

IDEAH • Vol. 2, Iss. 1 (DHSI 2019 & 2020)

Latin American E- literature and Location: The Nation Revisited in Electronic Literature Organization (ELO)

Verónica Paula Gómez¹

¹National Scientific and Technical Research Council of Argentina

Published on: Sep 20, 2021

DOI: 10.21428/f1f23564.4614d3de

License: [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC-BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

In this paper, I focus on the relation between literature and location, as a political address (Derrida 1997). In particular, I analyze how Latin American e-literature refers to the idea of Nation in five pieces of work hosted in the [Electronic Literature Collection \(ELC\)](#), [Volume 3](#).

The idea of Nation (Anderson; Gellner) has been largely studied in relation to print literature and national languages, but due to the global visual culture in which we are immersed, there is a deep transformation in the field of arts that gives place to the emergence of electronic literature (Hayles). Initially, the technopoetics (Kozak) hosted in cyberspace seem affiliated with the nomadism and the deterritorialization that dominate the digital world where they are produced and consumed (Beiguelman and La Ferla). But at the same time, there is a set of Latin American productions referred to local languages – legal texts, Spanish language, iconic images, folkloric tradition– into instruments for geopolitical territorialization (Chun). This means that these elements could be used to position Latin America in a global platform, as far as they keep the local characteristics linked to a specific Nation.

The *nationness* (Anderson) is present in some of the Latin American pieces that are part of the Electronic Literature Collection 3: *The 27th // El 27*, *Tatuaje*, *Anacrón*, *Bacterias Argentinas*, and *Grita*. Consequently, I examine the ambivalence of location in these e-literature (e-lit) works, considering the following question: what is the function of this reference to the idea of Nation when these productions are hosted in the overflow of cyberspace?¹ My objective is to identify the strategic use of national elements in the aforementioned Latin American corpus.

The Nation Revisited in Cyberspace

My doctoral thesis focuses on the relation between literature and location, as a political address (Derrida 1997).² Although e-literature is marginal because of its linking to visual poetry, which has traditionally criticized print support, and Latin America is marginalized in the zonal dispute that dominates the institutionalization of global e-literature, the “quality” of the national is still present in some of the Latin American productions published in [Electronic Literature Collection \(ELC\)](#), [Volume 3](#).³ Consequently, this article considers the following question in the frame of my larger research project: what is the function of this reference to a modern *locus* based on the idea of Nation when these productions are hosted in the cyberspace where national sovereignty does not organize the space anymore?

Regarding this question, the purpose of this paper is to identify the strategic use of some national elements in five Latin American works to build a powerful community in the dispute of global positioning, in ELO as a global platform.^{4 5} Thus, I consider that the still hegemonic idea of Nation cuts across the e-literature, to position *geopolitically* (Buck-Morss) some Latin American works.⁶ To study this function, I analyze five pieces of work that consider the national discursivity through economic, cultural and linguistic elements. The corpus is composed of *The 27th // El 27* by Eugenio Tisselli; *Tatuaje* by Rodolfo JM, Aranda Leonardo, Gabriela Gordillo, et al.; *Anacrón: Hipótesis de un producto todo* by Augusto Marquet and Gabriel Wolfson; *Bacterias Argentinas* by Santiago Ortiz; and *Grita* by Jose Aburto

The Wobbly Nation: The Overflow of Economics over Politics

There is a set of works that alludes to a political *locus*, whether on the Mexican-Constitution or on some practices that denounces corruption. Coming from the political sphere, this discourse is sealed and engulfed by the economic characteristics of late capitalism or *necro-capitalism* (Tisselli), which finds its legitimation in the modern subject but not necessarily its legibility (Weber 167). In this sense, the works analyzed express the discomfort with this dehumanizing discourse. In many different ways, the technopoetics I will analyze in this section link to the Mexican cultural tradition, showing the national—today wobbly—component.⁷

[*The 27th // El 27*](#) by Eugenio Tisselli is a work that proposes that “[e]ach time the New York Stock Exchange Composite Index (Symbol: ^NYA) closes with a positive percent variation, a fragment of the 27th article of the Mexican Constitution is automatically translated into English” (Figure 1). Concerning the fact that the 27th article legislates the dominion of lands and waters and private property in Mexico, Tisselli develops a technopoetic (Kozak) that involves some of the socioeconomic, cultural, and political controversies in which Mexico is currently subordinated to USA.

The 27th. El 27.

[EN] Each time the New York Stock Exchange Composite Index (Symbol: ^NYA) closes with a positive percent variation, a fragment of the 27th article of the Mexican Constitution is automatically translated into English. [[more](#)]

[ES] Cada vez que el Índice Compuesto de la Bolsa de Valores de Nueva York (Símbolo: ^NYA) cierre con una variación porcentual positiva, un fragmento del artículo 27 de la Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos será traducido automáticamente al inglés. [[más](#)]

Code: ^NYA
Name: NYSE COMPOSITE INDEX
Last closing price: 11712.5195
Last closing date: 6/22/2017
Last closing time: 4:06pm
Percent Change: +0.1388%

ARTICLE 27 LAND PROPERTY AND FALLING WATERS WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NATIONAL TERRITORY, ORIGINALLY CORRESPONDS TO THE NATION, WHICH HAS HAD AND HAVE THE RIGHT TO TRANSMIT THE DOMAIN OF THESE INDIVIDUALS, CONSTITUTING PRIVATE PROPERTY. EXPROPRIATIONS MAY ONLY BE BECAUSE OF USEFULNESS PUBLIC AND THROUGH COMPENSATION. THE NATION WILL HAVE AT ALL TIMES THE RIGHT TO IMPOSE ON PRIVATE PROPERTY MODALITIES THAT DICTATES THE INTEREST PUBLIC, AS WELL AS THE REGULAR, SOCIAL BENEFIT, EL APROVECHAMIENTO DE LOS ELEMENTOS NATURALES SUSCEPTIBLES DE APROPIACION, EN ORDEN TO MAKE AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH PUBLIC, CUIDAR DE SU CONSERVACION, LOGRAR EL DESARROLLO EQUILIBRADO DEL PAIS Y EL MEJORAMIENTO DE LAS CONDICIONES DE VIDA DE LA POBLACION RURAL Y URBANA. CONSEQUENTLY, WERE RENDERED MEASURES NECESSARY TO ORDER HUMAN SETTLEMENTS AND ESTABLISH APPROPRIATE PROVISIONS, USOS, RESERVATIONS AND DESTINATIONS OF LANDS, WATER AND FORESTS, IN ORDER TO EXECUTE WORKS TO PUBLIC AND TO PLAN AND REGULATE THE FOUNDATION, CONSERVACION, IMPROVEMENT AND GROWTH OF POPULATION CENTRES; TO PRESERVE AND RESTORE THE ECOLOGICAL BALANCE; FOR THE FRACTIONATION OF THE ESTATES. PARA DISPONER, EN LOS TERMINOS DE LA LEY REGLAMENTARIA, THE ORGANIZATION AND COLLECTIVE EXPLOITATION OF THE EJIDOS AND COMMUNITIES; PARA EL DESARROLLO DE LA PEQUEÑA PROPIEDAD RURAL; PARA EL FOMENTO DE LA AGRICULTURA, DE LA GANADERIA, OF THE FORESTRY AND OF THE OTHER ACTIVITIES ECONOMIC IN THE MIDDLE RURAL, AND TO PREVENT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE NATURAL ELEMENTS AND GIVES THEM TO YOU THAT THE PROPERTY MAY SUFFER TO THE DETRIMENT OF SOCIETY. CORRESPONDS TO THE NATION THE DOMAIN DIRECT OF ALL THEM RESOURCES NATURAL OF IT PLATFORM CONTINENTAL AND THE SOCKETS SUBMARINE OF THE ISLANDS; DE TODOS LOS MINERALES O SUSTANCIAS QUE EN VETAS, MANTO MASAS O YACIMIENTOS, CONSTITUTE DEPOSITS WHOSE NATURE IS DIFFERENT FROM THE COMPONENTS OF THEM LAND, SUCH AS MINERALS THAT ARE EXTRACTED METALS AND NON-METALS USED IN INDUSTRY; LOS YACIMIENTOS DE PIEDRAS PRECIOSAS, GEM SALT AND THE SALT FORMED DIRECTLY BY THE WATERS MARINE, PRODUCTS DERIVED FROM THE DECOMPOSITION OF ROCKS, CUANDO SU EXPLOTACION NECESITE TRABAJOS SUBTERRANEOS; LOS YACIMIENTOS MINERALES U ORGANICOS DE MATERIAS SUSCEPTIBLES DE SER UTILIZADAS COMO FERTILIZANTES; SOLID MINERAL FUELS; THE OIL AND ALL THE CARBIDES OF SOLID HYDROGEN LIQUIDOS O GASEOSOS; AND THE SPACE LOCATED ABOVE THE NATIONAL TERRITORY, IN THE EXTENT AND TERMS ESTABLISHED BY INTERNATIONAL LAW. ARE THE PROPERTY OF THE NATION, THE WATERS OF THE TERRITORIAL SEAS IN THE EXTENT AND TERMS THAT SET INTERNATIONAL LAW; THE WATERS MARINE INTERIORS; THE LAGOONS AND ESTUARIES THAT COMMUNICATE PERMANENT OR INTERMITTENTLY WITH THE SEA; LAS DE LOS LAGOS INTERIORES DE FORMACION NATURAL QUE ESTEN LIGADOS DIRECTAMENTE A CORRIENTES CONSTANTES; LAS DE LOS RIOS Y SUS AFLUENTES DIRECTOS O INDIRECTOS, FROM THE POINT OF THE CHANNEL IN WHICH TO BEGIN THE FIRST PERMANENT WATERS, INTERMITTENTES O TORRENCIALES, UP TO ITS MOUTH IN THE SEA, LAKES LAKES OR ESTUARIES OF NATIONAL OWNERSHIP; THE CONSTANT CURRENTS OR INTERMITTENT AND ITS DIRECT OR INDIRECT TRIBUTARIES CUANDO EL CAUCE DE AQUELLAS EN TODA SU EXTENSION O EN PARTE DE ELLAS, SIRVA DE LIMITE AL TERRITORIO NACIONAL O A DOS ENTIDADES FEDERATIVAS, PASS OR WHEN A COMPANY TO ANOTHER OR FEDERAL CROSSING THE BOUNDARY OF THE REPUBLIC; LAS DE LOS LAGOS, LAKES OR STREAMS WHOSE VESSELS, AREAS OR RIVER BANKS, ESTEN CRUZADOS POR LINEAS DIVISORIAS DE DOS O MAS ENTIDADES O ENTRE LA REPUBLICA Y UN PAIS VECINO; O CUANDO EL LIMITE DE LAS RIBERAS SIRVA DE LINDERO ENTRE DOS ENTIDADES FEDERATIVAS O A LA REPUBLICA CON UN PAIS VECINO; THOSE OF THE SPRINGS THAT SPROUT ON THE BEACHES, ZONAS MARITIMAS, CHANNELS VASOS O RIBERAS DE LOS LAGOS, LAKES OR ESTUARIES OF NATIONAL OWNERSHIP, Y LAS QUE SE EXTRAIGAN DE LAS MINAS; AND THE CHANNELS, BEDS OR SHORES OF LAKES AND STREAMS INTERIORS TO THE EXTENT FIXED BY THE LAW. LAS AGUAS DEL SUBSUELO PUEDEN SER LIBREMENTE ALUMBRADAS MEDIANTE OBRAS ARTIFICIALES Y APROPIARSE POR EL DUEÑO DEL TERRENO, PERO CUANDO LO EXIJA EL INTERES PUBLICO O SE AFECTEN OTROS APROVECHAMIENTOS, EL EJECUTIVO FEDERAL PODRA REGLAMENTAR SU EXTRACCION Y UTILIZACION Y AUN ESTABLECER ZONAS VEDADAS. AS FOR THE OTHER WATERS OF PROPERTY NATIONAL: THAT BELONG TO THE PUBLIC AND THAT ARE NOT IN THE STATE OF A FORMERLY ANTERIOR SE CONSIDERAN COMO PARTE

Figure 1: Screenshot of *The 27th // El 27* by Eugenio Tisselli. Licensed under [Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives 4.0 International \(CC BY-NC-ND 4.0\)](#).

One of the aspects shown first in *The 27th // El 27* is the corrosion of the national element in the 27th article in order to denounce the economic *locus* that leads to a translation, as I will analyze later in this paper. By choosing the 27th article of the Mexican Constitution, Tisselli brings the legal-rational discourse based on modern technique into interaction with a regime of sensibility that seems to be absent in the constitutional text. In this deviation from machinic construction that belongs to the economic discourse, Tisselli develops artistic strategies of contempt (Brea): he migrates from the *a priori* invariable, abstract and rational, legal and national text of the Constitution—looking forward to the idea of “progress” —to a technopoetic where these characteristics become a new language: “Tisselli highlights the rapid devolution of the text from coherence to incoherence, from utility to uselessness [...] [T]he transformation from successful communication to incoherence, emphasize[s] the importance of code for digital communication” (Berner 6).⁸

In addition to this construction, Tisselli uses the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) Composite Index to make this version of the legal text that loses its political and local sense. But through this lack of sense, this artistic deviation brings about a new meaning of the 27th article, re-positioning the local-national element into the global economic hegemony represented by the NYSE (Siskind 46). The paradox is that the financial language in the article presents itself “as a negative feedback loop: a relational process

in which one of the actors of the relationship is amplified and expanded (the economy) while the other is weakened and submitted (language)” (Tisselli 129). Tisselli does not try to stop this loop but, on the contrary, accelerates it in order to carry its effects to their limit and to make explicit not only the destruction of collective language, that which belongs to the public space where politics historically takes place, but also its replacement by the algorithmic atomization of the language of economy, characterized as flattened and interfered with by multiple machinic mutilations. In consequence, the collective language is swallowed by a machine designed by necrocapitalism, and we are faced with the question of how to reverse the deadly automatism of economic codification performed by the language of the empire.²

Tisselli’ s e-lit experiment uses automatic translation as a way not only to establish a critique of the global financial system using its own mechanical tools but also to show a language hierarchy according to which English, the language of the global financial machine, subordinates Spanish, the written language of Mexican politics. At the same time, Tisselli is interested in archiving versions of his works, substantially transformed, as is common in electronic literature (Berner 2).

Tatuaje by Rodolfo JM, Leonardo Aranda, Gabriela Gordillo, et al. is a transmedial novel that experiments with messages, images, and maps, aiming at a nationally located production.¹⁰ It is set in Mexico’ s Distrito Federal (Mexico City, now the Ciudad de México), where a private investigator accepts a job that consists of searching for Melquíades, a man that has his business in the historic Sonora Market (Figure 2). The story starts in this market, which is traditionally related to magic and esotericism, and moves to different places on the map of the Mexican capital in the search Melquíades, with connections to the Day of the Dead and *San La Muerte*. During the development of the novel, the story keeps confusing reality and dreams in a way that emulates nightmares (Gómez 2018a).

This work is remarkable in two ways: first, it seems to assert that identity is plural. This plurality appears when showing different traditions through the different situations in which the main character finds himself, such as Judaism, Hinduism, occultism, and aboriginal cultures, etc. Second, it uses current technologies to decrypt the identity of the characters browsing the web and sending messages, using tools such as Google Maps. In both ways, the reminiscences of a multicultural territory and the possibilities that technological development opens up lead toward the heterogeneous and souterrain construction that constitutes (and substitutes) the national Mexican culture (Gómez 2018a).¹¹ Defined by a set of habits and customs and in order to regulate, control and

reproduce the Mexican Nation, the tradition tries to join the different identities (Grossberg 223) shown in this technopoetic into a fictional one with the “quality of” national.



Figure 2: *Tatuaje* by Rodolfo Jm, Leonardo Aranda, Gabriela Gordillo, et al.

In this transmedial novel, and regarding my hypothesis about the predominance of an economic *locus* that subordinates the political one, I can observe how the technology crosses through the entire life of the investigator: in order to be able to carry out the search it is essential for him—as well as for his/her reader/user on the other side of the screen—to have the transmedial tools previously referred to. At the same time, it is to be noted that the clandestine professions that have since long ago subsisted outside the law—as in the case of Melquíades, a shaman—have a remarkable importance. So, the existence of these secret identities that precede the construction of the Mexican Nation coexist with the latest technology produced during a supranational period, which signals a moment subsequent to that of the idea of Nation. (Gómez 2018a) The political *locus* reappears, however, through negation or overlap, for example with the mentioning of different modern institutions. One such institution is the Invisible University: “ ‘La Universidad Invisible’ , cuyo DOMICILIO se encuentra en la Ciudad de México. Ingresé la dirección en un GPS y en menos de un minuto tuve en pantalla una enorme CASA COLONIAL” (JM, Aranda, Gordillo, et al.)¹² Another is Sonora Market, home to illegal practices of shamanism and occultism that some other practices have tried to rationalize through modernity, but which have not disappeared. Actually, these practices have been preserved in an economic circuit of non-legislated but still legitimated forms of work.

Finally, nomadism is characteristic of gypsies or Jewish people that have been exiled once and again, producing historical exodus that has left physical and cultural marks on that population: tattoos, symbologies, hidden languages, and footprints (Gómez 2018a).

All these “ingredients” or elements lead to a common language, located in Mexican territory, but also aside from the territory to interact with other spaces: “El lenguaje es un virus (que tiene su origen en México) Verás.¹³ En este otro monitor llevo las estadísticas de las infecciones que está generando el spam de los sueños. No es preciso, pero aun así sabemos que se ha vuelto viral, ha salido de México” (JM, Aranda, Gordillo, et al; Gómez 2018a).¹⁴ In the quotation, the authors follow the idea that the language does not have a “nation,” but is positioned locally. This ambivalence shows the coexistence of the different identities mentioned above.

Is the Mexican Nation an attempt to bring together the diversity of technological (futuristic) but iconographic (traditional) codes that the investigator seeks to decipher, by means of a political language? If in *The 27th // El 27* the feedback loop mechanically reproduces the economic language, in the technopoetic of *Tatuaje* something similar happens: an occult language—the one of identity dreams—becomes an epidemic in the Mexican imagery, expanding the phenomena through new technologies that make it possible (GPS, internet, etc.). In this way, the public space appears full of “tattoos” expanding the virus which can be comprehended by the readers/users because they share the alphabetical language —Mexican and located (Gómez 2018a).¹⁵

Finally, I will examine [*Anacròn: Hipótesis de un product todo*](#) by Augusto Marquet and Gabriel Wolfson, which works with the constructive idea of “gastronomic theory” (Smith 173), meaning that the Nation “se compone de elementos sueltos y sus diferentes culturas poseen una variedad de ingredientes de diferentes sabores y orígenes.”¹⁶ In this case, some elements from The Day of Dead that are part of Mexican tradition are combined with other elements from the global landscape (Ortega and Saum-Pascual). These ingredients interact in this technopoetic in two senses, one visual and one kinetic, and both pose the question, what is the meaning of death? Traditionally, Mexicans honour their dead once and again in common ceremonies, but nowadays, they look forward to the “northern promises” and this tradition weakens because many Mexicans do not carry out any ritualistic burial practices, a fact that is also present in *The 27th // El 27*. There is an economical discourse that goes through death—the number of dead people, the way they die—and it affects the way in which these deaths are seen politically, having a ritual ceremony depending on their “value.” The work itself seems to admit that death is

a *whole* (“un todo”), but what is the nature of that *whole*? Family or *product*? Singular affection or object of global discard?

About the visual dimension, the work is characterized by traditional colours while the syntax is changing when the mouse moves across the screen. Regarding the gastronomic theory referred to above, words, one after the other, are located as if in a collage that includes the surprising appearance of iconography, not only of Mexican tradition —the skull, the church, the cowboy movies, the *bolero*, the bad omen cats— but also of global discourse—a Campbell’ s soup can, pop music, Hollywood movies. In terms of the gastronomic theory referred to above, these icons are nutrients that feed the economy and to reflect (dis)affections with death:

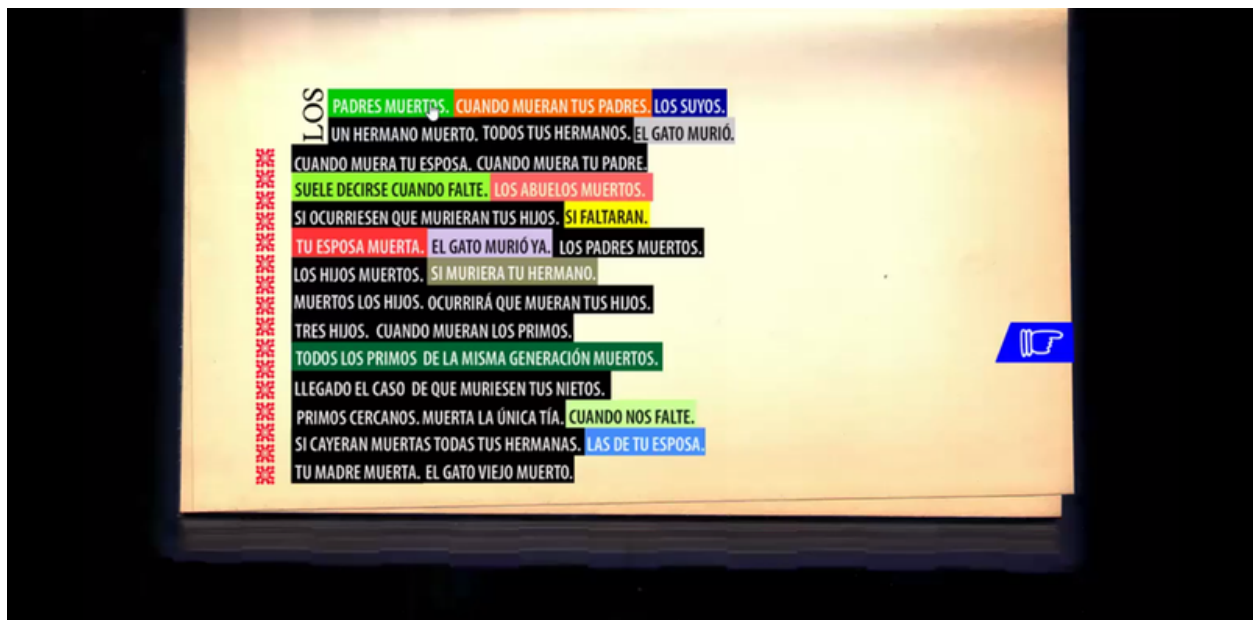


Figure 3: Screenshot from *Anacron* by Augusto Vinicius Marquet. Licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/). See <https://collection.eliterature.org/3/videos/anacron-video.mp4>.

Regarding the technological dimension, the interactivity of the work turns the death of the big Mexican family into just a number with each click of the mouse. This means that all those words that are mentioned as members of the family (mothers, cousins, children, etc.) in the work are considered just numbers by necrocapitalism: nobody cares about their deaths, and in consequence, they do not believe their deaths deserve any ritual. As with *The 27th // El 27*, an algorithmic language is present in this work since its title refers to *anacron*, free software that executes commands following a schedule, whether the computer is running or not. This could have a parallel to the way death is conceived, not anymore as an unexpected event that deserves a specific ritual but as a number that

periodically arrives to each family. The difference is that death arrives without previous notice, whereas in the software it is scheduled.

The word *anacron* is also reminiscent of “anachronism” or “anachronic,” words referring to something that happens in present time although it should have happened in the past. In this sense, the political discourse is caricatured in its impossibility of programming and being controlled (through a national law) and gives way to the dehumanizing ambivalence of the financial *locus*, which makes the human body an anonymous product of a *whole* (in the title in Spanish “un todo”), without individuation (Groys 47).

The Sentimental Nation: Family Imagery Technologically Encoded

Another way to think about the constitution of a Nation is through the metaphor of a spiritual extended family that has common cultural, linguistic, moral, and emotional roots (Parekh). Within this framework I analyze two works: *Bacterias Argentinas* by Santiago Ortiz and *Anacrón*. In these technopoetics, the relationship between the filial (micro) and national identity (macro) parallels the relationship between the microcellular genetic of morphemes in the trophic networks of the language and individual and anonymous deaths in the national iconic tradition.

In *Bacterias Argentinas*, Ortiz works with the body of words introducing a bacterium as “Argentine.” The gentilic refers to a very particular Spanish variant in the Spanish-speaking world. However, this variant is present only in the voice of the reader of those “genes” of the bacterium that are combined with each click: “Y la nacionalidad argentina de las bacterias es algo que se puede comprobar directamente en la aplicación (seleccione una bacteria para que hable)” (Ortiz).¹⁷

Ortiz writes, “*Bacterias Argentinas* es un modelo dinámico de agentes autónomos que recombinan información genética comiéndose unos a otros y en donde la información genética es narración” (Ortiz).¹⁸ His proposal is to think at the micro level not only about the genetics of the language, but also about the trophic networks in the natural sciences in which the stronger organizer gobbles up the weaker one, thus enabling circulation of energy at the macro level. So, the body appears in various and parallel planes thanks to the tools provided by the work’s intermediality: as a set of words enabling the generation of a text (or not), as genes combined in mobile maps with an Argentinean voice in the background that reads, and, finally, as a narrative ecosystem (Figure 4).

1. redes gramaticales

La siguiente ilustración expresa claramente una red gramatical. Las relaciones direccionales indican la posibilidad de concatenar un segmento de frase a otro preservando una gramática correcta.



Este esquema es **dinámico** (en el sentido más fuerte de la palabra). Imagine que el diagrama es el mapa de un archipiélago, cada fragmento de frase es una isla, y cada relación direccional es un pequeño viaje entre islas. Viajes sucesivos conforman frases. Y como desde cada isla es posible partir hacia otras dos o más (**divergencias**), podemos dejar al azar la decisión. De esta forma se configurarían sucesiones aleatorias de frases aleatorias. Por ejemplo:

El caballero pensó en un delicioso árbol el cual creía que algo pasaría. El caballero hablaba acerca de un árbol y...

Está muy claro que con un léxico tan limitado es muy poco lo que se puede generar. Si en vez de un fragmento de frase, cada nodo contiene varios fragmentos gramaticalmente equivalentes entre sí, y cada vez se selecciona un fragmento de forma aleatoria, se obtendrán narraciones un poco más interesantes. La siguiente aplicación está construida de esta forma y tiene además locución: cada fragmento de frase fue leído y grabado por lo que el texto generado, que es cada vez, por supuesto, diferente, también se **habla**. Es una versión **tridimensional, dinámica y hablada** de la red gramatical.



[pulsar el icono para abrir la red gramatical dinámica]

La voz es de **Edgardo Franzosini** (contador de cuentos). En la página **El Cerebro de Edgardo** se puede observar un montaje que se hizo de esta aplicación para la exposición **El Inventor de Historias** (MedialabMadrid, Conde Duque, abril-mayo 2004).

2. redes tróficas

Observemos ahora el siguiente esquema:



Figure 4: Screenshot from *Bacterias Argentinas* by Santiago Ortiz, <http://moebio.com/santiago/bacterias/>. Licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

The idea of Nation as it is analyzed in this section of the paper can be characterized through the idea of genetics: there is a set of bacterial words that create the illusion of a bound community and others that are not selected but are still in competition for the primacy of the national form on the line (Grossberg 223). Again, the legitimacy of community ties is built from the agglutination (and the digestion) of smaller organisms that lose the struggle for kinship, blood ties, and common descent (Parekh). It is the strongest collective identity that gives the sense of homogeneity, in this case through the gentilic adjective “Argentine.”

In addition, the biological paradigm of *Bacterias Argentinas* gives space for a “located” assertion of the author. He declares that the genetic principle is “highly unfair,” making reference to the political, economic, and social crisis in Argentina in 2001. This crisis was the consequence of a long decade of neoliberal politics that devastated the country. So, even as users keep in mind the idea of the grammar of a language as equivalent to a biological system, they cannot forget the conjuncture when it applies to the overwhelming and deadly financial language of those Argentine bacteria that now murmur and become silent because they lack strength to feed. In this way, *Bacterias Argentinas* manifests the weakness of the Argentinean under the crisis of 2001, and the injustice of hunger and misery in which the political word was left when the work was published (2004).

In relation to the idea of Nation as an expanded family, also in *Anacrón. Hipótesis de un producto todo*, it appears the importance of the filial links are absorbed by death once

and again and reproduced at the same time in every click on the words scattered on the screen.¹⁹ But instead of making associations within the ascetic paradigm of reproductive biology as Ortiz does, in *Anacrón* there is a predominance of the folkloric paradigm in which life and death are invested with symbology and ideologies.²⁰

The quantity of words present in the work is small and divided into family member names (father, mother, sisters, brothers, cousins, children, wife, grandparents, grandchildren, uncles) and into different ways of referring to death (“all your dead people,” the verb “to die” conjugated, “never exists,” etc.). In the random combination of words, the scarcity, the absence, the existence, the erasure of family members appears in the use of pronominal agents: mine, ours, yours. To determine who “we” are—the local Mexican culture—it is necessary to know who “they” are—the global algorithmic world. Regarding this objective, the work employs visual imagery that positions the cultural constructs of the past as traits of a national identity shared by members of the extended family. It seems that in these situations people are besieged by a global non-hospitable context nowadays (Bhabha). Related to this, the figure of the family becomes stronger because it reminds us of the sentimental Nation by hospitably drawing a local poetic through a political idea.

Life and death condense the power of “everything” : “más vale ni mencionar los 3 fetos, hipótesis de un producto todo.”²¹ In *Anacrón*, to live and to die are actions in a game in which the spectator comes into existence for as long as they interact with the work: “Mueve el ratón cual si existieras, dispara al clickeo, muérete is just game over, we enjoy emptiness.”²² During the brief time they spend navigating this technopoetic, users are invited to participate in the family fest of skulls and cats, deaths and walls, songs and shots. The emergence of the Nation as a family narrative is revealed through textual strategies, metaphorical displacements, subtexts, and figurative stratagems (Bhabha).

The Stutter Nation: Reproductions, Repressions, Refoundations

Language gives homogeneity and communion to the Nation. Although the linguistic factor is discussed in the other sections of this paper, in this one I will focus on its importance for the construction of the idea of Nation. Linguistic agglutination appears in the selected Latin American technopoetics that I analyze here as an incessant “stutter” that provokes sense distortions, linking to “the monolingualism of the other” (Derrida 1996). This use of language in machinic translation is also present in *The 27th // El 27*, which makes it impossible to speak the national language, and in *Grita*, discussed below.

In *The 27th // El 27* the dual and subordinated use of languages (Spanish-English) symbolizes the appropriation of the Mexican Nation, producing in each translated word a modification of its highest legal order, the Constitution. By translating the original language (Spanish) into that of the appropriators, the possibility of speaking, so characteristic of what it is to be human, is removed. Which are the effects provoked by the coded interference of economy in the language of politics? The source text, the Mexican article of the Constitution, appears “upside down” because of the automatic translation through what Tisselli calls “algorithmic politics,” showing the supremacy of English over Spanish, economy over politics. This intervention can be read as a stuttering expression of the Mexican Nation that, in the automatic translation of Spanish, finds its deformation.

This first “linguistic migration” from Spanish to English is followed by a second one related to the visual language. The text appears in two colours: black (the source text in Spanish) and red (the automatic translation into English), thus suggesting through the imagery of red blood that with each word translated there is a perforation of the textual body, whose pain increases as the distribution of richness becomes more unfair under the current financial dictatorship (Berardi). This suggestion leads users to think of the “bleeding” of Mexican migrants following the promise of “the North.” How could the pain caused by the migration be expressed when they do not have a voice? This emphasizes the materiality of the letter and its corporeal and “living” aspect that allows constant changes online through the development of MIDIpoet, a software to manipulate text and image at the same time.²³

Tisselli denounces that the intervention of the coded economy in the language of politics becomes a surrendering of the human condition itself, which consists in the capacity to speak. In this sense, I agree with Berner when he says: “By making code and, more accurately, the failures of code, so readily apparent, Tisselli’s paired works of electronic literature reveal the oft-ignored thingness of code” (8).

Algorithmically, the machinic translation involves the instrumentalization of language, “An automated English that will have already eroded a land delimited by language only, rendering it unrecognizable: torn, exploited, almost dead” (Tisselli 133). When translating the source language into the one of the empire, Mexican speakers are silent, being placed in an alienated relationship: the proprietors of financial capital appropriate for themselves the national voice of those who work the lands and natural resources that the 27th legislates.

Tisselli seems to construct this technopoetic looking forward to the survival about which Derrida writes: the artist takes the financial language of the machine and transforms it into a poetics of denounce:

En la tierra de los hombres de hoy, algunos deben ceder a la homo-hegemonía de las lenguas dominantes, deben aprender la lengua de los amos, el capital y las máquinas, deben perder su idioma para sobrevivir o para vivir mejor. Economía trágica, consejo imposible. No sé si la salvación-salutación al otro supone la salvación-salutación *del* idioma.(Derrida 1996, 48).²⁴

[*Grita*](#), by José Aburto, is a digital work available on the author' s website on the tab "Orales." This technopoetic proposes to make a poem through the sound of the voice and to be filmed by a webcam (previously authorized by the user). It is a performative work made in 2005 that calls for collaboration and interaction of those who consume it, "to be written" through the user' s shout (Gómez 2018b). This imperative action suggested in the title (Shout!) makes the work possible and demands the user experiment with their voice, becoming more and more urgent every time. How is this shout heard by others that are near to those who produce it? For the poem to exist, something stimulating has to happen, something related to our own bodies that has been repressed by socialization (Figure 5). Poet and reader perform a fusion to generate the poem searching for the shout of origin. Shouting and poetry seem to restore the human condition, the primal link that gives place to a Babel of languages (gómez 2018b). There is a current universal trend between the awareness of shouting (physics) and the de-naturalization of machines (metaphysics), paradoxically, in the digital era (Huizcar). This means that everybody could shout, as a primitive physical capacity, but using our shouts to interact with a machine to create a poem is not natural.



Figure 5: Screenshot of *Grita* by Jose Aburto, <http://www.entalpia.pe/>. Licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

The translation of the initial and external organic cry is always transformed by the machine into a poem in Spanish. Certainly, one cannot find in this technopoetic any allusion to a specific Nation, but there is a reference to the power of Spanish nowadays, meaning a Latin American zone that makes it possible. Traditions, conquests, revolutions--the cry is the way to express the primal articulation of words, the red colour of the interface, the imperative that tells users what to do with the work. The poem welcomes the cries of those who, fragile in their monolingualism, come as guests searching for this refuge, and although the results are always in Spanish (Gómez 2018b), any language is hospitable itself as far as it is spoken by *the other* (Derrida 1996).

Something interesting to say about this work is that it is part of a webpage called *Entalpia.pe*, whose catch phrase is “La poesía cambió de estado.”²⁵ Regarding this phrase, *Grita*, as much as many others of Aburto’s works, is looking for a transformation to the current way of making poetry: the material of the poem (orality, writing, drawing), the performance of readers/users, the interaction, the generativity, the listening, and the form acquired by the poem (Gómez 2018b). The author clearly marks a position related to the need for the intervention of those who consume his productions. They do it through the use of machines, although the action leads to poetic resistance. In consequence, the poetic language, as part of an artistic program, restores its own place for political action in a world overrun by machines (Groys). In the repetition of those cries

that were silenced by contemporary society, Aburto recovers an organic form of language providing place for a rebel poetics (Gómez 2018b).

The Expanded Nation in the Latin American Field

To conclude, I would like to come back to a question that cuts across the previous sections: what is the main idea of the Latin American field of e-literature? A possible answer could be that resorting to different conceptualizations of Nation is a way to agglutinate the works analyzed here in a common zone that allows their authors to enunciate—and rearticulate— Latin American traditions. In other words, the multiplicity of different concepts of Nation collaboratively constructs the Latin American field of the global ELO platform.

I consider that each one of the paradigms that allows us to define the idea of Nation— legal, sentimental or linguistic—coincides in showing the current problems of the “Latin American zone” : territories dominated by the indiscriminate use of resources (*The 27th // El 27*), silent languages that feed the fiction of monolingualism (*Tatuaje*), the changeable value of death in contexts of violence and forced migrations (*Anacrón*), the metaphor of trophic networks where the strongest gobbles the weakest during the Argentinean crisis of 2001 (*Bacterias Argentinas*), the myth of origin of languages in *the other* found in Latin America (*Grita*), and the metaphor of trophic networks where the strongest gobbles the weakest during the Argentinean crisis of 2001 (*Bacterias Argentinas*).

To a greater or lesser extent, all these uses of the Nation form make it possible to address common concerns contained here and not in other areas. In this way, different artistic initiatives as those presented in this paper converge cooperatively with the predominance of a dominant area. It seems significant that most of Latin American works in the third volume of ELO contain such national elements that allow their actors and spectators to articulate strategies of communitarian construction for positioning the “Latin American zone.”

Works Cited

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition. Verso, 2006.

Bhabha, Homi. “Introducción: Narrar la Nación.” *Nación y Narración*. Siglo XXI Editores, 2010, pp. 11–20.

Beiguelman, Giselle, and Jorge La Ferla. *Nomadismos Tecnológicos. Dispositivos móviles. Usos masivos y prácticas artísticas*. Fundación Telefónica, 2011.

Berardi, Franco. *La sublevación*. Hekht Libr, 2014.

Berner, Justin. “Unhelpful Tools: Reexamining the Digital Humanities.” *electronic book review*, June 2020, pp. 1–13, doi.org/10.7273/kbfc-4145.

Brea, José Luis. “Algunos pensamientos sueltos acerca de arte y técnica.” *La era postmedia. Acción comunicativa, prácticas (post)artísticas y dispositivos neomediales*. Editorial Centro de Arte de Salamanca, 2002.

Buck-Morss, Susan. *Mundo soñado y catástrofe. La desaparición de la utopía de masas en el Este y el Oeste*. La Balsa de la Medusa, 2004.

Burroughs, William. *La revolución electrónica*. Caja Negra, 2013.

Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. “Nómades que imaginan.” *Nomadismos tecnológicos. Dispositivos móviles. Usos masivos y prácticas artísticas*, edited by Giselle Beiguelman y Jorge La Ferla, Fundación Telefónica-Ariel, 2011, pp. 49–60.

Derrida, Jacques. *El monolingüismo del otro*. Manantial, 1996.

———. *Mal de archivo. Una impresión freudiana*. Trotta, 1997.

Glazier, Loss Pequeño. “Communities/Commons: A Snap Line Of Digital Practice.” *Electronic Literature Communities*, edited by Scott Rettberg, Patricia Tomaszek, and Sandy Baldwin, Computing Literature, 2015.

Gellner, Ernest. *Naciones y nacionalismos*. Alianza, 2001.

Gómez, Verónica. *Domicilios de la literatura digital: de la idea de Nación a la de interzona en ELO (Electronic Literature Organization)*. 2020. Universidad Nacional del Litoral, PhD Dissertation. bibliotecavirtual.unl.edu.ar:8443/handle/11185/5704.

_____. Review: Individual Work *Tatuaje* by JM, Aranda, Gordillo, et al. Electronic Literature Directory, 2018a. directory.eliterature.org/individual-work/5016

_____. Review: Individual Work *Grita* by José Aburto. Electronic Literature Directory, 2018b. directory.eliterature.org/individual-work/5011

Grossberg, Lawrence. *Estudios culturales en tiempo futuro. Cómo es el trabajo intelectual que requiere el mundo de hoy*. Siglo XXI Editores, 2012.

Groys, Boris. “Bajo la mirada de la teoría.” *Arte en flunjo. Ensayos sobre la evanescencia del presente*. Caja Negra, 2016, pp. 33–54.

Hayles, Katherine. *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*. University of Notre Dame, 2008.

Huizar, Angelica J. *Cosmos, Values, and Consciousness in Latin American Digital Culture*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

JM, Aranda, Gordillo, et al. *Tatuaje*. Centro de Cultura Digital, 2015. tatuaje.centroculturadigital.mx/#

Kozak, Claudia, editor. *Tecnopoéticas argentinas. archivo blando de arte y tecnología*. Caja Negra, 2015.

Ortega, Élika, and Alex Saum-Pascual. “Chapter 3. Toys and Toons: From Hispanic Literary Traditions to a Global E-Lit Landscape.” *Electronic Literature as Digital Humanities: Contexts, Forms, & Practices*, edited by James O’ Sullivan, Bloomsbury Open Access, 2021, pp. 43-53. dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781501363474.ch-003.

Ortiz, Santiago. *Bacterias Argentinas*. 2016, moebio.com/santiago/bacterias/.

Parekh, Bhikhu. “El etnocentrismo del discurso nacionalista.” *La invención de la Nación. Lecturas de la identidad de Herder a Homi Bhabha*, edited by Álvaro Fernpandez Bravo, Manantial, 2000, pp. 77–102.

Rettberg, Scott, and Alex Saum-Pascual. “Electronic Literature as a Framework for the Creative Digital Humanities.” *electronic book review*, July 2020, pp. 1–8. electronicbookreview.com/gathering/electronic-literature-frameworks-for-the-creative-digital-humanities/.

Rettberg, Scott, and Patricia Tomaszek. “Networks Of Creativity: Electronic Literature Communities.” *Electronic Literature Communities*, edited by Scott Rettberg, Patricia Tomaszek, and Sandy Baldwin. Computing Literature, 2015.

Siskind, Mariano. “La globalización de la novela y la novelización de lo global. Una crítica de la literatura mundial.” *Debates actuales: género, literatura y crítica cultural. Cuerpos, memorias y afectos*. Políticas de la memoria, 2009–2012, pp. 39–56.

Smith, Anthony D. “9. ¿Gastronomía o geología? El rol del nacionalismo en la reconstrucción de las naciones.” *La invención de la Nación*, edited by Álvaro Fernández Bravo, Manantial, 1995, pp. 185–209.

Tisselli, Eugenio. “The 27th // El 27.” *Medios Alternativos*, 2012–2014, pp. 54–78. www.motorhueso.net/text/medios_alternativos_tisselli.pdf.

Weber, Max. *Economía y Sociedad*. Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2015.

Footnotes

1. This paper was written, originally, as part of my PhD research. My corpus was composed by the 3 volumes of the Electronic Literature Collection and I found that there was a great increment of Latin American productions in vol. 3. However, the pieces of work that are analyzed here have a common element: all of them put into consideration a question about the national status of a literature that does not have a national belonging, such as the digital one. ↵
2. *Domicilios de la literatura digital: de la idea de Nación a la de interzona en ELO (Electronic Literature Organization)*(Doctorado en Humanidades – FHU-UNL) was successfully defended in August 2020 by the author of this paper. ↵
3. E-literature itself links to the field of Digital Humanities in a complex way. It is dedicated to *born-digital* literary forms (Hayles) and has also generated its own apparatus outside of pre-existing disciplinary frames, but at the same time, it is addressed to DH at a large: “What we propose is to consider electronic literature as a combination of the practices and methodologies that come about through its production, its study and its dissemination—not only the final creative works it produces—and explore how these disrupt, decenter and complement the DH field. Creativity is central and found at all levels and spheres of electronic literature, but as the articles in this gathering show, there is a need to redeploy creative practice critically to address the increasing instrumentalization of the digital humanities” (Rettberg and Saum-Pascual 2). ↵
4. Angelica Huizar presents a similar corpus (*Anacrón, Bacterias Argentinas, Tatuaje*, besides two others) in chapter 4, “How are we Interconnected,” of her book *Cosmos, Values, and Consciousness in Latin American Digital Culture*, but she has a different point of analysis. She focuses on how these pieces of Latin American e-literature experiment with metaphors of cosmos, universe, and culture and studies the interconnections between the conscious and the inanimate within a holistic frame. ↵

5. The Latin American community could be considered as one node of activity that has its own autonomy and is interconnected in the “hypertext” of the global e-lit communities. As Scott Rettberg and Patricia Tomaszek note in the introduction of the book they edited with Sandy Baldwin, “[t]he interconnected communities of electronic literature appear a kind of posthuman hypertext, a network of humans and technology with many pulsing and bifurcating nodes of activity. If it were a building, it would be a postmodern structure with many rooms, many architects, and many builders continuously at work on new additions at the edges of the property” (Rettberg and Tomaszek 10). [↵](#)

6. When I refer to a community, I need to say that differences, tensions, and motivations are always unpredictable. Inside the Latin American community, there is certain national location that coexists with the global one promoted by ELO. But at the same time, following Loss Pequeño Glazier, it is necessary to take into consideration many factors and transformations that occur besides these elements studied in this paper: “the idea of a “common goal” has subtle contours that are not simple to decipher. These contours are determined by concepts of acceptable means, tolerable strategies, and the degree of authority that is sought. They are also factored by motivations for group actions, how resulting gains will be shared, and whose interests are expendable in the process. These characteristics all exist in degrees, not absolutes, and may shift unpredictably, depending upon always fluid social factors” (75). [↵](#)

7. The relation between art and technic is a necessary one, since etymologically *techné* means art and it is related to the *know-how*. However, this relation is not always explicit. Claudia Kozak defines technopoetics as pieces of work that problematize the relationship with technology, showing that it is not neutral but political. This point is especially important in the case of the pieces that are analyzed in this paper. [↵](#)

8. Strategies of contempt refers to movements of resistance in digital art to the instrumental function given to electronic devices in this case. [↵](#)

9. Necrocapitalism defines contemporary forms of organizational accumulation, which means dispossession and submission of life to the power of death. It is remarkable that the national states lose place in favour of the mode of production of informational capitalism. [↵](#)

10. Transmedial is used here, instead of multimedial, because it is developed through different media and communication platforms, but also requires the active

participation of the public, and its different fragments and elements must complement each other to offer an overall vision. [↵](#)

11. This heterogeneous identity of the Mexican Nation is, in fact, a complex of all countries of the Latin American region, dominated by different and multicultural voices all around. As Élika Ortega and Alex Saum-Pascual argue, the tension between cultural and media differences are part of “an emerging global literary landscape” (52). [↵](#)

12. “ ‘The Invisible University’ , whose address is located in Mexico City. I entered the address on a GPS and in less than a minute, the screen showed a huge COLONIAL HOUSE” (my translation). [↵](#)

13. Drawing a parallel with the incipient growth of electronics during the last decades of the 20th century, Burroughs stated in the seventies that language was a virus whose only cure was silence or literature: “ ‘Borren las palabras para siempre’ [...] la palabra literaria fortifica el organismo contra las formas más insidiosas del mal; las palabras de los políticos, de los militares, de los comunicadores sociales, de los médicos, los psiquiatras” (Gamerro en Burroughs 26) “ ‘Delete words for ever’ [...] the literary word fortifies the organism against the most insidious forms of evil; the words of politicians, military men, social communicators, doctors, psychiatrists” (my translation). [↵](#)

14. “Language is a virus (that has origin in Mexico). You´ll see. On this other screen, I have the statistics of the infections generated by the dream´s spam. It is not exact, but still we know that has become viral, it has left Mexico” (our translation). [↵](#)

15. *Tatuaje* means In Spanish tattoo. The word that gives name to the piece refers to a tattoo of Melquíades, key for the research, but also to explore the public space of Mexico City, which is full of “tattoos” in a metaphorical way. [↵](#)

16. “[The Nation] is composed of loose elements, and its different cultures possess a variety of ingredients of different flavors and origins” (my translation). [↵](#)

17. “And the Argentinean nationality of bacteria is something that can be checked directly in the application (select a bacterium to speak)” (my translation). [↵](#)

18. “*Bacterias Argentinas* is a dynamic model of autonomous agents that recombine genetic information by eating each other and where genetic information is narration” (my translation). [↵](#)

19. Anacron. Hypothesis of a whole product (our translation). [↵](#)

20. With this statement, I do not want to say that Ortíz does not have an ideological posture, but in the construction of his work he does not choose this paradigm. [↵](#)
21. “And it is better not to mention the 3 fetuses, hypothesis of a *whole* product” (my translation). [↵](#)
22. “Move the mouse as if you existed, shoot the click, die is just game over, we enjoy emptiness” (my translation). [↵](#)
23. As it has been largely studied, e-literature proposes a set of languages that should be “seen” and/or performed, besides the hegemony of the verbal one: “a ‘structural reading’ that bypasses linguistic content and figurative languages in favor of visual and kinetic forms of engagement” (Ortega and Saum-Pascual 51). [↵](#)
24. “In the land of the men of today, some must yield to the homo-hegemony of the dominant languages, they must learn the language of masters, capital and machines, they must lose their language in order to survive or to live better. Tragic economy, impossible advice. I do not know if the salvation-salutation of the other entails the salvation-salutation of the language” (my translation). [↵](#)
25. “The poetry changes its condition” (my translation). [↵](#)