

Vernon K. Robbins, "Sociorhetorical Interpretation (SRI) as an Interpretive Analytic within Network Criticism: Compression, Human Scale, and Emergent Structure"

ABSTRACT

One of the undeveloped issues in *Tapestry*, *Exploring*, and volume 1 of *Invention* (Robbins 1996a; 1996b; 2009) is the relation of SRI to historical criticism. Since the publication of *Invention I*, April D. DeConick has developed a metacriticism called "network criticism," which is an embodied historical approach to texts and contexts that has emerged through interaction with SRI's use of Conceptual Integration/Blending Theory (Robbins 2007; 2009:107-20).

There are at least three aspects of DeConick's description of network criticism that establish its affinity with SRI. First, the approach builds on concepts of the embodied mind inaugurated by cognitive science during the last three decades that directly challenge body-mind dualism in Western thought and interpretation (Johnson; Lakoff and Johnson; Robbins 2005; 2007; 2009). Second, the approach updates the concept of webs of significance (Robbins 1984/1992; 1996a; 1996b) to cognitive networks (Robbins 2007; 2009: 100-04, 495-99) using guidelines from cognitive science that undergird Conceptual Integration/Blending Theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Fauconnier 2005). Third, the approach emphasizes the importance of emergent structures in historical processes and presupposes that emergent structure resides beyond blended spaces in links and compressions in the overall networks (Fauconnier 2005: 523, 529).

A number of interpretive analytics, methods, and strategies of analysis and interpretation will undoubtedly exhibit the interpretive power of network criticism as DeConick has formulated it. In my view, sociorhetorical interpretation as an interpretive analytic that works with compression and human scale in the context of composition, completion, and elaboration (Fauconnier 1997: 150-51) has its natural home in network criticism. As a higher metacriticism, network criticism explains overarching historical, social, cultural, ideological, and religious systems at work in an embodied historical approach. Sociorhetorical interpretation is one example of an interpretive analytic within such an embodied historical approach. In ways both implicit and explicit, network criticism has emerged through interaction with SRI. Perhaps especially for this reason,

SRI has its natural interpretive analytic home in network criticism as a metacriticism and is in many ways already functioning robustly in it.

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