

*Comparative Literature in the Digital Age:
From Identity Crisis to Epistemological Renewal*
الأدب المقارن في العصر الرقمي: من أزمة الهوية إلى التجديد
المعرفي

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Abstract

Comparative literature, historically torn between transdisciplinary openness and methodological legitimacy, finds its epistemological questions reshaped by the digital age. This article examines the impact of the digital, both as a tool and as an object, on the discipline: the transformation of corpora, the blending of qualitative and quantitative methods, and related ethical challenges. Far from being a crisis, this shift presents an opportunity for critical renewal, provided that hermeneutic rigor is preserved.

Keywords: comparative literature, digital humanities, distant reading, digital corpus, hermeneutics.

الملخص

الأدب المقارن، الذي ظل تاريخيًا متأرجحًا بين الانفتاح عبر التخصصات والشرعية المنهجية، يجد أسئلته الإبستمولوجية تتشكل من جديد في العصر الرقمي. تبحث هذه المقالة في تأثير الأدوات الرقمية - سواء كوسيط أو كموضوع - على هذا الحقل: تحوّل النصوص المرجعية، ودمج المناهج الكيفية والكمية، والتحديات الأخلاقية المرتبطة بهذا التحوّل. بعيدًا عن كونه أزمة، يمثل هذا المنعطف فرصةً للتجديد النقدي، شرط الحفاظ على الصرامة التأويلية.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب المقارن، الإنسانيات الرقمية، القراءة البعيدة، المتن الرقمي، التأويل.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In an era where digital technologies are profoundly reshaping the modalities of knowledge production, dissemination, and reception, comparative literature faces a structural transformation of unprecedented magnitude. Historically rooted in the study of relationships between literatures from different languages, cultures, or periods, the discipline has long been defined by its transdisciplinary openness and its resistance to any fixed methodological canon (Weisstein, 1984). However, the rise of the digital humanities—understood as the application of computational tools and methods to the analysis of cultural objects—has disrupted this equilibrium by introducing new paradigms of inquiry, novel objects of study, and renewed critical responsibilities.

The proliferation of digital literary databases, the generalization of text mining, algorithmically-assisted reading, and the emergence of born-digital literary works compel comparatists to reconsider the epistemological foundations of their discipline (Moretti, 2013; Hayles, 2012; Bode, 2018). In *How We Think*, Hayles (2012) argues that the use of computational technologies is far more than a mere technical supplement; it transforms the very way we think. Scholars such as Matthew Jockers (2013) and Sarah Allison (2016) have

advanced hybrid models that reconcile close reading with distant reading, thereby opening up new interpretive pathways. Yet these innovations are not without controversy: several critics have expressed concern that the hermeneutic core of comparative literature may be diluted by overly technicized approaches (Damrosch, 2020; Schaeffer, 2016).

Academic media (e.g., *Le Monde des Livres*, 2022; *Le Débat*, Compagnon, 2017), research platforms such as The Stanford Literary Lab or Huma-Num, and interviews with digital comparatists (Pressman, 2021; Risam, 2018) all bear witness to a growing tension between methodological innovation and critical rigor. Meanwhile, the expansion of interactive fiction, generative works, and online literary experimentation compels a reevaluation of what constitutes a literary object (Rettberg, 2019; Ryan, 2015). Comparative literature, long attentive to processes of transfer, translation, and hybridization, now finds itself at a crossroads: should it simply adopt digital tools as analytical aids, or should it reconceptualize itself in light of their internal logic?

This article takes root within this context and is driven by a central question:

Does the digital turn signal an identity crisis for comparative literature, or does it offer a critical and methodological opportunity for renewal?

Answering this question requires a dual diagnostic: an analysis of the ongoing transformations in comparative practices in the digital age, and an assessment of their implications for the epistemic identity of the discipline.

To structure this investigation, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How are methods from the digital humanities redefining analytical practices in comparative literature?
2. What are the effects of digital technologies on the constitution of corpora and the nature of comparative literary objects?
3. What ethical and epistemological challenges arise from the use of computational tools in a historically interpretive discipline?
4. In what ways are digital literary forms reshaping canonical categories of comparatism—such as text, author, reading, and circulation?

The primary objective is to develop a critical cartography of the transformations affecting comparative literature in the wake of digital innovation. Specifically, the article aims to:

- ✓ Identify continuities and ruptures with traditional approaches;
- ✓ Show how methodological hybridization (between quantitative and qualitative methods) redefines scholarly practices;
- ✓ Interrogate the legitimacy of digital corpora and emerging literary objects;
- ✓ Reflect on the ethical and political stakes of a digitally-informed and globally-conscious comparatism.

The secondary literature on this topic is both abundant and rapidly evolving. Foundational works by Franco Moretti (*Distant Reading*, 2013) have inaugurated a new vision of literary history based on data modeling. Katherine Hayles (2008, 2012) has emphasized the need to reconceptualize critical thinking in technological contexts, while advocating for a posthumanist approach to reading. Scholars such as Matthew Jockers (2013), Sarah Allison (2016), and Ted Underwood (2019) have each attempted to integrate quantitative methods into literary criticism without abandoning its interpretive foundations. Other researchers, including Jessica Pressman (2014), Marie-Laure Ryan (2015), and Scott Rettberg (2019), have explored the emergence of digital literary forms and their impact on critical paradigms. Meanwhile, voices such as Safiya Umoja Noble (2018), Roopika Risam (2018), and Lauren Klein and Catherine D'Ignazio (2020) have warned against the structural biases and cultural asymmetries embedded in digital infrastructures.

This body of literature provides a robust foundation for reflection, yet it also reveals certain limitations. It is often fragmented—split between technical case studies, theoretical essays, and critical manifestos. Moreover, few works offer an integrated synthesis that articulates methodology, corpus, literary objects, and ethics within a specifically comparative perspective. This article seeks to address that gap by advancing a transversal, critical, and contextualized approach.

The research methodology employed is qualitative and theoretical. It relies on a cross-analysis of:

- ✓ Foundational theoretical texts in digital humanities, comparative literature, and cultural studies;

- ✓ Case studies from recent digital projects (e.g., *Oceanic Exchanges*, *Stanford Literary Lab*, *Digital Modernism*);
- ✓ A critical discourse analysis of interviews, platforms, and academic publications (Hayles, Pressman, Risam, Compagnon);
- ✓ A historical recontextualization of the methodological metamorphoses in the discipline since the digital turn.

This approach, both diachronic and critical, resists framing the digital as a rupture per se. Rather, it interprets it as a moment of **creative tension**, wherein continuities and transformations converge. Drawing on interdisciplinary corpora—including information science, literary theory, digital sociology, and intellectual history—this study seeks to rethink the role of comparative literature in the evolving ecology of digital scholarship.

2. IDENTITY CRISIS OR DYNAMIC RECONFIGURATION

Comparative literature has always operated in a liminal space, anchored deeply in the history of ideas, yet structurally open to transnational literary flows. Unlike other academic disciplines, it has never possessed a fixed corpus or a unified methodological apparatus. This foundational instability, far from constituting a weakness, has in fact enabled the field to adapt fluidly to cultural and disciplinary mutations. In this light, the rise of the digital humanities should not be viewed as a rupture *ex nihilo*, but rather as a catalyst that intensifies long-standing internal tensions. The advent of computational technologies, the proliferation of digitized archives, and the emergence of hybrid

literary objects, interactive works, hypermedia fiction, generative literature, do not introduce unprecedented questions; rather, they magnify those the discipline has grappled with since its inception. To label this evolution as a “crisis” would be to replicate a defensive rhetoric often symptomatic of resistance to change. A more accurate diagnosis would point to a **dynamic process of reconfiguration**. The digital does not dismantle the comparatist edifice, it redraws its foundations. It challenges intellectual habits such as the notion of a closed text, a singular work, or a sovereign author, while simultaneously opening new analytical spaces. The tension between text and medium, meaning and structure, critical reading and algorithmic modeling, is not a threat to the discipline; it has become the very engine of its renewal.

In this context, Ulrich Weisstein’s (1984) tripartite reflection on the origins, identity, and future of comparative literature acquires renewed relevance. The question of origins, *Where do we come from?* no longer points to a Eurocentric disciplinary genealogy. It may now be traced across vast multilingual databases that enable us to map the global circulation of texts across time and space (Bode, 2018). The question of disciplinary identity, *What are we?* is being reshaped by the introduction of digital methods that require the merging of interpretive rigor with technical literacy (Allison, 2016). This methodological shift does not imply a departure from critical paradigms; rather, it reflects a higher level of demand premised on the complementarity of knowledge forms. Finally, the projection into the future, *Where are we going?* is increasingly anchored in engagements with literary forms that transcend the

print medium: interactive texts, immersive works in augmented reality, and narratives generated or assisted by artificial intelligence (Rettberg, 2019).

Yet this reconfiguration is not confined to the realm of objects and tools; it also implicates the **institutional practices** of research and pedagogy. Comparative literature programs must now incorporate a minimal level of digital fluency: the ability to read XML markup, understand the logic of stylometric algorithms, or navigate TEI-encoded corpora. The identity of the comparatist is becoming increasingly multifaceted, part literary critic, part media theorist, part data analyst. This hybridization of roles is both a constraint and an opportunity. It invites us to reconceive literary research not as a solitary or static pursuit, but as a **collaborative, interdisciplinary, and dynamically evolving activity**. On a symbolic level, this transformation also impacts the discipline's perceived **legitimacy**. In an academic context increasingly governed by imperatives of innovation, utility, and measurable output, comparative literature may appear out of sync. Yet its distinctive capacity to question boundaries, historicize concepts, and decenter dominant perspectives positions it as a critical observatory for understanding the effects of digitality on knowledge production. It does not offer certainties but rather furnishes **frameworks of intelligibility** that connect the technical with the symbolic, the global with the local, and the quantitative with the interpretive.

Rather than succumbing to the anxiety of obsolescence, we should instead recognize that comparative literature, by confronting the digital, discovers a **new epistemological frontier**. It is not being eclipsed, it is being redeployed: no

longer limited to the comparison of textual artifacts, but reoriented toward the analysis of *forms of literariness* across shifting media, cultural, and technological contexts.

3. HYBRID METHODOLOGIES: BETWEEN CLOSE READING AND DISTANT READING

Building on the epistemological reconfigurations described above, one of the most decisive transformations brought about by the digital turn in comparative literature lies in the emergence of **hybrid methodological models**. These approaches seek to reconcile the traditional interpretive rigor of *close reading* with the exploratory and statistical power of *distant reading*, as theorized by Franco Moretti (2013). Rather than seeing these two paradigms as mutually exclusive, an increasing number of scholars advocate for methodological pluralism that adapts to the scale, objectives, and nature of the literary objects under study.

Close reading, inherited from formalist and structuralist traditions, focuses on the intrinsic properties of the text, its language, tropes, syntax, rhythms, and intertextual resonances. It emphasizes textual singularity, aesthetic complexity, and interpretive depth. In contrast, *distant reading* proposes a methodological detachment: rather than interpreting individual texts, it analyzes large corpora through algorithmic tools, thereby revealing macro-patterns, stylistic trends, or intertextual networks that remain invisible to human readers. While close reading privileges hermeneutic density, distant reading brings scale and systemic vision.

This duality, however, is increasingly being overcome by **hybrid models** that recognize the value of both scales of

analysis. Sarah Allison (2016) introduces the notion of *scalable reading*, which adjusts the level of granularity according to interpretive goals. Matthew Jockers (2013), for his part, proposes a « funnel model » whereby researchers begin with large-scale quantitative observations and progressively narrow their focus to engage in traditional literary analysis. This methodological continuum enables scholars to **navigate between global patterns and textual nuances**, thus redefining the critical act itself.

In comparative literature, such hybrid methodologies prove especially relevant. The discipline has always dealt with heterogeneous corpora, multilingual, transhistorical, culturally diverse, and requires tools capable of managing complexity without sacrificing specificity. Projects like *Oceanic Exchanges* (Roeder et al., 2019) exemplify this synergy: combining stylometric analysis and network mapping with hermeneutic investigations of cultural transfers, the project sheds light on the global circulation of texts in the 19th century press. Here, distant reading does not replace close reading; rather, it provides **new entry points** into the comparative act.

These methodological innovations are also enabled by the development of sophisticated digital tools and visual interfaces. Platforms such as the Stanford Literary Lab or HathiTrust Research Center offer researchers the capacity to toggle between macroscopic visualizations, semantic maps, frequency graphs, clustering trees, and micro-analytical functions, such as keyword-in-context displays or narrative arc modeling. As Jean-Baptiste Camps (2020) notes, such tools act as "hermeneutic devices", transforming not only how we read texts, but how we

conceive of interpretation itself. Beyond the technical, the embrace of hybrid methodologies in comparative literature invites a more profound **epistemological shift**. It challenges the disciplinary habit of privileging depth over breadth, singularity over structure, and insists on the possibility of a critical practice that is both expansive and attentive. Andrew Piper (2018) underscores this dual demand: to harness the heuristic potential of data-driven approaches without relinquishing the interpretive imperatives at the heart of humanistic inquiry.

Ultimately, the goal is not to fuse *close* and *distant* reading into a new orthodoxy, but to cultivate **methodological agility**, tailored to the evolving nature of texts and questions in the digital age. This agility requires technical competence, but also theoretical reflexivity, an awareness that methods are never neutral but shape the kinds of knowledge we produce. In that sense, hybrid methodologies are not merely practical tools, they are conceptual frameworks through which comparative literature can reinvent itself as both **a critical science and a digitally literate practice**.

4. THE DIGITAL AS TOOL AND OBJECT: A CONCEPTUAL DUALITY

As comparative literature continues to adapt to the methodological shifts explored above, it faces another foundational challenge: how to theorize the **status of the digital** itself. Increasingly, scholars distinguish between two complementary yet analytically distinct dimensions, the digital as **a methodological tool** and the digital as **an autonomous object of study**. This duality is more than a terminological

nuance; it delineates two epistemological orientations and two ways of engaging with digital technologies.

On the one hand, the digital can function as an **instrumental extension** of existing literary methods. In this capacity, computational tools, text mining, stylometric analysis, topic modeling, network visualization, are applied to traditional literary corpora in order to reveal previously unseen patterns, trends, and textual relations. The objective remains interpretive, but is enhanced through algorithmic modeling. This approach, exemplified by Moretti's (2013) *Distant Reading* and Jockers (2013) *Macroanalysis*, positions the digital as a means of accessing macrostructural insights without abandoning the critical foundations of the discipline. On the other hand, the digital also constitutes **a new literary object in its own right**. Born-digital works, interactive fiction, algorithmically generated texts, hypermedia literature, augmented reality narratives, pose unprecedented challenges to traditional categories of authorship, textuality, and narrativity. As N. Katherine Hayles (2008) argues, these works demand analytical tools that are sensitive to their materiality, programmability, and readerly co-construction. In this second orientation, the digital is not simply an aid to understanding existing literary forms; it **creates new forms of literariness** that call for their own critical grammars.

Jessica Pressman (2014) and Marie-Laure Ryan (2015) have likewise emphasized that electronic literature cannot be approached solely through the lens of textual content. Its interactivity, code structures, and performative dimensions require an expanded notion of reading, one that is as much **experiential and multimodal** as it is hermeneutic. Meanwhile,

scholars such as Matthew Kirschenbaum (2016) have traced the history of digital writing environments (e.g., word processors) to underscore how the **material supports of literary production** have long been intertwined with technological systems.

Importantly, this dual framework, digital as tool vs. digital as object, does not imply an insurmountable opposition. In many cases, the two dimensions intersect. For instance, a researcher might use algorithmic tools to study the thematic progression of a digital poem, or apply distant reading techniques to a corpus of interactive fiction. What is essential, however, is to recognize that these approaches require **different theoretical commitments**. Treating the digital as a tool presupposes a continuity with existing paradigms; treating it as an object demands conceptual innovation.

This conceptual duality has profound implications for comparative literature. It urges scholars to simultaneously reflect on **how** they study texts and **what** they define as literary. It also raises the question of **disciplinary borders**: when does comparative literature overlap with media studies, digital aesthetics, or software studies? This disciplinary porosity, far from diluting the comparatist project, may actually revitalize it by extending its analytical reach into the technological architectures of meaning-making. Furthermore, the convergence of digital method and digital object invites a more **reflexive approach** to literary research itself. As Klein and D'Ignazio (2020) have emphasized in *Data Feminism*, any engagement with data, whether as analytical corpus or artistic substrate, must be critically aware of the **structures of power, access, and exclusion** embedded in technological infrastructures. Likewise,

Roopika Risam (2018) has called for a decolonial digital humanities that challenges the Western-centric norms shaping many digital archives and platforms.

In sum, treating the digital both as a **methodological interface** and a **creative field of inquiry** allows comparative literature to occupy a uniquely critical position. It can interrogate not only literary texts, but also the systems, technical, cultural, institutional, that govern their production and circulation in the digital age. Far from fragmenting the discipline, this dual perspective **expands its critical horizon**, enabling it to account for both inherited forms and emerging digital literatures.

5. RECONFIGURING CORPORA AND REDEFINING LITERARY OBJECTS

As digital technologies reshape the epistemological landscape of literary studies, one of the most striking consequences for comparative literature is the **redefinition of what constitutes a legitimate corpus and a literary object**. This transformation is not merely quantitative, reflecting the growing availability of digitized materials, but also qualitative, as it compels a rethinking of long-established hierarchies, genres, and modes of textuality.

Traditionally, literary corpora were formed according to implicit or explicit criteria: canonical status, linguistic representation, national heritage, or aesthetic recognition. Yet with the rise of massive digital libraries such as Gallica, Google Books, Project Gutenberg, and HathiTrust, the boundaries of the corpus have been radically expanded. Today's comparatist can access millions of texts spanning continents, centuries, and genres. However, this profusion of material does not equal

neutrality. As Katherine Bode (2018) emphasizes, digital corpora are **constructed artifacts** shaped by editorial priorities, institutional funding, and technological affordances. Far from being objective or comprehensive, these archives often **reinforce existing exclusions**, privileging Western, print-based, and majority-language texts while marginalizing non-Western, oral, or experimental traditions. This uneven representation leads to a paradox: while digital tools promise to expand our access to literary diversity, the **structural asymmetries of digitization** risk reproducing the very exclusions that comparative literature seeks to overcome. Ted Underwood and Michael Sellers (2016) have shown, for instance, that only a small percentage of digitized materials in major repositories originate from non-Western contexts. Similarly, Laura Mandell (2015) notes that many computational tools are designed for alphabetic scripts and Euro-American languages, thereby rendering other linguistic systems effectively invisible in large-scale analysis.

In response to these limitations, some scholars argue for a **critical reengineering of corpora**, one that not only diversifies content but also interrogates the socio-technical infrastructures that condition literary visibility. This endeavor involves not simply adding more voices to existing frameworks, but **rethinking what counts as a "text"** in a digital context. Indeed, born-digital literary forms, code poetry, networked narratives, data-driven fiction, challenge the stability of the book as a physical and interpretive object. These works often defy traditional classification: they may be non-linear, collaborative, multimodal, or performative. As such, they **complicate**

inherited categories like genre, authorship, temporality, and reader agency.

This redefinition of the literary object requires theoretical adjustments. How should we read a text that rewrites itself with every session? How do we interpret a narrative that unfolds differently based on user interaction or device interface? Scholars such as Marie-Laure Ryan (2015) and Scott Rettberg (2019) suggest that we must embrace an **expanded poetics**, one that incorporates materiality, interactivity, and technological mediation into our interpretive frameworks. In this sense, the reconfiguration of the corpus is inseparable from a rethinking of literariness itself. Moreover, this epistemological shift has **pedagogical and institutional implications**. As comparative literature incorporates digital archives and tools, its practitioners must acquire new forms of literacy: data handling, metadata standards, markup languages (e.g., TEI/XML), and visual analytics. This does not imply a renunciation of traditional skills, but rather an enrichment of them. Teaching comparative literature today involves cultivating a **bilingual competence**, in humanistic interpretation and computational method alike.

Ultimately, the digital transformation of literary corpora is not just a matter of scale or format, it affects the **very definition of literature**. It compels comparative literature to question its own historical blind spots, to reexamine its methodologies, and to imagine new conceptual architectures for engaging with texts. In doing so, it affirms its role not merely as a guardian of tradition, but as a **laboratory for critical reinvention**, capable of negotiating the entangled dynamics of global culture, media innovation, and interpretive pluralism.

6. ETHICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL STAKES IN THE DIGITAL TURN

While the integration of digital tools into comparative literature offers undeniable methodological advances, it also raises **critical epistemological and ethical questions** that go to the heart of the discipline. The shift from interpretive reading to data-driven analysis, from textual close reading to algorithmic modeling, does not occur in a vacuum. It reconfigures what counts as valid knowledge, who has access to it, and under what conditions it is produced and disseminated. Epistemologically, the digital turn has introduced a **new regime of legibility**. Traditional literary studies are grounded in hermeneutics, which valorizes ambiguity, nuance, and context. By contrast, computational methods tend to extract quantifiable patterns and correlations, often privileging surface features over deep interpretive engagement. As N. Katherine Hayles (2012) has warned, this shift risks producing a form of *algorithmic reductionism*, in which the aesthetic, cultural, and political complexities of texts are flattened into data points. The question is not whether digital methods are useful, they clearly are, but whether they can be **critically accountable** to the richness of literary meaning. This tension is not merely theoretical. It has concrete effects on the **practices of research**. As Franco Moretti (2013) argues, the distant reading approach redefines the object of analysis: it is no longer the singular text but the **distribution of forms** across vast corpora. While this perspective reveals large-scale patterns, it also shifts attention away from individual voices, idiosyncratic styles, and marginal traditions. This epistemic displacement must be scrutinized: what is gained

through scale may be lost in specificity. Ethically, the challenges are no less pressing. As Safiya Umoja Noble (2018) has shown in *Algorithms of Oppression*, digital infrastructures, search engines, databases, recommendation systems are **not neutral**. They encode and perpetuate racial, gendered, and cultural biases that often remain invisible to users. In the field of comparative literature, these biases manifest through the **asymmetrical visibility** of literary traditions: Anglophone and Western texts dominate digital corpora, while non-Western literatures, oral traditions, and minority languages are underrepresented or entirely absent.

Moreover, computational tools often reflect the **assumptions of their designers**, assumptions that may conflict with the interpretive ethos of comparative literature. For instance, stylometric analysis assumes textual stability and authorial singularity, both of which are challenged by collaborative, multilingual, or oral traditions. As Jean-Marie Schaeffer (2016) notes, technology should not dictate theoretical frameworks; rather, methods must be adapted to the specificities of the objects they analyze. To navigate these ethical complexities, scholars such as Lauren Klein and Catherine D'Ignazio (2020) advocate for a **critical data ethics**, one that foregrounds transparency, inclusivity, and reflexivity in digital research. Their concept of *data feminism* underscores the need to interrogate not only what data reveals but also **what it excludes**, what it silences, and whom it benefits. This approach aligns closely with the core values of comparative literature, which has long sought to make visible the overlooked, the marginal, and the subaltern.

Roopika Risam (2018) takes this argument further by calling for a **decolonial digital humanities**, one that reconstructs the very infrastructure of knowledge. She argues that it is not enough to include more diverse texts in existing frameworks; rather, the frameworks themselves must be reimagined in order to accommodate different epistemologies, aesthetics, and cultural logics. For comparative literature, this means moving beyond token inclusion toward **structural transformation**, rethinking the design of databases, the protocols of textual analysis, and the metrics of scholarly value. Thus, the ethical and epistemological stakes of the digital turn are inseparable. To engage with the digital is not simply to adopt new tools, it is to enter into a **new mode of knowledge production**, one that demands critical vigilance at every level: methodological, conceptual, and institutional. Comparative literature, with its long-standing commitment to complexity, multiplicity, and critique, is uniquely positioned to meet this challenge. Far from being displaced by digital methods, the discipline can **assert a renewed relevance**, not by resisting change, but by shaping it through reflective, inclusive, and theoretically grounded practices.

7. CONCLUSION

This article has examined the multifaceted impact of digital technologies on the field of comparative literature, questioning whether the digital turn signals an identity crisis or, conversely, a generative reconfiguration. Through a detailed exploration of methodological shifts, the reconceptualization of corpora and literary objects, and the ethical and epistemological challenges involved, it has argued that the digital age does not threaten the

integrity of comparative literature but rather invites it to rethink its foundations and expand its critical horizon.

The central findings underscore a **discipline in transformation**, not dissolution. The digital does not erase comparatism's legacy; it brings to light the tensions that have long underpinned its structure, between interpretive depth and analytical breadth, between text and context, between the singular and the systemic. By embracing hybrid methodologies, recognizing the dual role of the digital as both tool and object, and interrogating the asymmetries embedded in digital infrastructures, comparative literature can assert itself as a **critical interface** between the humanities and the algorithmic cultures that increasingly shape contemporary knowledge.

This leads us to a clear response to the guiding question: **the digital turn is not a crisis, but an epistemological opportunity**, a chance to reimagine comparative literature as a discipline that is both critically rigorous and digitally literate. However, such a transformation is not automatic. It requires an ongoing commitment to theoretical reflection, ethical responsibility, and methodological inclusivity. Yet this research also reveals several **limitations**. First, the study has focused primarily on Western academic contexts and mainstream digital infrastructures, leaving aside regional specificities and grassroots digital literary practices. Second, the article adopts a theoretical perspective and does not include empirical data from classroom practices, research labs, or user-based studies. Third, the ethical analysis remains largely conceptual and would benefit from further case-based investigation, particularly into the politics of archiving and the design of digital tools.

These limitations open up **valuable avenues for future research**. One pressing task is to develop comparative frameworks for evaluating born-digital literatures across linguistic and cultural contexts. Another is to explore how AI-generated narratives challenge the notions of authorship, originality, and interpretation that lie at the heart of literary theory. Additionally, pedagogical innovation is needed to equip students and scholars with the dual fluency in critical reading and computational thinking that digital comparatism demands. Ultimately, comparative literature in the digital age must not aim for technological assimilation or theoretical retreat, but for a **reflexive reinvention** of its own practices. It must remain what it has always been at its best: a site of critical mediation, between languages, cultures, and now, technologies. In doing so, it can continue to play a pivotal role in understanding not only world literature, but also the evolving forms of literariness that emerge at the intersection of human creativity and algorithmic mediation.

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