


Rhetorical Analysis of Literary Culture in Social Reading Platforms

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Recommended Citation

Vlieghe, Joachim; and Rutten, Kris. "Rhetorical Analysis of Literary Culture in Social Reading Platforms." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 15.3 (2013): [<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2244>](https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.2244)

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Volume 15 Issue 3 (September 2013) Article 7
Joachim Vlieghe and Kris Rutten,
"Rhetorical Analysis of Literary Culture in Social Reading Platforms"
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss3/7>>

Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 15.3 (2013)**
Thematic Issue **Literacy and Society, Culture, Media, and Education.**
Ed. Kris Rutten and Geert Vandermeersche
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol15/iss3/>>

Abstract: In their article "Rhetorical Analysis of Literary Culture in Social Reading Platforms" Joachim Vlieghe and Kris Rutten present a case study of the discourse surrounding literary phenomena that are emerging within social media. The case study is part of a methodological exploration within literacy studies whereby the social media's transformative effects on literary literacies are studied by focusing on language as symbolic and situated action. Vlieghe and Rutten have identified unique social reading platforms based on a prolonged study of the social media environment. The analysis of the developers' discourse on social reading platforms shows how developers are formulating new instructions on how to talk and to act in relation to literature by changing the scope of concepts related to literary phenomena within the "social media" system.

Joachim Vlieghe and Kris Rutten

Rhetorical Analysis of Literary Culture in Social Reading Platforms

Siegfried J. Schmidt explains that people's mediated sociocultural participation is conventionalized through language, thereby also institutionalizing processes relating to the semiotic system of the employed media ("Media" <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol12/iss1/1>>). He suggests that both the social and the semiotic systems of cultural institutions can be studied by exploring concepts describing socially accepted forms of mediated participation in communities. Based on his empirical study of concepts relating to literary phenomena, Schmidt concludes that "in 'modern' societies, the acting possibilities of actors in the social system of literature are institutionally distributed onto four action dimensions: production, mediation, reception, and post-processing" ("Systems-Oriented" 124). He argues, however, that descriptions of media systems are only provisional because every new medium affects people's opportunities for social participation by changing or replacing existing acting possibilities, as well as adding new ones. In order to study the transformative effects of new media, Schmidt proposes to examine and compare the uses and meanings of concepts related to media phenomena in and across various media systems.

The research presented in this article is also a methodological exploration within literacy studies: we propose to study the transformative effects of new media related to literary literacies by focusing on language as symbolic and situated action. Language can be considered the most fundamental tool by which people conceive, comprehend, and communicate understandings of reality and formulate "instructions on how to act and talk so as to take on a particular role that others will recognize" (Gee, *What is Literacy?* 1). Thus, different uses of language can be studied as indicators of how people perceive a situation and the choices and actions they see available to them, thereby offering insight into the motives for acting (see Foss). These situated meanings and motive-generating functions that language performs in relation to specific contexts can be studied by using tools from rhetorical criticism (see Brummett). In particular, we adhere to Kenneth Burke's dramaturgical theory and apply the dramaturgical pentad as an analytical method for "analyzing discourse by focusing on how it attributes motivation to human action" (Blakesley, *The Elements* 32). Burke describes the human being as "the symbol-making, symbol-using, symbol-misusing animal" ("Language" 16) and claims that we can learn to understand how these symbols work by analyzing literature, speeches, or even accounts of what people do and why as dramaturgical situations. The aim of our analysis is to understand the attributed motives of social interactions by addressing the question: "what is involved when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?" (Burke, *A Grammar* xv). Dramaturgical theory has been adopted by different scholars in order to study popular culture (e.g., Kimberling; Brummett), film (e.g., Blakesley, *The Terministic*), video games (e.g., Bourgonjon, Rutten, Soetaert, Valcke; Voorhees), and theater (e.g., Rutten, Mottart, Soetaert).

Burke's dramaturgical pentad incorporates and divides the question of "what is involved" into five distinct segments or elements: 1) the "act" (what happens), 2) "agent" (who does the act), 3) "scene" (the setting in which an action takes place), 4) "agency" (the means by which the act is carried out), and 5) "purpose" (the goal or objective of the act) (see *Language*). When starting the analysis, the first step is to identify the terms or concepts that represent these five key elements. The next step is to apply ratios that pair two different elements in order to examine their mutual influence and to detect the dominant pentadic element. The final step is to look for patterns in the associations or relations in order to map out different clusters (Foss 72-75). Based on the results of the analysis a pentadic cartography can be constructed. The technique of pentadic cartography was developed in order to "locate the featured term[s] that coordinate transformation of one vocabulary into the terms of another at pivotal sites of ambiguity" (Anderson and Prelli 80). Further, based on a study of social media participation, danah m. boyd points out that institutionalization of socio-cultural practices is influenced by ongoing debates and negotiations, as well as developers' efforts to monitor and regulate these practices (95; on social media see, e.g., Grosbeck and Holotescu; Kaplan and Hainlein; Liu, Maes, Davenport). By focusing on the discourse of developers we identify the attributed motives for innovating the literary system by constructing, design and hosting social reading platforms. Because this discourse also functions as a monitoring and regulating mechanism, it also

informs us about the "instructions on how to act and talk" given to participants of social reading platforms. An overview of these motives indicates how the reallocation of literary phenomena to the domain of social media affects opportunities for action and taking on roles.

The data presented in this article have been obtained through online participant observation in social media environments between September 2011 and June 2012. All source material and initial observations have been recorded and documented in an online weblog maintained by Joachim Vlieghe (<<http://joachimvlieghe.tumblr.com>>). The recorded sources contain texts and audio-visual material produced by developers to describe "social reading." As suggested by Christine Hine, Lori Kendall, and danah m. boyd, no data or field restrictions were made prior to documenting the observations collected through participatory immersion. After identifying the concept of "social reading" and social media platforms related to it, we collected textual and audio-visual material used by developers to describe the phenomenon of social reading. This material has been analyzed with the help of a Microsoft Access 2010 database. The database has been customized for the purpose of rhetorical or pentadic analysis and contains five sets of tables corresponding to the elements of the dramatistic pentad: [act], [agent], [scene], [agency], [purpose]. All of the descriptive information provided by the developers is segmented and imported in one of these five main tables. A numeric identifier is assigned to each piece of segmented information. In every set, the segments from the main table are paired with segments from the other four main tables based on the syntactic context. The pairs are stored in distinct subtables which represent possible pentadic ratios (e.g., the subtable [act-scene] contains segments from the table [act] paired with segments from the table [scene]). Accordingly, there are 20 subtables in total: [act-scene], [act-agent], [act-agency], [act-purpose], [agent-scene], [agent-agency], [agent-act], [agent-purpose], [scene-agent], [scene-agency], [scene-act], [scene-purpose], [agency-scene], [agency-agent], [agency-act], [agency-purpose], [purpose-scene], [purpose-agent], [purpose-agency], [purpose-act]. In addition to these subtables for relational information, each set also holds one subtable which contains clusters or themes. Clustering helps to overcome small variations in concepts used by developers. Because of the explorative nature of this study, the clusters (i.e., the applied labels) have not been predefined for the elements [act], [scene], [agency], and [purpose]. For the element [agent], however, we used predefined labels corresponding with the action roles identified by Schmidt: "producer," "mediator," "recipient," and "post-processor" ("Systems-Oriented" 124). These predefined labels were not considered restrictive. After pairing and clustering the information, all collected data from the Microsoft Access 2010 database was exported to a CSV-file (i.e., comma separated value) and then imported in a network analysis software package Gephi. Using this software package, we analyzed the pattern data and measured the weight of every relation and the weighted degree of individual clusters. Based on the outcome of this analysis, we generated a graph in Gephi which we use here to visualize the pentadic cartography of the developers' discourse on social reading platforms. In our description of the results, we try to maintain as much of the complexity and richness as possible by combining numeric data with examples from the descriptive material and insights from scholarship related to topics revealed in the data. We discuss 1) which is the dominant element, 2) how does it influence the other pentadic elements, and 3) where can we find strategic spots of ambiguity in the developers' discourse on social reading. We only address those themes which have a weighted degree that is above average and occur in more than half of the relevant sources (i.e., the different social reading platforms). Themes which meet only one or neither of these criteria are not discussed.

Ideally, a pentadic analysis focuses on all five elements of a dramatistic situation. Our analysis indicates, however, that not all developers elaborate on every element of the dramatistic pentad. This indicated most strikingly by the element "scene" which is only featured in relation to 18 of the 27 studied social reading platforms. An important reason for this is, of course, the fact that the platforms do not embody a physical and temporal environment. Instead, social reading platforms represent virtual or projected environments. The absence of distinct physical features of social reading platforms interferes with the developers' attempts to define the "scene" or to determine with certainty the different scenes of individual users from which the platforms are typically accessed. When the developers do focus on the element scene, it is always to refer to a social space (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Social reading platforms as social space

[SCENE]

"Book Country is a place where readers and writers of genre fiction come together to read original fiction, post work or comments, and make a name for themselves. ... Book Country aims to be useful, egalitarian, and merit-based while fostering an atmosphere of encouragement and creativity." (Book Country <<http://bookcountry.com/AboutUs.aspx>>)

"Shelfari is a gathering place for authors, aspiring authors, publishers, and readers, and has many tools and features to help these groups connect with each other in a fun and engaging way." (Shelfari <<http://www.shelfari.com/Shelfari/AboutUs.aspx>>)

"It is a place where you can see what your friends are reading and vice versa. You can create 'bookshelves' to organize what you've read (or want to read). You can comment on each other's reviews. You can find mind-blowing new books. And on this journey with your friends you can explore new territory, gather information, and expand your mind." (GoodReads <<http://www.goodreads.com/about/us>>)

"We all get more out of books when we can talk about them. And now there is a way I can talk with my students right in the pages of digital books. It's called Subtext. And it allows the whole class to be in a book together." (*SubText* <<http://vimeo.com/39460409>>)

Developers use the concepts of "space" and "place" to construct a recognizable and comprehensible metaphor which describes the social reading platforms and everything that they entail: services or tools [agency], endeavors [purpose], algorithmic and user-generated content [act], and people [agent]. The metaphor of the social space is used to celebrate the lack of physical determinants and idealizes the potential for diversity and anonymity as a stronghold, rather than a weakness of the social reading platforms. It stresses the importance of spaces that give everyone the opportunity to interact socially based on personal interests, regardless of when and where and without discriminating based on physical appearance or social position (see Meyrowitz 118). As such, the developers' relate the discourse on social reading platforms to the longstanding and ongoing debate about the democratic potential of the digital media. In light of this debate, social reading platforms become democratic social spaces where people are judged "by what they say and think, not what they look like" (Blakenship <<http://www.phrack.org/issues.html?issue=7&id=3&mode=txt>>) because they lack physicality. Their non-physical nature alters "those aspects of group identity, socialization, and hierarchy that were once dependent on particular physical locations and the special experiences available in them" (Meyrowitz 125).

At first glance, the potential of "scene" as a dominant element seems minor because it is often missing from the discourse and lacks many details when it is present. However, by contextualizing the use of the social space metaphor within the debate about the democratic potential of digital media, the importance of the element "scene" becomes clear. This is also reflected by results from our analysis. After applying a filter to our dataset to exclude all incomplete pentads (i.e., where the element of scene is missing from the discourse), we see that the terms coded for the element "scene" are consistently used to establish a connection between other pentadic elements. Based on the data output from our Access 2010 database, in Gephi we identify the theme of space as a central node in the pentadic cartography with a weighted degree of 22304. It is related to all 53 other themes in the pentadic cartography which features 1454 edges or relationships in total (see examples in Figure 2).

Figure 2

Roles of social reading platforms

[SCENE-AGENT]

"At Scholastic, we believe that literacy is the pathway to success and to realizing a complete life. Books play an important role in shaping who we are and who we will become. You Are What You Read provides a unique opportunity for readers all over the world to connect with each other through their shared 'Bookprints,' as we celebrate the books that bind us together and make us who we are today." (Scholastic Inc. <<http://youarewhatyouread.scholastic.com/kids/about/faq/>>)

"BookCountry aims to be useful, egalitarian, and merit-based while fostering an atmosphere of encouragement and creativity. Book Country also offers a convenient and affordable way to self-publish eBooks and print books. With a variety of services available, we want you to be able to put your book on the map." (Book Country LLC <<http://bookcountry.com/AboutUs.aspx>>)

"Shelfari introduces readers to our global community of book lovers and encourages them to share their literary inclinations and passions with peers, friends, and total strangers (for now). Shelfari is a gathering place for authors, aspiring authors, publishers, and readers, and has many tools and features

to help these groups connect with each other in a fun and engaging way. Our mission is to enhance the experience of reading by connecting readers in meaningful conversations about the published word." (Shelfari <<http://www.shelfari.com/Shelfari/AboutUs.aspx>>)

Among the non-dominant pentadic elements, several themes also have a relatively high frequency of recurrence. The themes of "meeting spaces" [agency], "sharing" [act], "discovery and exploration" [purpose], "interest and passion" [purpose], "recipient" [agent], and "interest or affinity or passion" [agency] have been documented in relation to at least 17 different social reading platforms. Weighted degree of the themes indicates that "recipient" (14088) and "meeting spaces" (6448) have the highest concentration of relationships. Attention is therefore directed towards the elements "agent" and "agency." Comparison of both elements based on weighted degree of all themes points out that the average relationship concentration is much higher for the element "agent" (3717) than for the element "agency" (772). These results suggest that there is a hierarchy among the non-dominant pentadic elements. If average weighted degree is used as a selection criterion, the pentadic elements can be placed in the following hierarchical order: scene (22304), agent (3717), agency (772), act (674), and purpose (593). We address the implications of this hierarchy by focusing on the ratios or relationships between these elements. In particular, we focus on the ratios [scene-agent], [scene-agency], [scene-act], and [scene-purpose], all of which feature scene as the dominant element.

With regard to the [scene-agent] ratio, we made two important observations. The first observation is that the themes related to the element "agent" are never used to describe the position or role of the developers. In fact, explicit self-references made by the developers are very scarce, though not entirely absent. When developers do refer to themselves, they do so through the social reading platform. This means that the name of a social reading platform is used interchangeably to refer to the elements "scene" and "agent." Thus, a first strategic point of ambiguity is revealed. By using the name of social reading platforms to refer to both scene and agent, the [scene-agent] ratio becomes an ambiguous one. As a consequence, the only way to learn about the developers' perception regarding their contributions to the literary system is through their descriptions of the affordance of the social reading platforms. The second observation relates to the descriptions of potential users of the services of the social reading platform. Our analysis shows that developers do not use terms that do not fit Schmidt's descriptions. In particular, the terms coded for the element "agent" refer to broad categories which concur with the following roles identified by Schmidt: "recipient," "producer" and "mediator." The categories are mostly used to allow users to navigate to subdomains dedicated to particular roles and practices to which users can identify (examples see box 2). Descriptions of the different roles are almost never explicitly mentioned. Mostly the descriptions are formulated implicitly in terms of the means [agency], practices [act] and goals [purpose] specific to the role-related subdomains. In light of this, we conclude that the [scene-agent] ratio holds a subdominant position over the ratios [scene-agency], [scene-act] and [scene-purpose]. This is also reflected by the high weighted degree of the themes "recipient" (14088), "producer" (5392) and "mediator" (2824). We consider the influence of the [scene-agent] ratio on the [scene-agency], [scene-act] and [scene-purpose] ratios by discussing how developers describe the different roles and practices related to literature.

Our analysis also results in two observations regarding the [scene-agency] ratio. The first observation concerns one particular theme, namely "meeting spaces." As we have indicated above, the concentration of relationships for this theme (6448) is considerably higher than the maximum concentrations measured for any other theme related to the elements "agency" (2960), "act" (3000), and "purpose" (2640). The unique position of the theme of "meeting spaces" becomes clear by looking at original data and its coding. The terms coded for the element "scene" were often coded for the element "agency" as well. This occurs when a social reading platform is simultaneously presented as a social spaces [scene] and a means for confrontation and communication [agency] (see examples in Figure 3). As such, a second strategic point of ambiguity is revealed. The [scene-agency] ratio becomes ambiguous when the concept of "space" is employed to denote two different things: an environment that enhances democracy or a means that enhances discussion (Papacharissi 11). The ambiguity of the [scene-agency] ratio thus suggests that social reading platforms could be perceived as social spaces for confrontation and conflict, not for confirmation and comforting.

The second observation pertaining to the [scene-agency] ratio relates strongly to the first. The following themes appear alongside the theme of "meeting spaces": "interest or affinity or passion," "community (formation)," "communication," and "collaboration and co-creation." These themes complement the characterization of social reading platforms as social spaces for confrontation and conflict. Social reading platforms focus first and foremost on people's shared interests and passion for literature. They are sounding boards for expressing engagement with a particular literary work or towards the field of literature through creation and communication (see Gee, "Semiotic Social"). Developers' often refer to communities or community formation to stress the shared engagement (i.e., interest and passion expressed through participation). In earlier work, we pointed out that communities formed in social media environments through shared engagement can be understood through Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" (see Vlieghe, Bourgonjon, Rutten, Soetaert). Based on a close study of nations and nationalism, Anderson has pointed out that "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact are imagined" since their members "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them" (5-6). Following Anderson, the concept of "communities" is used by developers to refer to an intricate network of loosely affiliated people who poses diverse knowledge, experiences, and perspectives on literature. Stated differently, the concept of "communities" is used to refer to social groups as a type of shared resources that brings new insights both to individuals and to the domain of literature as a whole (see examples in Figure 3).

Figure 3

Social reading platforms

[SCENE-AGENCY]

"Books can bring people together in unique ways, transcending geographic boundaries, structuring conversations, fostering ideas and new insights into each other." (BookGlutton <<http://www.bookglutton.com/about/how.html>>)

"Where the collective thoughts and ideas of the community live on every page, bringing new meaning and insights to every word ... Copia brings this idea to life in a digital world, so we can all read better together. This is the future of e-reading." (*About Copia* <http://www.thecopia.com/flash/flv/Copia_WhatIs_Video.flv>)

"People have always loved to talk about books. Now there's a way to talk about the book in the book. It's called Subtext and it's going to change the way you think about eBooks. It connects you to an entire community of people how love books just as much as you do. ... You'll get more out of your books ... and more into your books. You know it's always being added, so you can revisit a favorite and learn something new ... Subtext, it's a community in the pages of your book." (*Subtext* <<http://vimeo.com/28368227>>)

"Reading long-form written content ... has been a solitary experience for too long, but technologies now exist to bring people together through their shared interests." (Scribd <<http://www.scribd.com/about>>)

We do not discuss the observations regarding the [scene-act] and [scene-purpose] ratios separately because there is a significant overlap between them. This is in itself a first important observation. Consultation of the original data indicates that the overlap is not caused by a poor selection of thematic labels, but by a third strategic point of ambiguity in the developers' discourse. In addition to the [scene-act] and [scene-purpose] ratios, the ambiguity also involves the [scene-agency] ratio. In particular, aspects of the social reading platforms relating to the element "agency" are often presented in terms of opportunities formulated as a set of imperatives. Developers rarely state explicitly whether the listed imperatives refer to acts or purposes. The order of the lists and the syntactic structure of the sentences sometimes can give a hint, but there is often no way to make a definitive statement about the intended meaning. The ambiguity is maximized when developers formulate imperatives that signify a sequential chain of acts and purposes, whereby the purpose of one sequence become the agency for the next sequence.

Despite the ambiguity between the [scene-act] and [scene-purpose] ratios, we have been able to observe a general pattern that runs across both ratios. This last observation is closely related to the developers' attention for the gaining of new insights, which we have already touched upon in the paragraphs above. Terms relating to the theme of "discovery and exploration" [purpose] are found frequently in relation to all 18 sources. In nearly all cases they are accompanied by terms relating to the themes of "interest and passion" [purpose] and "sharing" [act]. The latter two themes suggest

that the theme of "discovery and exploration" consists of two components. One is a personal component which focuses on "interest and passion," but also on themes like "efficiency and effectiveness" [purpose], "reflection" [purpose], "choosing and selecting" [act], "controlling and managing" [act], "reading" [act/purpose]. The other is a social or group component which focuses on "sharing" [act], as well as "identifying to others" [act], "social bonding" [purpose], "collaborating" [act], "self-expression" [purpose], "seeking advice or suggestions" [act], "discussing" [act], and "criticizing and evaluating" [act]. Reassessment of the original data confirms that the developers often stress the personal and social aspect of "discovery and exploration" simultaneously. As a consequence of the ambiguity between the [scene-act] and [scene-purpose] ratios, a distinction between both — i.e., where one aspect serves the other — is rarely found. In many cases, it is suggested that a taste in books reflects a taste in friends or "the company we keep" (Booth) — and vice versa. Thus, social reading platforms feature two different, yet strongly related kinds of "taste fabrics" which denote networks of interests (see Church and Hanks; Lui, Maes, Davenport). One focuses on books while the other focuses on people. The most important affordance of social reading platforms is thus to offer users a means to explore and keep track of these taste fabrics which facilitates the discovery of new books and new people (see examples in Figure 4).

Figure 4

Taste fabric in social reading platforms

[SCENE-ACT] & [SCENE-PURPOSE]

"Revish lets you: Write reviews of any books you read Maintain a reading list and share it with friends Keep a reading journal — look back and see what you were reading at any time Read reviews by other Revish members Create and participate in groups, to discuss books, reading or anything else Use our API and widgets to include your Revish content on your blog or website Receive books with Revish Connect (coming soon)" (Champion <<http://www.revish.com/>>)

"Whether online or on your reader, your library is an easy way to keep track of all the books you've read and want to read. And with tons of e-books for sales and millions of catalogue titles you can fill it up quickly. What is important to remember is that every book is a connection to new people. And the more people you follow, the better it gets." (*About Copia* <http://www.thecopia.com/flash/flv/Copia_WhatIs_Video.flv>)

"You Are What You Read provides a unique opportunity for readers all over the world to connect with each other through their shared 'Bookprints,' as we celebrate the books that bind us together and make us who we are today. Once you sign up, you'll be able to input your Bookprints — the five books that most influenced your life. You'll then be able to connect with others through your shared Bookprints, interact with a global community of readers, and discover new books to enjoy" (Scholastic <<http://youarewhatyouread.scholastic.com/adults/about/>>)

"For centuries, people have been scribbling in the margins of books, taking notes and doing their best to pass the books along. With Readmill this is made easy ... Build up your own personal network of readers and discover how good eBooks can be. Why make a book digital and not make it shareable?" (*This is Readmill* <<http://vimeo.com/33250586>>)

"On Goodreads, when a person adds a book to the site, all their friends can see what they thought of it. It's common sense. People are more likely to get excited about a book their friend recommends than a suggestion from a stranger. We even created an amazing algorithm that looks at your books and ratings, and helps you find other books based on what fellow Goodreads members with similar tastes enjoyed." (GoodReads <<http://www.goodreads.com/about/us>>)

Before we continue to discuss the roles related to literature as they are described by developers, we summarize the above presented findings concerning the phenomenon known as "social reading": the developers' discourse on "social reading platforms" is characterized by three strategic points of ambiguity. The first point of ambiguity deals with themes relating to the element "agent" and allows developers to obscure their role and position within the media system as designers of social spaces. The second point of ambiguity deals with themes relating to the element "agency." The ambiguity arises when the social reading platforms are characterized as open social spaces that welcome diversity and confrontation, instead of closed niches for preselected members. The third strategic point of ambiguity focuses on the elements "act" and "purpose." Here, the ambiguity is used to stress the networking and archiving function of social reading platforms, which facilitates the creation, visualization and exploration of personal and social taste fabrics related to literature.

When we can discuss the documented roles relating to literature within social reading platforms, it should be noted that we have only found references to three of the four roles (i.e. producer, mediator, recipient and post-processor) identified by Schmidt in relation to the tradition literary

system. In order to discuss these documented roles we have compared the weight of the relationship between the themes relating to the element "agent" on the one hand, and those relating to the elements "agency," "act" and "purpose" on the other hand. The results suggest that the general findings regarding the phenomenon of "social reading" apply in fairly similar fashion to all three roles. However, if we limit our scope to one role at a time, we detect variations in the relative importance of certain themes. These variations suggest a different focus for each role. In relation to the recipient, developers stress the themes of "reading" [act/purpose], "communication" [agency], "social bonding"[purpose] and "identifying to others" [act]. As such, the social aspect of literary reception is highlighted. In relation to the producer, the themes of "collaboration and co-creation" [agency] and "criticizing and evaluating" [act] are stressed. This emphasizes the interactive or collaborative aspect of literary production. In relation to the mediator, the developers accentuate the themes of "controlling and managing" [act], "discussion" [purpose], "efficiency and effectiveness" [purpose] and "choosing and selecting" [act]. Accordingly, the argumentative and managerial aspect of literary mediation is underlined (see examples in Figure 5).

Figure 5

Social aspect of literary reception

"Copia brings this idea to life in a digital world, so we can all read better together. This is the future of e-reading." (*About Copia* <http://www.thecopia.com/flash/flv/Copia_WhatIs_Video.flv>)

"People have always loved to talk about books. Now there's a way to talk about the book in the book ... Subtext, it's a community in the pages of your book." (*Subtext* <<http://vimeo.com/28368227>>)

"Get a group of your peers together to read and discuss each other's work. ... Then you can have targeted discussions about each paragraph in order to hone your craft." (BookGlutton <<http://www.bookglutton.com/about/how.html>>)

"Now we've adapted the idea for the Internet Age, so authors get to write the books they really want to write and you get to read real books that in a crowd celebrity-obsessed marketplace might otherwise never see the light of day." (*What is Unbound?* <<http://youtu.be/de9CQA7G6vk>>)

"BookGlutton has the only Web-only book publishing platform. Using the Epub book format, you can upload, set your price, and track your sales. Your readers are part of your publishing network, and we enable direct lines of communication between reading groups and you. It's not for everyone in publishing, but it's for the forward-thinking ones." (BookGlutton <<http://www.bookglutton.com/about/how.html>>)

"How Libraries Can Use LibraryThing. We love libraries. Let us count the ways. Fully integrate LibraryThing's social data into your catalog using LibraryThing for Libraries. LTFL lets you add tag-based browsing, book recommendations, ratings, reviews, series data, awards information, stack maps, virtual shelf browsers, and more to your OPAC, by integrating with LibraryThing and its high-quality book data." (LibraryThing <<http://www.librarything.com/about/libraries>>)

The pentadic analysis of the developers' discourse on social reading platforms shows how the roles of the recipient, producer and mediator reappear within the social media environment, while specific references to the role of the post-processor appear to be absent. The developers highlight the interrelatedness of production, mediation and reception is highlighted by focusing on their interactive, argumentative and social aspects. This echoes the idea that "meaning-making is an ongoing process [that] does not end at a pre-ordained place" (Du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, Negus 85). In other words, the presentation of social reading platforms as social spaces for confrontation stresses the spiraling effect of the literary system as a "cultural circuit" (Du Gay, Hall, Janes, Mackay, Negus 85). As such, the developers relate their descriptions of social reading platforms to the discourse on remix culture, which is strongly connected to the rise of social media and user-generated content. The discourse on remixing suggests that "the interdependence of our creativity has been obscured by powerful cultural ideas, but technology is now exposing this connectedness" (Ferguson <<http://vimeo.com/14912890>>). By stressing this idea of connectedness or intertextuality, the developers' discourse enhances the idea that everyone in the literary system is involved in the post-processing of literary texts. Stated differently, within social reading platforms everyone involved in the literary system becomes a post-processor. Social reading platforms thus actively seek to democratize the literary system by reducing the notions of hierarchy related to it, thereby also increasing the opportunities to switch between roles. As James Paul Gee suggests, this kind of environment enables

and stimulates people to observe, mimic and experiment with a variety of different roles and practices within real and meaningful contexts (see "Semiotic Social").

In conclusion, based on a pentadic analysis of the discourse on social reading platforms, we show how developers are formulating new instructions on how to talk and to act in relation to literature by changing the scope of concepts related to literary phenomena within the system of "social media." By applying the technique of pentadic cartography we locate three strategic points of ambiguity in the developers' discourse on social reading platforms. A first point of ambiguity shows how literary phenomena are being redefined in terms of continuous "post-processing" which transforms the relationships between "production," "mediation," and "reception." A second point of ambiguity specifies how developers attempt to reduce notions of hierarchy within the literary system. And the third point of ambiguity indicates that developers draw on the democratic potential of social media environments to present social reading platforms as social spaces that thrive on affinity (i.e., shared passion related to literature) which is expressed through active participation and networks of taste (i.e., shared interest). Our findings suggest that developers are creating the foundations for a literary and social media system which recognizes the multiplicity and complexity of what it means to be literate in everyday life. Literacies are the result of people's involvement in multiple and overlapping communities of work, interest, affiliation, and so on. As the New London Group suggests, the challenge today is to create spaces where local and specific meanings can be created and where different communities can find their own voices without promoting excessively specialized subcultural discourses which lead to individualism and seclusion. Our analysis of developers' discourse suggests that social reading platforms are an attempt to create such spaces. Developers of social reading platforms problematize formal and institutionalized roles and practices related to literature by explicitly reinforcing informal networks of people and tastes. Greater importance is ascribed to personal experience and social interaction in relation to literature, as opposed to professionalization and institutionally validated expertise. While the research presented here is a starting point for a broader exploration of the transformative effects to which the introduction of social reading platforms gives rise, further research is needed to test and supplement our findings with data which portray other perspectives based on field research among active users of social reading platforms (e.g., interviews, focus groups, participant observation, etc.). In particular, future research should attempt to document changes in people's perceptions of roles and practices resulting from active involvement in social reading platforms and determine whether users of social reading platforms identify with aims and efforts of developers. Only then can we generate detailed descriptions of the transformations of traditional notions of literacies relating to literature.

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