

# Can We (Still) Speak of a 'French' Digital Literature?

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## ABSTRACT

This article explores the conditions of emergence of digital and computer-assisted literatures in the French context. Noting the importance of exhibitions in particular in contributing to the development of digital works and aesthetics, the article explores what offerings and concessions are there in considering the emergence and elaboration of such literatures through an approximate national frame.

## KEYWORDS

digital literature; Oulipo; Serge Bouchardon; Philippe Bootz; procedural; aesthetics of frustration.

## RESUMO

Este artigo explora as condições de emergência de literaturas digitais e assistidas por computador no contexto francês. Frisando a importância particular das exposições, pelo seu contributo para o desenvolvimento de obras digitais e da sua estética, o artigo explora as possibilidades e concessões decorrentes de se considerar o surgimento e elaboração de literaturas deste tipo através de um enquadramento aproximativamente nacional.

## PALAVRAS-CHAVE

literatura digital; Oulipo; Serge Bouchardon; Philippe Bootz; processualidade; estética da frustração.

## I. INTRODUCTION: OULIPO AS THE BIRTH OF FRENCH DIGITAL LITERATURE

**M**y research begins in 1960, with the foundation of the French polymath group, Oulipo (Ouvroir de littérature potentielle, or Workshop of Potential Literature), and the discussions and correspondence that testify to the group's nascent curiosity regarding computing methods and the potential applications of these to existing techniques and practices in literary composition and experimentation.

I have read extensively through the documents of the *Archives de l'Oulipo* since beginning to write about and attempt to situate the emergence of French digital literature, and as a result I consider the group's early years as demonstrative of many crucial ideas that would later foreground what would ultimately become known as digital literatures.<sup>1</sup> I have taken the group's initial meetings as a point of departure for discussions of literary computing in France and have traced the history of this evolving incorporation of the computer by French writers forward to contemporary device-based works, such as the recently released mobile application narrative, *Agir* (2016), by Serge Bouchardon (2017). In the Oulipo group's first manifesto, the "Premier manifeste Oulipienne," written in 1961, the intention to incorporate the "machine" in the activities and projected compositions of these writers was underscored as central to the group's agenda, even insofar as to become a defining feature of the oulipian approach:

...Ce que certains écrivains ont introduit dans leur manière (...) l'Ouvroir de Littérature Potentielle (l'OuLiPo) entend le faire systématiquement et scientifiquement, et au besoin en recourant aux bonnes offices des machines à traiter l'information. (OULIPO, 1973: 17)<sup>2</sup>

Comparing the intentions of the Oulipo, articulated shortly after the group's formation, and taking into consideration the theoretical discussions and compositional experiments that took place over the fifteen to twenty years that followed, with the Electronic Literature Organization's definition of e-literature, I consider the Oulipo's intentions and undertakings in these early years to neatly

1 The *Archives de l'Oulipo* are found in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, where I was based in 2015-2016 as an invited researcher of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

2 "That which certain writers have introduced in their own ways (...) the Workshop of Potential Literature (the OuLiPo) intends to do systematically and scientifically, and, as may be needed, drawing on the assistance of information-processing machines." (My translation).

qualify as early examples of e-lit, making use of whatever resources and information could be made available to writers of their time:

Electronic literature, or e-lit, refers to works with important literary aspects that take advantage of the capabilities and contexts provided by the stand-alone or networked computer.<sup>3</sup>

## II. OULIPO AND FRENCH LITERATURE

Oulipo is considered by some to be the latest and the longest-running of the twentieth century French avant-garde movements, and indeed the group is still active today, although operating in a rather different vein to these early years, with little to no mention of the digital characterizing the works being produced by the current *ouvroir*.<sup>4</sup> The French tradition of the literary group or collective thus distinguishes the birth of computerised literatures in France to a great degree, with the Oulipo group's initial experiments and discussions regarding the potential offerings of the computer to literary endeavors leading into the foundation of the Alamo in 1981, in order to create a specific and dedicated collective to address these ideas more carefully.<sup>5</sup> The involvement of Jean-Pierre Balpe in the Alamo and Balpe's later involvement in the group *Transitoire Observable* suggest something of a lineage in the experimentation with computers and literature in the French context. This group model, inherited from the Oulipo, suggests a conception of digital literature in France as to some extent the inheritor of the later twentieth-century avant-garde traditions, also noting that groups such as Oulipo published manifestoes, and *Transitoire Observable* presented its "texte fondateur" (Bootez *et al.*, 2003), in which the collective lays out its shared vision and experimental ambition. Though these early links have made past decades of literary computing in France a relatively homogeneous subject of study, the field has more recently become vastly more varied in terms of the approaches encountered, with many individual practitioners working today, each demonstrating their own approach to the creation and dissemination of these works.

Researching the nature and evolution of literary computing from the disciplinary backdrop of French studies has necessitated the tracing of a number of boundaries: a selection procedure has dictated which works I draw on most frequently, not only based on how these works are made up, or how they operate and engage the reader, but also taking into account the language in which these works are written, the home country and creative/geographical context of the

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<sup>3</sup> "What is Electronic Literature?", <https://eliterature.org/about/>.

<sup>4</sup> For framing of Oulipo as an avant-garde movement, see Elkin and Esposito (2013), or for a more detailed situation of the group see Edward Lintz's (2000) section on the European avant-garde, in which Lintz discusses Oulipo as a neo-avant-garde movement, taking the aims of its predecessors "one step further."

<sup>5</sup> ALAMO - Atelier de littératures assistées par la mathématique et les ordinateurs. 8 Feb. 2018 <http://www.alamo.free.fr/pmwiki.php?n=Alamo.Historique>.

author, and the literary tradition from which these may or may not appear to stem. It might be argued that the Oulipo and Alamo's combinatoric poems, the "Rimbaudelaire," (Alamo, accessed 2018) illustrate how a work may be at once exploratory of computing and the digital, whilst maintaining a firm sense of literary tradition and of literature as a national practice associated with the language of writing and how past authors and poets have made use thereof. Enclosing the works in question — works of digital literature — through such an imposition of categorical delineations may be seen, in many respects, as running counter to the sprawling, international and multimedia context, and the equally multifarious and dispersed nature of the field from which these works are drawn.

Perhaps the most dissonant element of a categorical formulation such as 'French digital literature' is the suggestion that, at a time in which electronic literatures are mainly flourishing online, and are thus accessible, translatable and modifiable to reader/users the world over, such works might still be ascribed to an approximately national literary tradition or even a writing tradition that is anchored in the use of a single language, bearing all of the cultural echoes that such choices and formulations insinuate.<sup>6</sup>

### III. NATIONAL AND/OR DIGITAL?

Digital literary studies and the works on which these tend to focus are, however, rife with, if not also explicitly characterized by and concerned with, such ambivalences of belonging, including, but not limited to, the relationships of electronic texts to literary traditions and themes, and language affiliations, which are never neatly detachable from these.

One of the major, overarching themes and tasks of digital artworks and literatures, it might be argued, tends to be that of addressing both the costs and potential gains of the connectivity that allows for their diffusion and, conversely, the links that are necessarily broken in favor thereof, for instance with the constraining notion of the literary work as defined by prescriptive physical forms.

It is not so much the case, then, that digital works such as those that continue to appear today represent the finalized results of dissolutions of literary, linguistic and disciplinary boundaries, but rather these at once constitute and document this ongoing and tentative process of dissolution and reconfiguration,

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<sup>6</sup> Indeed, it is often the case that online works suggest the arbitrariness of the language selected at the outset, and it is frequently the case that the 'start' or introductory page of an online text offers the reader multiple versions of the work in three or more languages. These options represent roughly equal and alternative routes through the texts, rather than offering distinct versions thereof, each inflected with its own particular tradition of composition and language use. This apparent universality, of course, favours Western and majority languages, and as such English and Spanish tend to feature heavily. Serge Bouchardon's e-literature work, *Déprise* (2010), for example, is offered online in French, English and Italian versions. 8 Feb. 2018. <http://www.utc.fr/~bouchard/works/Déprise.html>.

finding in digital media a fertile ground in which the selective disaffiliations often entailed by the creation of multimedia works might be productively interrogated and enacted. The international texture of online works and the eclectic environments in which these literatures typically thrive, therefore, should not serve to invalidate these kinds of questions – those of correspondences in language and literature – but rather to render them all the more compelling.

As Sandy Baldwin (2010) notes in his preface to *Regards croisés: alternate perspectives on digital literature*, “...electronic culture is neither reducible to nor separable from national cultures” (xiv). There are, accordingly, practitioners of digital literature, such as Philippe Bootz or Jean Pierre Balpe, for instance, who work with a view to diffusing their texts through the international channels of digital poetry and e-literature, but who would nonetheless claim that certain aspects of or approaches to their works are typical of a specifically French tradition of digital creation.<sup>7</sup> I shall return to this in a moment through the exploration of a specific example. There are some critics who have argued for a European/American distinction or break within the field of digital literature, taking genre as the basis, and French works as paradigmatic of a European approach. In his article, “Digital Literature in France,” Serge Bouchardon paraphrases Alain Vuillemin, who in “Informatique et poésie” claimed that “poetry generated exclusively by computer remains a European phenomenon, and more specifically French.”<sup>8</sup> This suggestion that “national” digital literatures might be distinguished by genre is one that does not prove to be very satisfactory, entailing the production of more difficulties through such exclusions than actually constituting substantial, useful associations from such a grouping. To be sure, the U.S. tradition of digital literature has typically been more associated with hypertext: indeed, Michael Joyce’s 1987 hypertext, *Afternoon, a story*, is probably one of the most frequently cited examples not only of the genre of hypertext, but of electronic literature more generally. Europe, on the other hand, as claimed by Bouchardon via Vuillemin, has historically been linked with generated and animated e-lit works.

In Philippe Bootz’s article “The Functional Point of View,” the author specifically associates the automatic generator movement with Europe versus the verbose foil of the American hypertext. In spite of such arguments, French and French-language hypertexts do of course exist, though these lag a couple of years behind their American counterparts, and include notable works by François Coulon, Gregory Chatonsky, Lucie de Boutiny, and Anne-Sophie Brandenbourger (Bootz, 2006). Though, then, a categorical grouping of electronic literature cannot neatly be formed under such bases as genre, one of the advantages to be gained by grouping these texts together as “French” works is an

7 This is how Bootz (2005) presents the ‘esthétique de la frustration,’ for example.

8 This quote from Vuillemin’s “Informatique et poésie” is taken in fact from Serge Bouchardon’s article (2012), when he refers to Philippe Bootz’s observations on certain characteristics of ‘national’ digital texts, such as the specificity of text generation in the French tradition, and of hypertext in that of the United States.

ability to read these in light of their historical context and the surrounding material factors that may or may not have nourished certain aspects of the tradition.

One of the main lines of argumentation I adopt when writing of certain digital works as part of a “French” grouping concerns the particular, apparent failure or simple aloofness on the part of French publishing houses (and of course here I generalize, and omit mention of some minor, specialized agencies I write of elsewhere) to assimilate works of digital literature and accommodate their particular features.<sup>9</sup> Even nowadays, it would seem that digital literature is seen by most major French publishers as an exception to be nodded to once in a while, as occasional novelty appearances flecking a more reliable print output — I think here specifically of Mathias Malzieu’s work, *L’Homme Volcan* (2013), an animated text published jointly by Flammarion and Actialuna as “leur premier livre application sous forme de fiction adulte. [Their first application book in the genre of (adult) fiction.]”<sup>10</sup> Aside from this work, Flammarion’s other forays into the digital entail the creation of e-reader friendly versions of the publisher’s print output.<sup>11</sup> I have suggested that this failed emulsion of print and digital within the French publishing spheres has necessarily forced digital texts to find a grazing patch at some distance from the mainstream print literary culture, and indeed it might be observed that this has fruitfully pushed French works closer to the exhibition context, giving these texts some distinctive qualities.

One of the consequences of this disaffiliation from the print tradition might be seen in the resistance or tendency of French works to demonstrate a quality opposed to verbal effusiveness as part of their literary nature (contrasting with the more text heavy “American” hypertext) and in place of this, we can see a more verbally minimal and more creatively spatialised conception of works that typically contain lighter literal components, meditating more lengthily on how these fall within the space of operation and display of the work.

To be sure, then, French digital texts have found themselves situated closer to various other artistic traditions — to video art, or installation works, for instance — than to the literary tradition, practically from the very beginning of explorations with these forms, and this is a proximity that may still be observed today, with many artists in the French context, such as Sophie Calle (2008) and Annie Abrahams (2002), working on artistic projects in more conventional media as well as web-based texts of a more literary nature.

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9 Among these ephemeral publishers dedicated to French digital literature are Éditions Ilias, whose ‘Génération’ collection was founded in 1997, and the roughly contemporaneous publisher ‘Temps qui courent.’

10 This translation is mine.

11 One more recent example worth nothing is Éditions 00h00.com, a ‘maison d’édition entièrement en ligne,’ which has existed since at least 2000 and has published, among other texts, the definitive version of *Apparitions Inquiétantes* by Anne-Cécile Brandenbourger, printed under the title ‘La malédiction du parasol’: <http://www.00h00.com/>. Digital works seem nonetheless to be a relative rarity in 00h00 editions’ catalogue, with many digitised works outnumbering these.

## IV. THE ROLE OF EXHIBITIONS IN THE FRENCH CONTEXT

In my other writings on French digital literatures I have highlighted that, from the very beginning, literary works that involved the computer in their composition or display were introduced to the French public in the context of exhibitions and festivals, as opposed to in a format that could be taken home and read. Among these festivals, one of the first was the Europalia festival in Brussels, which took place in 1975 and thereafter the Journée "Écrivains, Ordinateurs, Algorithmes," which was held at the Centre Pompidou in 1977. Members of the Oulipo were present at both of these events, as well as being closely involved with their organization, and the oulipians ensured that examples of their programmed literatures were made available on these occasions, thus consultable to the exhibition visitors.

The version of Raymond Queneau's *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* [One hundred thousand billion poems], a book of permutational sonnets, which had been programmed by one of the Oulipo's most enthusiastic collaborators from the computing industry, Dmitri Starynkevitch, was first exhibited to the public at the Europalia festival in 1975, when readers were invited to generate unique sonnets dependent on the time of consultation of the programme and the letters of the reader's name.

In these early years, the French-speaking public was being introduced to interactive computerized works in the context of exhibitions, where they benefited from the presence of writers and experts who could accompany and advise upon their exploration of such texts.

While the prevalence of these exhibition spaces dedicated to exhibited literatures is noteworthy, it should also be noted that take-home forms designed for a private reading or "lecture privée" ("private reading") were nonetheless created, and that these contributed to the foundation and development of electronic literature in France in a significant way (Bootz, 2000). While electronic literature journals, such as *KAOS* and *alire*, which were released in the late 1980s and early 1990s on floppy discs — were later offered to readers —, museum and exhibition spaces have always proven to be fruitful venue for exploring the kinds of forms and works being produced by French e-lit practitioners. The 1985 exhibition *Les Immatériaux*, co-curated by Jean-François Lyotard and Thierry Chaput, is extremely interesting as an example of how electronic, collaborative, and networked literary works (including some compositions presented by the Alamo) were situated and considered within a broader exhibition on the subject of materiality and cultural production. Another useful, and slightly more recent, example is that of the *Espaces Interactifs Europe* exhibition, at which various types of interactive works were shown, including works by Philippe Bootz and Jean Dutey, and which took place at the Pavillon de Bercy in 1996.

These forms therefore did not develop in total independence from the templates and structures of traditional publishing and diffusion, but rather drew on

these as part of a wider array of measures taken to bring interactive and ultimately digital works to a French audience. This break that I suggest between e-lit and the print tradition in France is therefore not absolute, firstly, and secondly, its evocation does not affirm that current examples do not exist of writers who straddle the boundary between traditional and electronic literatures: Tim Catinat is one such example of a French writer who works both in print literature and in electronic forms, as well as producing graphic works and etchings.<sup>12</sup> One principal development in the field of French digital literature that may be observed since the 1980s, both in terms of exhibition and anthology formation, is the shift in focus from a national frame to more mobile forms of comparison and interaction. Of course, this is greatly assisted by the Internet as both a vehicle for transmission of texts and anthology formation.

This may be observed, for instance, in the inclusion of the French writer Serge Bouchardon's *Séparation* (2013) at a recent exhibition of digital literatures at the Paul Watkins Gallery of Winona State University in September–October 2016.<sup>13</sup> While, then, the Internet has vastly simplified questions relating to accessibility of digital works, this has also meant that the field has taken on a more international and enmeshed quality, including linguistically, as I demonstrated with the earlier example of Bouchardon's linguistically branched homepage, whereby works from various currents and countries may be easily consulted, read and analyzed regardless of the linguistic or geographical distance of the reader. It follows, then, that Bouchardon's work is exhibited along with nine other works of digital literature created by artists and writers from various places in the United States and Canada, and influenced by different traditions, without the work by Bouchardon needing any particular explaining as a 'French' exception: quite rightly, as an interactive work that may also be read in English, its inclusion represents no challenge to the integrity of the exhibition itself.

Digital works are also nowadays often encountered by readers in the mosaic-tile formats of online "exhibitions" and anthologies or galleries of works. The formation of anthologies of digital literatures has been unavoidably internationalized since the Internet has become such an accessible and convenient vehicle for makers of digital literature to publish their works. The collections compiled by the Electronic Literature Organization, for instance, an organization that produces anthologies of selected digital texts, thus takes the form of a homepage that consists of a juxtaposed offering of thumbnail links, each of which lead to individual works from a range of international digital literature projects and texts.

This menu, with its semblance of symmetry and order, thus in fact encompasses a range of texts that vary greatly in tone, content, aesthetics, scale, structure and reading mode required. Examining the *Electronic Literature Collection*,

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12 Tim Catinat, 8 Feb. 2018. <http://catinat.net/?lang=en>.

13 "You/I: Interfaces and Reader Experience." 8 Feb. 2018. <http://dco-wsuv.org/ELIT/you-i/index.html>.

Volume 3, a comprehensive anthology of e-literature published in 2016, we may notice an option to view the texts included by country.

This option to some degree demonstrates the continued presence of national context as not a single determinant for categorization but still one among the many axes of consideration that interweave these anthologies and works, as factors that partially determine some aspects of their reception, or may be taken into consideration when readers are choosing works to read and navigating the field.

Sandy Baldwin's statistics have shown that the 2016 *Electronic Literature Collection* anthology contains 114 works from 26 countries, which appear in 13 languages, demonstrating a significant broadening and diversification from the first anthology in 2006, which contained only 6 non-English language works, which at that time were all gathered together under the category of "multilingual," from a total of 64 works.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, the selection of the country filter when browsing the *Electronic Literature Collection* demonstrates the demotion of how recently the works have appeared in favour of where they have come from: the French works listed in the 2016 anthology may thus be seen to span a number of years. Works by the oulipians Paul Braffort and Marcel Bénabou, for instance, are included in the collection, and these date much further back than 2016.<sup>15</sup> Similarly with language, we notice that a German-language work by Alexandra Saemmer (2011), *Böhmische Dörfer*, is filed in the French section, presumably on account of its production in France.

#### V. ON THE POSSIBILITY OF PARTICULARLY FRENCH AESTHETICS

While, then, a totalizing association of genre with geographical area can only ever be tenable as a generalized designation of the main types of works arising from one context or other, we might next attempt to look at more specific elements of these works. One might attempt, finding the rough association of certain genres with certain geographical areas to be insufficiently neat, to attribute specific aesthetic tendencies to particular currents or groups of literature.

Though it cannot be argued that a distinct tradition of French digital literature exists, arguments have been made that distinctly French aesthetics and trends emerge from within the broader tradition of digital literature. Philippe Bootz, for instance, has presented the "esthétique de la frustration" as something of a French exception, that predominantly defines and characterizes

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<sup>14</sup> *Electronic Literature Collection, Vol. 1*. 8 Feb. 2018. <http://collection.eliterature.org/1/>. It is worth noting that 'country' does not exist as a viewing option at this point, but rather the reader may search by Author name, keyword, or title of the work.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Braffort's *Triolets* (2014) and Marcel Bénabou's *Dizains* (1985) both appeared in the *Electronic Literature Collection Vol. 3*, and both works demonstrate clear affiliations with Alamo's preoccupations, inherited from the Oulipo, with permutational compositions. These dates are representative of the final versions, and it is likely that Braffort's work in particular has much earlier origins than the provided date suggests.

French works, although, examining the definition thereof more closely, it cannot possibly be argued that this aesthetic is at work solely or even markedly in French texts in particular. Bootz defines the “aesthetics of frustration” in one case as follows:

L'esthétique de la frustration consiste à attribuer, dans le projet d'écriture, une valeur sémiotique à l'activité et aux réactions du lecteur. Autrement dit, à considérer que *l'activité de lecture elle-même, dans son aspect béhavioriste, fait partie du texte.* (Paloque-Berges, 2009)<sup>16</sup>

Elsewhere, in the 2006 article “Qu'apporte l'interactivité à la littérature numérique,” [What does interactivity contribute to digital literature?], Bootz makes a claim for the French origins of this aesthetic:

L'esthétique de la frustration est une forme numérique. Elle apparût en 1996 dans *Stances à Hélène* (Philippe Bootz et Marc Battier). Elle est aujourd'hui largement pratiquée par les auteurs français. Elle utilise la déception, la frustration, l'échec de lecture...du lecteur, autant de situations négatives que, d'ordinaire, un auteur tente d'éviter.<sup>17</sup>

Philippe Bootz has also argued that the French aesthetic has allowed for a linking and transcendence of genres: in “From Oulipo to Transitoire Observable: The Evolution of French Digital Poetry,” Bootz writes:

A coherent French aesthetics gradually developed, dealing with both real and imaginative behaviour of the device, with the relation between the text and other parts of the system, with the relationship between the work and the reader. In this new conception, hypertext, generation and animation were no longer different genres but different complementary facets of works. (Bootz, 2012)

I would argue that Bootz' envisioning of the role of this aesthetic linkage is too totalizing and ultimately does not allow for the fact that instances of this, furthermore, rather manifold aesthetic, might arise incidentally or indeed deliberately in works with little or no connection to the French digital tradition. Examining these definitions that are given of the “esthétique de la frustration” in different articles and works, it may certainly be argued that comparable effects have been employed in works external to the French tradition, such as Noah Wardrip-Fruin's text *Screen* (2002), a work created for the Cave simulator at Brown University.

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<sup>16</sup>“The aesthetic of frustration consists of attributing, in the project of writing, a semiotic value to the activity and to the reactions of the reader. Put differently, to consider that the activity of reading itself, in its behaviourist aspect, is part of the text.” (My translation).

<sup>17</sup>“The aesthetic of frustration is a digital form. It came into being in 1996 in *Stances à Hélène* (Philippe Bootz and Marc Battier). Today it is mainly practiced by French writers. It uses deception, frustration, failure of reading...of the reader, as many negative situations that, ordinarily, a writer tries to avoid.” (My translation). [https://www.olats.org/livresetudes/basiques/litterature-numerique/4\\_basiquesLN.php](https://www.olats.org/livresetudes/basiques/litterature-numerique/4_basiquesLN.php).

In the reader's experience of *Screen*, words begin to come loose and fall from the walls of the environment in which the text is read. The reader must physically replace the words, a task that is achievable for a certain period of time, before the words begin to accelerate, and a greater number thereof begin to fall simultaneously than before, reducing the reader's efforts to a hopeless scramble.

Though not inscribed within the explicit tradition of the aesthetic of frustration, then, a text such as *Screen*, produced outside the ken of the French tradition, may be clearly seen to engage with the same strategies of highlighting readerly participation. Though the "esthétique de la frustration" might be evoked as a critical point of reference in the analysis of such works, stemming from the French theoretical sphere relating to digital literatures, its identification or detection in works whose author is unknown, for example, may be scarcely taken as a guarantee that the work stems from the French tradition.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This article has explored some of the ways one might go about thinking and theorizing a distinctly French tradition of digital literature. What I hope to have demonstrated is that, aside from some advantages to such an approach in terms of historicizing the field and contextualizing older works, such a designation applied to present day works serves to close off otherwise useful considerations and comparisons. Digital literary works belong to a field that we, as analysts and readers, are constantly watching, perplexed, as it evolves. Already these works' manifestations may escape us, and so an attempt to think forward and anticipate the kinds of literary models the current works are prefacing would be immensely difficult.

Certainly, the national frame offers one fruitful way of considering the birth and development of earlier computer-assisted works, in terms of the material conditions of their emergence. Such an approach, however, should be recognized in its limited capacity as but one facet whereby such works might be considered, and, like the operative term in a hypertext, it leads us down one line of enquiry that is far from singular, definitive, or terminal.

It is on this note that I would like to close: we might speak of a French digital literature insofar as these search criteria do herald results, and insofar as an overlapping of these filter terms might offer us a selection from the more heterogeneous breadth of this expansive field of works. However, in line with the nature of electronic and digital literatures more generally as these are emerging today, creation as it is currently occurring in the field may be safely seen as unshackled from any one tradition, be it national, linguistic, literary, or aesthetic.

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