the ghosts that social scientific criticism has stirred. SR criticism tries, hopefully with a great deal of responsibility and uncertainty, to listen to them.

Once again, then, I just want to reiterate that these various movements are all part and parcel with one another: there is a return to the social that is also a return to the forgotten and lost in history and in Christian history in particular; this proceeds from a desire to break with the narrational voice, against any unproblematized literary interpretation, or at least to hold it in suspicion. This narrational voice could be, variously, the narrational voice of Acts, of dominant theological forms of Christianity, or the voice of the historian who proceeds to describe the world with seeming god-like objectivity. It is also, however, 'Robbins'' voice, and it's my voice now, the one that is speaking to the reader from within this document. As such, it is always open to further levels of demystification, but no demystification would ever be the last. In the context of the particular concerns of biblical scholarship and the study of early Christianity, this kind of work leads us to articulate, with a great deal of trepidation, a number of different discourses that each operate with relative autonomy and that are therefore heterogeneous rather than being mere aspects or supplements to a 'grand narrative' (not in Lyotard's sense, I don't think) of Christian origins.

I should mention that I am drawing the notion of 'narrational voice' from Robbins' discussion of *inner texture*, to turn, at last, to the textures that Robbins describes in *Tapestry* and in *Exploring the Textures of Texts*. In the diagram that shows how communication takes place at the beginning of the book, inner texture would occur between the implied author, the narrator, and the characters. The need to examine inner texture proceeds initially from the basic exigencies of close reading: to delineate various inscriptions and repetitions within 'the text itself' in order to begin to observe patterns at work there. Thus, it begins with repetitive-progressive texture, namely the way in which certain words or phrases are repeated, and seeks to locate patterns there. These patterns eventually emerge as moving from a beginning to a middle and an end, and thus there is opening-middle-closing texture. There is also narrational texture, as I've indicated, which the interpreter examines as a way of understanding the repetitions, progressions, and temporal unfolding of the text in terms of an organizing principle or imaginary consciousness that makes the text a 'story' or a 'plot' more than just a constellation of meaningless patterns. Inasmuch as it responds to the text as *given*, as a 'text itself,' literary interpretation always runs the risk of acquiescing to the narrator. Thus Robbins proceeds to argumentative texture, and this is one place where we can clearly see the shift taking place from a literary to a rhetorical and therefore social, ideological, cultural mode. A text does not only tell a story, it also is persuasive, showing a common value in an epideictic fashion, or arguing a case in a more juridical or deliberative fashion.

Ultimately, SR's theory of inner texture, which proceeds from literary insights about the reliability of the narrator and from rhetorical insights about the persuasive dimensions of texts, inflects all of these different inner textures according to their functions within a matrix of argumentation and more or less 'logical,' i.e. abstract, reasoning. None of them exists independently of its localization in a context in which someone is persuading someone else of something; that is, there is always a communicative aspect of any *logos*, and this communicative aspect is never strictly *disinterested*, and therefore can always be scrutinized. Thus, this rhetorical turn moves us from inner texture outward into the other textures from which it had been provisionally separated, especially into the social and cultural and ideological textures. It points us to the ideology of the text, for example, which takes place in a social and cultural environment in which someone is trying to persuade someone else of something. It also turns us back on the ideology of the interpreter, however. Robbins mentions a couple cases where a

decision as seemingly innocuous as locating the 'opening' of a text can actually call into play a whole existing ideological matrix of interests and effects in which that interpretation is situated. Inner texture then, is provisionally set apart in order to give us resources to analyze the text, but it always has already been insinuated into ideological texture, as well as inter and social and cultural texture, in any variety of ways that remain to be examined.

There is also sensory-aesthetic texture included in inner texture, which I should mention because it puts us in contact with the body, and also with images and thus at least potentially with imagistic reasoning inasmuch as it is also an aspect of the argumentative or persuasive dimension of a text.

Intertexture would be located at the moment of authorial production, and refers especially to the way in which an author works with verbal signs from other texts, which can include historical, social, and cultural 'texts'. The key here is that the author would be working with verbal signs, and thus interpretation always follows a textualization of the world. This texture is therefore different than social and cultural texture, in particular, which would proceed from the insights of sociological and anthropological theory to examine the social and cultural world of ancient Mediterranean discourse. Under intertexture Robbins includes oral-scribal intertexture, which would refer to the way in which an author works with verbal and written signs from other texts. Typically it means the way in which an author recalls and utilizes texts within the scriptural tradition in new ways. Thus it has been the mode in which Biblical form, source, and redaction criticism have operated. Robbins is concerned here to articulate SR's work on intertexture against that work that would stop with oral-scribal intertexture. Following out the impulses of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, SR's intertextual analysis moves into the broader world of the ancient Mediterranean world to explore a variety of verbal signs and discourses from a number of different cultures.

Again, this is part and parcel with the impulse to move against the dominant narrative of Christian origins. By breaking with canon and with the narrational voice that would constrain Christian origins to its canonical history, Robbins seeks to given voice to a new history of early Christianity that would not only be the history of the victors.

(If I might just make a brief interjection here, I would point out that this is perhaps not the only or inevitable way to take on this narrative of Christian origins and its dominance in theological Christianity; I think it's entirely possible to work within the canonical tradition in a

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subversive way by parodying the dominant narrative, for example by reiterating it on the basis of a new story where the old antagonists have become the protagonists. If the breakdown of the Acts narrative is justified on ideological, rather than historical grounds, then I would want to allow SRI to remain open to those other modes of analysis that might not move outward into the Mediterranean world, but that might still subject the dominant narrative to subversive reiterations. One could easily move into the modern world, for example, to find intertexts that would, in the mode of Pippin or Moore, undermine the security of the dominant narrative and the canon. Of course, you mention this kind of intertextuality a couple times, but then go on to say that, nevertheless we still need to draw boundaries. Agreed, but then I would want to draw other boundaries, perhaps, or at least to be open to drawing them in a different way.)

To that end, Robbins goes on to describe social, cultural, and historical intertexture. Cultural intertexture would include textual motifs in Greco-Roman culture, for example, while social intertexture would include widespread practices and phenomena in the ancient world. The latter, which might seem to be too close to social *texture*, would still be intertexture as much as it was focused on words and phrasing rather than on the phenomena *per se*. Historical intertexture would include the textualization of specific events that had taken place.

Analysis of social and cultural texture moves away from textualization on the basis of insights from anthropological and sociological theory to explore ancient social and cultural phenomena as they are represented in the text. Robbins emphasizes three different rhetorical *topoi* as they operate within a text's social and cultural texture: specific or material *topoi*, common *topoi,* and final categories. The first, I might say tentatively, is more *cultural* than *social* in the sense that it is based on *topoi* specific to cultural modes of discourse rather than ones common to the society at large, as in common topoi. The specific t*opoi* in question here are reformulations of Brian Wilson's sevenfold typology of sects as responses to the world. In some ways I see these as related to rhetorolects in the way that they are presented here and in the dynamic way that they can intersect and blend with one another. As I noted above, Robbins sets out here in *Tapestry* to begin to elaborate specific and autonomous modes of discourse in early Christianity, and these seem to do so in certain ways. The *thaumaturgic* t*opo*s, for example, seems to me a lot like miracle rhetorolect; the difference of course is that the former is a kind of response or identity where the latter is a frame. It would seem natural to begin to relate these to

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one another, and Robbins mentions in the conclusion of *The Invention of Christian Discourse* that this is an area that remains t be explored.

The next *topos* is common *topoi*, which includes those *topoi* that are common to the entire ancient mediterranen world. In other words, the variety of social phenomena like honor/shame, kinship, or patronage, that early Christians would have understood more or less automatically. As Robbins says, a great deal of work has already been done on these *topoi* in social scientific criticism. The latter moves, somewhat similarly to historical criticism, from text to world, but in a way that emphasizes diversity and difference and that also moves away from the dominant mode of historical criticism in favor of the history of the mundane, quotidian, forgotten, and silenced.

The last *topos*, final categories, is the one that Robbins anticipates will need the most work, and involves local matters of intercultural conflicts and alliances.

As I noted above, there are various ways in which each of these three first textures are already involved in ideology: inner textural analysis scrutinizes the narrative voice even as it chooses where to draw boundaries; intertextual analysis can limit itself to certain texts or others and thereby produce ideological effects; social and cultural textural analysis moves into the persuasive and interested situation in which discourse takes place, and it works against the dominant historical-theological ideology. Ideological texture, in turn, always falls back on these three. It does so at the level of the text, inasmuch as there is an ideology 'in the text,' for example Paul's manner of hemming in diverse voices and imposing his own authority. It does so at the level of the authoritative tradition, inasmuch as there is ideology at work in the whole tradition of interpretation, as JZ smith and Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza have pointed out. It also does so at the level of intellectual discourse taking place now, as Schussler Fiorenza and Stephen Moore indicated. In every case any number of 'narrational voices' have yet to be scrutinized.

In the section on Stephen Moore, Robbins indicates two aspects of his understanding of ideological texture that I think are crucially important for understanding *Tapestry* in general and that push us toward his later work on rhetorolects. The first is his feeling that certain binary operations are undergirded by one fundamental metaphysical operation, the one that would rigorously seek to separate inside from outside, body from mind, etc. In pushing us to articulate socio-discursive networks of meaning effects, *Tapestry* seeks to work against the dominance of the mental *subject* and its *objects* in a way that would be complicit with the whole refocusing and

centrifugal movement that I've tried to identify. The second is the focus on the *chiasmus* as the figure that epitomize the circular self-reflexivity of socio-rhetorical analysis. For example, I think he says that 'inner texture explores the textual culture of religion and the religious culture of text," or something like that. The point, in any case, is to effect a return to the context of the interpreter, so that each of the analytic distinctions that she *applies* also can be seen to *apply to her*.

Ending with sacred texture is appropriate inasmuch as in the conclusion to *Invention* Robbins locates the impulses for some of his work on rhetorolects in his study of sacred texture. For the most part, this has to do with the various ways in which a study of sacred texture moves us into a time and into spaces that are not strictly comprehended within the scope of a text's narrative. Sacred spaces point beyond plotted time, the time of the narrative, to story time, namely the time of a whole narrative with indeterminate beginnings and ends and through which each textual iteration is mediated as much as it is mediated through any number of other social, cultural, and ideological spaces. That is to say that they point to cultural memories, to the characters and histories that exist in the mind and in the body and that make sense of and give rise to specific social and discursive utterances. Holy people and the deity are not only characters in a text, they are characters in a cultural narrative that belongs to a community, and whose reiteration involves the members of that community at a fundamental level. The divine history, too, would seem to precipitate us toward 'secondspace', toward the cosmological conceptualized *time* through which we make sense of 'lived', historical time. Religious community, too, seems to involve us in the nature of various discourses in a way that I've been insisting on here, namely in a *social* way; our stories are often situated within collective stories without which they would have no meaning. All of these sacred textures help, then, to begin to close in on the cognitive, spatial, and social aspects of *frames*, frames which, in turn, gain definition and meaning as they are articulated in terms of *values* like "Jesus" or "Paul" that define characters, on the one hand, and give rise to roles like "apostle", "healer", etc. on the other. Thus they mark the transition from 1st space to 2nd space, and in a sense they also seem to imply 3rd space, inasmuch as they elaborate the roles that future Christians can simulate in their ongoing reiteration of Christian stories through their physical actions in the world, including the stories that they tell about themselves and the ways in which they "move back" into a reimagined 1st space that is also the 3rd space of blending.