if not impossible, for us to reach some mutual understanding during the last quarter of a century.

THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO CULTURE

First of all, Wilder's appeal to cultural anthropology implied that New Testament texts have something to do with culture. But it has been, and remains, a highly challenging task to describe the relation of Christianity to culture. H. Richard Niebuhr's classic work *Christ and Culture* articulated important insights for us when it described good Christianity as *against* culture, *above* culture, *paradoxically* related to culture, or as a *transformer* of culture (1951). Yet the underlying implication of this approach is that culture is something bad. Since culture is at least implicitly bad, 'good' Christianity separates from culture – hopefully, as oil separates from water. In our best moments, we have known that this underlying dualism is not entirely true. 'Good' Christianity creates a particular kind of culture with the hope that its adherents will steadfastly choose this mode of conviction, belief, attitude, feeling, action and thought as their 'primary' culture. But what kind of terminology can we use to describe the kinds of culture we would consider to be positive forms of Christianity?

The initial step in activating a cultural analysis of Christianity must be a working definition of 'culture'. From my perspective, culture is 'a system of patterned values, meanings, and beliefs that give cognitive structure to the world, provide a basis for coordinating and controlling human interactions, and constitute a link as the system is transmitted from one generation to the next' (Smelser 1992: 11; based on Berger and Luckmann 1967). Another insight into the nature of culture can be gained from describing it as 'simultaneously a product of and a guide to actors searching for organized categories and interpretations that provide a meaningful experiential link to their rounds of social life' (Smelser 1992: 11; based on Geertz 1973).

Still another angle can be to perceive culture as a system that arises in 'the game of social control, social conflict, and social change' (Smelser 1992: 25). Culture is a product of a human game, and religion is an ingredient of that game. It is most helpful, however, not to use the concept of culture simply as a 'global entity' – a concept that covers all things. Rather, culture has 'discrete parts

(values, beliefs, ideologies, preferences)' that can help us to investigate and display a range of different 'cultural' manifestations of Christianity throughout all periods of its existence (Smelser 1992: 24). The particular range represented by New Testament texts can appropriately be referred to as the 'cultures' of 'New Testament Christianity'. The symbiosis and tension among these cultures, in turn, represent the 'culture' of New Testament Christianity as it may be contrasted with the 'culture' of Christianity in other times, places and manifestations.

Fortunately, a number of anthropologists and sociologists have been helping us to find the terminology with which to investigate and describe Christianity as a cultural phenomenon. The work of an anthropologist like Clifford Geertz helps us to understand that some form of Christianity is 'the primary culture' in which many people live (1973). Also, his work helps us to understand the function of 'local cultures' and their relation to national and international cultures (1983). Thus, concerning early Christianity we must ask questions like the following:

(a) What kinds of local cultures did Christianity create during the first century?
(b) What kinds of coalition cultures, groups working together in temporary alliances for limited purposes (Elliott 1993: 127), emerged during first-century Christianity?
(c) What kind of culture is 'New Testament culture', the culture transmitted by canonical New Testament literature? What is it that characterizes 'New Testament Christianity' as a culture in the midst of other cultures?

In addition, the work of the Norwegian anthropologist Fredrik Barth raises the possibility that Christianity nurtures 'attitudinal boundaries' in ways that create distinctive forms of 'ethnic identity' (1969). This means that group members in the first century nurtured strong convictions about one, two or three major values or behaviors that defined them over against other groups with whom they had close contact (Østergård 1992: 36–8; Gourdriaan 1992: 75–7). In other words, they did not emphasize, or even regularly admit, the things they had in common with these other groups. Rather, their attitudes were deeply informed by a few basic convictions and behaviours that set them apart from other groups with whom they shared many things in common. These differences in attitude and behavior created clear boundaries that separated them

from other groups and gave them a special identity (Barth 1969: 9–10). Perhaps this insight into the manner in which a group can form a distinct boundary between itself and other groups on the basis of a few deeply felt convictions can help us to describe the boundaries that Christianity persistently creates between itself and other cultures and between 'local cultures' in Christianity itself. The challenge lies before New Testament interpreters to describe the kinds of local and extended cultures that are visible in the discourse available to us in New Testament texts, and many resources now are available to meet this challenge (Robbins 1993c, 1994d).

THE RELATION OF TEXTS TO SOCIETY, CULTURE AND HISTORY

Second, as we face the challenge of describing the relation of first-century Christianity to culture, how do we deal with integrity with the inner nature of New Testament texts themselves? In the midst of his address, Wilder asserted that '[o]ur task must be to get behind the words to what semanticists call their "referents"' (1956: 3). This means that he presupposed that words in texts are always in some way interacting with phenomena outside of texts as they interact with words in that particular text. This, as it turns out, is another thorny issue for us (Lategan and Vorster 1985). In order to drive home the insight that a text creates its own world with its own words, many interpreters have taken the position that written discourse has no clearly definable relation to cultural, social and historical phenomena outside itself. Perhaps, then, the 'referents' are simply firmly held values, beliefs and convictions that an individual creates out of emotional and psychological needs and desires. Maybe, in other words, the referents are primarily psychological phenomena related to biologically driven desires to survive, feel secure and procreate in an environment that, if left unencountered, naturally produces starvation, loss of physical strength and death within humans.

The relation of texts to phenomena outside themselves is an especially pertinent issue in New Testament study, since this is the arena in which many interpreters enact their most deeply held convictions about the nature of humans, God and the world. Is it the 'true nature' of humans that they are not 'actually' an internal

part of this world we see, feel, touch, hear and smell each day? Are humans really 'foreign' to this world? Do New Testament texts show a person 'another world' – a world in which our true nature 'lives', rather than the world in which we dwell on earth for the purpose of dying? Are New Testament texts a kind of literature that creates a world in which no one, in the final analysis, truly can 'live' as an earthly human being? Could it be, therefore, that no one ever really enacted the historical, social and cultural assertions we encounter in the New Testament, since all of these are reconfigured in terms of a world other than this earthly world? To put it still another way, is it possible that the all-encompassing nature and function of New Testament texts is to introduce the Word of God as a reality that can exist only outside any earthly human reality? Is it possible, then, that New Testament texts are not at all reliable as a resource for understanding the cultural, social and historical nature of first-century Christianity? Is it possible that New Testament texts are completely a 'world unto themselves' – a world in but not of the world?

Amos Wilder himself began to tackle this issue in his remarkable book *Early Christian Rhetoric*, which appeared less than a decade after his presidential address (1964). After discussing New Testament language as 'The New Utterance' in the first chapter, he programmatically explored the rhetorical nature of dialogue, story, parable and poem, and he ended the book with a chapter on 'Image, Symbol, Myth'. Yet Wilder's aesthetic conceptualization of literature evoked a limited ability to work with the manner in which language persistently interacts with phenomena outside itself. Aesthetics concerns beauty, pleasure, fulfilment and creativity – the imaginative resources of humans. Yet interpreters activate aesthetic analysis in ideologically different ways in interpretation (Eagleton 1990, 1991). Most biblical interpreters who responded to Wilder's call considered the goal to be an explanation of the imaginative resources of the mind at work in the writing and reading of the text. Many of these interpreters have included in their purview the concrete circumstances of the body that are embedded in these texts. Many of these same interpreters, however, have approached the workings of the mind as though they existed outside the body and its functions. Particular social and historical aspects of the body, they have reasoned, are 'outside the text' rather then 'inside the language', because they are outside rather than inside the mind. This is a result of approaching literature as a product of the mind

alone rather than the product of interaction between the body and the mind (M. Johnson 1987).

Researchers in various fields have shown both that the concrete circumstances of the body are 'inside' language itself and that language is 'inside' the concrete circumstances of the body (Geertz 1973: 55–83; M. Johnson 1987; R. H. Brown 1987). Biblical scholars, in turn, are bringing these insights into analysis and interpretation of biblical literature (Meeks 1986a; Krondorfer 1992). Language always emerges out of particular locations of the body in social, cultural and historical circumstances. Yet language is also an ingredient that 'makes' these circumstances social, cultural and historical. In other words, language is an integral, constitutive and cognitive feature of human society, culture and history. This means that language is always simultaneously interrelated to speech, writing and actions of particular people, to social and cultural meanings and meaning effects that concern groups of people, and to particular phenomena that people see, feel, touch, smell, fear and desire in particular regions of the world (Roger Fowler 1986: 85–101).

But how do we enact these insights in exegesis, the central practice of New Testament interpretation in which we read meanings 'out of' texts (ex-egesis) rather than simply read our meanings 'into' them (eis-egesis)? The multiple methods of historical–critical exegesis are subdisciplines of historical method. Therefore, they emphasize historical and theological referents in biblical texts rather than symbolic, rhetorical and narratorial referents. Historical–critical methods create the context for biblical interpretation to be a liberating venture in Western culture. These are the methods that make the biblical text available to us with its variant wording in different manuscripts and invite us to the challenges this variation communicates to us about Christianity in the world. But historical methods have their limitations (L. T. Johnson 1986: 8–11). They were not designed to explore the inner nature of texts as written discourse. Their role was, and still is, to answer a comprehensive range of historical and theological questions about people who can be identified as Christians and about events, institutions and beliefs that exhibit the history of the growth and expansion of the phenomenon we call Christianity. The goal is always to draw some conclusion about phenomena outside the New Testament texts themselves, even when there is significant focus on the internal wording of the text. On the other hand, formalist literary and rhetorical methods and the New Criticism were

designed specifically to explore the relation of words to one another in texts. Interpreters did not generate these methods for the purpose of exploring the manner in which texts referred to phenomena that exist outside of texts. The purpose was to gain a clear understanding of the nature of written discourse in contrast to spoken discourse and in contrast to other kinds of visual communication.

Fortunately, a number of interpreters have been working both from texts to society and culture and from society and culture to texts. The earlier interests of proponents of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* are being supplemented by the work of a number of sociolinguists and literary interpreters who have been analyzing the social and cultural nature of language in texts at the same time that a number of cultural anthropologists, sociologists of culture and social philosophers have been analyzing the nature of society and culture as text (Lentricchia and McLaughlin 1990). Society, culture and texts are all environments in which meanings and meaning effects interact with one another. The challenge, then, is to develop strategies of analysis and interpretation that exhibit the multiple networks of meanings and meaning effects that the words in our texts represent, engage, evoke and invite.

The question stands before us, then, whether we are able to develop a systematic approach that brings specialized arenas of biblical interpretation into a productive working relation with one another. Can we find a way, without violating the nature of texts as particular kinds of written discourse, to investigate the phenomena with which texts interact as they participate in multiple networks of meanings and meaning effects? Can we develop practices of exegesis that explore multiple contexts of meanings and meaning effects without establishing insurmountable boundaries between them? Socio-rhetorical criticism has evolved as a systematic approach that sets multiple contexts of interpretation in dialogue with one another. Both literary and rhetorical interpreters have begun to explore social and cultural aspects of New Testament texts. In turn, social science critics are engaging in conversation with literary and rhetorical critics to find ways to join ranks wherever possible in the exegesis of New Testament texts (Robbins 1995). The challenge is to use these dialogues and activities to explore the relation of texts to society, culture and history at the same time as we are negotiating our understanding of the relation of Christianity and Christian

belief to society, culture and history. We need the best efforts of many people to meet these challenges.

THE RELATION OF NEW TESTAMENT INTERPRETATION TO THEOLOGY

Third, most New Testament interpreters have wrestled mightily with dogmatic theology, but can we engage in a kind of exploratory theology that contributes to constructive or systematic theology? Despite the all-pervasive use of the terms 'theology' and 'Christology' in New Testament interpretation, most theologians pay little attention to the specific results of New Testament exegesis. Many, perhaps most, New Testament methods of exegesis produce specialized results that theologians consider to be of interest only to people inside the boundaries of biblical interpretation. In fact, the boundaries are so noticeable that specialists in Old Testament interpretation regularly have nothing to do with specialists in New Testament interpretation, and even within the two major fields many interpreters either ignore or avoid one another.

During the last four decades, many biblical interpreters have been developing methods of interpretation they think should contribute to constructive and systematic theology. Redaction criticism was designed to explore the theology of biblical texts in the settings in which they were produced. This paved the way for various kinds of structural, literary and rhetorical methods that were designed to explore coherence, consistency and tension in texts; and interpreters considered these approaches to be much more congenial to the articulation of constructive and systematic theology.

The challenge of bringing theologians and biblical interpreters into a cooperative relation, however, appears to be very difficult. A growing number of interpreters are seeking ways to explore deep theological and ideological issues in biblical scholarship. Yet theology itself is a wideranging and changing field with its own interests and concerns. For many theologians the Bible is an essential but minor phenomenon in a large arena of concerns. Biblical interpretation, therefore, is informative only if it engages this larger arena in a manner that challenges it and contributes further insight and information to its projects.

Socio-rhetorical criticism is grounded in a pragmatic approach to language and interpretation that functions in a manner related to

the theological project of the feminist theologian Rebecca Chopp. The goal is to weave a discourse of judgment and transformation that shows 'the relation of language, politics, and subjectivity in the dominant social–symbolic order and, standing on the margins and in the breaks of that order, to glimpse and whisper possibilities of transformation' (Chopp 1989: 102–3). One of the goals of socio-rhetorical criticism is to bring the margins and boundaries into view, to invite the interpreter into the discourses that dwell in those marginal spaces, to criticize the dominating interpretive practices that exclude these marginal discourses and to seek discourses of emancipation for marginalized, embodied voices and actions in the text.

A major goal, then, is for socio-rhetorical criticism to function as a prolegomenon to a constructive theology guided by discourses of emancipatory transformation (Chopp 1989: 107–15). As it enacts this role, it regularly takes the form of exploratory rather than constructive theology. In accord with this, the method moves from highly intricate and detailed analysis of language in texts to broad, complex and controversial issues concerning subjectivity and politics (Chopp 1989: 101–7). The final goal is to explore not the private and political arenas of life in and of themselves but the religious dimensions of life in a world constituted by language, subjectivity and politics. In the end, then, socio-rhetorical criticism as it is presented in this book focuses on language about God and Christ, subjectivity in the context of both private and public religious practice and speech, and politics both among and within different religious groups and between and among religious people and various kinds of historical, social, cultural and ideological phenomena in the world they inhabit.

THE RELATION OF DISCIPLINARY METHODS TO AN INTERPRETIVE ANALYTICS

As a guild of interpreters, our forebears and we ourselves have been good at creating specialized disciplines of study. Are we capable now of using the tools of 'a "grand theory", a broad-based interpretive analysis that moves across discursive and nondiscursive practices of the present' (Chopp 1989: 103) to bring our different kinds of specialized knowledge into dialogue and to create a context for generating new insights, new areas of research and new

specialties that lead to a new account of first-century Christianity? To fulfill this task, the field of biblical studies needs an interpretive analytics rather than a method or theory in the usual sense. An interpretive analytics approaches texts as discourse and 'sees discourse as part of a larger field of power and practice whose relations are articulated in different ways by different paradigms' (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 199). The rigorous establishment of the relations of power and practice is the analytic dimension. The courageous writing of a story of the emergence of these relations is the interpretive dimension. The interpretive task moves through these steps:

1) the interpreter must take up a pragmatic stance on the basis of some socially shared sense of how things are going; . . .
2) the investigator must produce a disciplined diagnosis of what has gone on and is going on in the social body to account for the shared sense of distress or well-being; . . .
3) the investigator owes the reader an account of why the practices he [or she] describes should produce the shared malaise or contentment which gave rise to the investigation.

(Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: 200)

Socio-rhetorical criticism does not present a program for a full-scale interpretive analytics, but it is a step toward it. Among other things, resources from the discipline of psychology are noticeably absent from the socio-rhetorical practices of exegesis in this book. I began to incorporate social and developmental psychology in socio-rhetorical exegesis during the 1980s (1992a), but so many other challenges lie at the interface between the historical–critical methods and social, rhetorical and modern literary methods that it has been necessary to exclude psychology from this presentation. Other resources as well will steadily emerge for interpreters of religious texts. One of the goals of socio-rhetorical criticism is to provide a beginning place for inviting these resources into an environment of systematic exegesis of texts.

A beginning place for psychological analysis and interpretation in a new mode has already begun in the context of social, cultural, ideological and theological dimensions of New Testament texts (e.g. Theissen 1987). But significantly new work will be necessary to bring the resources of cultural and cognitive psychology into

analysis and interpretation of the psychological texture of the literary, historical, social, cultural and ideological phenomena in New Testament texts (e.g. Lawson and McCauley 1990). Some initial explorations of Pauline texts with the aid of insights from the work of Wilhelm Dilthey hold promise for analysis of the psychological texture of texts in a socio-rhetorical mode (Na 1995). A reason for mentioning this here is to emphasize that one of the goals of socio-rhetorical criticism is to nurture a broad-based interpretive analytics rather than simply to introduce another specialty into New Testament interpretation. An interpretive analytics invites the development of specialties that will programmatically explore aspects of human reality that have heretofore been unexplored. Of special concern during this era in our history is the relation of power, practice and self-perspective. Since socio-rhetorical criticism is a textually based method, the goal is to explore the inner phenomena and nature of power, practice and self-perspective in the context of exegetical practices with texts.

CONCLUSION

Socio-rhetorical criticism challenges interpreters to explore human reality and religious belief and practice through multiple approaches to written discourse in texts. As an interpretive program that moves toward a broad-based interpretive analytics, it invites investigations that enact integrated interdisciplinary analysis and interpretation. At present, interpreters are practicing many multiple approaches, but they are often practicing them either without knowledge of one another or in contexts where animosity is articulated with an absence of an understanding of the profound interrelation between the respective projects and their results. The specific texts under discussion in this book are in the New Testament. The approach, however, is applicable to any texts anywhere. Since my own specialty is New Testament literature, I have accepted this task in the context of the challenges that currently face interpreters of New Testament texts.

As I began the task, I had hoped that historical–critical methods could simply be reformed to meet the challenges that lie before us. My experiences during the past quarter of a century in the field, however, suggest that historical–critical methods in the form in which they have developed during the last fifty years are not well

equipped to perform all the tasks that face us as we look toward the beginning of the twenty-first century. A number of current historical–critical methods still do not seriously incorporate literary, rhetorical and semiotic modes of analysis. To the extent that these methods avoid these new modes of criticism, they regularly reduce New Testament texts to forms of historical and theological discourse that exclude meanings and meaning effects that are highly pertinent for addressing the issues of our day. Methods that overemphasize a single dimension of a biblical text, like structuralism or linguistics, have also not been sufficient for the task. New Testament texts are not simply historical, theological or linguistic treatises. Rather, their written discourse is a highly interactive and complex environment. Interpreting a biblical text is an act of entering a world where body and mind, interacting with one another, create and evoke highly complex patterns and configurations of meanings in historical, social, cultural and ideological contexts of religious belief. Rhetorical argument, social act and religious belief intertwine in them like threads and yarn in a richly textured tapestry. By renewing many of the interests of proponents of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* with insights from literary, rhetorical and semiotic practices of interpretation during this last decade of the twentieth century, it is possible to explore in quite new ways the nature of New Testament texts as religious discourse. In this new context, a well-tuned interdisciplinary approach that explores the relation between rhetorical argument and social location and action can merge programmatic, systematic investigation with multiple insights into language, subjectivity, politics, belief and practice in a more satisfactory manner than methods limited to the practices of a single discipline of investigation.

Socio-rhetorical criticism is part of a context at the end of the twentieth century where people in every area of life face the challenge of relating 'specialized' knowledge to larger contexts than those to which the specialists who produce that knowledge regularly relate it. On the one hand, it behooves anyone who is engaged in such an enterprise to build on previous knowledge rather than to discard it. It would be a mistake, therefore, for a socio-rhetorical approach to bypass insights attained by the wide range of historical–critical approaches that currently exist. Historical–critical methods have yielded treasured insights into biblical literature, and they will continue to do so. The methods of text, source, form and redaction criticism bring the details of ancient

manuscripts into view in a manner that deserves, and must continue to receive, support and respect. In addition, history of religions, tradition criticism and canon criticism each add additional data and understanding. On the other hand, each method limits its interest in texts as written discourse, because its focus is first and foremost on 'historical' interests. This means that the texts themselves do not, in the final analysis, receive primary attention. Rather, the focus lies on 'the historical world' to which the texts, in the mind of the interpreter, point. The common practice of referring to New Testament texts as 'documents' exhibits this focus. In the context of much historical–critical interpretation, the value of New Testament writings lies in what they 'document' in the world outside the text, not in what they contain as texts, as written discourse that has its own inner nature and meanings. The second interest lies in 'theology', the 'beliefs' that arise out of the historical world in which people produced these texts. Socio-rhetorical criticism accepts the challenge to move beyond modes of historical and theological analysis that limit the resources of the text. It brings dynamics of religious belief into view by establishing a dialogical environment for analytical strategies from widely different arenas of investigation. The dialogue invites a wide range of historical, social, cultural, ideological and psychological phenomena into the project of theological reflection and construction. Again, the possibilities for this lie in the merger of new modes of textual analysis with broad interests in religion that were characteristic of proponents of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* (Boers 1979; Räisänen 1990; Riches 1993).

Amos Wilder, who died after a long and full life in the year in which this manuscript began to emerge (1993), introduced a vision already in 1955 that can inform us as we attempt to move toward a new interpretive analytics. Yet Wilder's focus itself caused him to limit the resources for new insights into the nature and function of image, myth and symbol in biblical texts. As a result, it has taken New Testament interpreters nearly four decades to begin to integrate analysis of the inner imaginative and argumentative nature of early Christian texts with analysis of the social, cultural and historical nature of their discourse. Beginning around 1970, many biblical interpreters began to read the works of scholars outside the field of biblical studies whom they had never read before, and they began to include references to these scholars in footnotes and comments as they wrote their articles and books on the Bible. The

scholars to whom they referred were not simply philosophers or theologians about whom people had not yet heard. They were literary critics who read novels, structuralists who made detailed diagrams, linguists and sociolinguists who created difficult words in order to study language, anthropologists who studied a wide variety of people and sociologists who developed long lists of different types of groups, alternative kinds of activities for producing goods and services, and multiple systems for distributing and trading items that people valued. The new roll call was bewildering, but the new names and the new diagrams just kept coming. The purpose was to expand the field of biblical studies so it included the rich resources available from the fields of literary study and the social sciences as well as history, philosophy and theology.

Socio-rhetorical criticism was born in this new environment, and it uses the works of many people outside the field of biblical studies, various kinds of diagrams, and many strategies and techniques to invite the reader into its practices, purposes and goals. The chapter after this introduction is a case in point. Socio-rhetorical criticism identifies four arenas of texture in a text. These arenas have appeared gradually as I have gathered strategies of analysts and interpreters both outside and inside the field of biblical studies to create an approach that brings new aspects of interpretation into a form that not only my scholarly colleagues but also college, seminary and doctoral students as well as lay people and clergy can regularly use as they interpret the Bible. The task is not especially easy, since the new names and the new words can be bewildering for the most eager reader. But within time the new names become familiar, even if a person has not read the writings of the people, and with a little care the new words can acquire meanings that are helpful as a person interprets a biblical text. The purpose, in any case, is to bring biblical studies forthrightly into the world of thought, activity and belief at the end of the twentieth century so it can meet the challenges of the twenty-first century as they come quickly and relentlessly into our lives.

At this point in New Testament study, interpreters who responded to Wilder's call but at first resisted the insights of social scientists into myth, the social construction of reality and the ideological nature of culture now have new resources at their disposal. Socio-rhetorical criticism has been designed to help interpreters to use these new resources. The purpose of the strategies and techniques in the approach is to move us into new forms of dialogue,

exploration and cooperation that will fulfil the potential that lies in the robust field of biblical study today. Socio-rhetorical criticism does this by bringing insights from literary critics, linguists, sociologists and anthropologists into an organized frame of understanding and activity. The works of about twenty people outside the field of biblical studies contribute significantly to the diagrams and discussion in the next chapter. In the interest of communicating as clearly as possible to the reader, however, only a few of their names appear in the references in parentheses.

2

REDRAWING THE BOUNDARIES WITH SOCIO-RHETORICAL CRITICISM

When we look at a thick tapestry from different angles, we see different configurations, patterns and images. Likewise, when we explore a text from different angles, we see multiple textures of meanings, convictions, beliefs, values, emotions and actions. These textures within texts are a result of webs or networks of meanings and meaning effects that humans create. One person has explained in the following manner how the term 'text' itself signifies these networks or webs:

> Writing and the texts produced by writing are, from the first, expressions of a metaphor of figuration as 'weaving'. The word 'text' itself derives from Latin *texere* ('to weave') and we still speak of weaving or 'stitching together' (cf. *rhapsode*, 'stitch together') a discourse in which the 'seams' are not obvious, or one that makes a 'seamless web'. This weaving metaphor occurs in story after story as a symbol of order, and order itself is another weaving metaphor, derived from Latin *ōrdō*, a technical term for the arrangement of threads in the warp and woof of a fabric. And, do we not still speak of the 'fabric' of a tale, the 'thread of discourse', or words as the 'clothing of thought', of the 'network' of ideas in a text, and of 'spinning a yarn', which others may 'unravel'?
>
> (Tyler 1987: 35)

With socio-rhetorical criticism, the metaphor of texts as a thick tapestry replaces the traditional metaphor of texts as windows and

mirrors (Krieger 1964; Petersen 1978: 24; cf. Abrams 1953). The idea has been that the interpreter who is truly interested in literature as literature treats all the characters, actions and episodes in a text as mirrors that reflect back and forth on one another. All of the reflections create the world 'inside the text'. Historians in contrast to literary interpreters, so the understanding goes, use the text as a window either to look briefly in at the text or to look out at the outside world, rather than as a set of mirrors, to find out what is inside the text. They look in or out of the windows of texts for the purpose of creating a story, namely a 'history', outside of texts.

This metaphor of mirrors and windows has served a very useful purpose, but it is my opinion that it is now causing us problems. The problem is that it separates the 'internal' mind of a text from the 'external' body of the world in a manner that is not true either to the texts we read or to the lives we live. The metaphor of windows and mirrors reflects a polarity between literature and history that is part of the dualism between mind and body in modern thought and philosophy. This approach overlooks the nature of language as a social product, possession and tool. Language is at all times interacting with myriads of networks of meanings and meaning effects in the world. Texts exist in the world, and we exist in the world. Interpreters who talk about reading texts from the perspective of a text's own internal mirrors actually bring their own view of social reality to the language in the text. Every reader does this. On the one hand, it is appropriate for an interpreter to place a text in a laboratory that temporarily seals the outer edges of the text with a 'poetic' boundary for special kinds of systematic analysis. The term 'poetic' comes from a Greek word meaning 'to make', and the idea is that writing is such a special activity that language is made to function in a special way in a text. This special function of language creates a 'language border' between itself and other language that calls for special attention. On the other hand, it is an exaggeration to approach a text as a language object 'unto itself'. The problem is that a text is not simply a 'thing unto itself' but is also a 'message which is read'. As a message, it is a communication. To be what it truly is, a text must be read, which may mean 'read aloud'. Social, cultural and ideological meanings at work in the environment of reading – whether aloud or privately to oneself – are the medium through which the text becomes communication. There is no way, then, for a text to be what it is and to be outside the world.

The boundaries some literary critics have established around a text for the purpose of sustained analysis of language in a text are not the only boundaries interpreters should use and reconfigure in the act of interpretation. Interpretation is more like a ritual than a single act (Robbins 1994c). Exploring phenomena within one set of boundaries should be understood as one phase of an extended process. At any one particular time in history, the perception of the beginning, middle and end of the process will differ, much as the laboratories scientists create today look significantly different from the laboratories of the nineteenth century. The creation of boundaries in and around texts is a necessary step if an interpreter is interested in systematic analysis. It is improper to think, however, that the text itself contains these boundaries. The socio-rhetorical approach in the following pages invites interpreters to explore a wide range of textures of text through a process of creating and dismantling various boundaries to create arenas of understanding that interact dynamically with one another. A text is a thick matrix of interwoven networks of meanings and meaning effects. These networks extend far beyond the boundaries we construct to analyze and interpret phenomena; they interconnect phenomena inside and outside of texts in ways quite difficult for us even to imagine. Therefore, no interpreter should allow one arena of texture to be an environment for creating boundaries that separate this arena permanently from other arenas of texture. We must learn both how to create boundaries and how to take boundaries away. At the outset, then, we should admit that it is impossible for us to think without boundaries. Even the most simple use of language creates them. In addition, however, we should see that language continually moves boundaries it initially evokes for the purpose of communicating 'beyond itself'. This approach to language and boundaries within language provides the context for socio-rhetorical criticism.

Figure 2.1 represents a diagram for socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation as it currently exists. The outside rectangle represents boundaries around the world of the interpreter. Every interpreter has a limited experience of and relationship with the world, even though many interpreters consciously attempt to take a large part of the world into account as they approach a text. No matter how large the world of an interpreter may be, there are limits to the interpreter's knowledge of that world.

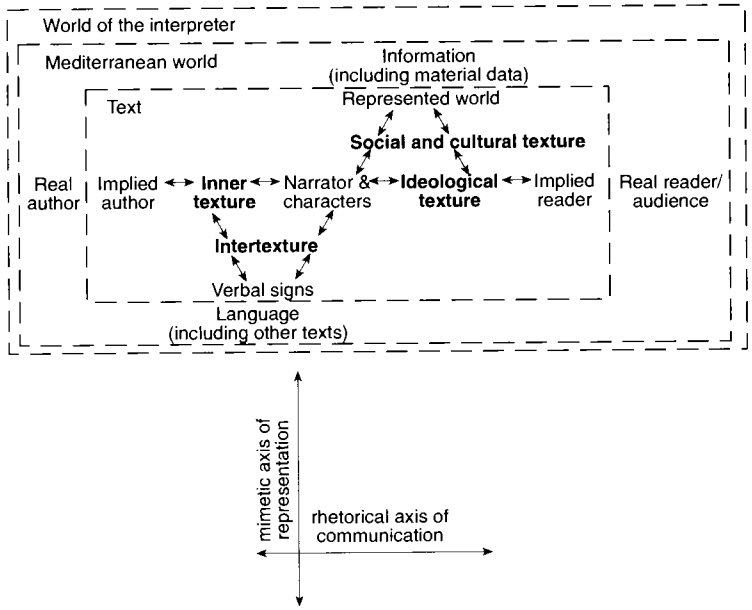

Figure 2.1 Socio-rhetorical model of textual communication

The rectangle inside the world of the interpreter represents the boundaries to the world of the author who wrote the text. For the New Testament, this is the ancient Mediterranean world. The innermost rectangle represents boundaries around a text. The real author, language, information and the real reader/audience are phenomena inside the Mediterranean world. Real authors are historical persons. The texts they make somehow are extensions of themselves. Literary critics use the term 'implied author' for authors as they can be known through manifestations of their expressions in texts (Powell 1990: 19–29). Words in texts 'imply' authors, and the kind of author a reader constructs on the basis of words in a text is the implied author of the text. Thus, 'real author' is in the rectangle representing the Mediterranean world and 'implied author' is in the rectangle representing the text. Likewise, the language of New Testament texts is a phenomenon in the Mediterranean world. Texts contain signs that imply language. Instead of using the phrase 'implied language', which would be appropriate, the diagram uses the term

'verbal signs'. Verbal signs stand in relation to language in the Mediterranean world in a manner similar to the relation of implied authors to real authors. This relation continues around the rectangle that represents the text. The diagram uses the phrase 'represented world' for the 'implied information' in the text that stands in relation to information in the Mediterranean world. Again, the phrase that designates information as it is manifest in texts signals that a particular manifestation of the world, a distinctive configuration, is implied by the verbal signs in the text and inferred by readers in particular ways. Finally, the phrase 'implied reader' designates the reader the text implies and the interpreter infers in relation to real readers and audiences both in the Mediterranean world and in the world of the interpreter today.

All the boundaries in the diagram are broken lines, because they are human-made boundaries for the purpose of focusing analysis on a text. All kinds of meanings and meaning effects travel through the gaps in the boundaries. Meanings and meaning effects travelled between the Mediterranean world and the text when the author wrote the text, and they travel through the boundaries from the world of the interpreter through the Mediterranean world when a person reads these texts today. Language and other texts travel through the boundaries just as information and material data travel through the boundaries. Many, though not all, interpreters build boundaries to keep various things from their own world out of the ancient Mediterranean world and to put certain things 'foreign' to their own world into the Mediterranean world in which they embed New Testament texts. Since New Testament texts were written in the Mediterranean world of late antiquity and are also located in our world, both the ancient Mediterranean world as we infer it and our own world, conscious and unconscious to us, flow into the text. Texts are in the world and of it. Nevertheless, interpreters can focus on an inner world of the text that calls for special attention on its own terms.

Literary interpreters have concluded that the inner texture of a narrative text contains a narrator who tells the story and characters who think, act and have their being in the story. The narrator and characters exist in a context of 'images' of the real author, language, information and the real reader/audience. In other words, the inside of a text is a combination of 'show' and 'tell'. The narrator tells the story. The reader hears the narrator and sees the characters, who may themselves speak and 'look'. In this context the image of the

author of the text, the 'implied author', appears. The implied author is the image created by everything the reader sees in the text. Also, readers give 'voice' to verbal signs as they see them. That is, readers turn the signs into sounds that are 'language' among people. This is the means by which the verbal signs in a text become 'implied language'. In addition, readers hear and see phenomena in the context of the action and thought that are 'implied' information and material data. Finally, readers of texts create an image of a reader who can read a particular text with understanding. This is the 'implied reader'. If they themselves cannot understand the text, they create an image of a reader who the implied author imagined could read and understand the text. Whether or not all of this is clear to the real reader who is now reading this, literary interpreters have drawn these conclusions about the inner texture of texts. These conclusions guide socio-rhetorical criticism as it approaches the inner texture of a text, and the goal is to create activities for an interpreter that will make it possible to investigate these and other inner phenomena in texts.

At the bottom of the diagram are horizontal and vertical arrows. The horizontal arrow represents what literary interpreters call the rhetorical axis. An axis is an imaginary line through the center of something, like the imaginary line through the center of the earth as it spins, as we say, 'on its axis'. Through the center of a text is an imaginary 'rhetorical' line between the author and the reader. The term *rhetorical* is related to the word *orator*, a person who speaks a message to people. The rhetorical axis in a text represents 'speaking' or 'communicating' both from the author to the reader and from the reader to the author, since the author creates 'implied' voice in the text and the reader actually 'gives' voice to the text. The text speaks or communicates, then, through reciprocal action between author and reader. In addition to the horizontal arrow there is a vertical arrow at the bottom of the diagram. The vertical arrow indicates a 'mimetic' axis. The word *mimetic* comes from the Greek word *mimesis*, meaning 'imitation'. As indicated above, the written signs in the text 'imitate' the sounds of language, and the narrator, actors and things in the 'textual world' imitate information and material data in the world. Thus, the vertical lines represent an axis of 'imitation'. This axis exists in angles in the diagram, rather than straight up through the center, since the horizontal movement of the communication from the author to the reader and from the reader to the author causes the vertical axis to run up and down at

angles. In other words, the diagram is meant to exhibit action. In the dynamic movement from author to reader and from reader to author, words, characters, represented world, implied author and implied reader all 'imitate' the world.

In the midst of all of these phenomena in the text are four arenas of texture printed in bold print: (a) inner texture; (b) intertexture; (c) social and cultural texture; and (d) ideological texture. One of the special features of socio-rhetorical criticism is its identification of these four arenas in a text. Pointing to these arenas, the approach gathers practices of interpretation for each arena to enable a person to investigate each arena both on its own terms and in relation to other arenas. The remainder of this book works carefully through each part of the diagram displayed above, using various New Testament texts to illustrate how socio-rhetorical criticism works with each part of it, then focusing specifically on 1 Corinthians 9 at the end of each chapter. Each arena is given a name for its own particular 'text-ure'. In order to explain more about each arena, the remainder of this chapter dismantles the model for the reader and rebuilds it in four steps after it focuses for a moment on the world of the interpreter.

THE INTERPRETER'S LOCATION AND IDEOLOGY

The outside rectangle in Figure 2.1 calls for attention to the world of the interpreter. Interpreters construct this 'world' interactively with phenomena in their own personal lives and with the historical, social, cultural, ideological and religious worlds in their world. I will begin, therefore, with some open reflection about my own 'theological ideology'. My own ideology includes feelings, convictions, beliefs and points of view that were formulated in the context of the circumstances into which I was born, raised, schooled, married and employed. I have engaged seriously with 'traditional' biblical interpretation and theology, both North American and international. In the end, it has been necessary to develop strategies of analysis and interpretation that would carry out my own view of reality and truth in the world. I was born and raised on a small farm on a sandhill outside a village with a population of 139 people, not of my own choosing. We did not have electricity until I was in the second grade, again not of my own choosing. I did not choose to milk cows by hand morning and evening until I was in high school

when we milked cows on Treptow's hill where we could use milking machines and sell grade A milk. I did not choose to grow up in an agonistic, rural culture. I did not choose not to have a political voice of any kind because I had no daily newspaper, radio or television that would give up-to-date, firsthand news about what was happening in Washington, DC and New York City. I did not choose to be born and raised as a WASP who is supposed to hate and suppress blacks, Jews, women, native Americans and all kinds of other people. I did not choose these things.

So what am I supposed to do about these things now? Should I join in an academic project that was envisioned, launched and nurtured to maturity by city dwellers who know how to use the power structures of the university, the large metropolitan areas and the national and international scholarly organizations and book publishers? Even if I join these things, should I contribute to strategies of New Testament interpretation that only see the big power plays as the significant parts of early Christian history? Should I pretend that I do not hear the voices and see the plights of the 'little people' who cry out in biblical texts? Should I pretend that I do not know what it is like to live in a family where the father and mother are tenant farmers? Should I pretend that I do not know what it is like to live in a family so indebted that the father has to sell out and go to work in a city in the humiliating job of a school janitor? Should I pretend that I do not know what it is like not to have honor?

But there is also another part to the story. Should I pretend that I did not have the opportunity to achieve a college and seminary degree, yet another master's degree and a Ph.D.? Should I pretend that I have not been gradually inducted both into cosmopolitan urban life and into the central power structures of professional biblical interpretation? The truth is that most stages of my life have involved me in at least two worlds, or two 'cultures', at the same time. As a rural farm boy I also lived in an evangelical Christian culture. As a college student I worked during the summers in a job that combined dairy and agriculture farming with a union construction job in urban areas. As a married seminary student I rode a large motorcycle, which I personally repaired, around the cosmopolitan urban city in which we lived, simply because it was inexpensive transportation like that to which I had been accustomed on the farm. As a doctoral student I repaired cars and drove a bus to deal with the onslaught of inflated living expenses in a cosmopolitan

center of urban America. As an assistant professor, I repaired bicycles to keep in touch with my 'working body' as I pursued the 'inner recesses of the scholarly mind'. As an associate and full professor, I have rather fully taken my 'working body' into my teaching and publication of articles and books.

So the truth is that the experiences of my life, body and mind are now coming to expression in socio-rhetorical criticism. This approach is not somehow based in 'objective' reality, except insofar as my life is based in objective reality. This approach is based in the realities of my life. I have regularly experienced being an insider and outsider at the same time: in relation to some people I have regularly been an 'insider', in relation to others regularly an 'outsider'. And this is the principle that lies at the foundation of socio-rhetorical criticism – namely the dialogical relations between inside and outside, center and margins, power and weakness, influence and exclusion, success and failure.

Therefore, when faced with the question of what kind of biblical interpretation I myself should enact and teach, the situation is like when Camden Gowler, at 2 years old, was playing with the bubble solution his mother Rita had mixed for him, and spilled some of it on the floor of their storage shed. When Rita told him he wasn't supposed to do that, he said, 'What am I 'posed to do?' That is the question. Just what are some of us white male Protestants supposed to do when we hear the voices, sight the boundaries and see both the plights of the people on the margins and the flaws of people at the center of the New Testament texts we read?

Socio-rhetorical criticism is my answer to what I think I must do to perform biblical interpretation in a manner that embodies who I am. As I do this, the image of my father looms before me – that tenant farmer turned janitor who died while I was writing this book. Many people, including me, tried to persuade him to be less pessimistic about his own life and less critical of those whom he loved, in a context where he did so many good things for so many people every day. But he did the best he could. He let his voice be heard in the best way he knew how. And this view of the world was no crazier than the views of many highly sophisticated philosophers and theologians. He did not have all the words they have. But he had plenty of the experiences, most of the visions, many of the insights and various ways to communicate most of them. He was a philosopher and a theologian in his own right, but he never wrote a book, never ran for public office and was always afraid he would

bring shame on himself if he asserted himself too strongly in public. He was one of the 'little people'. His voice is still around in many places. The only question is whether anyone can hear it.

I happen to think that we *can* hear the voices of the little people throughout history. But we must also realize that most people regularly live in two, three or more worlds at the same time. I am thankful that I have many colleagues who have been showing me and others how to hear the voices and see the worlds in which people live. I feared for many years that I could not be a truly academic professor of the New Testament and remain true to those voices and worlds at the same time. But little by little – with the help of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Bobby Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, Garrison Keillor, Desmond Tutu, Mikhail Gorbachev, Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela, Toni Morrison, Cornell West and many others – I have begun to find a way. We simply have to find ways to be true to ourselves as we are being true to both the little people and the great traditions of the past, and to the many worlds in which people, both powerful and weak, live in the present. I cannot change myself to a woman, a person of color, or a fascinating mixture of Catho-Ortho-Prote-Asio-Native-Christian. I must be what I am, and one of the ways is to bring to consciousness and evoke the interactive body and mind that continually take me into many different worlds at the same time. Socio-rhetorical criticism, then, is my way of finding and exhibiting a way of living responsibly in the 'worlds of our time' as we rush toward the third millennium CE.

INNER TEXTURE

The first arena in the text to which I turn is the inner texture of the text. When a person first looks at a text, one only sees signs on a flat surface. A reader or interpreter knows that these signs represent what an author, or someone writing for an author, has written on the page. If the text is written in a language one understands, a process of reading can begin. Since this is a very complex process (Grimes 1975; de Beaugrande and Dressler 1981), it is necessary to give an extremely abbreviated account here. In very brief terms, with the act of reading, a person may begin to explore the 'inner texture' of a text. This means that the inner texture of a text concerns communication. What is in a text is 'part of a communication transaction' (Vorster 1989: 22). For a text to 'be itself', it must have a

reader who activates it – a reader who 'receives' the message. In other words, inner texture is only one part of the communication transaction. Because a reader must engage a text in this way for it to communicate, it is very difficult to determine what is actually in a text itself in contrast to what a reader 'puts into' a text. At the very least, readers put their own ability to speak, hear, see, think, act, smell, taste and feel – their nature as 'subjects' – into texts. Only in this way can a 'nonhuman' object become a 'human object'. Or would it be better to say that a nonhuman 'subject' becomes a 'human subject'? The concept of object versus subject raises a major issue. A subject is a person, and a text is not a person. A text has an inner nature that is somehow different from a person but which somehow 'comes to life' when persons read it. In turn, however, a person can be treated by an interpreter either as a subject or as an object. One of the special issues, then, is whether an interpreter treats narrators, characters, authors and readers as 'objects' or as 'subjects' when he or she 'brings them to life' in a text. Since this is a lifelong commitment one way or another, we will not try to solve this issue at this point. Some interpreters prefer to treat all people as objects while others prefer to treat them as subjects. And there is much to be gained by both approaches, just as there has been incredible gain by medical investigation of people as 'objects' and there has been incredible gain also by investigating them as 'subjects'. The goal of socio-rhetorical criticism is to approach people as interactive subjects–objects. Not only do people treat other people as both objects and subjects, but we treat ourselves interactively as objects and subjects. We have the ability to think about our own bodies and minds both as objects and as subjects, and we alternate between our ways of thinking about them. Socio-rhetorical criticism attempts to nurture such interactive subject–object, body–mind interpretation of texts.

The inner texture of a text appears primarily among the implied author, the narrator and the characters, who work together to communicate a message. Various literary critics have displayed a horizontal diagram to exhibit this communication process, 'the whole narrative-communication situation' (Chatman 1978: 151; Rimmon-Kenan 1983: 86), and this is the beginning point for building a socio-rhetorical model for interpretation. Adapting the diagram so it includes the concept of inner texture creates Figure 2.2.

At this stage of analysis, interpreters were identifying the real author and real reader/audience outside the text, but not language

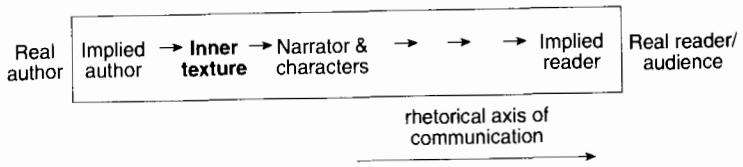

Figure 2.2 Inner texture

and information. The reason was that only the rhetorical axis of communication, the movement of the message from the author to the reader, was the focus of attention. Inside the box, thus inside the text, interpreters identified and defined the implied author and the implied reader – the images of the real author who caused everything to be as it is in the text and the real reader who is able to read and understand the text – and the narrator and the characters – who are the agents and voices in the text who tell the story. Socio-rhetorical criticism identifies the environment among the implied author, the narrator and the characters as the arena where interpreters investigate the inner texture of a text. In other words, analysis of inner texture regularly does not concern itself with language or information outside the text. Literary and narrative critics who have contributed significantly to this kind of analysis have focused on the text, with both the author as producer of the text and the represented world evoked by the text in the background of the analysis. Anglo-American New Criticism, Russian Formalism and French Structuralism have represented special attempts to maintain a completely 'intrinsic' or 'text-immanent' approach to texts in this manner. With important exceptions that cannot be discussed here, representatives of these approaches considered an intrinsic focus to be a disciplinary activity that set literary interpretation in opposition to historical criticism and its subdisciplines, either because the latter impose 'extrinsic' data on texts or because they simply use texts as treasure houses of data that can be used to construct a story extrinsic to texts.

Socio-rhetorical criticism does two things with intrinsic or text-immanent analysis. First, it sets these 'disciplinary' results in dialogue with other disciplinary results that are the product of exploring other textures of a text. Second, it adds the real reader/audience as an interactive counterpart of the real author in the construction of the inner texture of the text. In the diagrams throughout the rest of the chapter, therefore, arrows point not only from the author to the reader, but from the reader to the author. As mentioned above, a text does not truly become a text until someone reads it. Prior to its being read, it is a written artifact with webs of signification buried in it as if it were a tomb. Only readers can bring the webs of signification into the world of meanings and meaning effects. As soon as readers do this, however, their own world of meanings and meaning effects works interactively with meanings and meaning effects from the ancient Mediterranean world to create the meanings and meaning effects of the text. Thus, socio-rhetorical criticism approaches the inner texture of a text as an interactive environment of authors and readers. Authors create texts in their world; readers create a world of the text in their own world. Socio-rhetorical criticism interactively explores the world of the author, the world of the text and the world of the interpreter to interpret the inner texture of a New Testament text.

INTERTEXTURE

In a context where interpreters were focusing on the inner texture of texts, the concept of 'intertextuality' arose when some interpreters observed that not only are author and reader involved in the writing and reading of texts, but other texts play a decisive role. Every text is a rewriting of other texts, an 'intertextual' activity. To display the dialogue that occurs between texts in the context of the communication from the author to the reader, a vertical axis has to be added to the horizontal axis. With the addition of a vertical axis that represents the dialogue between the text itself and other texts (Kristeva 1969: 145; Hutcheon 1986: 231), an interpreter sees the 'intertexture' of a text. To investigate this aspect of a text thoroughly calls for comparison between the text under investigation and other texts. Analysis of a number of texts brings into view language outside of texts, because the interpreter sees language

'between' texts in addition to 'inside' one text. Therefore, the vertical axis features language itself, and other texts are a specific manifestation of language outside the particular text under investigation. Again, the reason the vertical axis becomes angled lines is that the text evokes language and information only in the context of a communication transaction, which the diagram depicts as dialogical interaction that moves back and forth from author to reader and reader to author.

Adding 'intertexture', then, produces Figure 2.3. Language stands at the bottom of the vertical axis, outside the boundaries of the text itself, and other texts represent a manifestation of language that plays a special role in authors' writing of texts. When the intertextuality of the text comes into view, the boundary around the text becomes a broken line. It becomes obvious to the interpreter at this point that the boundary is a human-made boundary for the purpose of focusing analysis on a text, since all kinds of meanings and

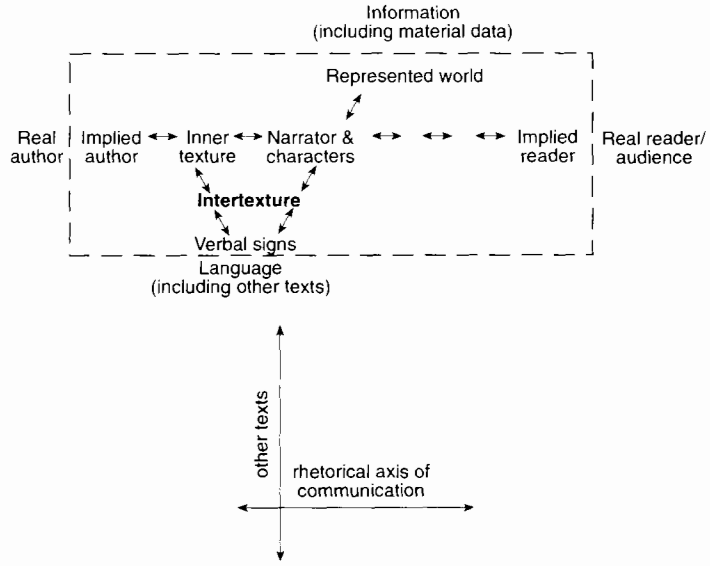

Figure 2.3 Intertexture

meaning effects travel through gaps in the boundary. At this stage of analysis, the interpreter focuses special attention on the relation of the verbal signs inside the text to verbal signs in other texts. In addition, the interpreter compares the represented world evoked by the text with the represented world evoked by other texts. One of the results is that the interpreter 'textualizes' not only the 'represented' world in the text but also all language and information outside the text. For the intertextual interpreter, 'the world' is limited and structured by 'textual' communication; 'the world is a text'. The arena of intertexture as it is defined in socio-rhetorical criticism, then, emphasizes the author as producer of the text over the reader as constructor of the meaning of the text. The interpreter investigates the act of production by comparing verbal signs in the text under investigation with verbal signs in other texts. In other words, the interpreter begins with verbal signs in the text that explicitly evoke verbal signs in other texts. Thus, analysis of intertexture begins in an environment among the inner texture, the verbal signs, the narrator and the characters. This analysis reaches out into language through the verbal signs in the text, and it reaches into information in the world through the narrator, the characters and the represented world in the text. The implied reader and the real reader stand at a distance from the analysis. At this stage, the interpreter presupposes their presence but pays more attention to the language in texts than to authors and readers of this language.

For intertextual interpreters, then, while real authors, real readers, language and social, historical and material information lie outside of texts, texts intrinsically incorporate these phenomena within themselves through language. This is immediately noticeable when a text contains fragments of other texts in the form of explicit quotations and allusions. But cultural, social and historical phenomena are also in texts, and intertextual interpreters perceive them to be present in a 'textualized' form – that is, in an ordered, patterned and structured form related to language. This nature of a text is its intertexture. Texts stand in a dynamic relation to phenomena outside them. Language, which is the medium for texts to be what they are, comes from outside any particular text and is embedded in them, indeed shaped in them, bearing the data that language carries with it.

Analysis and interpretation of intertexture in a socio-rhetorical mode, then, appropriates and refigures source, form and redaction criticism in biblical studies. Source and redaction criticism become

environments for investigation of the dialogue between structures, codes and genres in a particular configuration. Intertextual investigation analyzes and interprets the dynamics of recitation, recontextualization and reconfiguration when different sources, traditions, redaction and amplification stand in relation to one another.

It is generally recognized that intertextuality emerged in the context of 'cross-fertilization among several major European intellectual movements during the 1960s and 1970s, including Russian formalism, structural linguistics, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and deconstruction, at the least' (Morgan 1989: 240). My analysis suggests that the current terminology of 'intertextuality' collapses three arenas of analysis and interpretation together in a manner that is confusing. For this reason, socio-rhetorical analysis separates the three arenas out and uses different terminology to refer to them. Intertexture in socio-rhetorical criticism represents the arena of intertextual analysis that maintains a close relation to verbal signs in the text. Socio-rhetorical criticism identifies two other arenas of intertextuality – social and cultural texture and ideological texture – on which it focuses separately. In the arenas of intertexture as defined by socio-rhetorical criticism the goal is to analyze the manner in which signs and codes evoke a textual form of cultural, social and historical reality. Since this mode of analysis approaches all literature within a closed system of signs, it is a disciplinary practice of interpretation with its own data, strategies and goals. Socio-rhetorical criticism puts this disciplinary mode in dialogue with the disciplinary practice of analysis of inner texture, social and cultural texture and ideological texture. This dialogue interactively deconstructs and reconfigures insights from other arenas as the analysis proceeds. The interpreter faces a challenge to allow the tension and conflict that emerge from the different approaches to inform the overall process of analysis and interpretation rather than to allow one arena substantially to close down information from the other. The tensions and conflicts are to remain significant data for analysis and interpretation even as the interpreter draws final conclusions.

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL TEXTURE

Mikhail Bakhtin, Kenneth Burke and Roland Barthes have been most responsible for the appearance of the social and cultural

texture of texts. Bakhtin contributed to it by exploring the social and ideological location of the voices in texts (Reed 1993). Burke contributed by developing a method of interpretation that uses the resources of philosophy, literature and sociology to understand language as symbolic action (Burke 1966). Barthes contributed by interpreting a text as a product of various cultural discourses, 'a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture' (Barthes 1977: 146).

Approaching a text from the perspective of symbolic action that puts many socially, culturally and ideologically located voices in dialogue with one another calls special attention to the arena in the text between the represented world and the narrator and characters. The voices in the text are 'mimetic' in relation to the action and speech of people in the world. When Paul Hernadi assessed both axes of the diagram that arose when intertextuality emerged, he called the horizontal axis the rhetorical axis of communication and the vertical axis the mimetic axis of representation (Hernadi 1976). In other words, the vertical axis exhibits a text's 'representation' or imitation of the world through language. When the emphasis on the vertical axis is the 'mimetic' nature of language in a text, the social and cultural nature of the arena between represented world and the narrator and characters becomes a special focus of attention. Adaptation of Hernadi's diagram so it includes the arena of the social and cultural texture of a text produces Figure 2.4.

The social and cultural texture of a text concerns the dynamics of 'voice' as they function among the narrator and the characters in texts. Socio-rhetorical criticism views voice in text as the medium for the 'consciousness' or 'vision' of the characters and the narrator, who are 'concretizations drawn from a represented world' (Frow 1986: 159). In addition, analysis of the social and cultural texture of texts focuses on the full range of rhetorical topics in the text rather than only the four topics of traditional literary criticism – metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony (Vickers 1988: 435–79). Rhetorical topics – which ancient rhetoricians divided into material (specific) topics, common topics and final (strategic) categories – are manifestations of social responses to the world, enactments of social and cultural systems and institutions, and performances of cultural alliances and conflicts. Investigation of the social and cultural texture of texts moves beyond the mimetic environment of the verbal signs to the mimetic environment of the action and speech of the narrator and the characters that evoke the represented

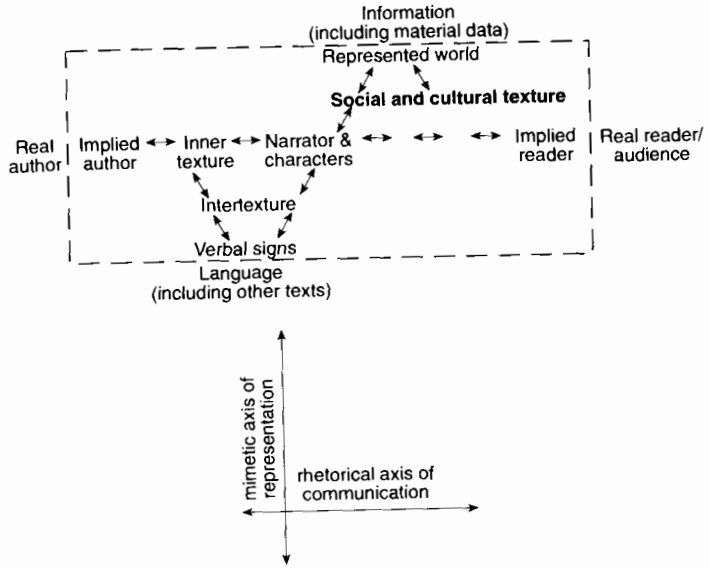

Figure 2.4 Social and cultural texture

world. In contrast to the kind of intertextual analysis that textualizes culture, society and history, social and cultural analysis invites the full resources of the social sciences into the environment of exegetical interpretation.

Extensive resources are available for analyzing the social and cultural texture of texts with greater detail than literary critics have yet achieved. Agents and actors in the text interact in discursive modes that evoke a wide variety of social, cultural and ideological vocabularies, dialects, attitudes and dispositions. As these voices dialogue with one another in the context of the represented world of a text, the work of Clifford Geertz on 'local cultures' and the work of sociologists of culture furnish insight into dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contraculture and liminal culture (Robbins 1993c, 1994b). In addition, Bryan Wilson's social typology for religious responses to the world furnishes specific resources for analysis of texts (Wilson 1969, 1973). Social-scientific

:s of the Bible have gathered extensive data that can enrich .ysis of the social and cultural texture of texts with insights into honor and shame culture, patronage, hospitality, health systems, relation of countryside to cities, purity systems, etc. (Malina 1993; Neyrey 1991; Elliott 1993). Both biblical and literary studies are poised to engage in a fully interdisciplinary analysis of the social and cultural texture of texts if interpreters bring insights from the social sciences into a dynamic environment of textual analysis and interpretation.

IDEOLOGICAL TEXTURE

Investigation of social and cultural texture takes the analyst to the doorstep of ideological texture. The term 'ideology' has meant, and still does mean, different things to different people. From a socio-rhetorical perspective, ideology is

> the ways in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structure and power-relations of the society we live in . . . those modes of feeling, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relation to the maintenance and reproduction of social power.
>
> (Eagleton 1983: 15)

Ideology concerns the particular ways in which our speech and action, in their social and cultural location, relate to and interconnect with resources, structures and institutions of power. Kenneth Burke, who almost singlehandedly brought the social, cultural and ideological texture of texts into view (cf. Jameson 1981, 1988), and Roland Barthes, who introduced the concept of readers as 'writers' of the texts they read, opened the ideological texture of texts to view for interpreters (1967, 1972, 1974, 1981). Clifford Geertz adapted Burke's work to reconfigure sociology of knowledge as sociology of meaning. Michel Foucault analyzed discourse as a 'relationship between truth, theory, and values and the social institutions and practices in which they emerge', which brought 'increased attention to power and the body' (Dreyfus and Rabinow 1983: xxv). Mieke Bal, in turn, has reworked narratology to bring special attention to the ideological nature of texts (1985, 1991). The ideological texture of texts features the arena between the implied reader and the narrator and characters. The particular way in which

the narrator and characters evoke the message and the particular way in which the implied reader and real reader/audience receive it concerns ideology. Thus, adding ideological texture to the diagram produces Figure 2.5.

Reciprocity between the empowerment of the narrator and characters, the verbal signs and the represented world by the implied author and the implied reader represents the ideology *in* the text. In turn, reciprocity between meanings and meaning effects of the text in its world and meanings and meaning effects in the world of the real reader represents the ideology *of* the text. In other words, now the emphasis lies on the arena of the text where the implied reader and the real reader/audience receive and empower the message of the text.

Analysis and interpretation of the ideological texture of texts raises, in the end, the issue of spheres of truth and how we attempt to approach them. It has been traditional to think that truth can be

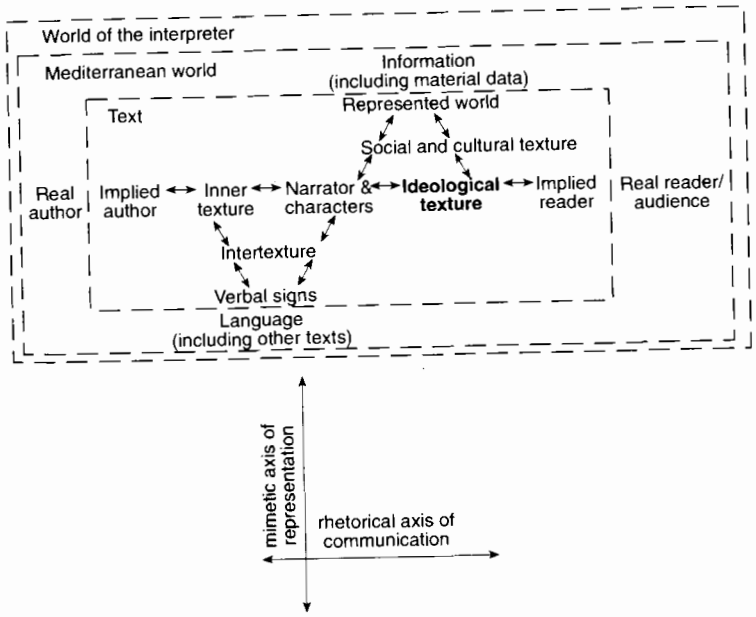

Figure 2.5 Ideological texture

'captured' in ideas or concepts. In other words, truth can be captured in frames of understanding. It has now become obvious that this is an illusion. Truth always escapes us. Our best chance for getting insights into the nature of truth is to understand the relationships things can and do have to one another. Things stand in relation to one another. There are different kinds of relationships. Some relationships are close enough that we can rather successfully talk about them in terms of sequence in time. In other words, some things stand in relations of quite direct 'influence' one way or another on each other. But other things stand in relations that will have 'influence' only if someone 'brings them into a particular sphere of influence'. These other things were there before they were brought into this sphere of influence, but traditional historians and scientists may not include these other things in their analysis. Socio-rhetorical criticism focuses on the relation of things to one another. In the context of relationships, some things stand in a relation of 'influence', of cause and effect. In interpretation, these phenomena are regularly perceived to be 'historical', and the historian includes them in the 'correct interpretation' of a text and excludes phenomena that do not have this 'relation of influence'. Socio-rhetorical criticism includes data in the Mediterranean world that stand in various kinds of relation besides a directly perceivable 'relation of influence' to a biblical text and uses comparison to analyze the nature of the 'relation' in terms of difference and similarity.

The issue of ideology comes into full prominence with the focus on readers of texts. Prior to the twentieth century, methods focused on some combination of a text and its author. Rarely did interpreters include readers in the analysis. During the twentieth century, the inclusion of an author in analysis of a text became more and more problematic. Many texts exist for which there is no certainty concerning the author, in certain instances authors write in the names of other authors and in other instances the only information about an author comes from the text which is the focus of interpretation. In this context, formalist literary critics, structuralists and linguists began to focus entirely on phenomena in the text itself. The author either completely disappeared from the context of interpretation, receded far into the background as an 'implied' author or simply existed as a way of referring to phenomena in the text itself, like 'Mark' says (meaning 'the text of Mark' says). Even if significant information was available about the author, interpreters

regularly perceived their task as ascertaining the nature of the text. If interpreters said anything about the author, they were simply referring to the 'implied' author evoked by the text itself. In this context, something of a division of the house arose among historical critics. Some historical critics retain an interest in the authors of texts as historical figures, even if it was uncertain exactly who the person was. Some 'sceptical' historians focused their interests on the activity and location of the author of a text in a historical and geographical location, even if they were working with an unnamed or falsely named author, or perceived the author to be an editor of data produced by a 'community' of people. Whether the focus was somehow on the author or somehow on the text, however, rarely did this focus seriously include the reader.

During the twentieth century interpreters began to include the reader in the context of interpretation, and ideology began to appear in the context of this emphasis. From the perspective of socio-rhetorical criticism, a 'complete' interpretation includes the interrelation among the author, the text and the reader. This vision comes from rhetorical analysis, which traditionally focuses on a speaker, a speech and an audience. In the context of analysis of a text, interpretation includes presuppositions, implicit or explicit, about the author, the text and the reader. Socio-rhetorical criticism brings all three into the arena of textual interpretation. The reason is that language is produced out of social interaction among people: there is not simply a speaker or writer; the speaking and writing presuppose the presence of a hearer or reader. There is not simply a text; texts were produced by authors and they are meaningless without readers. There are not simply readers; readers are meaningless without texts to read and authors who write texts. All three presuppose historical, social, cultural and ideological relations among people and the texts they write and read.

Analysis and interpretation of ideological texture raise the issue of readers in the twentieth century and authors and readers in the first century. What is the relation of our reading of a New Testament text to the way in which a first-century person might have written or read a text? The answer is that all people choose ways to write and to read a text. For this reason, socio-rhetorical criticism interprets not only the text under consideration but ways people read texts in late antiquity and ways people have interpreted New Testament texts both in the past and in different contexts in our modern world. Each interpretation of a text is a text on its own

terms, inviting socio-rhetorical analysis and interpretation as much as each New Testament text invites analysis and interpretation. This produces the two rectangles outside the boundary of the text which complete the diagram of socio-rhetorical criticism. Between the text and the world of the interpreter lies the world of the author who wrote the text. Especially with ancient texts, the world of the author calls for special attention since it clearly is a foreign world to the interpreter. Interaction among the world created by the text, the world of the author and the world of the interpreter represents the environment in which socio-rhetorical criticism explores and interprets a text.

CONCLUSION

A text intrinsically contains textures of meaning that cover a spectrum from the most intricate details about discourse itself to extensive details about historical, social, cultural and ideological phenomena. Socio-rhetorical criticism provides an intricate environment for analysis and interpretation in the context of interaction between rhetoric and mimesis, communication and representation, in texts. There are, of course, many implications that come with this model. I will introduce a few of these to bring this chapter to a close.

First, this model presents a 'system' approach to interpretation. This means that presuppositions and strategies in one arena reverberate throughout the entire system. For example, if interpreters emphasize 'opposition' in the inner texture of a text, they are likely to investigate intertexture which features texts that this text opposes, social and cultural groups against which this text pits itself and an ideology of separation from other people in the world. In contrast, if interpreters emphasize 'dialogue' in the inner texture of the text, they are likely to investigate intertexture which features texts that this text reconfigures, social and cultural groups with which this text is in conversation and an ideology of interaction with other people in the world. When interpreters are at work in any one arena of a text, therefore, implicit if not explicit presuppositions about the other arenas are at work in the analysis and interpretation.

Second, socio-rhetorical criticism uses a strategy of reading and rereading a text from different angles to produce a 'revalued' or

'revisited' rhetorical interpretation. This means that the mode of interpretation is explicitly interdisciplinary. The goal is to use the resources of other disciplines 'on their own terms' and to allow these resources to deconstruct and reconfigure the results of a particular focus and set of strategies in a particular discipline. In this deconstructive and reconfiguring environment, no particular discipline should be allowed to achieve a position of hierarchical authority. The rule of the game is that various disciplines engage in conversation with one another on equal terms, rather than dismiss one another through their power structures. The final result is at least as conflictual as intradisciplinary debate, and in some instances more so. The difference is the range of insight brought to the conclusions the interpreter draws. Socio-rhetorical criticism presupposes that the skills of specialization are well enough in hand in textual interpretation that much is to be gained by bringing 'specialized' conclusions of various kinds into active dialogue with one another.

Third, socio-rhetorical interpretation uses the same strategies of analysis on other people's interpretations of the text under consideration as the strategies for analyzing the biblical text itself. The reason is that both texts and interpretations of texts are symbolic actions that create history, society, culture and ideology. If the interpreter does not subject interpretations of the text to the same kind of interpretation as the text itself, some interpretation somewhere will hold the trump cards and dictate the final conclusions without yielding to the responsibility to give audience to its presuppositions, strategies and conclusions.

In conclusion, a four-texture approach was not explicit in the earliest socio-rhetorical interpretations, including my own. Rather, I began to use strategies of one kind and another designed to explore social and discursive aspects of texts, and only within time have the four arenas of texture emerged. While multiple textures of interpretation were becoming evident in New Testament interpretation during the 1970s and 1980s, it was difficult to discern the relation of these textures to one another. It has become common in certain circles, as a result, to present one's analysis as a 'fragment' of interpretation and to leave unattended the relation of one's analysis to other analyses. Socio-rhetorical criticism is the result of a concerted effort to integrate new practices of interpretation. The four arenas of textures, each with its own range of strategies and data, represent a significant refiguration of historical criticism and theological

criticism (Montrose 1992: 397–8, 412). The impulses underlying the refiguration are an embedding of disciplinary research and interpretation in an interdisciplinary mode, an embedding of literary modes of interpretation in rhetorical modes and an embedding of historical modes of analysis and interpretation in social, cultural and ideological modes.

A tendency within much historical and theological criticism is to make every new specialization a subdiscipline of historical and theological reasoning. This means that additional disciplines are not allowed into the exegetical arena as equal partners. The disciplines of history and theology maintain the role of judge and jury, issuing restraining orders, establishing laws that govern 'accurate' exegesis and deciding when an interpretation has gone beyond the bounds of acceptability. One of the strategies has been to declare various kinds of interpretation 'unrelated' to historical and theological interpretation.

The goal with socio-rhetorical criticism is to bring disciplines into interpretation on their own terms and engage those disciplines in dialogue on an equal basis. No discipline stands in a privileged position that allows it to disqualify the observations of another discipline. Each discipline exhibits its data with its own particular strategies and point of view. This creates a somewhat different experience in biblical interpretation. The traditional environment presupposes that certain historical and theological approaches stand in an authoritative position over other disciplines. A truly interdisciplinary environment presupposes that intensive dialogue and debate occur in contexts where interpreters with specialties in other disciplines show interest and respect for data gleaned by interpreters using other methods and presuppositions. This creates a context of deconstruction and reconfiguration of each other's data which is more characteristic of conversation and conflict in a global world than conversation and conflict in the context of multiple cultures 'colonized' by another culture. The overall goal, therefore, is to create an approach that can serve us well as we live in the global world of the third millennium CE.

To enable this dialogue, socio-rhetorical criticism creates spaces among and around arenas of specialty that normally function in a strictly disciplinary manner: historical, social, linguistic, literary, theological, aesthetic and ideological. The next four chapters discuss the appearance in biblical interpretation during the 1970s and 1980s of the four arenas socio-rhetorical criticism uses for

analysis and interpretation, and apply these arenas in succession to 1 Corinthians 9. A concluding chapter assesses the promise of socio-rhetorical criticism for the field of New Testament study in particular, but also for interpretation in other fields of study.

the TAPESTRY *of* EARLY CHRISTIAN DISCOURSE

rhetoric, society and ideology

VERNON K. ROBBINS

ROUTLEDGE