

An Old School Publisher's Journey from the Book to the e-reader

(A study on the French novel *La Liseuse* by Paul Fournel)

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Robert Dubois, the protagonist of Paul Fournel's *La Liseuse*, is an acclaimed publisher. On his office table are stacks of mainstream manuscripts and his publishing “house is bathed in the silence of old paper”. One day, a fateful knock at the door awakens him to a reality he has so far ignored: an electronic reader (e-reader) capable of carrying an entire library in digital form! How would an old school reader, used to traditional books, react to the advent of the e-reader? The objective of the present study is to analyze Dubois' reaction to this new digital tool for reading. Selected passages of the novel were analyzed in order to explain and determine his reaction. The analysis revealed that Dubois' initial uneasiness with the e-reader soon leads to a deeper realization: the e-reader is about to separate the content (the text) from its traditional container (the book). However, the anticipated apocalypse does not dishearten the publisher but makes him explore, with a group of young tech savvy interns, new modes of “digital literature” written exclusively for e-readers. The protagonist's shift from traditional literature to “digital literature” demonstrates the author's affinity to "Oulipo"; a literary school seeking new patterns and structures in literature. In *La Liseuse* Fournel pushes existing boundaries to explore potential literature in the yet unexploited digital space.

Keywords: dematerialization of text, digital literature, potential literature, Oulipo