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Platform Intermediality

Giterature and the Anti-book

Servanne Monjour and Nicolas Sauret

Abstract

What do we mean by “digital literature”? How does the concept of digital literature differ from that of electronic literature, and how can it contribute to (re)defining contemporary literature? The chapter draws on two emblematic platform-related case studies: *twitterature* and *giterature*. The platformization of literature in these cases should not be understood as either dismissal of the computational skills typical of the first and second generations of electronic literature, or a third generation’s loss of any aesthetic drive, but rather as dislocation of literariness to the effect of foregrounding digital literature as a concept in its own right, revisited here within the conceptual framework of intermediality.

Introduction

At the turn of the 21st century, the advent of Web 2.0 resulted in a massive supply of digital technologies, with the combined effect of better access to devices (less expensive, more compact, and designed for individual uses), to the Web (with its wider, cheaper, and faster coverage), as well as to publishing tools (thanks to the emergence of CMS¹ and social media requiring minimal technical skills). This marked a shift toward a full-fledged digital *culture* which, beyond the technological, involves a host of conceptual mutations as well (Doueïhi). In the field of electronic literature, where authority is partly based on computer skills, the development of writing platforms raises many questions. What credit can be given to a work conceived on popular platforms which, like WattPad, have developed their promotional discourse around an ideal of emancipation from computer skills?² What about literary writing published on social media (Twitter, Youtube...) whose primary function is neither aesthetic nor poetic? Last but not least, should we beware of the “platformization effect” generally described as going beyond the literary (Poell et al.; Bullich; Gillespie)? Could it be considered as a new form of publishing monopoly, even though some platforms have already given their name to forms of literary writing—*twitterature*, *literatureTube*, *auto-biography*? Are these practices still part of electronic literature in the strict sense of the word,³ or do they belong to the broader field of what has been widely called in French criticism “*littérature numérique*” (digital literature) (Bouchardon; Gervais; Guilet)?

In this chapter, we will analyze the main conceptual and aesthetic issues of what we call “platform-literature” also identified by Leonardo Flores as a third generation (also called “third wave”) of electronic literature—after a first generation marked by hypertextual practices that preceded web-based writing and then a second generation of writings favoring multimedia and interactivity.⁴ First presented at the 2018 ELO conference in Montreal, Flores’s approach has gone deeper and deeper into the relevant phenomena ever since. In 2019, Flores summarizes the difference between the second and third generations as follows:

The 2nd generation seeks originality and formal innovation while 3rd generation is exploring existing forms, established platforms, and interfaces. In 2nd generation works readers must learn how to operate them—to the extent that many works feature instructions and many books about electronic literature, feature explanations on how to read works of e-lit (such as Funkhouser’s *New Directions in Digital Poetry*). In 3rd generation works, readers are already familiar with the interface and genres and the works don’t usually seek to challenge that established training because it reduces readership. This is why works from the 2nd generation are published in websites and that readers must go visit with their computer frequently

needing plugins to access the work, while 3rd generation works seek to reach audiences where they already are with computationally simpler works. Perhaps the most significant difference is in the line between digital modernism and postmodernism and their respective affinity to (highbrow) literary culture and (lowbrow) popular culture.

(Flores)

In this chapter, we wish to examine more closely this “3rd generation” of e-lit where platforms and their *dispositifs*⁵ are brought to play an essential role in the construction of the narratives and their poetics. Departing from Flores’s work, we propose to examine the distinctive features of this new generation through the concept of intermediality (Larrue and Vitali-Rosati; Méchoulan; Rajewsky; Müller), which covers both a theoretical and a methodological approach. By breaking away from the canonical definitions of electronic literature, we will study the stakes of this platform-based writings through the lens of a (inter)media-turn in literature, underpinned in its turn by the *contemporary paradigm* established in the field of visual arts (Goldsmith). Our approach attempts to go beyond the traditional opposition between modernity and post-modernity, and it concurs with a theoretical trend that is increasingly gaining traction in French literary studies, where the “contemporary paradigm” of literature knows a growing interest (largely influenced by Anglo-Saxon criticism). Like the corpora we are going to present in this chapter, our theoretical and methodological tools have been developed over the last 20 years in French-speaking criticism (especially in France, Quebec, and Belgium), where they have allowed literary studies to renew themselves, by surveying new territories beyond those of the printed book (Mougin; Ruffel; Nachtergaeel; Gefen and Perez; Gervais).

Therefore, from now on, we will strictly distinguish e-lit and digital literature.

Indeed, the concept of electronic literature hasn’t been successfully used in French theory, which prefers the expression “digital literature” (*Littérature numérique*). This choice can be explained by two reasons at least. First, very few French writers or artists claim to practice e-lit. We can, of course, mention the very important work of Jean-Pierre Balpe, Philippe Bootz, Serge Bouchardon, or even Alexandra Saemmer, but there’s not a French e-lit community: more exactly, there are French writers and artists who belong to the international e-lit community. Secondly, in French, the adjective “numérique” (translated by digital) massively occupied both the field of French theory and common usage. Thus, when Serge Bouchardon published one of the first books written in French dedicated to digital literature (in which he talks about e-lit), he entitled it *La valeur heuristique de la littérature numérique* (*Heuristic value of digital literature*).

But we can also argue, with Marcello Vitali-Rosati, that the expression “digital literature” comes with a normalization of digital tools and emphasizes a cultural shift:

A few years ago, the definition of electronic literature focused on the tools used to produce literary works, and critical analyses concentrated on objects produced with new technologies. The shift to the adjective “digital” [numérique] has brought about a change in perception: nowadays, we refer more to a cultural phenomenon than to technological tools and, from this perspective, the challenge is no longer to study literary works, but to understand the new status of literature in the digital age.

(Vitali-Rosati)

In other words, the concept of digital literature shifts the focus from computer literacy to digital literacy, understood as an expertise in the (digital) contemporary culture. Therefore, digital literature stands inclusively for the digitally produced and published literary practices. It does include e-lit practices, yet proposes another perspective on its three generations.

The first corpus we will study is called *twitterature*. As its name indicates, *twitterature* includes all the writings (poetic, autobiographical, fictional...) produced and published on the social media platform Twitter—now renamed X. Broadly speaking, *twitterature* belongs in what we have previously called “profile-writing,” a term coined to designate literary practices that question social platforms (Monjour), whether in formal ways (through a game played with the writing constraints of the platform) and/or in critical terms (self-mediation, personal data, digital identity, etc.). We will show how much these instances of “profile-writings,” whose legitimacy is still debated in the field of electronic literature, engage digital expertise that is probably more cultural and social than truly computer-based. Whereas literary value has long been played out at the level of coding mastery as a form of poetic writing in electronic literature (eliciting critical approaches such as the ones in critical code studies), these new writing practices pave the way for a literarity informed by a more complex literacy, one involving a more comprehensive cultural and even political awareness. We will then focus on a second corpus, which will allow us to present a new “genre” of digital literature: *giterature*, named for the software and protocol Git shared by several platforms (GitLab, GitHub, etc.) traditionally occupied by communities of programmers, but recently sought for by literary communities as well. While Flores calls at the end of his article to think about the relationship between the third generation and its predecessors,⁶ our analysis of *giterature* envisages for its part to draw a link between platform-based writing and a sharp kind of digital literacy involving the mastery of many if not all layers of digital writing (Petit and Bouchardon), from the one of the code to the one of the interface.

Could “non-e-lit(ist)” Practices Be the Future of Digital Literature? For an Alternative Conceptual Framework

Could we consider “(non-)e-lit” practices as the future of digital literature? Far from mere quipping, such probing aims first of all at questioning the criteria of literarity that have been formulated since the 1990s in institutionalizing electronic literature, notably in academia. It will also occasion stating the field in which we are operating, as the matters at hand relate more to *digital* literature rather than *electronic* literature. But before detailing that distinction, let us elucidate the epistemological stakes of our research question.

Questioning the value of digital writings constitutes a somewhat risky challenge: why indeed run the risk of falling into the essentialist trap set by the concept of “literarity”⁷ whose criteria seem so difficult to define? First of all, we must recognize the topicality of a problem that has caused tension in the field of contemporary literature, more specifically digital literature, as the latter is still seeking legitimization despite several decades of existence. For a researcher looking into experimental poetics, publishing, and transmedia experiments of the digital era, the question of literarity cannot be framed by an epistemological reflection to begin with. Indeed in the print paradigm, traditional authority plays a fundamental role in legitimating writings, even long before a work gets to be analyzed by academics. Quite on the contrary, in digital environments, many of those instances of authority are no longer relevant. Therefore, our work on contemporary corpora strongly contributes to its institutionalization—just as we seek, for ourselves, a form of legitimization in an academic context whose borders are still, despite everything, relatively strict. This corpus is quite ephemeral and fragile. We regularly lose whole sections of it for very diverse reasons: technical obsolescence, a writer’s oversight who did not renew a domain.... This phenomenon has repercussions on our own work, as we focus on contemporary literature, significant portions of which can turn out quite short-lived.

Researchers, librarians, and cultural institutions are well aware of the need to find appropriate solutions to archive and index this literary heritage from the early days of the digital age. But what will be the validity of this heritage in 50 or 100 years? Will it be studied for its literary qualities, or will it bear witness to a moment of technological transition and media exploration? How many of us

have actually read Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story*? Such questions plead for an epistemological work on the methodological, theoretical, and critical approaches of digital literature and even e-lit. An essential part of the relevant epistemological debate refers in fact to the influence of the technical medium, or more precisely the value that we—researchers or researchers-creators—assign to a literary work's technical facet. The latter has garnished substantial attention in digital—and particularly electronic—literature criticism and theory via approaches whose very names embody this preoccupation: critical code studies, software studies, and platform studies. These approaches, by focusing on what is obviously one of the most salient features of these literary practices, namely, a fundamentally computerized form of writing, tend however to draw the reader's attention to the technical aspects of such literary works—to the point of closely equating literarity with technicality. The bias is regularly underlined by the authors themselves, as we can see for instance in the following excerpt from "Digital Literature Is Dead," by the French writer Thierry Crouzet:

In the nineteenth century, did we organize symposium on "the author in the age of the carved quill," or "in the age of the Sergent-Major quill" (1856) or the typewriter (1872)? No one had such a crazy idea. To speak of authors in the digital age, of digital authors or digital literature locks us up, suffocates us, tears us away from the field of literature. We exclude ourselves from it, and for good reasons we almost never mix with those who are not of our parish. This self-enclosure, of which I cannot accuse the academics since we are ourselves the first culprits, leads the analysts to speak about our status as authors, our publishing and promotion strategies, and at times even the way we work, but almost never about our texts. It seems that we don't write, it seems that those who talk about our work never read us.

(Crouzet)

The approach we propose, grounded in intermedial studies, does not oppose this technical perspective, it simply recalibrates it, by adopting a radically anti-essentialist view on technology, and on any medium in general. The intermedial approach could be literally defined as thinking the *in-between* that imposes to de-essentialize media and to understand them as dynamic feeding off technical modalities of previous and contemporary media as well as of publishing, writing, social, and community practices, be they ancient or contemporary. This idea is in particular at the origin of the concept of "mediating conjunctures" forged by Jean-Marc Larrue and Marcello Vitali-Rosati as breaking free from "an essentialized vision of the phenomenon of mediation" (Larrue and Vitali-Rosati 52) and foregrounding mediations as "moving combinations" conjunct with mediatic interrelations.

For the technical aspect is undoubtedly not the only one to raise issues in defining digital literary writing. The use of the term "literature" and, to a greater extent perhaps, the established disciplinary term "literary studies," may also prove problematic. The main difficulty is likely first and foremost purely institutional. As far as we are concerned, it is primarily a question of advocating openness, both of the literary phenomenon and of its study. The very choice of the expression "literary phenomenon" is indicative of a will to understand the diversity of literary productions in a transversal way, by binding together features as heterogeneous as the stylistic, the mediatic, the semiotic, the technical, the sociological, the economic, and so on and so forth. It is therefore a question of taking into account the "énonciation éditoriale"⁸ of literary objects, and particularly their mediatic enunciation.

A first reframing (or "breaking open") of the concept of literature therefore, revisited as literary phenomenon, would invite adopting the current theoretical and methodological purviews sensitive to the various (sociological, mediatic, semiotic, etc.) conditions of existence and production of texts over those advocating an immanent approach to corpora (seen as text only). The opposition is obviously somewhat caricatural: in the history of literary criticism, the dividing line is far from being that clear.⁹ One needs nevertheless to take into account the notable influence exerted by the formalist

and then post-structuralist heritage in literary studies, where we note a tendency to over-value the text, even in the very definition of literature and the practice of the discipline. And if one pleads for a transitive concept¹⁰ of literary phenomena, the latter still remains quite often cloistered in the domain of language, seen as works of language and style only, and impervious to other—e.g., material or institutional—elements. At the same time, we cannot but notice a related partitioning—that also needs to be surmounted, “broken open”—in an established definition of electronic literature. In a foundational theoretical contribution to the field of hypermedia studies, that Flores draws on to introduce his concept of a third generation of e-lit, Katherine Hayles defines electronic literature by its capacity to be performed by the machine. If the *dispositif*-related dimension of literary objects gets in the focus then the formalist influence may actually not be that far behind, and we agree on this issue with Philippe Bootz who has noted the relevant transition “from a textual structural literarity to a literarity bound to the device of communication:”

We can also examine them under the angle of the device of communication and look at the new situations of communication that these productions propose. This aspect is particularly instructive because the fundamental specificity of computer literature does not reside in its screen or multimedia character, a character that video or opera have explored elsewhere, but in the singularity of the device of creation/reading that it establishes. Asking such question implies a displacement of the status of literature. Starting from a structuralist approach focusing on the forms of the text, literature, now understood as *dispositif*, has move to a systemic approach.

(Bootz)

While presupposing a *dispositif*-based definition of electronic literature, this conception, widely shared by the e-lit research community, has paradoxically tended to replace the critical discourse on text with one on code, at the risk of instituting a new formalism. Indeed, pointing at a “displacement” of literature then became necessary in demarcating these new writing practices from other more “traditional” literary outputs, disseminated in print. The latter has in fact become a largely transparent medium, whose poetic potential is hardly explored anymore. Flores himself, in his argument regarding the third generation, operates with such a definition:

I define electronic literature as a writing-centered art that engages the expressive potential of electronic and digital media. Even though it has origins in oral culture, particularly poetry, literature as an artistic tradition and field of study has been shaped for centuries by writing and print technologies.

(Flores)

In a recent article, Marcello Vitali-Rosati underlines the problem posed by these first definitions of electronic literature which function at first by exclusion. He thus pleads for an opening of “electronic” literature, which must already be requalified as “digital” literature, and even reintegrated into “literature” as a whole:

Joining the theses of Dylan Kinnett and Paul LaFarge, Gefen asserts that it is not possible to define digital literature in opposition to the rest of literature, but rather that it must be understood by inserting it into the continuity of literary practices. In this sense, rather than talking about “digital literature,” focusing on the technological tools used for the production and reception of literary works, we should talk about “literature in the digital age.” This very inclusive approach has the advantage of making it possible to take into account a whole series of literary practices that do not fit into the more exclusive definition of the electronic literature organization, but which nevertheless have a growing presence and impact in the contemporary literary panorama. In particular, all forms of writing that could be defined as

“homothetic” to paper, such as short stories published on blogs or other online platforms, or novels that circulate exclusively in digital form, but which, because of their format, could just as easily be distributed in printed form without losing any of their specificity.

(Vitali-Rosati)

Marcello Vitali-Rosati’s proposal thus encourages a third “breaking open:” that of the definition of the *digital*, whose cultural and not-only-technological facets need to be highlighted. This acknowledgment of a “cultural” dimension of the digital, which Vitali-Rosati borrows from Milad Doueihi, is of essential relevance to the demonstration that follows. Digital literary practices require a *dispositif*-based critical approach, by taking into account digital culture, that is to say, the overall conditions of the process of production, distribution, and also legitimization of those literary works. Such conditions include the technical features of the writing tool, its cultural or economic connotations, the institutional conditions of dissemination of the literary works, their legal classification, etc. The next step will involve the intermedial analysis whereby one will first dwell on the relevant—mediatic—dimension of the digital literary work at hand; once again, media in a resolutely anti-essentialist acceptance, as a conjuncture of technical, esthetic, and political aspects, practices, and know-how, as well as the individual and collective imaginary.

Twitterature, LiteraTube autoBlography: Questioning the Platformization of e-lit

Thinking within a digital-culture framework can help to grasp what is really at stake in the platformization phenomenon pointed out by Flores.

Social media have been widely used and explored over the past 20 years by established authors of electronic literature and other writers alike, within as well as outside the e-lit community. While some of them already had writing and publishing backgrounds (mostly in rather traditional settings), digital writing platforms also gave birth to numerous new voices; and Flores does indeed underline the importance of amateur communities within this third wave. Although the explicit purpose and utility of social media are obviously more informational and communicational rather than literary, they have been widely frequented by such writers for their simplified writing, publishing, and broadcasting features. This phenomenon, marking a significant evolution in literary practices, requires a different critical approach than the one usually deployed in tackling previous chapters of e-lit. More often than not, these new practices involve no computer programming.¹¹ While coding literacy (instrumental for instance in automatic text and multimedia generation or web-based creativity) was a mainstay of first- and second-generation e-lit, it is no longer a prerogative of these writers who in the meantime rely on the above-mentioned platform interfaces and the in-built algorithms thereof. These new forms necessitate new literariness assessment criteria, and it is the critic’s job to come up with the latter.

The best example of this shift is the Wattpad platform, designed for amateur writers, which has built its reputation and its communication strategy on the already mentioned promise of technical simplification: “don’t think, just write.” This slogan echoes previous discourse in the history of technology, notably in photography, as Kodak once urged users to “press the button, we do the rest.” Such a catchline had the merit of implicitly advocating opening up photography to a mass audience, but that came at a significant cost for photography, since it had already been suspected for decades of being an artless technique requiring no particular skill. As a response to such concerns with authority and legitimation, typically related to significant media transition, most digital platforms attach algorithmic or community-based evaluation and recommendation to their writing and publication spaces. These features contribute largely to the construction of users’ authority or social capital. In this context, the academic work of description and analysis of those emerging literary practices can

propose a critical alternative to these dispositifs of authority, and legitimate authors who take the risk of exploring forms and spaces miles away from institutionalized canons.

Several neologisms have been coined in the last decade to designate these hybrid literary practices. Many of them draw on the very platform names: e.g., twitterature (poetry, fiction, autobiographical pieces posted on Twitter), literaTube (literature filmed and broadcast via a Youtube channel (Bonnet)), autoblography (self-narrative published on a blogging or microblogging platform), etc.¹²

These diverse and formally inventive practices call for several remarks. Giving up programming skills—since no longer necessary—does not imply giving up esthetics, but rather challenging literarity. Whereas Philippe Bootz has identified a new literarity in the code and the programming informing the works of the first and second e-lit generations, in the case of platform writing, one can speak of a certain kind of cultural literariness. The latter refers to having a deep familiarity with digital culture, particularly the ability to tap into, and play with, the cultural patterns of these platforms and their recommender systems and algorithms more generally. Since fundamentally social, these platforms require “écranvains”¹³ to be particularly knowledgeable of, and able to put to use, their new digital social realities and their relevance to aspects such as the dynamics of legitimation or performativity’s impact on writing and the textual output per se.

Formally internalizing such realities and modalities in writing presupposes a knowledge of the technical, semiological, and epistemological dimensions of these platforms seen as a new literary space. In spite of the promised simplicity, platforms cannot claim to have the mediatic transparency that new media and media theories often boast (Bolter and Grusin). The authors-artists willingly adopt (or rather play along with) that simplicity/transparency to just immediately twist the platform’s social and cultural codes as part of their creative endeavor. An estrangement effect is at stake, whose subversiveness invites questioning the platform and its algorithmic governance in particular. We could thus characterize the 3rd e-lit generation by a dislocation of literariness toward a reflection on the social, political, and cultural implications of the “general public” digital tools.¹⁴

How does this platform-literature manifest itself in concrete terms? Let’s examine for instance the case of twitterature, understood, evidently, as writings produced and disseminated on (and for) Twitter.

In his publication, Flores¹⁵ devotes a long passage to the bots currently swarming on Twitter. This example however, as relevant as it may be, still speaks to earlier e-lit practices and, specifically, definitions of the field involving computer programming carried out by the author(s) as an integral part of the writing per se.

The techniques for creating them are not very different from bots in earlier generations, but rather than creating custom datasets, programmers are pulling or processing content from API services or using user-friendly platforms like the Twinery-powered Cheap Bots Done Quick! Rather than being standalone custom experiences, these bots leverage social media networks as contexts and spaces to develop audiences. For example, when you’re on Twitter, a bot might react artistically to something you posted, such as @HaikuD2 or @Pentametr0n, which detect tweets that could be cut into haiku or happen to be written in iambic pentameter, respectively. While there are more people with the programming skills necessary for bot-making, services like CBDQ and Zach Whalen’s SSBot tool have lowered the barrier to entry, which magnifies the production of works in this vein.

(Flores)

As we can see, programming skills remain at the heart of the practice presented by Flores, for whom the interest of the platform resides first of all in the new economic and distribution paradigm specific to Web 2.0:

Third generation works respond to new markets, platforms, and monetization possibilities and have developed without the need for academia and its validation. [...] An aesthetic of difficulty would undermine the very spreadability and commercialization paradigms that help 3rd generation works thrive. And as Kirschenbaum provocatively stated in his keynote, “maybe what matters is the continued growth and diversification of an e-lit that is not dependent on whatever contradictions or complications attend its status in relation to an academic valuation of the avant-garde” (Kirschenbaum 7).

(Flores)

It appears to us, however, that twitterature is not necessarily computational, in the sense that the text is not necessarily generated by a computer program. Its most interesting productions are realized by means of a more classical if technically savvy kind of writing that conforms to the platform’s practices and forms, while nevertheless disrupting their established usage. There lies in fact the main relevance of platform-literature: like a Trojan horse, or, moreover, by following in the footsteps of *tactical media* (Garcia and Lovink), it embraces the uses prescribed by the platform to just advance alternative practices, thus occasioning a critical reflection on the relevant new modes of communication and contemporary media culture. Another significant aspect of this literature is its formal relatedness to literary genres beyond e-lit: on a poetic level, the compulsory conciseness invites practicing forms like the haiku, the aphorism, the epigram; at the same time, given the importance of Twitter profiles, the platform also offers a new space for autobiography or autofiction; finally, as a microblogging tool, it reconnects with the tradition of the *feuilleton* and thus becomes a timely venue for serialized fiction.

The example we will next be looking into is that of Guillaume Vissac’s *Accident de personne* (Vissac). The title alludes to the expression used in railway contexts to designate a collision between a train and a pedestrian: it will be translated as train-pedestrian fatalities (which reveals the extent to which the French have chosen a euphemism to refer to what, in most cases, represents an instance of suicide).

For almost two years, I spent between two and three hours a day on public transport (RER, metro). All that time, put together, made me a bit dizzy. I’ve had my fill of personal accidents, I haven’t counted them, but there’s always a special atmosphere in the train when the driver announces it, or on the platforms when the screens flash. One day, one of them made me arrive two hours late for my job at the time. That day, I had the idea of doing something about it, taking notes, and writing the very first one.

I took notes for a year and a half. All (or most) of these notes were written directly on board the train, either in the carriages or on the platforms, on the classic cell phone, then via the iPhone. [...] At the end of 2010, I had over 200 fragments of writing, all under 140 characters, so I created the account @personne/, and cleaned up my text. I kept about 160 fragments. This way, I was able to post 5 fragments a day for just one month. It was November, so I chose December, and the timing was perfect, with Christmas and New Year’s Eve as the climax. The idea had been there from the very beginning, to be able to schedule the tweets at a fixed time, every day at 7am, 9am, 12am, 6pm and 8pm, so that the tweets could be read at peak times, on the transport system to be precise. And then there was the soap opera aspect: followers began to know that it was “soon @personne time.”¹⁶

As Guillaume Vissac tells us, *Accident de personne* was put together to fit on the Twitter platform and simultaneously distort it: the news feed is used to publish fictional stories, involving fictitious victims. Adopting the platform's most salient constraint (no more than 140 characters per tweet at the time), Vissac works with a short form that reminds one of the funeral epigram. But he also appropriates the media support: the smartphone, used as a writing support (like a digital version of Oulipian "subway poems"), and which is precisely the first expected reading support. Smartphone is indeed the medium that the reader has at his disposal in the subway, connecting and gathering all the readers at the same time to follow the feuilleton.

all of them bent over their touchscreens, screens, pocket scanners: how many to see behind them the executioner & above the axe?¹⁷

But *Accident de personne* is also representative of a platform-literature which, by doing away with e-lit's specific computability—whereby a work can only be "read" (or rather viewed) when the underlying code and/or data are instantiated—becomes amenable to multiple inscriptions and forms. It will obviously be hosted on the platform on which it was initially inscribed, but it can also end up on other platforms or websites where it gets redistributed and/or remediated, possibly even into book format (epub or print). Thus, since its first publication on Twitter, *Accident de personne* has been published in e-pub format (publie.net) and even as a printed book (Nouvel Attila). Certain aspects of, or elements in, that first performance were obviously lost in remediation, but others were gained—such as the editing, arrangement, and reorganization of the initial contents into the form of a lexicon—bringing new meaning to the story:

By the end of December, I had put it all together in an alphabet book. Originally, I hadn't planned for any figures to emerge, but then characters popped up by themselves, for instance the one who looks for an ideal song to play when he's dying, the one who kills herself but several times, because it never works, the flow regulators I saw every day twice a day, and so on. So classifying them into characters was an idea. The footnotes came about during this phase, to get everyone talking to each other, so all the notes are new, never seen on twitter, and some are over 140 characters long.¹⁸

This curation into book form, both digital and printed, allows for the creation of more individualized characters than the publication on Twitter would encourage, as an apparatus of notes can help to build a more complex narrative structure. The book form appears to be crucially impactful by comparison to Twitter's antichronological publication format which makes the performance hard to revisit as such.

He or she who... speaks

I pace the platforms in search of information to give: timetable, delay or suicide [160]: I shout them for the shadows until they burst

due to a personal accident [161] at X station, train Z to Y has been cancelled, our apologies alphabetically...

SNCF voice bug: endless vain announcements murderous train not coming: still waiting for it¹⁹

This last excerpt is indeed quite illustrative of one of intermediality's most salient outcomes: the de-essentialization of platform(-based) digital performance and, at the same time, the closely intertwined de-essentialization of the book. The work's various inscriptions—describable in fact as sequential "states" of the text or stages of the literary project—thus prove to operate certain media translations, from digital to print and vice versa. Yet it is, as argued before, in book form that the

potential of *twittérature* is fully realized... This in no way disconsiders the poetic relevance of the work as published-performed on the platform but actually further highlights the latter's relevance as a work-in-progress.

Giterature: Preliminary Definitions

To the already long list of digital-literature-related neologisms, we would like to append the term *giterature*, a fusion of GIT—the computer protocol—and literary writing. Advancing the concept, and formulating (below) a definition, of giterature was largely inspired by Abrüpt's significant projects. Abrüpt has indeed promoted an alternative form of platform-literature well beyond the framework of third-generation e-lit as described by Flores. But let us first propose a definition of giterature as a literary phenomenon combining, on the one hand, the writing and publishing affordances of a certain platform (the collaborative software forge GitLab), and computer skills—specifically writing with(in) protocols—geared toward literary creativity and poetic innovation, on the other. Giterature also inherits from single-source publishing, emerging publishing processes and practices breaking up with traditional workflow, and fostering collaborative environments as it relies on Web standards, formats, and platforms, and therefore in its early-days philosophy.

The study of the third generation has rather focused on (mis)appropriation and the platform-adapted dissemination strategies (tackled from a platform studies perspective), whereas giterature requires revisiting the concurrence of two writing modes: literary writing and computer code writing, reunited in the same writing space through the Git protocol and the GitLab platform. While such a question would perhaps be most often relegated to a critical-code-studies-based approach, we will once again prefer the intermedial perspective, which, nevertheless, will not prevent one from addressing the poetics of code either.

Giterature has already been defined by the Swiss digital publishing house Abrüpt, which has been also illustrating the concept through its various activities over the past several years.

Let us linger a while on the very name, “Abrüpt,” an entity that describes itself as an “us,” thus maintaining a certain equivalence between “human” actors (publishers, authors, developers, designers, all of whom are *tinkerers* of sorts), “techniques” (formats, tools), and “institutions” (protocols, distribution circuits). More than a collective, Abrüpt seems to enact the fusion of these actors into a new kind of publishing ecology, where traditional authority becomes dismantled.

It is abrüpt. The word scatters in the dark, and we are left with only books to throw into the world to manifest dreams and howls. We organize ourselves around texts that agitate and revolt, that alter into anti-books, that strand themselves in sharing. We make transdialectics and tamper with paper, we take note of a cyberpoetics whose verb foments the error in the heart of the real. It sounds. We are listening.

(« Antilivre »)

Abrüpt's “we” is in and of itself an attempt to redefine publishing as embodiment into a new publication object: the “anti-livre” (anti-book). According to Abrüpt, anti-books do not necessarily rule out the more traditional book-in-print scenario but aim to deconstruct the traditional print-medium paradigm guaranteeing the immutability of text and the institution of the author (of a legal and economic nature rather than an aesthetic one). In a way, the anti-book represents a new *media* book concept whose definitory features emerge to be modularity—each title is made available in print form (for sale) as well as HTML and PDF (free)—and open source/open access: the texts and the code are uploaded into a GIT repository for free reuse or appropriation. The definition of the anti-book lies at the heart of Abrüpt's manifesto:

The anti-book is a metamorphosis, is its disorder, is the affirmation of a literature of short-circuits, of its joyful circulation, against the era, against the book and its grammar, against its chain and its humming, for a future of alterations, for a free and reticular information, for a multitude enlightened by it.

The anti-book has no form, its impermanence disposes of all forms, it transforms itself ceaselessly, and its raw information knows no fixity, no border, it fragments its essence, distributes the common, deploys its freedom in front of our cybernetic singularities.

The anti-book has for enemy all culture. Culture does not fight, it holds the baton, it entertains, then knocks out.

(« Antilivre »)

In Abrüpt's anti-book manifesto, poetics and politics are inseparable. The reference to the commons movement is accompanied by a call to shake up the world, the language, and more broadly culture. The manifesto, just like the catalog, echoes with both classics of 20th-century humanities and social science thought (Simone Weil, Pierre Kropotkin) and contemporary authors that one can come across on well-known literary platforms (e.g., Pierre Ménard and Christine Jeanney, regular contributors to *publie.net*). Heteroclitic in terms of genres and artforms (essay, poetry, narrative, or visual arts such as photography, drawing, collage) as well as format and appearance (every HTML anti-book comes with a new design), the catalog is nevertheless consistent in terms of editing and publishing, both carried out exclusively on one single platform, GitLab. Thus, Abrüpt's editorial and publication protocol is fundamentally one and the same as the Git protocol informing the platform. It is the latter, as we will further detail below, that occasions a redefinition of the concept of literature in the context, both poetically and politically speaking.

Abrüpt's anti-book project relies on the platform GitLab, which was named for GIT, a file versioning and synchronization protocol. Thanks to its versioning system, GIT allows developers to generate, share, and update code by means of contribution, exchanges, and collaboration. The free software GitLab integrates this protocol, to which it adds, on a dedicated interface, collaborative affordances such as a wiki, a bug tracking and communication system, and, last but not least, a social media platform for sharing code and other kinds of digital text. In other words, GitLab is what has been called in computer science a "forge:" a collaborative text and code development, maintenance, and management system.²⁰

GitLab can probably be considered more of a geek's rather than a writer's tool. Unlike the above-mentioned writing platforms (Wattpad or social media platforms like Twitter), GitLab requires certain technical skills: one needs to have a minimal coding background, be able to use the command line and be comfortable with branch management and versioning. This is no longer simply a matter of digital cultural literacy, but of acquiring writing and scripting skills that are not confined to software development solely any longer. In fact, these skills are far from being shared by everyone, and the literature practiced by Abrüpt is first of all a publishing endeavor rather than a genuine instance of co-writing factually involving other co-authors. Throughout the catalog, Abrüpt is more often than not the only actual contributor to its own repositories. The well-known *ZAP Rimbaud* project, of which more in a bit, is, in fact, just an exception.

What could appear to be a technical deadlock is however compensated by an explicit lack of any formal authority, as the *modus operandi* involves co-authoring and (re)source sharing. More fundamentally, mastering or acquiring the necessary technical competence is seen as a way of political and formal emancipation—since literary and artistic forms ultimately tend to be as overdetermined by the hegemonic proprietary dimension of the platform as they used to be in the

apparently more uniformizing ecosystem of traditional/print media—and therefore of esthetic creativity.

Is GitLab a “niche” platform? With its over 30 million developers, let us say that it addresses a category of writers particularly aware of the wide range of contemporary digital cultures, who have complemented their literary expertise with digital-tool and computer-programming literacy and thus opened up a whole new world of possibilities to themselves. As current approaches in critical code studies have argued, one would be wrong to consider code writing as a purely technical activity (Marino). Giterature represents, moreover, an opportunity to challenge established literature practices by means of another writing model borrowed from code developers and the field of software engineering. Such synergy is instrumental in shaking up long-standing traditional literary concepts not the least of which is the one of authority.

Computer writing is indeed deeply informed by a *hack spirit* whose origin goes back to the very emergence of computer science as a discipline (Coleman; Mauro). As we will show below, that spirit can also be traced back to the 20th-century avant-gardes as recently critically revisited within a contemporary paradigm (Nachtergaele; Mouglin; Ruffel).

From Hack Politics to the Poetics of Uncreative Writing

Over the past few years, mainstream media, cinema, and, to an even greater extent, TV series, have shaped a *hack* imaginary largely fantasized and contradictory: at best, the hacker evokes a romantic outlaw figure, at worst, he appears to be a shrewd criminal bent on stealing our personal data and hacking into our bank accounts. In reality, hacking is part of the history of computer science (Mauro) and, to the present day, arguably, common computer practice. Computer writing, generally speaking, in both its methodology and overall philosophy, has something to do with it: hacking can definitely, in more prosaic terms, help one become a better programmer.

Anthropologist Gabriella Coleman has specialized in the study of hacker communities. Her book, *Coding freedom*, helps us to understand the philosophy of hacking, in its political as well as ethical and even esthetic dimensions:

Although hackers hold multiple motivations for producing their software, collectively they are committed to productive freedom. This term designates the institutions, legal devices, and moral codes that hackers have built in order to autonomously improve on their peers’ work, refine their technical skills, and extend craftlike engineering traditions. This ethnography is centrally concerned with how hackers have built a dense ethical and technical practice that sustains their productive freedom, and in so doing, how they extend as well as reformulate key liberal ideals such as access, free speech, transparency, equal opportunity, publicity, and meritocracy.

(Coleman)

The *hacker* is a tinkerer, provided with a compulsive taste for observing and understanding what lies *under* “the hood of” our machines and their software interfaces. Hacking means also appropriating and altering code. In fact, in programming, one generally never does coding “from scratch” or on a “blank page” but recycles existing (scraps or blocks of) code by adapting, amending, or improving it (or them). If we draw a comparison, writing code can be seen as similar to writing on palimpsests. From such an angle, hacking proves to be a form of playful writing—not quite unrelated to traditional literary genres such as parody, pastiche, and more recently, Oulipian experimentalism.

As hack can be seen as related to the above-mentioned 20th-century avant-garde traditions (Bootz; Perloff; Funkhouser), it naturally also speaks to the more recent or updated relevant paradigms such as the one a theoretician like Kenneth Goldsmith is most representative of in literature. His theory of *uncreative writing* (Goldsmith) is in certain ways a theory of the modern palimpsest. According to Goldsmith, a writer's authority in this age cannot be measured anymore by the singularity of the style or the originality of her story. Writers always tell more or less the same story, with similar tools: language, grammar, and syntax. Drawing on the specific paradigm that has governed the visual arts for over a century now, Goldsmith adopts a performative point of view: originality is *making*. Creating new works matters less than continuing a dialog with the forms of the past, and thus playing with recontextualization, reformulation, copy-paste, mash-up, or remix:

How I make my way through this thicket of information—how I manage it, how I parse it, how I organize and distribute it—is what distinguishes my writing from yours.

(Goldsmith)

Slipping Shakespeare's tirades into .JPEG files converted into .txt (in order to question the becoming-text of photography in the digital age); asking a hundred students to copy the same edition of the NYTimes (and finding that no copy will be exactly the same as another); printing the Web (ten tons of paper won't be enough) ... these are the kind of experiments Goldsmith engages in.

Some would likely say that is conceptual art, but one can also describe it as publishing art; a kind of art involving the "upstream" and "downstream" (re-)appropriation of the work at hand through media displacement, where hacking eventually appears to be an intermedial practice.

The Register of the Forge: The Commit as Editorial Metatext

Obviously, such a writing paradigm could not work without a toolbox for disassembling and reassembling code. Enter GitLab... GitLab can be first described as a particular kind of library, one where code, or snippets of code, are stored; therefore not a coding, but a code, library. Yet the metaphor of the library needs to be complemented with another, even more suitable, image: that of the "accounting register." A register is a private or public notebook, book, ledger, or directory for recording data, transactions, names, and/or figures for later (accurate) reference. The Git protocol thus determines how all the actions, i.e., the instances of writing, carried out in the files of a given directory are *recorded*. But why speak of forges? The register only keeps track of the differences between one state of the text and another. Thus, it is by re-reading the register step by step, by sequentially adding and deleting strings from each record in the register that the text—or computer code—can be *forged*. The forge is therefore about the merging of all contributions together.

Let us briefly explain how that works. The user "clones" a local code repository onto her/his computer and manipulates the files as s/he pleases (by writing, editing, and/or coding), until s/he obtains a satisfactory "state,"²¹ which s/he must then "declare," i.e., register. Once registered in the register, the user pushes this registration onto the server in order to synchronize her/his local register with the online one, so that each contributor can synchronize her/his local register in their turn.

Each of these records must be documented and justified: this is called a *commit*. These commits can be seen as edits and as a form of meta-writing at the same time. Indeed, a project's list of *commits* represents a history of its progress—the corrections, amendments, additions, etc.—as well as, for each of the listed records, the "author's" (user)name. Writing (or rather, committing) by the Git protocol does not mean giving up one's auctoriality: quite on the contrary, it actually allows for a better recognition or valorization of each contribution, however small. In the case of a digital literary work making use of the poetic-technical potential of the digital *medium*, this recognition is capital: it

will render evident the IT/software developer's own involvement in the composition/construction of the work. GitLab thus relevantly provides, as a forge, an account of all the editing involved in the making of a work of digital literature.

The question therefore arises in the context, of whether we are transitioning to a shared or collective form of auctoriality or not. It is a potentially sensitive matter particularly in the case of literary writing, as the related economics alongside symbolic capital continue to gravitate to forms and methods of publication still informed by the print tradition. The singularization of authors and authorship has represented a major trend in that tradition, an issue which, in the specific case of *Abrüpt*, requires a politically militant stance:

Our works are hidden behind the abbreviations CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0, in other words, they are made available under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Behind these abstruse names lies an equally abstruse will, that of taking a step aside from the sacrosanct intellectual property. Free license, open license, free distribution license, free software, open source, open data, open access, open data and open sources, copyleft, from commons to commons, and free culture, and free art, and the terms that float senselessly, drunk with their metamorphic power.

The editors argue at length on their website in favor of what they term the “scalpel-like treatment of copyright,” all in the name of freedom of data and information. A pragmatic choice involving actual steps toward the voluntary public domain. Surprising as such a choice may sound coming from a publisher, it may, in fact, seem even bothersome to other players in the world of literary publishing more widely speaking. Intellectual property is not only an economic issue out there—how will authors as well as book production and distribution workers be remunerated?—but also an aesthetic one—how will one handle, after releasing one's work into the public domain, its possible distortion, corruption, or, worse, “destruction.” While the first question is beyond the scope of this chapter, we will try to address the second one by means of a concrete case study.

ZAP Rimbaud, Anti-Publishing Experiment

For all our already quite numerous theoretical considerations, navigating between forges and protocols, hack spirit, and contemporary paradigm, our concept of giterature still seems at best utopian, at worst impracticable. One must admit that, even in the case of *Abrüpt*, whose editorial model is based on this concept, most of the anti-books deposited on GitLab are rarely reedited. The anti-books await their reappropriation in repositories whose sole contributor is *Abrüpt*. The writers, in other words, do not write directly in the files uploaded onto the server, which means that Git is most likely not deployed until the very last stage of the editing and production process. Among these repositories, the recent project *ZAP Rimbaud*, initiated and realized entirely on GitLab, appears however to stand out.

ZAP means “Zone Autonome à Poétiser.” The project was born in May 2020, when an important part of the world was already in lockdown, or was about to be. In compliance with the established practice of the *book sprint*,²² the ZAP was conceived as a collective and festive event organized as part of the *Open Publishing Fest*.²³ On that occasion, *Abrüpt* sent out a call “to set up a squat in the Rimbaud monument and to launch a frenetic and collective rewriting of his *Season in Hell*.” The M.O. is quite straightforward: people are invited to collectively write over Rimbaud's original poem and thus emerge a new literary object, whose genre *Abrüpt* calls “cyberpoetry.” As a collective enterprise, ZAP imposes on its contributors a short chapter of rules among which the renunciation of

auctoriality (the outcome will be deposited into the public domain) and the use of free or open-source computational tools only.

Technically speaking, each participant must “clone” the repository onto her own machines, rewrite parts of the texts her personal “branch,” then submit the resulting file via a *merge request* for inclusion into the main branch maintained by the editors. On the server, those multiple versions accumulate in the register, and, when merging, they materialize live into the progressive hack of Rimbaud’s text. In the repository, a set of HTML, CSS, and JS files edit, organize, and structure on-the-fly the evolving collective poem through Gitlab’s continuous deployment on a dedicated website.²⁴ The editors’ specific editorial work consists of making sure the unaltered parts from Rimbaud’s original poems and those rewritten by the participants are printed out in different colors on the “palimpsest” website. In the same way, Abrüpt has named its artifacts “anti-livre,” we can consider Abrüpt’s radical approach as “anti-publishing,” which is fully realized in the ZAP Rimbaud experiment. Its radicality lies precisely in the fact that it overturns the established publishing model and its associated concepts of author, editor, book, artwork, writing, or editing.

Indeed, in the particular case of *ZAP Rimbaud*, the *giterary* comes specifically from a virtuous cycle combining literary and computational writing. That’s what cyberpoetics is all about. The latter involves in this instance “hacking” a classical work, that is, specifically writing over, “writing through,” or in any way modifying *A Season in Hell*, the consistent input or starting line of the cyberpoetic process. Between and over Rimbaud’s original terms and syntax, between and over literary and computational practices, this “writing over” experiment precisely instantiates the very intermediality by calling on a conjunction of technological and cultural-political elements and processes. Figures of stylistics and rhetoric are thus grafted onto code hacking (or, at times, improvement) procedures. For example, code refactoring (the computer science term for restructuring or “reformulating” existing code) is paralleled by poetic repetitions, anaphors, or epiphoras:

Ma langue vide les lacs de Cervoise la langue inculte ma langue venue du fond des âges ma langue Wisigothe ma langue Attila ma langue ma langue luisante c’est une guillotine ma langue ma langue velue ma langue barbare maltraite ma langue cou-cou-coupe l’amour par le milieu.²⁵

Where the code constructs, calls, and/or iterates through variables, the poetics deploys polyptoton, pre/suffixing, and/or other types of word variation, even when such figures implicate ventriloquizing the *bug*:

La parascience, notre nouvelle noblesse! La croissance de la décroissance. Le progrès dégresse. Les âmes de bien dégressent. Salvatio for the Pachamama. Nous, êtres du mal, nous l’accélération. Contre le monde en marche. Le globe sur la tête. Marquage au fer. Pourquoi ne révolutionnerait-il pas, à l’envers? Décentré, décuplé en caniveaux de billets inventés, de cours adescendants. La science, la nouvelle noblesse! Le progrès. Le monde marche! Pourquoi ne tournerait-il pas? La science, la nouvelle noblesse! Le progrès. Le monde marche! Pourquoi ne tournerait-il pas? La science, la nouvelle noblesse! Le progrès. Le monde marche! Pourquoi ne tournerait-il pas? La science, la nouvelle noblesse! Le progrès. Le monde marche! Pourquoi ne tournerait-il pas? La science, la nouvelle noblesse! Le progrès. Le monde marche!²⁶

Such re-appropriation, one may note, translates or even teleports the Rimbaldian poem to the 21st century and, in the process, makes new themes emerge, particularly the one of the computer. Words get replaced in the context (the “witches” or “sorcières” in the original, for instance, become in the new poem “hackeuses,” the French feminine for hackers), whereas inserts or inserted characters get

to literally dialogue with(in) the work of the poet whose name is now appropriately transposed from Rimbaud to “rim-bot:”

Ah! Le réseau à l’estomac! #NOFILTER! Ne jeter pas vos yeux derrière nos difformités. Et ce poison, ce baiser mille fois maudit! #JETEBAISE. Ce baiser mille fois baisé! Ma faiblesse, la cruauté du monde! #JETEBAISE. Mon Dieu, pitié, cachez-moi, hackez-moi, je me tiens trop mal! #JELESBAISETOUS. — Je suis caché et je ne vis plus. Selfie! #NOFILTER + #JETEBAISE = <3! Je suis haché et je ne sais plus.²⁷

All those linguistic and (typo)graphic games impact the materiality of the digital text by accommodating, for instance, machine code in its most elemental form, e.g., sequences of 0s and 1s incorporated into Rimbaud’s poem where they replace the letters “o” and “i:”

[quel-que-f01s-je-v01s-au-c1el][des-pla-ges-sans-f1n][c0u-ver-tes-de-blan-ches-na-t10ns][en-j01e][un-grand-va1s-seau-d’0r][au-des-sus-de-m01][a-g1-te-ses-pa-v1l-l0ns][mul-t1-c0-l0-res][s0us-les-br1-ses-du-ma-t1n][j’a1-cré-é-t0u-tes-les-fê-tes][t0us-les-tr1-0m-phes][t0us-les-dra-mes]²⁸ An already epitomizing work of a still emergent genre, giterature, ZAP Rimbaud fully realizes and, moreover, performs the anti-book concept as formulated by Abrüpt. It implements all its required features: it creates conditions for the appropriation of an existing text, it delivers an editing protocol that enables free collective writing, and it uses Git, first, as formal constraint (to rewrite only what has not been rewritten—“no toying”) and, second, as submission mechanism (via the *pull request*). Last but not least, Abrüpt releases an actual publication, namely a more tangible (anti-)book, featuring both poems in distinctive colors (Rimbaud’s versus the collective’s). This seamless convergence of the Git and editing protocols is illustrative of the degree to which literature in general is inextricably linked to the editorial, mediating, and publishing strategies at play, while giterature in particular emerges itself as the intermedial fusion of literary and computational writing. More specifically, rendering the differences between the original and the collective text visible—by means of the *git diff* function—amounts to an overarching metaphor binding the Git protocol to the kind of continuous and collective writing it has catalyzed.

What is there left of Rimbaud, of his *Season in Hell*, once this cyberpoetic hack is completed? Nothing, apparently, or, one may very well add, probably everything. Picking a work of the “poète voyant” for this experiment was certainly no accident: the ZAP concludes with a syllepsis celebrating the collective adventure: “Ci-GIT je” (Here lies I). If the poet used to say “je est un autre” (“I is another”), Abrüpt makes a point that all of us are, or can become, Rimbaud.

Conclusion

Particularly when in digital forms, modes, and environments, literature does not cease to “overflow”: it overflows the book, the institution, the genre, etc. Case in point, giterature and the ways in which, by importing techniques and technics from, by and large, non-literary medialities, it overflows the very meaning of writing. The appropriation of the relevant tools and affordances implies indeed adopting, at least to a certain extent, the philosophies and the epistemic models that inform them.

Giterature is thus part of a larger trend in contemporary cultures to the effect of de-essentializing literature and artforms as such. By means of its text and/as code versioning and anti-books, it embraces the (inter)media turn in literature. Given its (digital or analog) temporal and spatial open-endedness, it marks the transition from a definitive-text paradigm to a process-based performative approach to editing and publishing. And, last but not least, through its collective dimension, it ushers in a new reformulation of the author’s status.

Notes

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1 Content Management System is computer software used to manage the creation and modification of digital content (content management).

2 One of Wattpad's slogans is "Don't think, just write."

3 A literature in which literary writing is closely associated with a poetics of code, as we will see below.

4 Flores returns to this first categorization effort that we owe to Katherine Hayles: "When she [Hayles] established the concept of first-generation electronic literature, she defined it as pre-web, text-heavy, link driven, mostly hypertext, that still operated with many paradigms established in print. She defined the second generation from 1995 onward, as Web based and incorporating multimedia and interactivity. After some of the critical conversation around her notion of generations, she renamed the first generation as classic and the second as contemporary electronic literature." (Flores 2019)

5 We refer to the concept of "dispositif" proposed by Michel Foucault, which "implies a field of forces acting upon a technological, social, legal etc. context or environment" (Kessler 2004).

6 "We need to build bridges between e-lit generations so they can learn from us as we learn from them. Nothing less than the future of the field is at stake" (Flores 2019).

7 Introduced by Jakobson (who talked about "literariness"), the concept of literarity refers to all aspects that make a text literary. It has been then discussed by many French theoreticians, such as Jacques Rancière or even Gérard Genette.

8 The concept "énonciation éditoriale" has been proposed by Emmanuel Souchier. It "refers to the plural elaboration of the textual object. It heralds a theory of the polyphonic enunciation of text produced or uttered by any instance likely to intervene in the conception, realization or production of the book, and more generally of the written word. Beyond that, it is of interest to any medium combining text, image and sound, notably computer screens – it being understood that any text is seen as well as read" (Souchier 1998).

9 The impact of cultural studies and the host of interrelated trends usually entered under the label "French theory" in North America has strongly contributed to blurring the line between the literary and the non-literary. From the 1970s onwards, by following in the footsteps of authors like Barthes, Eco, Kristeva, and others, the canon has been considered to be the offspring of certain power mechanisms, always (re)constructable in alternative fashions. The porosity of the frontier between the literary and the non-literary, in such contexts, has thus become a given.

10 The concept of transitivity opposes Roland Barthes' "intransitive writing," considering that literature is not a pure act of stylistic speech, but has something to say about *and to* the world.

11 Note should be made however that even if Flores bases his third-generation argument particularly on the Twitter-based literary bots, the most striking user content on such social media do not come from bots but from humans whose writings are "arranged" on, and by, the platform. We will develop on this below.

12 We borrow most of these neologisms from Gilles Bonnet, whose book *Pour une poétique numérique* abounds in ingenious and playful neologisms (Bonnet 2017)

13 This French term, also used by Gilles Bonnet, is a play on words involving "écrit" (writing) and "écran" (screen) in distorting the term "écrivain" (writer).

14 This is what Flores himself seems to suggest when he says "Most 3rd generation e-lit writers are a younger generation who have naturalized what was experimental to us, and even though the work they create may be naïve and disconnected from the artistic and literary traditions of the past, they were more directly formed by digital culture." Our aim here is to demonstrate that digital culture can engender complex works that are not necessarily disconnected from the past—quite on the contrary, as we will see below, they even relate to forms that predate e-lit.

15 Note that Flores does not use the term twitterature, but explicitly mentions bots on Twitter and its counterparts (mastodon, etc.)

16 In the original text: «Pendant presque deux ans, je passais entre deux et trois heures par jour en transport en commun (RER, métros). Tout ce temps-là, mis bout à bout, ça fout la lourde comme on dit par chez moi, le vertige. J'ai donc eu mon compte d'accidents de personne, je ne les ai pas comptés, mais toujours une atmosphère particulière dans le wagon lorsque le conducteur l'annonce, ou sur les quais quand les écrans clignotent. Un jour l'un d'entre eux m'a fait arriver deux heures en retard dans mon boulot de l'époque. Ce jour-là, l'idée d'en faire quelque chose, de prendre des notes, et l'écriture de la toute première. La prise de notes a duré un an et demi. Toutes ces notes (ou la plupart) ont été écrites directement embarqué soit dans les wagons, soit sur les quais, au téléphone portable classique, ensuite via l'iPhone. [...] Fin 2010, j'avais plus de 200 fragments d'écrits, tous de moins de 140 caractères, alors j'ai créé le compte @personne, j'ai épuré mon texte. J'en ai gardé environ 160. De cette façon, j'ai pu mettre en ligne 5 fragments par jour pendant un mois tout juste. C'était novembre, j'ai choisi décembre, et ça tombait bien avec Noël et réveillon à la fin comme acmé. L'idée était là depuis le tout début, de pouvoir programmer les twitts à heure fixe, tous les jours 7h, 9h, 12h, 18h et 20h, afin que les twitts puissent être lus aux heures de pointe, dans les transports précisément. Et puis ça avait un côté feuilleton: les followers ont commencé à savoir que c'était « bientôt l'heure d'@personne » ».

17 In the original text: « Tous penchés sur leurs tactiles, écrans, scanners de poche: combien pour voir derrière eux le bourreau & au dessus la hache? »

18 In the original text: « Passé fin décembre, j'ai mis au propre, rassemblé le tout dans un abécédaire. A l'origine il n'était pas prévu que des figures émergent, et puis des personnages sont apparus d'eux mêmes, par exemple celui qui cherche une chanson idéale pour la passer au moment de mourir, celle qui se tue mais plusieurs fois, car ça marche pas, les régulateurs de flux que je voyais tous les jours deux fois par jour, etc. Alors les classer par

personnages, c'était une idée. Les notes de bas de page, c'est venu pendant cette phase là, histoire de faire dialoguer tout le monde, du coup toutes les notes sont inédites, jamais apparues sur twitter, plus de 140 caractères pour certaines. »

¹⁹ In the original text: « Celui ou celle qui... parle. J'arpente les quais en quête d'infos à donner: horaire, retard ou suicide [160]: je les gueule pour les ombres jusqu'à ce qu'elles éclatent en raison d'un accident de personne [161] survenu en gare de X, le train Z à destination de Y a été supprimé, toutes nos excuses alphabétiques... bug sur voix SNCF: annonce en vain sans fin train meurtrier qui ne vient pas: quand même l'attendre. »

²⁰ According to Violaine Louvet: "The objective of a forge is to offer a space of permanent exchange and online collaboration to software developers, and a space of distribution (public versions of developed software: source packages, web pages) for users (for everyone if the forge is public). It thus makes it possible to gather projects and developers, but also other people working on these projects (users, translators...)" (Source : PLUME – <https://www.projet-plume.org/ressource/faq-forge>)

²¹ The term *state* is preferable to that of *output*, as the digital forge operates under the sign of processual publication rather than the one of mere editing.

²² A book sprint is a method of creating a book collaboratively in a short period of time (three to five days), completing both the writing and the publishing at the end of the sprint period. Books are made available immediately at the end of the sprint as e-books and/or with print-on-demand services (source: [Wikipedia.org/Book sprint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_sprint)).

²³ As we can read on the website initiative, "Open Publishing Fest is a decentralized public event that brings together communities supporting open source software, open content, and open publishing models." See online <https://openpublishingfest.org/>.

²⁴ See also Fauchié on GitLab's platform-related relevant functions.

²⁵ In the section, « mauvais sang » of the original text, Rimbaud asks the question: « sais! qui a fait ma langue perfide tellement, qu'elle ait guidé et sauvé jusqu'ici ma paresse ? »

²⁶ In the original text: « La science, la nouvelle noblesse! Le progrès. Le monde marche! Pourquoi ne tournerait-il pas? »

²⁷ In the original: « Ah! remonter à la vie ! jeter les yeux sur nos difformités. Et ce poison, ce baiser mille fois maudit! Ma faiblesse, la cruauté du monde! Mon Dieu, pitié, cachez-moi, je me tiens trop mal! — Je suis caché et je ne le suis pas. »

²⁸ In the original text: « Quelquefois je vois au ciel des plages sans fin couvertes de blanches nations en joie. Un grand vaisseau d'or, au-dessus de moi, agite ses pavillons multicolores sous les brises du matin. J'ai créé toutes les fêtes, tous les triomphes, tous les drames. »