



Literature From the Authority of the Pen to the Horizons of Technology

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Abstract:

The computer has come to occupy a central position in the creative process, functioning simultaneously as a tool for production and reception. Digital culture introduces a new condition – one that brings with it its own language and alphabet – and has asserted its presence alongside the traditional written cultural heritage. This evolution has given rise to a new reality that necessitates engaging with digital forms through a pragmatic and informed perspective.

Keywords: *digitization; computer; written cultural heritage; reception*

Littérature : De l'autorité de la plume aux horizons de la technologie

Résumé :

L'ordinateur occupe désormais une place centrale dans le processus créatif, fonctionnant simultanément comme outil de production et de réception. La culture numérique instaure une nouvelle condition – dotée de son propre langage et de son propre alphabet – et s'affirme aux côtés du patrimoine culturel écrit traditionnel. Cette évolution a donné naissance à une nouvelle réalité qui exige d'appréhender les formes numériques avec pragmatisme et discernement.

Mots-clés : *numérisation ; ordinateur ; patrimoine culturel écrit ; réception*

Introduction:

The literary field has witnessed a new cultural movement through a modern experiment known as **interactive writing**, which has opened artistic horizons for both reading and writing. This form integrates and employs various media—multiple electronic supports such as image, motion, and text—all within a digital space that allows the reader to navigate and interact freely.

For hundreds, perhaps thousands of years, paper remained the primary medium that hosted the works of creative writers, preserved their intellect and imagination, guaranteed their intellectual property, and served as the most effective channel of communication with their readers. However, the digital revolution has brought about a radical transformation in the standards of writing and communication, making electronic media a closer alternative to the language of the contemporary age. In this respect, readers have been quicker than writers and creators to engage with this new world. Digital literature now occupies a shared space between reader and author, as browsing social media platforms and digital books has become easier than traditional reading.

This raises essential questions: does the reader truly interact with the mechanisms of digital writing? Can digitization be considered a key to ensuring communication in the contemporary world—a new duality that stimulates correlation, convergence, and interconnection?

Interactive texts seek to offer a cultural, social, and human representation of reality. They address vital issues, as illustrated by Labiba Khammar in her short story collection *A Room and Mirrors*, which encompasses all dimensions of



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this literary form. Her work incorporates multiple media – auditory, visual, kinetic, and linguistic – forming a system of meaningful signs. From this standpoint, the present study, entitled *From the Authority of the Pen to the Horizons of Technology*, explores this phenomenon.

The technological age has generated new types of texts that differ in nature from the traditional ones, which were written on paper to reach the recipient. The intermediary between the creator and the receiver has now become the screen, which has transformed everything in our time into a digital image based on the binary code – zero and one – including literature itself. This reality prompts the following central question: *Has interactive literature become an inevitable necessity, or does paper still hold an enduring authority that will not fade away?*

To address this question, the study follows the following structure:

- An **introduction**, which serves as a prelude to the topic;
- A section devoted to **digital literature**, attempting to define it and discuss its alignment with the demands of the modern era;
- An analysis of the **distinctive features of interactive literature**, showing how the computer has become the official medium for literary and artistic creation;
- A discussion of **reader response in interactive texts**, emphasizing that interaction is only complete when the reader engages actively with the text;
- Finally, a **conclusion**, which summarizes the findings and offers reflections aimed at answering the central

research question, supported by both subjective and objective motivations.

Personal Motivations

My interest in this topic stems from its close connection to digitization, which has accompanied the era of electronic advancement and thus emerged as an inevitable outcome.

Objective Motivations

- Keeping pace with ongoing developments;
- Attempting to integrate digital technology into the field of literature;
- Shedding light on digital literature;
- Encouraging engagement with digital literature and promoting the modernization of writing.

I have adopted the **descriptive method**, as it is the most suitable approach for this study. I also relied on a set of key references, most notably **Said Yaqtin's** *The Hypertext and the Autonomous Text in Arab Culture*. Through this research, I aim to highlight digital literature as a means of aligning literary creation with the broader process of digitization.

1. Electronic Literature or Digital Literature

Digital literature is a form of writing that merges literature and technology and can only be received through an electronic medium. It emerges within a digital environment and is the product of media computing. The term gained wider usage with the advent of the **Internet** and compact discs containing educational or entertainment programs that require interactive reading, combining numbers and letters.



1.1. The Concept of Digital or Interactive Literature

The term *digital literature* intersects with several related expressions used in the same context, such as *electronic literature*, *interactive literature*, *networked literature*, and *digital literature*, among others. The diversity of terms is understandable, as the field is still relatively new and in need of critical reflection to clarify its scope – not necessarily to impose rigid definitions, but to build an objective critical framework capable of refining and contextualizing its concepts.

According to **Hamdaoui (2012)**:

“Digital literature refers to narrative, poetic, or dramatic works that employ digital media in their writing and creation. In other words, it relies on the computer or digital device to produce a literary or creative text. This means that digital literature uses digital media or computing systems to transform the literary text into digital, automated, and algorithmic worlds.”

The digital medium thus converts the creative text into a visual, media-based, or screen-oriented form, moving it from the world of paper to the realm of the screen through specific digital codes based on sound, text, image, and motion.

The term *digital literature* applies to any literary text connected to technology in any way. Digitization depends on digital processing devices that transform letters into numbers – without neglecting the aesthetic dimension that makes literature literary, through its artistic deviation and figurative imagery. It is, therefore, a form that fully

integrates technology, relying on advanced production methods and the use of multimedia components.

Digital literature operates through links that move the text toward artistic and semantic horizons. As **Said Yaqtin (2008)** notes:

“Renewing writing and language to align with multimedia is the challenge of any cultural development in our time. Every nation finds itself compelled to reconcile its modes of thought and the tools of that thought with new media, which are not merely instruments, but also forms of thinking and modes of culture.”

Digital literature, then, represents a transcultural phenomenon. The Saudi poet and writer Ibrahim al-Jarifani observes:

“Illiteracy today no longer lies in the inability to read and write, but in the failure to keep pace with information technology.”

Thus, digital literature stands as a true hallmark of our era, one shaped by **social media** platforms that have turned the world into a small global village and transformed the notions of authorship and publication. Readers increasingly prefer browsing electronic sites to reading printed copies, evaluating works according to the number of *likes* they receive, which has become an informal measure of quality.

Digital literature includes narrative, poetic, or dramatic works that employ media technologies in writing and creativity. It utilizes computers or digital devices to produce literary works and to transform them into digital worlds. Consequently, it integrates audiovisual elements into a unified digital framework, making it a multimedia genre that combines sound, image, and text within diverse



interactive relationships. It can take the form of poetry, short stories, novels, or plays.

Digital literature thus employs all forms of digital data to transform literary works into interactive archives that exploit the full potential of the screen, using audio, visual, and graphic techniques to bring creativity closer to the digital reader.

Moreover, digital literature establishes an interactive relationship with the digital reader through the exchange of remarks, criticism, and various comments. Such interaction may occur directly—on the text's page with the author's presence—or indirectly through an electronic link that redirects the reader to the text.

The educational field has also benefited from interactive literature through specialized digital learning platforms that promote learning through interaction.

Since the computer medium is one of the essential tools of communication, it transforms the creative text into a visual form or transfers it from the world of paper to the digital screen. Accordingly, digital education employs audiovisual media to fulfill its digital function. It unites sound and image into a single digital framework and, as a result, becomes a multimedia educational process that incorporates sound, image, text, and interactive computing relationships.

This includes the teaching of Arabic as a foreign language, as language is a system of thought, communication, and expression. As Madhkoor (2006) states:

“The culture of every society is embedded in its language and lexicon; there is no human civilization without linguistic revival.”

Teaching Arabic to non-native speakers therefore requires a **scientific method** grounded in clear principles and systematic organization. **Madhkoor (1991)** emphasizes:

“The core problem does not lie in the Arabic language itself, but in the way it is taught—as rules, mechanical exercises, and rigid templates—rather than as the living tongue of a people and a language of life.”

Media technologies possess the capacity to strengthen the use of Arabic and serve as one of the most effective tools for enhancing language proficiency. As **Akkanah (2007)** notes:

“If we adhere to simplified Arabic in our discourse and present it in a renewed and accessible form that suits the levels of society, media can become the best means of improving spoken language.”

Setting clear educational objectives creates better learning opportunities, since a teacher’s understanding of language goals is fundamental to successful instruction. Indeed, one of the first qualities of an effective teacher lies in their skill at defining learning objectives and selecting an appropriate methodology.

1.2. The Concept of Interactivity

According to Al-Mu‘jam al-Wasīṭ, the term *interaction* (*tafā‘ul*)—found under the root *fā‘ala*—is used in the **chemical sense**, referring to what is known as a *chemical reaction*. The dictionary states:

“A chemical reaction occurs when one substance affects another, thereby altering its chemical composition; or it is a chemical change that takes place in a substance under the influence of heat, electricity, or similar factors.” (**Montassir, 2004**).

Similarly, the Contemporary Arabic Language Dictionary defines the adjective *interactive* (*tafā‘ulī*) as: “related to



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interaction; mutually influential – e.g., interactive force.” (Mokhtar, 2008).

From these definitions, it can be inferred that *interaction* or *interactivity* denotes a mutual influence between two entities, an exchange that reflects the strength and dynamism of the relationship.

Terminologically, Said Yaqtin defines *interactivity* in his book *From the Text to the Hypertext*, as follows:

“In informatics, interactivity is a process of reciprocal exchange or mutual response between the possibilities offered by the digital system to the user, and the actions performed by the user in return. This is exemplified by a user clicking on an icon to move to another page.” (Yaqtin, *From the Text to the Hypertext: An Introduction to the Aesthetics of Interactive Creativity*, 2005).

From this definition, *interactivity* refers to the way the user engages with the digital device and responds to its functionalities.

A number of Western scholars, however, maintain that this term does not simply denote the ability to navigate the virtual world; rather, it implies the user’s agency and capacity to modify that environment. They argue that “*stimulating emotions and enjoying freedom of movement do not in themselves confirm an interactive relationship between the user and a given environment.*” (Al-Bariki, *Introduction to Interactive Literature*, 2006).

Thus, the word *interactivity* conveys notions of exchange and mutual influence, established through communication between two or more entities. It is a relatively recent concept, emerging from the evolving relationship between

humans and machines. The essence of interactivity lies in response – without which, interaction cannot occur.

According to **Fatima Bariki (2006)**,

“Interaction is a mode of life and a way of engaging with the various situations an individual constantly encounters. Human beings naturally interact, often unconsciously, with the literary or non-literary texts presented to them—whether printed or electronic. Those who develop their modes of interaction over time, in line with changing forms of texts and the media that convey them, simultaneously evolve in their engagement with literature and its communicative mechanisms.”

1.3. Manifestations of Interactivity in Literature

The technology of the **Internet** and its communication protocols has provided numerous tools for connection and interaction. The reader has consequently developed an active relationship with interactive literature—reading, engaging, and responding to it through various digital means such as **email, discussion forums, and personal blogs**.

First: Email

Email is defined as :

“one of the means of exchanging messages between individuals and organizations, characterized by speed, efficiency, and effectiveness through the use of different network capabilities. It also allows for multiple transmission patterns, such as sending the same message to a large number of recipients.”
(**Allah, 1999**).

Communication through email enables the exchange of text messages, tables, graphics, videos, or images via



interconnected digital accounts on the Internet. It is therefore considered a **fast and convenient tool** for transmitting and accessing information.

Second: Electronic Literary Forums

Electronic literary forums are distinguished by the fact that their membership does not require formal documentation. They provide a space for discussion and debate around literary texts, allowing Internet users to exchange views and ideas on various topics. Using email and other tools, these forums form scientific and intellectual discussion groups, making them an important medium of interaction among Internet users.

Third: Blogs

Blogs function as personal journals published on the Internet, where individuals share their thoughts, viewpoints, and reflections on events, expressing their concerns, emotions, and ideas. They constitute a space for free expression, managed by both professionals and enthusiasts from different fields.

Blogs have played a significant role in promoting and disseminating literary texts, and many websites have adopted this service extensively to give users the opportunity to participate in content creation and to cultivate an interactive and responsive readership engaged with digital texts.

2. The Distinctive Features of Interactive Literature

Digital education represents the innovative use of digital tools and technologies in the processes of teaching and

learning. It is often referred to as technology-enhanced learning or e-learning. The use of digital technologies enables teachers to design more engaging and effective learning experiences within their courses. Such learning can take the form of short modules or full academic programs delivered online.

Current technological developments compel us to take into account the importance of promoting oral and written communication, adopting authentic contexts and texts, facilitating the transfer of knowledge and experience, and prioritizing the learner by considering individual differences and the integration of teacher and learner roles.

As **Halimi (2006)** notes:

“Practical application is what enables learners to acquire linguistic skills, transforming theory into practice. The theoretical aspect is an essential foundation in building linguistic competencies, but it is not the ultimate goal; rather, it is the means leading to the true goal – practical and applied mastery.”

Digital culture has thus become a defining feature of the modern era and a driving force behind various developments across societies. It is now essential to expand its dissemination and accessibility among all social groups, allowing individuals to integrate into the knowledge society and enhance their abilities to perform social and professional functions effectively.

It is well established that the computer medium is a means of communication. This medium transforms the creative text into a visual or screen-based form, transferring it from the realm of paper to that of the digital display. Consequently, digital education utilizes audiovisual media to fulfill the function of digitization, combining sound and



image into a unified digital framework. Hence, digital education is inherently multimedia-based, involving sound, image, text, computer technology, and diverse interactive relationships.

Digitization, in turn, refers to the integration of digital technologies into everyday life by converting everything that can be digitized. According to Al-Bariki,

“Digital education is the innovative use of digital tools and technologies in teaching and learning. It is often referred to as technology-enhanced or electronic learning. The use of digital technologies allows teachers to design learning experiences that are more engaging and effective, whether in the form of short online courses or complete programs.”

2-1. Reader Response in the Interactive Text

Since this term has begun to make its way into Arabic literature in recent years—through a number of critical writings—it has become necessary to introduce the **Arab reader** to it and to clarify the modes through which this new form of literary writing manifests. The aim is to make readers aware of how literature in the West has harnessed modern technology to bring literary art closer to people, renewing its image for generations more accustomed to sitting for long hours before the blue screen than to reading a printed book.

The term interactive literature is now becoming established within Arab literary and critical circles, as well as among computer scientists interested in the relationship between literature and technology. Although various designations have appeared—such as networked text, interactive text, electronic journals like ASGP, online literary

forums, virtual symposia, and international or national conferences held through teleconferencing – they all refer to the same phenomenon that relies on the computer and the internet to convey information.

A. Response through Emoji

Users of digital media interact with posts on social platforms through multiple modes of expression: writing, images, and emojis. Since images and emojis save both time and cognitive effort compared to written responses, they convey emotions toward the author that vary depending on the context. This reflects the reader’s rhetorical competence, as such reactions encourage writers to continue their production and indicate the presence of a readership of researchers and critics following their digital contributions.

B. Response through Images

The audience also interacts visually, using images for rhetorical effect. Here one recalls Roland Barthes’ reflections in *Rhetoric of the Image*, which the blogger can perceive and internalize. Such interactions motivate continued writing and confirm the presence of an audience of scholars following digital works. They also remove spatial and temporal barriers between the writer and the reader—for instance, through an image accompanied by the word “*Beautiful*,” a hand holding a red rose, or an icon signifying a raised salute.

C. Response through Writing

Written responses often take the form of compliments, encouragements, or polite expressions similar in content to emojis—such as greetings or wishes for success. Comments



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tend to be brief and belong to a discursive space of collegiality and goodwill within scholarly circles. However, some comments adopt a critical or corrective stance, offering counterarguments or additions that address gaps in the original post.

Today, engaging with this form of literature has become a necessity to keep pace with modernity. Digital literature has found its place among both readers and writers: reading has become browsing-based, guided by readers' personal preferences and interests. At the same time, the openness of online publication allows anyone to share texts, choose a pseudonym, and receive feedback – whether from specialists or general readers.

The Arab reader now has access to world literatures, including interactive novels published exclusively online, navigated through hyperlinks. Literature, via social media, has transformed into a space for literary dialogue, enabling readers to communicate with their favorite authors and to express expectations regarding future works. The digital writer is no longer the sole owner of the text; they must accept the reader's participation in creating, modifying, or expanding it, as well as exchanging knowledge and forming virtual friendships.

Since this reality is now an inevitable part of the modern age, adaptation to this new literary form is essential. The internet has made literature globally accessible – easy to upload, download, and share through direct electronic links. What once required knowing a book's title can now be reached instantly by clicking a link, which also enables immediate interaction and sharing.

This form of literature is not confined to adults; children, too, have their share. The text has moved from paper to virtual space, from the traditional medium to the digital environment. Whether we accept it or not, today's generation is drawn to technology and to what appears on screens. With the spread of smart devices, PlayStation games, CDs, and animated films, children find pleasure and engagement in technological use. Modern culture now relies primarily on hearing and vision, which strengthen and reinforce conveyed meanings.

As **Al-Haythi (1988)** explains:

“Television facilitates comprehension by linking the spoken word with the visual image, as though transforming abstractions into perceptible realities. Most of what individuals learn is absorbed through these two senses.”

Consequently, it has become imperative to employ technology in education and in developing various aspects of early childhood. Digital literature represents one of the new technological forms favored by the majority of children. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the potential role of technology in influencing children's behavior.

Digital literature for children refers to literary works displayed on digital screens – whether television, computer, tablet, or smartphone – across multiple genres such as digital stories, digital theater, and digital poetry. The latter is defined as

“a sequence of verbal, visual, and auditory narrative perceptions arranged within the computer system according to electronic technical structures, produced by the creator through hypertext technology”
(**Nadhir, 2010**).



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This artistic approach in narrative creativity – marked by interaction, openness, decentralization, horizontal reading, and coordination – is inherently **interactive**, with its nature determined by the type of engagement achieved.

Interactive literature, thus, offers an open text – a text without boundaries. The creator, regardless of the genre, may publish a work online and leave readers free to complete it as they wish. In this way, interactive literature opens the field for the reader to co-create the text. It promotes nonlinear reading, based on interlinked pathways that allow readers to follow diverse internal relationships among interconnected texts.

2-2. Interactive Literary Genres

In recent years, new literary genres have emerged in connection with the computer and the digital network space, such as collaborative novels and collective interactive writings, in which numerous readers and authors participate in the creation process. These interactive literary forms encompass a range of genres, among which we may mention the following:

- **Interactive Poetry**

Hypertextual (Linked) Poetry is a form that employs a nonlinear linking system, transferring the reader's role from that of a mere consumer to that of an active co-producer who helps to shape and direct the text. Whether visual, auditory, kinetic, or textual, hypertext poetry engages the reader in navigating and constructing meaning through interaction with the poem's digital architecture.

- **Interactive Poem**

The interactive poem represents a new form of modern poetry that relies on the advanced mechanisms of the electronic computer, combining image, music, and recall functions through dynamic interaction between the poet and the reader. It takes the form of a moving panorama, accompanied by music and sound effects that propel the poem toward greater harmony and sensory richness.

It is worth noting that the interactive poem does not necessarily require an internet connection; it may be accessed through CD-ROMs and used offline, independently of the network.

- **Interactive Novel**

The interactive novel merges fictional imagination with the author's personal perspective while employing technological tools that enhance meaning and illuminate the novelist's vision. It avoids excessive elaboration, focusing instead on a single event until it reaches completion—thus maintaining narrative simplicity and clarity.

Nevertheless, the printed novel retains a higher level of aesthetic refinement, distinguished by its symbolism and elevated language—qualities that digitalization often struggles to replicate fully. The novel remains deeply connected to an emotional state; it is not merely a product of imagination but also an embodiment of human sentiment and reflection.

- **Interactive Play**

The idea of digital theatrical literature emerged with the goal of creating collaborative plays written collectively online by individuals from different nationalities and



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regions. This experimental form of playwriting represents a new and distinct practice: it abolishes the notion of a single, central author.

Any reader who accesses the website hosting the electronic play can become a co-author, contributing to the unfolding of the narrative, which remains open-ended. A participant may select a particular character and develop its dramatic trajectory, after which another participant can choose a different character and expand its textual movements. The process continues indefinitely, forming a continuous, participatory creative cycle.

Conclusion

Interactive texts have diversified, giving rise to multiple forms—the digital text, the hypertext, and the electronic text—each governed by its own balance and principles. These principles have revealed the essential distinctions between the various types of texts.

Perhaps the time has come to approach the topic of digital literature through critical analysis, for we are now required to write using the tools of our age. Digital literature has become a genuine literary phenomenon that characterizes the technological era in the Western world. However, in the Arab context, it still advances with considerable hesitation. This hesitancy is linked to the Arab intellectual mindset as well as to the current state of literary criticism and its limited ability to keep pace with the evolving forms of textual production.

Moreover, many of the concepts related to digital literature remain somewhat ambiguous – not only within the Arab experience, but also in the Western experience, given the relative novelty of the field. The fear of the “newcomer” – a kind of technological phobia – has also hindered writers and critics from fully engaging with the domain of digital literature.

Interactive literature, for its part, is a form that employs the resources of modern technology to present a new literary genre that fuses literariness and digitality, where the concept of interactivity is manifested through processes of exchange and reciprocal response.

The advantages of this type of literature include:

- Reducing distance and saving travel effort.
- Creating opportunities for communication with professors from foreign universities.
- Saving both time and energy.
- Facilitating and accelerating communication processes.
- Enabling easy contact with novelists and critics through hyperlinks.
- Ensuring the lightness and portability of digital books.
- Providing access to audio versions of texts.
- Offering the essential feature of interactivity, through the use of hypertextual links.

Amidst this abundance of advantages, certain drawbacks must also be acknowledged – most notably, the strain prolonged screen exposure places on vision, and the limited number of Arabic digital books available to readers.



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