Mexican Debates Around Digital Literature. Evolving Perspectives: Mónica Nepote, Juan Villoro, and Eugenio Tisselli

MICHELE MARCHINI

Michele Marchini (he) is a language teacher and a doctoral student at KU Leuven, Antwerp Campus, Belgium. He is writing a thesis on the representation of violence in the works of several internationally renowned Mexican chroniclers, while also analysing the translation and adaptation of these works in Anglo-Saxon and Italian contexts.

Abstract

This contribution examines the evolving landscape of digital literature in Mexico and assesses its impact within the country's meta-context. The article explores how digital literary practices intersect with cultural policies, editorial strategies, and modes of reading and writing in the digital age. The investigation aligns with the research questions formulated by Mendoza and Sued (2018), with particular emphasis on the new challenges the country faces. The study begins with an overview of significant Mexican initiatives, ranging from the pioneering computational model for narrative improvisation, *MEXICA*, to the more recent *E-Literatura* platform. It then focuses on selected contributions from three prominent Mexican figures: Mónica Nepote, Juan Villoro, and Eugenio Tisselli. Over the years, their voices—as writers, editors, and publishers—have shaped public discourse on digital literature, raising concerns about emerging and urgent issues. These authors have often expressed their views with caution and ambivalence, yet have consistently engaged in a polarised dialogue aimed at understanding, representing, and mediating diverse approaches and attitudes toward digital literature. This contribution not only highlights Mexico's growing engagement with a field at the intersection of tradition and innovation—nurturing "decolonial perspectives, community-building, and recovery" (Ortega 2018)—but also addresses fundamental questions of access, humanity, and the evolving role of literature in the digital age.

Keywords: digital literature, artificial intelligence, Mexico, Centro de Cultura Digital, Mónica Nepote, Juan Villoro, Eugenio Tisselli

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"¿Puede una computadora encontrar la motivación necesaria para querer escribir (o dejar de escribir) un poema?"[1] (Tisselli 2023). This is one of the key questions raised by the Mexican poet, writer, and essayist Eugenio Tisselli in the essay *¿Por qué escriben las máquinas que escriben?*. In this short contribution, Tisselli interrogates the motivation and will of artificial intelligence and its poetic possibilities, up to comparing the motives that drive humans to creative practices to those that drive AI. He also proposes a definition of the concept of electronic literature in a narrow sense—according to the author, there exists no electronic literature yet, "puesto que su causalidad no es electrónica sino humana" (Tisselli 2023).[2] On a final note, he concludes that electronic poetry will only be possible when computers will eventually develop their own motivation to write a poem autonomously.

Tisselli's perspective, together with the insights of other prominent Mexican authors examined throughout this study, offers a valuable framework for understanding literary creation within the realm of digital literature and for defining the role of emerging technologies in this field. Rather than aiming to provide a comprehensive analysis of digital literary production across the American continent, this contribution focuses primarily on Mexico, while also acknowledging broader regional dynamics in Latin America. The views expressed by these authors regarding new technologies—and the significance they attribute to them in the contemporary world—help delineate the current frontier of digital literary practices in a region undergoing profound social, cultural, and economic transformations. As will become evident, Mexico—together with Uruguay and Argentina—stands out as one of the pioneering countries in the production of digital texts. The decision to focus on the emblematic case of Mexico, a country where works within the framework of digital literature are extensively produced, consumed, and critically examined, is

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[1] [can a computer find the necessary motivation to be willing to write (or stop writing) a poem?]. Spanish is maintained in the original throughout, while all English translations are mine unless otherwise noted.
[2] [since its causality is not electronic but human].

rooted in its long-standing tradition in the field. This tradition can be traced back to the publication of the visual poetry book *El canto del gallo. Poelectrones* by Jesús Arellano in 1972 (Flores et al. 2020).

Latin American Digital Literature and Its Definitions

In the introduction to issue number 9 of *Virtualis* magazine, published in 2018 and titled "Preguntas por la literatura en la era digital. Una introducción", professors Juan José Mendoza and Gabriela Sued pose some necessary questions to conceptualise and outline the contemporary Latin American digital literary landscape. At the same time, the two scholars attempt to mediate between past and future literary traditions and to address criticism—particularly the one directed at what they term 'cyberliterature'—while also considering the role of the reader and their personal experience with the text. By reflecting on the historical changes in literature spanning the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, the two authors ask whether "¿la literatura se ve verdaderamente interpelada por la era digital, una edad de los textos en la que al parecer una nueva ontología extraña a la cultura se impone?" (Mendoza and Sued 2018).[3]

In her book titled *Narrativas y poéticas digitales en América Latina. Producción literaria en el capitalismo informacional* (2018), Carolina Gainza offers a more complex and comprehensive overview of the production and circulation of digital literature. In the volume, she defines what digital literature is, specifically stressing the choices behind its nomenclature within the geographical context of Latin America:

> es un concepto más apropiado para referirse a lo que Hayles denominó literaturas "digitally born/nativas digitales", y obedece, además, a la discusión conceptual que se ha dado en América Latina, donde algunos autores hemos establecido una discusión respecto a experimentaciones literarias realizadas con medios electrónicos y con lenguajes digitales.[4] (Gainza 2018)

According to the author, this term appears more appropriate, as it designates texts that engage with and experiment through digital language—more specifically, the language of computer programming.

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[3] [is literature truly being challenged by the digital age, an era of texts in which a seemingly new ontology alien to culture is emerging?].

[4] [it's a more appropriate concept to refer to what Hayles termed 'digitally born/native digital' literatures, and it also aligns with the conceptual discussion that has taken place in Latin America, where some of us authors have engaged in a discourse concerning literary experiments conducted with electronic media and digital languages].

Gainza conceptualises digital literature as a literary form designed exclusively for digital formats, to be read on interactive device screens. In such a digital space and format, various intermedial texts are integrated and interact with one another, in a networked structure that includes computer codes, orality, alphabetic writing, and images.

As digital literature evolves alongside technological (r)evolution, it eventually stands out as a changing and innovative form of literature that redefines printed literature. In a similar way to how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can have a social impact as the potential to foster revolutionary and protest movements—reference here is to the Zapatista movement in Mexico in 1994 or the student movements in Chile in the last decade—it is no surprise to see how digital literature has the potential to challenge the *status quo* of predominant literature in Latin America as a cultural production that has historically been employed by the dominant classes to project a hegemonic image within society or has been used during social crises to influence revolutionary imaginaries. In fact, "estas tecnologías y sus usos han afectado la forma en que habitamos el mundo, al potenciar y transformar las prácticas sociales y culturales que conocíamos hasta hace una década" (Gainza 2018).[5] This transformative potential stems from digital literature's use of a distinct medium—one that not only reshapes literary production, circulation, and reception, but also transcends alphabetic writing by integrating non-verbal elements such as images, sound, gesture, and computational processes.

Mexico as a Case Study in Latin American Digital Literature Creation

As mentioned, Mexico can be considered one of the pioneering countries in the production of digital literature within the Latin American context, as it was among the first nations to create digital texts. The website of the *Antología Lit(e)Lat Volumen 1*, an online repository whose objective is to be "un espacio de recuperación y visibilización de un corpus significativo de piezas de literatura electrónica producidas desde (o en relación con) Latinoamérica y el Caribe" (Flores et al. 2020),[6] lists the work *Correcaminos (aka Caminante)* by the Uruguayan Eduardo Darino as the first work of digital literature in Latin America. Published between 1965 and 1966, this text consisted of an animated digital poem depicting a male figure walking (Flores et al. 2020). In chronological order, the *Antología* proceeds by listing the *IBM* series, by the Argentine Omar Gancedo (1966), composed of three punched cards containing some recorded poems (Flores et al. 2020) and the already

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[5] [these technologies and their uses have affected the way we experience the world by enhancing and transforming the social and cultural practices we knew until a decade ago].
[6] [a space for the recovery and visibility of a significant corpus of electronic literature pieces produced from (or in relation to) Latin America and the Caribbean].

mentioned visual poetry book *El canto del gallo. Poelectrones*, by the Mexican Jesús Arellano (1972) (Flores et al. 2020). Among the reasons why Arellano's book is considered the first work of digital literature in Mexico, one can find the fact that it was composed using an IBM MT72 machine, which "combinaba las funciones de grabación en cinta magnética con la posibilidad de rebobinado y regrabación con opciones de espaciado, justificado y uso de distintas fuentes" (Flores et al. 2020).[7] The neologism *Poelectrones* in the subtitle is referred to

> una poesía electrónica, y que repite en el texto con variaciones como 'poelectronizo' o 'poelectronema' al tiempo que habla de la cibernética, la soberanía de su propia voz electrónica y del electrón. Esta recurrencia de referencias vinculadas a la modernización tecnológica de la época no se agota sin embargo en sí misma ya que se combina en su libro con referencias de fuerte crítica social.[8] (Flores et al. 2020)

Twenty-five years later, in 1997, the Mexican engineer and academic Rafael Pérez y Pérez launched the *MEXICA* programme. (Flores et al. 2020) This software, created by using the Pascal programming language, could generate short stories about the pre-Columbian Mexica civilization—problematically known in Western historiography as the Aztecs. Compared to other earlier works of digital literature, *MEXICA* turned out to be a much more technically complex product because it allowed to "crear secuencias de eventos lógicos, aún con giros inesperados, atados a comportamientos humanos con los cuales nos podemos identificar" (Flores et al. 2020).[9] Beyond the stories it could write, the programme was also able to "produce un informe autoevaluativo que analiza la obra utilizando tres criterios -coherencia, interés y novedad- y le asigna una puntuación numérica en una escala de cien puntos" (Flores et al. 2020).[10] In 2017, Pérez y Pérez finally selected and published 20 stories in the anthology titled *Mexica: 20 Years–20 Stories [20 años–20 historias]*.

In the years following the launch of the *MEXICA* programme, Mexico saw a considerable boom in the production of digital literature to the point that the scholar Elika Ortega stated how

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[7] [it combined the functions of magnetic tape recording with the possibility of rewinding and rerecording, featuring options for spacing, justification, and the use of different fonts].

[8] [electronic poetry, and is repeated in the text with variations such as 'poelectronizo' or 'poelectronema' while discussing cybernetics, the sovereignty of its own electronic voice, and the electron. This recurrence of references linked to the technological modernisation of the era, however, does not exhaust itself, as it is rather combined in his book with references of strong social criticism].

[9] [create sequences of logical events, even with unexpected twists, tied to human behaviours with which we can identify].

[10] [produces a self-evaluative report that analyses the work using three criteria -coherence, interest, and novelty- and assigns a numerical score on a scale of one hundred points].

"en 2014 ya se hablaba fácilmente de la literatura digital mexicana" (Ortega 2019, 162).[11] In fact, the Mexican Ministry of Culture, in collaboration with the federal government of the country, started placing specific emphasis on the establishment of institutions and festivals dedicated to digital literature. In this regard, two initiatives have emerged as seminal: the founding of the Centro de Cultura Digital and that of its digital publishing division.

With the foundation of the Centro de Cultura Digital—hereafter referred to as CCD—the year 2012 marked a significant chapter in the history of Mexican digital literary culture. The CCD is a governmental institution located in Mexico City under the Monumento al Bicentenario de la Independencia Nacional—the monument that commemorates the 200 years of independence. As a centre dedicated to digital literature, it represents a unique case in the world because "si bien estas formas literarias han florecido a lo largo de América Latina y más aún en Estados Unidos, […] en ningún caso se han dado gracias a un impulso deliberado y enfocado en fomentar su práctica y creación fuera de aulas universitarias" (Ortega 2019, 165).[12] The institution prioritises the comprehensive exploration of digital culture as it also "repiensa la diversidad de manifestaciones culturales, sociales, políticas y económicas propias de la digitalidad" (Centro de Cultura Digital n.d.).[13]

Within this organisation, the CCD digital publishing division, *Editorial*, made its debut in 2013. This publishing venture, which remains operational to this day, oversees a series of remarkable projects that have added depth and dimension to the current shaping of Mexican digital literary culture. As can be read in their own statement, *Editorial* aspires to be a space that "pretende difundir el trabajo de autores y artistas marcados por la influencia del lenguaje tecnológico y al mismo tiempo conformar un archivo de conocimiento accesible a todo aquel usuario que quiera información sobre la amplia gama de proyectos que caben bajo la nomenclatura de cultura digital" (Centro de Cultural Digital n.d.).[14]

Among the many projects launched by the centre, one of the most emblematic is *E-Literatura*, a collective platform focused on the research and experimentation of various digital literary works, which can be considered as an incubator of digital literature. The platform was launched in 2015 and was presented internationally during the fifth edition of the Congreso del Libro Electrónico, held in Barbastro, Spain, in 2017, where Mexico appeared as the guest country

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[11] [in 2014, Mexican digital literature was already being widely discussed].

[12] [while these literary forms have flourished throughout Latin America and even more so in the United States, [...] in no case have they arisen thanks to a deliberate and focused effort to promote their practice and creation outside of university classrooms].

[13] [it rethinks the diversity of cultural, social, political, and economic manifestations inherent to digitality].

[14] [it aims to disseminate the work of authors and artists influenced by technological language while simultaneously supplementing an accessible knowledge archive for any user seeking information about the wide range of projects that fall under the umbrella of digital culture].

(Dirección General de Asuntos internacionales 2017). In *E-Literatura*, the interests and sensibilities of various creators converge—not only writers but also animators, musicians, programmers, and many more, all influenced by the digital language. Their shared objective is the creation and widespread dissemination of collaborative and collective works of digital literature. At the same time, *E-Literatura* pursues the preservation of such works through the implementation of a dynamic and ever-updated digital archive (Centro de Cultura Digital n.d.). The Barbastro Congress saw the presentation of other projects supervised by *Editorial*, too, such as *Descargables*, which "se dedica a la publicación digital más reconocible y publica, en formatos digitales, materiales que convencionalmente consideramos libros" (Ortega 2019, 169),[15] and the project *Revista 404*, which, as articulated by Mónica Nepote, a key figure within the *Editorial* project that I will present more in detail in the second part of this essay, "pretende asir el tema tecnológico y digital desde diversos ángulos, principalmente a partir de la literatura, y reflexiona, sobre todo, en torno a las maneras de producir pensamiento, escritura y lectura" (Nepote 2015).[16]

Despite the brevity of this overview in presenting current projects and initiatives, it is evident that these endeavours bear collective witness to the significant attention being directed towards these themes in Mexico, if not to the thriving state of digital literature in the country. As one can see, both on a personal and institutional level, such a literary production is well-rooted in the region, and is, in fact, financially supported. However, the debate surrounding such experiences is polarised and still quite tentative, as a selection of contributions by three key Mexican authors will aptly illustrate.

Three Authorial Perspectives on Digital Literature

The first figure I would like to introduce is the already mentioned Mónica Nepote—a Mexican writer, poet, and editor, born in 1970 in Guadalajara, Jalisco. Currently serving as the Head of the CCD digital publishing division, Nepote has been working within the field of digital literature for many years and has extensively contributed to the *E-Literatura* project. After raising concerns regarding the technological revolution that altered writing and reading practices in the Nineties, Nepote now positions herself as a firm believer in the positive contribution that technologies offer to human life, expressing hope for continued cooperation between humans and machines (Ethel 2020).

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[15] [it is dedicated to the most recognisable and public digital publication, releasing materials that conventionally we regard as books in digital formats].

[16] [it aims to grasp the technological and digital theme from various angles, primarily through literature, and reflects mainly on the ways of producing thought, writing, and reading].

Such a vision clearly emerges in an interview offered to *Telos Magazine*, issue 112 (December 2019), where Nepote specifically touched on the cultural production of digital literature and the interplay between technologies and humanities. The importance of her figure within this debate is somewhat emphasised by the journal's dedicated cover and by her presentation as someone whose "labor consiste en promover la literatura electrónica, nuevos formatos y soportes para el libro"[17] (Zafra 2019, 27) and who encourages artists to step out of their comfort zone and begin interacting with technological tools. In Nepote's perspective, "las máquinas dan la posibilidad de expandir las prácticas artísticas" (Zafra 2019, 32),[18] thus fostering new ways of thinking and new practices of analysis. However, it is crucial to emphasise that her entire discourse remains grounded in an anthropocentric worldview, which underlies the potentially adverse consequences of technological development. These emerging technologies are not inherently neutral; rather, human agency plays a central role in their creation and application, inevitably reflecting the interests and intentions of those who design and program them (Villamil 2020). This, ultimately, is one of Nepote's primary concerns.

Her interest in digital literature aligns with the exploration of various and stimulating possibilities, including an in-depth examination and subsequent appropriation of devices and technologies which enable the continuation of activities that were previously confined to an 'analogue' context. This endeavour is coupled with the commitment to "hacer una escritura que desafía nuestras ideas canónicas de escritura" (Ethel 2020),[19] widening the literary field to include elements that originate within different cultural areas, such as that of videogames. One of the most pressing questions she finds herself to go back to, as also part of the CCD digital publishing division's research, is what it means to write and read in an era dominated by screens: from her perspective, in the future, authorship will be formed primarily by groups that have been historically marginalised by the canon, such as women and non-binary people, but she admits that she is uncertain about the role electronic formats will play. With regard to readership, she considers that the reader of electronic literature assumes an active and participatory role in the interpretive process (Fundación Telefónica, 2020).

Although the CCD works with a wide range of audiences, Mónica Nepote has frequently maintained that their projects must address children openly, as she sees them as a crucial demographic, with the highest potential to soon become, if not already being, digital natives. Following her guidance, the centre's sponsored activities have embraced such a mission, especially by integrating texts and gaming practices. Paradoxically, she argues, adolescents do not fit the

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[17] [work is to promote electronic literature, new formats and supports for the book].
[18] [machines provide the possibility to expand artistic practices].
[19] [challenge our canonical ideas of writing].

profile of digital readers despite their strong attachment to the digital world because, for them, "la literatura sigue siendo algo que vive en los libros" (Ethel 2020).[20] Such an understanding is also reflected in the interplay between literature and education. Although it is still accepted that literature belongs to the most traditional canon of the humanities, its corpus is actually changing over time and this transformation carries within itself an evolution in the way we teach it that affects the ways in which we educate children and adolescents (Zafra 2019, 32). Nepote also acknowledges that there is still much to be done, as the digital literary field is now in development and remains both unbalanced and unpredictable in its future trajectories. Answering a question about what kind of future awaits us, she responds that it is difficult to imagine what lies ahead "si no nos metemos desde ya a imaginar otras posibilidades corresponsables con el planeta" (Zafra 2019, 32).[21]

Another important Mexican voice to consider in such a discussion is Juan Villoro, one of the most representative and influential authors in the current Hispanic American literary panorama. Born in 1956 in Mexico City, his literary production intersects various genres, including novels and non-fiction texts, such as *crónicas*. It does not seem coincidental that he has often expressed contrasting opinions on the use of social networks and technology in the literary field and also questions the broader impact of artificial intelligence on our lives, as he comes from a background in sociology, which he studied during his university years, and later specialized in journalism professionally (Grivas 2020). Although Villoro does not comment directly on digital literature as Gainza understands it, his reasoning touches on the topic from a sociological perspective as he refers to the way texts are written today and the consequences of writing and reading on a digital device rather than an analog support—addressing many characteristics that define digital literature.

One can measure the effect of his analyses on such topics by specifically looking at how he engages with these themes on his social media, especially on X, Twitter's revamped version. Villoro's X profile counts almost 400,000 followers and provides him with a direct and meaningful connection with his audience. He regards it as a means not only to disseminate and share his literary creations, but also to present his journalistic investigations (Cortés Campo and Rosado Avilés 2018). Despite all the controversy surrounding Elon Musk's takeover and management of the platform, X still provides an unmediated space for active involvement in national and international political debates. On it, Villoro frequently addresses issues related to human rights and the diverse manifestation of violence that afflicts Mexico.

On the one hand, Villoro is active on social media and keeps a generally positive and constructive attitude towards such a digital environment. On the other hand, however, his

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[20] [literature continues to be something that exists in books].
[21] [If we don't start now to imagine other possibilities that are responsible toward the planet].

discourse takes on more complex nuances when it tackles contemporary technologies and their use. Regarding writing practices, in a 2016 interview for *EDUforics*, he stated that his way of using technology is functional and primitive as he tries to use it without succumbing to the addiction it may cause (Villoro 2016). He mainly looks at the current technological evolution as a way for writers to potentially increase their possibility of being read, by widening their audiences, and eventually their income, too, by accessing a direct track towards publishing processes. Moreover, he interrogates himself about the survival of philological practices in an era in which most of the texts that are being written are thought and created in front of a screen, where no hesitation is deemed possible: "en la computadora, si no has cometido errores de dedo, tienes una página limpia. En cambio, si tienes que volver a pasar la página como ocurría anteriormente, puedes hacer modificaciones" (Villoro 2013).[22]

Nonetheless, he acknowledges that technological advancement and social media have not killed literature. Instead, they have contributed to the emergence of the written text as the main means of communication and thus revived aphorisms, epigrams, and other literary forms that were fashionable in the eighteenth century and that find their literary significance in the values of brevity and clarity. Villoro underlines the potential of creating communities around such texts and recognises that advancements in technology, particularly in terms of the accessibility of the web, have brought to the recuperation of certain traditions that might otherwise have been lost. In his words, "lo que antes se decía en torno a una hoguera, ahora se dice en torno a la hoguera invisible de Internet" (Villoro 2015).[23]

Of a similar tentative nature, his declarations on artificial intelligence reveal an uncertain position. For Villoro, while it is undeniable that AI represents a useful tool in assisting an increasingly fatigued human workforce, it is also unquestionable that such a technology poses a threat, as it could potentially replace humans in many activities. He specifically developed this discourse in relation to AI tools like ChatGPT: according to Villoro, this rapidly advancing language-based instrument is a menace to humanity because it does not help the individual but rather tries to replace it, as an illusory way to come up with ideas or gather information (Oliveros Acosta 2024). It is essential to underscore that Villoro believes that any AI development is not inherently dangerous. The true danger lies with the selected individuals who own it and control it, as they operate outside the democratic system and cannot be monitored and supervised. As he expressed in an interview for the newspaper *La Tercera*, the coming years will bring a tragic increase in job losses in various professions, including journalism, also because of the massive

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[22] [on the computer, if you have not made typing errors, you have a clean page. In contrast, if you have to go through the page again to look for mistakes, as was the case before, you can make modifications].

[23] [what was once said around a campfire is now said around the invisible campfire of the internet].

implementation of AI, with poetry being the only literary field to resist these developments. It is poets who will then guide our way to newfound stabilities: "los más irreductibles serán los poetas. Hay que confiar en ellos" (Retamal 2023).[24]

What are the remedies for the future? Very emphatically, the author places reading—more specifically, reading newspapers—in a position of importance, as he trusts it represents the only way to understand the reality that surrounds us. Not by chance, he strenuously defends the journalistic activity carried out by humans, who read and write, and disregards it when performed by AI, since "no se puede perder el contacto milenario entre dos espíritus que se desconocen y que luego se unen a través de la lectura" (Oliveros Acosta 2024).[25] In Villoro's view, reading and writing emerge as the two remaining antidotes capable of defining and constraining the potential of machines. This notion is further reinforced in the essay *No soy un robot. La lectura y la sociedad digital* (2024), where he explains how the virtual world has initiated a transformative phase for the realms of writing and reading, emphasising the reader's role as the true agent of change in relation to the written word.

It is worth noting how the visions of Nepote and Villoro coincide in multiple aspects, despite being writers who present many subjective differences in other facets of their cultural influence. They both maintain an uncertain vision towards the future—an era which is certain to revolutionise our lives, whose reins, however, still inevitably fall into our hands. Their suggestions on how to cope and survive in the coming years can be reduced to a very simple, yet efficient, message of humanity.

Within this debate, it is interesting to also consider the perspective of Eugenio Tisselli, who stands out as the most comprehensive figure among the others, as his entire body of work revolves around literary and critical production on the digital. He is arguably the most well-known author in this cultural sphere, both within and outside Mexico. Tisselli was born in Mexico City in 1972 and is a computer engineer, a poet and net artist (Flores et al. 2020).

Antología Lit(e)Lat Volumen 1 lists *Poesía digital* as Tisselli's first work of digital literature. It consists of a series of 12 experiments, developed between 1999 and 2002, with textual and non-textual elements that can be downloaded and run through *MIDIpoet*, "una herramienta de software que permite la manipulación en tiempo real de texto e imagen en la pantalla del ordenador" (Tisselli 2002).[26] More specifically, Tisselli created virtual poems that are both animated and typographic, visually rendered with bright colours and dynamic, moving letters. The poems can be read in

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[24] [the most irreducible will be the poets. We must trust them].

[25] [the millennia-old connection between two spirits who are initially unknown to each other and then unite through reading must not be lost].

[26] [a software tool that allows real-time manipulation of text and images on the computer screen].

Spanish, English, and Catalan, and they explore various concepts. One example is *Nunca mais no más derrames)*, which clusters a series of black-coloured words—all referring to technological devices—against a lavender background, evoking the image of a slowly spreading oil spill (Flores et al. 2020).

Similar to *MIDIpoet*, *PAC. Poesía asistida por computadora* is a work-program created by Tisselli with the purpose of assisting blocked poets, as indicated by its website description: "¿Sin inspiración? Utilice el sistema *PAC*, siguiendo estos sencillos pasos, y verá cómo la musa cibernética se asoma a la ventana" (Tisselli 2006).[27] For Tisselli, *PAC* is a computational linguistic game that supports the poet through collaborative interaction with the machine.

Beyond being an author of digital literary works, Eugenio Tisselli is also a theorist and critic of this kind of cultural production. In the essay *Tres manifiestos [tres mapas]*, the author outlined three stages that influenced his literary production, each marked by a manifesto, and provided maps for writers to navigate the territory of digital literature. This enables us to appreciate how the author himself has moved within this cultural field. The first of such manifestos, written in 2002 and published on *motorhueso.net*, is titled *Manifiesto Text Jockey* and coincides with the second version of *MIDIpoet*. The manifesto centres on the theme of movement and is articulated into 10 "commandments". They include:[28]

1. Surfear el tiempo, navegar – leer como el que mira desde la ventanilla de un tren en movimiento, escribir a colores en el aire.

[…]

3. Moverse en manadas, pertenecer a una tribu distinta cada día; cada día una lengua distinta. Hacer girar el texto junto con la luz. […]

4. Atreverse a interpretar "aquello-que-nos-está-sucediendo-ahora", rehabi(li)tar el texto. Ni el mundo ni la vida son libros, son textos en movimiento y transformación continua. […]

8. Construir máquinas de poesía visual cinética. Hacerlas reaccionar e interactuar. (Tisselli 2021, chap. 16)[29]

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[27] [lacking inspiration? Use the *PAC* system, following these simple steps, and you'll see how the cybernetic muse peeks through the window].

[28] I direct the interested reader to the integral version of the manifesto on Tisselli's website, as I will just quote from selected commandments that I consider the most relevant for this discussion, specifically from a stylistic point of view.

[29] [1. Surf the time, navigate—read like someone looking out from the window of a moving train, write in colours in the air. […] 3. Move in packs, belong to a different tribe each day; each day a different language. Make the text spin along with the light. […] 4. Dare to interpret "what-is-happening-to-us-now," re-inhabit

The second manifesto in the series, titled *Manifiesto de la poesía maquinal (por la destrucción de todos los poetas)* and written in 2006, elaborates on the use of the World Wide Web as environmental material. The title aims to strip poetry of its human burden and, through this mechanism, "Tisselli contrarresta no solo cualquier estereotipo romántico de sujeto lírico y poesía, sino también el giro autofigurativo en literatura: el manifiesto propone protagonismo absoluto del lenguaje y, en consecuencia, prescindencia total del poeta" (Del Vecchio 2022, 112).[30] Unlike the first manifesto, this second one is not structured around 'commandments' as it rather critiques, in points, the reality in which contemporary humankind lives. Machines, which once represented a promise of freedom for humanity, have now enslaved and turned humans into dependent and unhappy beings. However, in point 6, Tisselli argues that these machines can still serve to liberate humanity from the chains it has imposed upon itself—an endeavor that appears to be both the final frontier and the last resort. He goes even further into this thought in points 9 and 10:

> las máquinas poéticas, los algoritmos generadores de poemas, abren la última vía posible hacia la liberación: la superación del arte hacia la plenitud de la vida. que las máquinas hagan la poesía, para así nosotros dedicarnos a vivir. la poesía maquinal ya no representa, no expresa, no refleja, no plasma experiencias, no busca enaltecer ni envilecer, no es un vehículo de nada ni de nadie, simplemente es y está allí. las palabras de la poesía maquinal son químicamente puras ya que provienen del cálculo, de la ejecución de un algoritmo. (Tisselli 2021, chap. 16)[31]

In the final points, Tisselli acknowledges that the beauty of the language of poetic machines lies in the imperfection of grammar, which presupposes a reconstruction of language itself in the mind and spirit of the reader. Nevertheless, readers may soon be compelled to relinquish their role as communicative recipients, as machine poetry anticipates a near future in which it is meant to be

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the text. Neither the world nor life are books; they are texts in continuous motion and transformation. […] 8. Build machines of kinetic visual poetry. Make them react and interact].

[30] [Tisselli counters not only any romantic stereotype of the lyrical subject and poetry but also the trend of self-representation in literature: the manifesto advocates for the absolute prominence of language and, consequently, the complete dispensability of the poet].

[31] [poetic machines, the poem-generating algorithms, open the last possible path to liberation: the transcendence of art towards life at its fullest. Let the machines create poetry, so that we can dedicate ourselves to living. Machine poetry no longer represents, expresses, reflects or captures experiences; it does not seek to exalt or demean, it is not a vehicle for anything or anyone, it simply is and exists there. The words of machine poetry are chemically pure because they come from calculation, from the execution of an algorithm].

read exclusively by machines—promising a form of liberation for human readers as well (Tisselli 2021).

The last manifesto of the series bears no title and appeared for the first time in Tisselli's book *Estamos aquí* (2021). In this text, the author reflects introspectively on ethical issues related to the activity of writing digital literature, concluding with "un distanciamiento y una contención que han resultado en la interrupción indefinida de mi trabajo" (Tisselli 2021, chap. 16).[32] More specifically, Tisselli proclaims the victory of (the) machines as "la máquina es capaz de producir poema más [perfecto | bello | contundente | esclarecedor]" (Tisselli 2021, chap. 16).[33] He further argues that humans have transformed into machines. Nevertheless, "poesía de ahora en adelante { obtenMomentoActual(); } vendrá siendo cuerpo-en-movimiento. vendrá haciendo. sin palabra. con voluntad. peluda. tomar por asalto el vacío" (Tisselli 2021, chap. 16)[34] and the poet anticipates a poetry without writing, where "seres [humanos | no-humanos] son objetos peludos que danzan la poesía" (Tisselli 2021, chap. 16).[35]

An examination of the three manifestos makes it clear how Tisselli's vision of the creation of digital literature and digital literature itself changes and adjusts in accordance with/in response to the technological evolution of machines. In this case, the human (the writer who presents his vision) evolves with the machine in such a way that his writing shifts from using conventional grammar to adopting a style that emulates the text processor or the commands used in computer programming, such as "{ obtenMomentoActual(); }". Since machines can now produce poems with words and humans can speak like machines, the only possibilities of poetry will lie in the movements of the body. Ultimately, Tisselli does not understand the cooperation of humans and machines as a threat, but rather as a natural and inevitable process.

This evolution, however, did not remain confined to the stylistic or conceptual domain. Over time, Tisselli's engagement with digital literature began to intersect with broader ethical and socio-political concerns, prompting a deeper reflection on the implications of technological mediation in cultural production. The reasons that led Tisselli to distance himself from digital literature in 2011 were not merely theoretical, critical, or related to the 'victory of the algorithm'. His pragmatic perspective can be retraced in a Facebook post published on his personal profile in 2011. After spending time with some farmers in Tanzania, Tisselli realised how such workers have long survived natural disasters and famines thanks to their ancestral expertise and not modern

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[32] [a distancing and restraint that have resulted in the indefinite interruption of my work].

[33] [the machine is capable of producing a poem that is more [perfect | beautiful | powerful | enlightening]].

[34] [poetry from now on { obtenMomentoActual(); } will be body-in-motion. It will come doing. Without words. With will. Furry. Assaulting the void].

[35] [beings [human | non-human] are furry objects making poetry dance].

scientific knowledge. Consequently, Tisselli's view of science, scientists, and academia began to deteriorate, as he came to believe that with science's ascent as the dominant epistemological paradigm, most scientists had effectively become uncritical adherents—blindly guiding others who were equally unaware (Tisselli 2012). This thought inevitably reflected onto the field that was closer to him, that of digital literature, since this literary production is inherently defined by its use of an electronic medium. This led the author through a phase of 'self-criticism', as he began interrogating the relationship that digital literature maintains with the world. For this reason, Tisselli temporarily decided to stop composing pieces of digital literature in order to explore new avenues of cultural production. Most importantly, he refused to study digital literature solely within the academic world. As already mentioned, such considerations have an ethical foundation, as the writer also questioned how the raw materials that make up any electronic device are extracted, extending his ethical concern to the academic community specifically: "¿hemos estudiado profundamente las implicaciones socioeconómicas de utilizar los ordenadores como herramientas literarias, en un momento en que nuestras instituciones se están colapsando? Brevemente, ¿estamos siendo responsables?" (Tisselli 2012, 33).[36]

Questions of Inclusion and Exclusion for Mexican Digital Literature

As already mentioned, the founders of the CCD intended the institution to be a centre that explores and rethinks the diversity of cultural, socio-political, and economic expressions emerging in the digital realm. In its original statement, the CCD is indeed an inclusive space open to all members of society. However, extending Tisselli's own reasoning, what is the situation in a country like Mexico, which presents many cases of social exclusion? How does this reality relate to new technologies?

The *Encuesta Nacional sobre Disponibilidad y Uso de Tecnologías de la Información en los Hogares* (ENDUTIH), conducted by the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, in 2022, provides a statistic picture of technology use in Mexico (INEGI 2023). According to the survey, 78.6% of the population aged 6 and older has internet access, with this tool being utilised by 83.8% of the urban population (in contrast to 62.3% of the rural population). The age groups that predominantly have internet access are young adults aged 18 to 24 years (95.1%), followed by adults aged 25 to 34 years (92.8%) and teenagers aged 12 to 18 years (92.4%). The smartphone is the most used electronic device (97%, compared to 31% for laptops and/or tablets), and its most frequent use reported in

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[36] [have we thoroughly considered the socioeconomic implications of using computers as literary tools, at a time when our institutions are collapsing? Briefly, are we being responsible?].

the survey is communication (93.8%). It is significant to note that the same survey indicates a decline in reading newspapers, magazines or books, dropping from 47.1% in 2019 to 39.9% in 2022.

Looking at these data, one can observe how almost a fifth of Mexico's population finds itself inevitably excluded from any kind of digital cultural production, due to age, economic possibilities, or geographic limitations. In this sense, the terms 'included/excluded' take on a meaning that transcends the technological field. In *Diferentes, desiguales y desconectados* (2004)*,* anthropologist Néstor García Canclini insightfully argues that "los incluidos son quienes están conectados, y sus otros son los excluidos, quienes ven rotos sus vínculos al quedarse sin trabajo, sin casa, sin conexión. Estar marginado es estar desconectado" (García Canclini 2004, 73).[37]

The ENDUTIH survey demonstrates how the inclusivity proposed by the CCD or the accessibility promoted by new technologies are actually difficult to achieve in practice, as without a mobile device or internet connection all kinds of access are prevented altogether. While it is true that Mexico has made significant progress in the last thirty years—building internet infrastructure, establishing government institutions like the CCD, and expanding studies related to digital literature within academia—it is also true that there is still much left to be done to make the digital really accessible to anyone.

As observed, the Mexican landscape of digital literature in particular has witnessed remarkable developments over the past decades, propelled by the concerted efforts of trailblazing institutions like the CCD itself. The cultural debate behind digital literature and the possibilities that technologies and AI offer to humankind have permeated many different spheres and constantly prove the relevance and timeliness of such topics. The discussion that I have briefly outlined through the contributions of Mónica Nepote, Juan Villoro, and Eugenio Tisselli evidences the polarised, yet still tentative and doubtful nature of such discussions within a national scene that stands at the intersection of tradition and innovation, grappling with questions of identity, access, and the evolving role of literature in the digital age. As the debate continues, these diverse perspectives contribute to a rich and evolving narrative, shaping the trajectory of digital literature and literary products as a whole in Mexico.

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[37] [those included are the connected ones, and their others are the excluded, those who see their ties broken by losing their jobs, their homes, their connection. To be marginalised is to be disconnected].

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