

# Mapping Digital Literature in Europe

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Digital literature, also referred to as e-literature, short for electronic literature – refers to a wide range of approaches to literature all having in common the prominent and crucial use of computers and digital technologies. Digital Literature does not concern digitalization of printed works, it relates to digital texts - i.e. digital born.

If it is true that every medium develops its own narrative structure, it is also true, from a narratological point of view, that the same medium type could spawn different products for instance, the book and the newspaper (Ryan, 2004).

In this speech I would like to relate some of the results of my ongoing project on digital literature. The project is an interdisciplinary and multilingual study of digital creative practices of literature. The goal of this project is a two-fold goal. On the one hand the aim of the project is to establish and define the characteristics and forms assumed by literature due to the impact of the new technologies; it observes if, how, and to what extent the new devices affect narrative and poetic construction. And on the other, it is to map out these new creative productions in Europe.



Figure 1: Example of digital literature – Serge Bouchardon and Vincent Volckaert, *Déprise*, (2010)

The project focuses only on European internet-based creative narrative and poetic practices, giving particularly attention to gender aspects. This choice is due to the fact that while there are several ongoing studies analysing or archiving digital literature in different European countries, a comparative studies of digital literary creations in Europe is still missing as well as a sustained analysis of digital literature from the perspective of gender is lacking.

The corpus will be selected in six languages: English, French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Catalan. The selection will be based on the following criteria: a) European diversity: to represent a broad cross-section of authors from different European cultures; b) formal diversity: to represent a broad sampling of approaches to electronic literature; c) historical relevance.

The project is located in the ambit of critical theory, culture studies, semiotics, comparative literature, gender studies, and informatics. Due to the fact that digital literature is a new field of research, critics are still seeking context-specific analysis criteria. According to K. Hayles (2007),

scholars need to recognise the specificity of this new media without abandoning the rich resources of traditional modes of understanding language, signification, and embodied interactions with texts. In order to approach the project both qualitative and quantitative research methods are used. Besides proposing "close reading" of electronic literature using digital hermeneutics (Simanowski, 2011; Di Rosario, 2011) rhetoric tools (Bouchardon, 2008, 2011; Saemmer, 2015) I will also approach European Digital Literature through the lens of "distant reading" (Middleton, 2005; Moretti, 2013), i. e. understanding literature not by studying particular texts (close reading), but by aggregating and analysing massive amounts of data in order to get a global view on how digital literature is produced in Europe.

## References

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