

Francophone literature in the digital age: language and style

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Abstract. The article is centered on the digital methods of representing a literary text. The aim of this article is to pinpoint the stylistic characteristics of new forms of narrative organization in the French-speaking sector of the Internet. The general scientific methodology of the research was formed by works on narratology (R. Barthes, M. Bakhtin, Y. Lotman) and text digitalization (S. Bouchardon), studies in the field of visual semiotics and polycode (U. Eco, J.-M. Klinkenberg, V.E. Chernyavskaya, etc.), as well as in the field of punctuation and graphic organization of visual prose (T.F. Semyan). This article analyses the stylistic features of a new model of writing by Francophone authors - online literary blogs and novels. This research contributes to the academic field of literature and digital technologies, broadening our comprehension of the stylistic aspects of new forms of narrative. The originality of the work lies in the fact that it examines the impact of the Internet on culture exclusively through the prism of literature and analyses new forms of text organization in the context of digital space. It was found that online writing not only creates new modes of expression, but also brings about changes in existing genres. Contemporary digital literature exists in the form of interactive and generative texts, visual poetry, online literary blogs and novels. The analysis showed that literary blogging promotes hybridization by intertwining genres inherited from print and digital formats. The analyzed online blogs and novels are characterized by fragmentation, non-linearity, hybridity, incompleteness, lack of a unified plot and visualization.

1 Introduction

As the most prevalent means of communication accessible to all users, the Internet has an influence on various sectors of society. Literature is not an exception.

Over the past three decades, computer technology and the Internet have led to the emergence of digital literature and significant transformations in 'paper' fiction texts. Since the first experiments with digital media in the 1990s, the Internet has become not only a platform of self-expression, an open domain where every word can be written and heard, but also a conducive space to all kinds of creative experimentation.

Presently, the Internet serves as a literary laboratory where a wide variety of narrative forms emerge and intermingle.

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The coexistence of 'paper' and electronic literary texts leads to the alteration of genres; such modifications can be primarily observed in the literary blogs of contemporary authors and in digital innovations that are novel and original forms of narrative: from sound experiments to film performances, from interactive interactions to short, labyrinthine formats.

The aim of the article is to identify the stylistic features of new forms of narrative organization in the French-speaking segment of the Internet.

2 Materials and methods

Due to the active integration of computer technologies with literature, resulting in new forms of narrative organization, there is currently a rise in researchers' interest in the functioning of the text in the new environment and in digital methods of representation of the literary text.

According to scholars, the penetration of digital technologies into the process of text creation allows us to talk about the advent of a new literary era [1].

Marcello Vitali-Rosati believes that under the influence of digital technologies, the status of text is undergoing serious changes. On the one hand, in the digital environment, text is ubiquitous: images, videos, objects and even actions become symbolic. On the other hand, the text itself generates other texts or actions [2].

Considering the relationship between literature and the digital world, J. Clément concludes that the problems arising are not limited to a simple transfer from one medium to another. The collision of text with image and sound leads to the emergence of new hybrid forms and interactive works. In addition, according to the author, online writing generates new ways of self-expression and brings about changes in existing genres [3].

A review of publications on the problem allows us to identify several research directions:

- The study of the phenomenon of network literature and the specificities of literary genres on the web [2-10];
- The identification of the role of hypertext [5] and visual and graphic features of digital texts [11];
- The consideration of hybrid practices that combine literature and visual arts (tactile digital poetry, the use of computer games and animation in the creation of digital literary works) [12, 13, 14]. [12, 13, 14].
- The analysis of the changes occurring in the printed literary text under the influence of Internet technologies [15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20].

The general scientific methodology of this study is based on the works on narratology (R. Barthes, M. Bakhtin, Y. Lotman) and digitalization of text (S. Bouchardon), on visual semiotics and polycode (U. Eco, J.-M. Klinkenberg, V.E. Chernyavskaya, etc.), as well as studies in the field of punctuation and graphic organization of visual prose (T.F. Semyan).

In this article the linguistic-semiotic analysis of digital texts and their stylistic interpretation were used.

The advent of computers, and subsequently the Internet, has indeed opened up many possibilities for the creation of texts and led to numerous literary experiments online, among which S. Bouchardon distinguishes hypertext narratives, kinetic (moving); 'algorithmic' and collective [6]. The classification proposed by J. Clément, includes generative writing (represented by 'factorial' and 'exponential' combinatorics), animated poetry and interactive works in the creation of which the reader takes an active part [3].

Analyzing the impact of digital technologies on the modern French text, A. Kornienko points out the hybrid and fragmentary nature of the modern French short story and raises the question of the birth of a new literary genre [17].

U. Ruiz also raises the question of the phenomenon of literature hybridization. Drawing a parallel between traditionally published 'paper' literature and new works that emerged

thanks to the Internet, the author concludes that these two types of literary production are closely related [10].

The discursive transformation of literature has manifested itself not only in the emergence of numerous literary experiments online, it has also touched the blog-diary, which under the influence of Internet discourse has turned into a new digital technology. A considerable amount of research has been devoted to the practice of blogging, from the perspectives of sociology, social psychology and literary studies.

According to A. Gefen, blogging is primarily a social act, directly or indirectly performative, which makes it difficult to fit into the defining criteria of 'literary literature': as a result, very few studies have established blogging as an independent literary genre [21].

The researcher posits that this meta- or non-traditional form exists outside the normative or intertextual tradition and resides at the periphery of the literary field.

Comparing literary blogs to rhizome, I. Escolin-Contensou considers them as a network working environment when they transform into a means of literary writing [7].

The digital works of Francophone writers using the resources of computer technologies and models of communication in the Internet environment are chosen as the object of research of this article.

3 Results and Discussion

Prior to the inception of the Internet, the utilization of the playful and creative possibilities of hypertext links attracted writers, as with hypertext navigation, the text is no longer merely readable, it becomes visible. From the very beginning of its existence, the Internet has been a medium in which new literary forms or genres have been born and developed: animated or kinetic poetry, interactive and generative texts.

The analyses have demonstrated that digital works are completely transforming the notion of reading. For example, the Dreadbox project (<https://thedigitalreview.com/issue00/dreadbox/begin.html>) invites the reader to choose among several possible narrative options, each leading to alternative stories and endings. In this case, the reader determines the narrative, which is multiplied tenfold thanks to the multitude of possibilities offered.

J. Clément considers the main function of digital literature to be human [12: 77]. Using the example of the generative novel "Trajectoires", he shows that the reader's goal is not to learn the story, but to reach its end. Therefore, digital literature has much in common with paraliterature and play.

Navigations is a literary experiment proposed by M. Vitali-Rosati on his website (and later a book published on Publie.net). It is a journey in the footsteps of a character named Eugène who wants to meet his lover Anita in Toronto. The short texts deal with themes such as identity, love, friendship, mystery, immigration, freedom, literature, and film. According to the author, writing is about wandering and structuring space. There are no more stories, only travelling, no more maps, only navigation. The game is like a matryoshka doll, where each fragment is connected to the previous one. The rules of the game include, firstly, time constraints: one text per day, posted at 21:00 GMT, for one year. Secondly, formal structures: a daily text volume of 1000 characters, dictated by the time required for reading and the ability to view the text on the screen without scrolling.

Text adventure games, called 'interactive fiction,' give everyone a chance to enter a world of entertainment with a range of possibilities.

Digital literary workshops have also been set up on Publie.net and <https://www.liminaire.fr/>.

At present, the term 'digital literature' encompasses a range of narrative forms, including writers' blog sites.

A blog site is characterized by a combination of verbal (text, hypertext) and non-verbal (images, sound, video) content, and interactivity with the reader (who can post, comment and exchange views with the blogger).

For instance, in his blog "Refonder blog notes d'écriture", F. Griot has been publishing his personal writing notes for over twenty years. Each week the author posts a new entry, and from this, a narrative of his literary passion gradually emerges. This type of digital book embodies the paradox of 'an unfinished book that you stop at some point' [8].

In the following fragmentary note:

le site est un corps : matière et chair, mouvement et poussée et respiration, siège de lang, mais désormais plus seulement posée, déposée, mais actée, dite, soufflée, respirée.
le site, et son corollaire : environnement sonore et visuel/graphique, n'accompagnent pas le texte (ce texte qui reste toujours la recherche et production centrale) mais le portent là où il s'avance. il n'y a pas illustration mais corps avec.
alors peut-être ces blocs de mouvement durée pourraient accueillir, faire corps avec cette vie animée de la lang soufflée respirée.

The author draws a comparison between the website and the body, comprising of matter and flesh, movement and breath, where the sound and visual environments do not merely accompany the text but carry it, becoming 'one with this animated life of breathing language.'

An example of how the web modifies literary codes is "Désordre", a website designed by Philippe De Jonckheere [22], which is a hypermedia work with a hybrid structure. Navigating through the maze involves 27 cells, each linked to a specific part of the site using a random script. This creates a randomized way of travelling that will prevent a visitor from visiting "Désordre" twice in a row, resulting in the site undergoing a constant, unceasing metamorphosis.

The home page of the site captures attention with its unusual aspect, something between a comic book and a draft. However, it is in fact a labyrinthine narrative, reminiscent of the tree-like organization of a hard drive and allowing one to jump to different pages with photos, sketches or the novel "La Cible". By fragmenting the blog into each of its posts, through the play of hypertext, the reader is referred to elements beyond the original blog.

The specificity of the visual and graphic design of this novel, written in the form of an online diary whose author has decided to pass away, lies not only in the way the novel is presented as a blog, but also in the use of planar, typographic and color variation, the use of hypertext links and the inclusion of iconic elements in the text [11].

For instance, in the text fragment dated 30 September 2003, color variation becomes the main means of visualization, creating a semiotic image that is not conveyed verbally. The first sentence of the text "Je me suis mis à boire" is printed in font size 96 and in orange color.

As the author details his binge and the procedure of mixing orange juice and gin (reducing the amount of juice and increasing the amount of gin each morning), the color of the letters becomes increasingly pale and the font size decreases to 8. The invisible text ends with a warning about the danger of taking into account the drunkard's reasoning for turning juice into gin and vice versa. Such visualization acquires a playful character.

Adapted to the peculiarities of the Internet, this textual and visual work enriches our understanding of the web and opens new avenues for the development of digital literature.

Blog-based books are a characteristic feature of the information technology age. One of the pioneers in this field was François Bon with his novel "Tumulte".

While working on a project that focused on digital photography, the writer had the idea to write an online work that included fictional stories and memories. Thus came the literary website tumulte.net, which served as the basis for the book with 225 unrelated pieces. Currently, the writer's literary website Tiers Livre, web & littérature is a platform for numerous literary experiments.

I. Escolin-Contensou considers blogs as a writer's online working environment, which is used as a medium for literary writing [7]. Blogs are favored by such French authors as E. Chevillard, A. Veinstein, V. Rilos, etc.

Written in a humorous manner, E. Chevillard's minitexts are a mixture of absurdity with irony and benevolent humor. In network blogs, real facts and fiction are intertwined, and the author himself is the protagonist of the fictional narrative [23].

According to researchers of E. Chevillard's work, the writer is characterized by soft irony and excellent humor, hiding the author's philosophical view of the problems of modernity.

The irony of the post of 12 February 2015 is expressed by antithesis: millions of charming young women bent over their phones are contrasted with one single woman reading an art magazine dedicated to the Pre-Raphaelites:

Des jeunes femmes au profil de médaille, inclinées doucement, le front pensif, plissant les lèvres en une moue charmante, une mèche de cheveux caressant leur joue, il y en a beaucoup, il y en a par centaines des millions de milliers, partout, mais elles sont penchées sur leur téléphone. Alors quand vous en surprenez une soudain dont l'activité ne dément pas cette gracieuse attitude puisqu'elle lit une revue d'art consacrée aux préraphaélites, l'émotion est grande.

Fragmented writing is not a novel concept, as it is characteristic of many styles and genres. However, the limited amount of text on social media and authors' blogs have contributed to its widespread use. R. Audet notes that most digital writing resorts to short or fragmented prose precisely because of the limitations imposed by the platforms used [4]. For instance, the style of A. Veinstein's book "Cent Quarante signes", built in the form of an online blog that does not require a clear storyline, is fragmentary and concise. Additionally, messages in the form of SMS on V. Rilos's site (100 caractères (espaces compris) can be considered as an analogue of a writer's notebook [20].

The book S. Ménard's "Soleil gasoil", published on diafragm.net in the form of travelling notes, contains images inspired by the road, sensations from sounds and smells during journeys and fragmentary memories [24].

The next paragraph consists of fragments - individual frames reflecting the narrator's thoughts and memories: the seashore, the waves, the cries of birds, the ship.

Je suis sur la côte — je suis au bord de la mer — je vois la mer — je vois les vagues s'écraser dans la mer — j'entends l'eau s'écraser dans la mer — j'entends l'écume qui mousse sur le sable je vois l'eau — elle est aspirée par le sable je vois le ciel au loin j'entends la mer il y a des cris c'est des oiseaux — je suis sur la côte — je suis au bord de la mer — je regarde au loin je vois l'horizon — l'horizon se départage assez facilement entre la mer en bas et le ciel en haut — la zone entre les deux est un peu floue sans doute — je suis sur la côte — il y a un navire un grand bateau là-bas — ce n'est pas vrai mais je l'écris j'entends le va-et-vient des eaux sales du navire à l'intérieur des grandes cuves — j'entends quelque chose c'est un rythme régulier tanker et rien n'est vrai.

The visualization of the fragment is achieved through the use of dashes, which create the vividness of the picture and emphasize details. Such fragmentation of the narrative correlates' photography and reality, writing and snapshot. Stylistically, such fragmentary prose is characterized by imagery. The reader who is offered a fragmentary text often begins to involuntarily perceive it as a whole, to see connections between disparate fragments, to perceive the development of situations and plots.

4 Conclusion

The opportunities afforded by the digital environment have led to the emergence of new forms of narrative organization. Networked writing not only generates new modes of expression, but also leads to changes in existing genres. Contemporary digital literature exists in the form of interactive and generative texts, visual poetry, online literary blogs, and novels.

Literary blogging promotes hybridization by interweaving genres inherited from print and digital formats. The analyzed online blogs and novels are characterized by fragmentation, non-linearity, hybridity, incompleteness, lack of a unified plot and visualization.

The popularity of literary blogs is related not only to their brevity, but also to the active role of the reader and his ability to engage in the game of decoding the text.

Thus, the study is a relevant scholarly contribution that enriches our understanding of the development of literature in the digital age and underscores the importance of analyzing changing narrative styles in the online environment.

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