

Serialization as a Social Network: a case study of E. A. Petherick's colonial series

In examining the case study of Australian Edward Petherick's colonial series that he jointly produced with William Heinemann, Longman, and other British publishers between 1889 and 1894, I consider book serialization and the transmission of information during the production and distribution of series as a social network in which there is no clear starting or ending point. A social network model of serialization is inspired by the work of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari who argue that a rhizome—defined as a decentred organic network—describes the positive pattern of connection and connectivity between agents in a capitalist society. In a social network, agents—an agent being anyone or anything, including a book, that effects the network—repeatedly engage one other in processes of production, distribution, and consumption and in doing so influence one another, which spawns further interactions with each new interface leading to the potential multiplying or rupturing of the network.

This paper explores the idea that connectivity stimulates the growth of the social network and book series and that series develop out of other linkages within the larger network. Defining serialization as a social network also raises the issue of rupture, which is a key aspect of any rhizomorphic model. Rupture refers to both a type of “borrowing” within a social network and a type of cultural and social cross fertilization or reterritorialization and deterritorialization. In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari assert that books deterritorialize the world and the world reterritorializes books as they move “from one territory to another” (126). In developing a case study of *Petherick's Collection of Favourite and Approved Authors* one finds multiple instances of rupture in terms of acts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization as Petherick repackaged popular books and marketed the series to colonial readers.

Alison Rukavina
Dept. of English and Film Studies
University of Alberta
Edmonton Canada
rukavina@ualberta.ca