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Rachel Haywood Ferreira

The First Wave: Latin American Science Fiction Discovers Its Roots

Now we have a historical consciousness of belonging to a global movement and, at the same time, we respond to this world science fiction movement with our own characteristics, with notable antecedents and with distinctive, complementary aspirations.—Trujillo Muñoz, *Biografías* 355

Retrolabeling the Early Works of Latin American SF

If Hugo Gernsback's first act in the inaugural issue of *Amazing Stories* was to choose the term that would eventually become "science fiction" to designate the type of works that his magazine published, his second act was to use that term retroactively to label—or retrolabel—a body of existing texts that he felt belonged to the same tradition: "By 'scientifiction,'" he states, "I mean the Jules Verne, H.G. Wells, and Edgar Allan Poe type of story—a charming romance intermingled with scientific fact and prophetic vision" (3).¹ Although the genealogy of science fiction has been actively traced in its countries of origin since the moment Gernsback formally baptized the genre,² in Latin America this process did not get underway until the late 1960s and is still a work in progress. Like all such bibliographical processes, the effort to retrolabel Latin American sf has in part been the result of a desire for the stature and legitimacy that identifiable ancestors bestow upon their descendants. While Latin Americans can point to northern hemisphere antecedents for their science fiction and claim that established pedigree as their own, their late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century search for a more direct national or continental sf family tree represents a desire for evidence that science fiction has been a global genre from its earliest days, that Latin America has participated in this genre using local appropriations and local adaptations, and that this participation is one way in which Latin America has demonstrated a continuing connection with literary, cultural, and scientific debates in the international arena. But as an examination of three nineteenth-century texts from Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina reveals, the addition of pre-space-age texts to the genealogical tree of Latin American sf does more than provide its writers and readers with local roots: it broadens our understanding of the genre in Latin America and the periphery; it extends our perceptions of the role of science in Latin American literature and culture; and, together with later Latin American sf, it contributes new perspectives and new narrative possibilities to the genre as a whole.

From the nineteenth century to the present day, the sf tradition/genre has proved to be an ideal vehicle for registering tensions related to national identity and the modernization process in Latin America. The challenge of constructing and/or maintaining a national identity in the face of significant input and influence from the North has been a constant. Latin America has also consistently existed in a state of what García Canclini has termed "multitemporal heterogeneity" due to the uneven assimilation of technology (47). M. Elizabeth

Ginway's metaphor of science fiction as "a barometer to measure attitudes toward technology while at the same time reflecting the social implications of modernization in Brazilian society" is equally apt in describing a key function of sf in Spanish America (*Brazilian* 212).

Association with the genre can be more costly today than in the nineteenth century, however. Having their work carry the sf label has often been a double-edged sword for Latin American writers in more recent years. If the name recognition of science fiction brings them an easily identifiable genre home and a ready-made reader base, that reader base is still relatively small.³ The label often draws charges of having "associations with 'low art' and popular fiction" (Ginway, *Brazilian* 29), of being a party to cultural imperialism, and of failing to reflect local realities. (It should be said that with the contemporary boom in the writing and criticism of Latin American sf, and with a shifting of genre tides away from the predominance of shiny, rocket-launched visions of the future, contemporary writers and promoters of the genre in Latin America are better able to defend themselves against such charges.)⁴ In the nineteenth century, however, sf was not so thoroughly perceived as an external genre that was unrelated to Latin American realities, nor had such strong links yet been forged between sf and popular culture.

Rather than the more recent association with mass culture, science-fictional texts in the nineteenth century were read almost exclusively by the literate elite classes. They tended to be published in newspapers and magazines, and any Vernian didacticism was lauded as providing scientific knowledge to the reading public. While many writers in the young nations of Latin America sought to establish and make contributions to their countries' bodies of national literature in the nineteenth century, still it was more acceptable to have the works of Northern writers as literary influences. This was a time in Latin America when the political, economic, cultural, scientific—and even racial—characteristics of northern European nations such as Britain, France, and Germany were often touted as models for bringing progress to, or "civilizing," the "barbarous" Latin American nations. The US was viewed as an example of a nation that had successfully applied these models in the New World. Thus an association with literary genres of Northern origin such as the utopia, the fantastic voyage, futuristic fictions, the scientific romance—genres that were fast coalescing into the sf tradition—was more likely to increase than to decrease the cachet of a text.

The nineteenth century was also the time in Latin America in which scientific discourse was the supreme guarantor of truth. In *Myth and Archive*, his landmark study of Latin American narrative, Roberto González Echevarría describes what he has termed the "hegemonic discourse of science" as "the authoritative language of knowledge, self-knowledge, and legitimation" in Latin America (103).⁵ This legitimating power of scientific discourse would imbue texts written in the nascent science-fictional genre with an additional authority originating outside the texts themselves. As in the twenty-first century, nineteenth-century Latin American nations were rarely producers of original scientific research, so the source of this authority would necessarily be

associated with the North. While Northern influence in science as well as literature is sometimes seen as doubly damning in Latin American sf today, this was much less the case a hundred and forty years ago.

González Echevarría addresses one important aspect of influence—the non-American component of hybrid/mestizo/post-colonial Latin American cultures:

It does not escape me that the hegemonic discourse described here comes from “outside” Latin America; therefore Latin America appears to be constantly explaining itself in “foreign” terms, to be the helpless victim of a colonialist’s language and image-making. There is a level at which this is true and deplorable. However, in Latin America, in every realm, from the economic to the intellectual, the outside is also always inside.... Latin America is part of the Western world, not a colonized other, except in founding fictions and constitutive idealizations. (41-42)

This is to say, political independence from European colonial powers did not completely divorce Latin Americans, especially Latin American elites, from their European roots.

Another key aspect of the status of Latin American nations as importers of science in the nineteenth century is that this dependence was expected to be short-lived. The mid- to late-nineteenth century was a time of nation building and of great real and/or perceived national potential in Latin America. It is not a coincidence that a majority of the earliest works of Latin American science fiction are utopian in flavor, including our three texts. The Argentina of the 1870s-1880s, during which Eduardo Ladislao Holmberg (1852-1937) wrote *Viaje maravilloso del Señor Nic-Nac* [The Marvelous Journey of Mr. Nic-Nac, hereafter *Nic-Nac*, 1875-76], showed imminent promise of joining the first world: “Compared to other Latin American countries,” Julia Rodríguez writes in *Civilizing Argentina: Science, Medicine, and the Modern State*, “Argentina was surging ahead. It appeared that the nation had a chance to reach the levels of prosperity and development of its northern neighbor, the United States” (2). Another of our writers, Joaquim Felício dos Santos (1828-95), put Brazil as potentially on a par with the United States in his text *Páginas da história do Brasil escripta no anno de 2000* [Pages from the History of Brazil Written in the Year 2000, hereafter *Brasil 2000*, 1868-72] “due to its [geographical] position and natural resources” (*Brasil 2000*, Feb. 21, 1869).⁶ Although our third text, “México en el año 1970” [“Mexico in the Year 1970,” hereafter “México 1970,” 1844], was written in a time and place which were somewhat less inspiring of optimism than the previous two, advances in technology, primarily in the areas of transportation and communication, also permitted its pseudonymous author “Fósforos-Cerillos” to view progress as eminently attainable for his nation. Texts written in the sf tradition in nineteenth-century Latin America, then, would not have been perceived as pale imitations of imperialistic literary models, but as works that described the present with the authority of scientific discourse and reached for the brighter future that seemed destined to come.

Out of Chaos, Utopia: Patterns and Commonalities in the Production, Publication, and Form/Content of Three Founding Works of Early Latin American SF

When these three early Latin American texts were originally published, readers would certainly have recognized the “loose bonds of kinship” between them and texts written by the founding fathers and mothers of Northern sf. The clearest indications of these kinships are the use of the tropes of time and space displacement, direct citations of the works and ideas of Northerners in the texts themselves, and the advertisement published by the newspaper *El Nacional* promoting the forthcoming book version of *Nic-Nac* as a narrative that would awaken “the same interest as any of the best novels of this genre coming from the pen of the popular Jules Verne” (Mar. 13, 1876).⁷ Only in the last fifteen years, however—after over a century of being lost and found and re-lost and re-found—have “México 1970,” *Brasil 2000*, and *Nic-Nac* come to be definitively and universally recognized and retolabeled as some of the earliest examples of Latin American science fiction.⁸ In recent years the three have frequently been cited as such, the individual texts have often been referred to in prefaces and articles and have occasionally been analyzed in greater detail, but they have never been considered in conjunction. Despite the undeniable diversity of the national histories, cultures, and literary contexts from which the three texts emerged, major commonalities among Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina contribute to distinct patterns of similarity in the three texts: Iberian colonial pasts, unequal modernities, location on the periphery of political influence and scientific research, and the centrality for each country of issues of national identity and Northern influence. Before continuing to an examination of the uniqueness of each text in greater detail, it might be useful to outline some of the parallels among these three works.

Northrop Frye has said, “The utopia form flourishes best when anarchy seems most a social threat” (27). These three utopian texts all emerged during conditions of national unrest (with at least two of them published in specific response to political events), although, as discussed above, a more ideal society also seemed to lie just over the horizon. All of the tales set their utopian societies in locations remote either in time or in space, using these devices of displacement to achieve Suvin’s effect of cognitive estrangement of the writer’s own reality. One function of the displacement of the utopia in space or time has been explained by Frye:

The desirable society, or the utopia proper, is essentially the writer’s own society with its unconscious ritual habits transposed into their conscious equivalents. The contrast in value between the two societies implies a satire on the writer’s own society, and the basis for the satire is the unconsciousness or inconsistency in the social behavior he observes around him. (27)

As Suvin puts it, utopia’s “pointings reflect back upon the reader’s ‘topia’” (51).

These texts, then, sought to pinpoint areas that required improvement in order for their nations to join the forefront of world progress and take what their writers felt to be their rightful places near the center of the international stage. Thus, the oft-cited function of the science-fictional text as an agent to bring

about change would have been particularly attractive to our three writers, as all were active participants in the processes of nation building and consolidation in their home countries.⁹ All three writers were also informed about the scientific and technological advances of the day, and they viewed these advances as one of the principal means to national progress. Lastly, all were writers for national or regional newspapers and magazines, and at least two of the three were also editors. All three were originally published in these rather ephemeral media, and even as utopias, futuristic fictions, and/or serial publications of fiction go, they are particularly localized both temporally and geographically. I.F. Clarke has described authors of early Northern sf as writing “for the nation and for the world” and as having “an international audience for their stories” (xiii). Latin American authors, however, did not feel included in these descriptions of the future, and so they wrote their own. The resulting works, which were so narrowly time-stamped and place-stamped, are less about showing humanity a broad vision of utopia than about bringing Latin American nations forward, catching them up to the Northern nations. Once this was accomplished, our writers appear to be saying, Latin Americans would be able to describe and/or be described by a more general vision of what was to come.

As is often the case in utopian tales, all three texts are, to varying degrees, framed narratives. The nineteenth-century or Earth-based outer frames work together with other metafictional, realistic, and fantastic narrative devices—such as footnotes, epigraphs, sessions of spiritism, and the inclusion of real, extrapolated, and fabricated texts, events, and figures—to emphasize their own fictionality while at the same time claiming the authority lent by their use of historical fact and scientific discourse.¹⁰ The narrative frames also create what Paul K. Alkon has described as “a twofold narration that proceeds simultaneously along [two different] time tracks”: a “double temporal perspective” in the case of our two futuristic fictions, a double spatial perspective in the case of the planet-hopping *Nic-Nac* (Alkon, *Origins* 125).¹¹ It is no coincidence that *Don Quijote* is mentioned directly in two of the texts, not for the science-fictional episode of the cosmic voyage aboard the horse Clavileño described by Marjorie Hope Nicolson in her *Voyages to the Moon* (18-19), but rather for Cervantes’s magisterial use of the framed narrative and for the episode of the marvelous journey into the Cave of Montesinos.

The sociocultural, political, and literary influences of Europe and the United States are central to the form and content of these works. All of the authors portray the estranged, utopian versions of their own nations as strong, politically independent, culturally rich, and globally important,¹² yet each text betrays in some way the legacy of the deeply ingrained culture of dependency: either the Latin American nation in question maintains this high level of “civilization” with some sort of European and/or North American support, or the authority or approval of the North is symbolically required to legitimize and seal the Latin American success. While the influence of Latin American writers is surely important in our three texts, that of Northern writers is at least as strong, particularly that of Northern writers of proto and early science fiction. Flammarion is mentioned by name in *Nic-Nac*, and the works of Kepler,

Mercier, Poe, and Verne, among others, likely influenced our writers in terms of the use of the fantastic voyage, of a specific future setting for utopia, of travel through time and space via medium or spiritist, of scientific detail and didacticism, of extrapolation from the present, and of the combination of real and fictitious characters and events. Other themes that appear in most or all of our texts reflect the writers' visions of national progress: individual merit to be valued more highly than one's inherited title or class or race; the involvement or integration of different races and immigrant groups into national life; the importance of education and literacy; the political as well as the economic and cultural benefits of new technologies of transportation and communication; and the necessity of a free press. But it is time to let each text speak for itself.

“México en el año 1970” [Mexico in the Year 1970, 1844]

“México 1970” was originally published in *El Liceo Mexicano* [The Mexican Lyceum]. Although the magazine stopped publication after only two issues (in January and May of 1844), *El Liceo Mexicano* was part of a significant publishing phenomenon of the time, the literary magazine. Advances in the technology of typography and economies of scale contributed to the new look, content, and popularity of the “revista literaria” in 1840s Mexico. According to a study of publishing trends in Mexico during this time period, this type of magazine generally “reproduced the latest in letters, the sciences, and the arts produced in Europe and the United States” and eventually works by national writers as well, and its contents were “miscellaneous, instructive, and entertaining,” (Suárez de la Torre 584). In the introduction to their first issue, the editors of *El Liceo Mexicano* declared their *raison d'être* to be nothing less than “to make the multitude ... well acquainted with useful discoveries, with progress in the sciences, and with the steps being taken on the path that must lead to the perfection of man's knowledge” (“Introducción” 3).

The two pages of “México 1970” appeared amidst four-hundred-plus pages of other “perfecting” articles on topics ranging from railroads, the daguerreotype, aviation, and electricity to hygiene and education, to Mexican history, literature, and figures of note to poetry, fashion plates, and musical scores. The editors of *El Liceo* stated their intentions to emphasize Mexican topics and include “very few translations” (4). Because they wanted the magazine to be accessible to all and “a source of varied and very useful instruction” to their compatriots, they promised that the articles on scientific progress would be “written in a colloquial style ... avoid[ing] the use of technical terms” (3). The ultimate proof that they give of the worthiness of their enterprise, however, was the recognition of the value of this type of publication by Europeans; the opening lines of the Introduction are: “The utility of publications such as this one is universally recognized today. It is sufficient to peruse the voluminous list of publications of this type that are being produced in Europe in order to be convinced of the degree of acceptance which they have merited” (3). As has been noted, Fósforos-Cerillos can be credibly linked with the publication mission of *El Liceo Mexicano*, as he writes a number of articles for both issues which vary in nature from the sociocultural to the scientific to the

literary. In the opening paragraph of “México 1970” itself, his protagonist don Próspero [Mr. Prosperous] criticizes the majority of literary periodicals from the past (nineteenth) century for lacking just those elements that *El Liceo Mexicano* prided itself for including, articles on scientific and historical themes.

“México 1970” was published during particularly violent times. Between 1833 and 1855 there were thirty-seven Mexican presidents, and eleven of them were Antonio López de Santa Anna of Alamo fame; this period in Mexican history can be summed up as “constantly teeter[ing] between simple chaos and unmitigated anarchy” (Meyer et al. 312). The text of “México 1970” does not mention the political intricacies of 1844 directly. It takes the form of a dialogue between don Próspero, a man of ninety, and his nephew, Ruperto. They touch on a variety of topics in their short conversation: the importance of specialization in field of study and work, the death of the Governor of the Californias (with no implications that “the Californias” would soon be lost to the United States), a twentieth-century elopement via balloon in a well-lit neighborhood, the punishment of a corrupt politician, and the theater scene in Mexico City with its French acting troupes and Italian opera companies that pop over from Europe several nights a week to perform. The common thread running through this hodgepodge of themes is the writer’s desire to reveal the progressive national future that has replaced the retrograde national past. Mexico has left behind the superficial “encyclopedic spirit” of the nineteenth century. Sophisticated and efficient transportation and communication networks make it possible for the nation to hear of the death of a far-off governor and have governors of other states gather for his funeral on the same day. Advanced daguerreotype technology allows for life-sized images of the events to be viewed in other cities. Balloons—never mind trains or cars—are the principal means of private as well as public transportation. Corruption in the Mexican political system is now extremely rare, and perpetrators are given the death penalty. National institutions provide a wide range of cultural and educational opportunities as well as social services to the citizenry.

“México 1970” is not a framed narrative per se. There is no actual journey through time to reach the year 1970 as there is in many utopias or futuristic fictions, and the dialogue format means that there is no room for a traditional third-person narrator who might address comments to the contemporary nineteenth-century reader. And yet that “double temporal perspective” is clearly present: the text is, as the Mexican critic Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz points out, “more an x-ray of the Mexico of 1844 than a premonitory fiction about the Mexico of 1970” (“El futuro en llamas” 13). The creation of a de facto narrative frame is carried out via the character of don Próspero and via metafictional means.

Don Próspero’s opening line lays the groundwork for the constant connection of past and present (or present and future) narrative threads throughout the story: “It is necessary to confess, dear nephew, that the advances of the twentieth century are gigantic in all areas” (347). Born in 1880, don Próspero would have grown up in the nineteenth century and been an eyewitness to the reforms that have brought his nation out of its troubled past and into the

mainstream of global progress. This potential great-grandchild to Mexicans of Fósforos's generation is thus the ideal authority to contrast the utopian Mexican society of the twentieth century with the problems of the nineteenth and so to serve as mouthpiece for Fósforo's criticisms of his present and for his ideas about the correct path to a better national future. Don Próspero continually refers to the past during the conversation: to those inferior literary periodicals, to the bad old days when corrupt politicians were the norm, to what the value of a coin collection would have been "a century ago" (348). His final pronouncement is something of a closing of the frame he opened with his first lines. Here he describes the Mexico City of 1970 as seen through the eyes of a typical nineteenth-century Mexican leader, and he makes it clear that this utopian future is not due to the efforts of such men:

"If one of our *pseudo-great men* from the past century were to come back to life and see in Mexico City 22 theaters, 43 libraries, 164 literary institutes, 32 hospitals; in short, if he were to see 800,000 inhabitants enjoying liberty, salubrity, and inalterable peace in the most beautiful city in America, he would ask to be returned to his tomb immediately for fear of finding himself confronted on all sides by the curses of men." (348; emphasis in original)

The text of "México 1970" also carries out temporal doubling on a metafictional level, in the epigraph and the footnote appended to the tale. The epigraph is attributed to J.J. Mora, one of the possibilities suggested for Fósforos's true identity.

How many times our great-grandchildren will cross themselves
When they take the annals of this century
Into their hands! They will say: "Our grandparents
"Were discreet, cultured, theatrical:
"In conversing and writing, they were accomplished men;
"In self-praise, without equal;
"But in the midst of so many perfections
"They were great scoundrels." (347)

This sarcastic ditty is, then, a perfect gloss of the story itself, as it pokes fun at Mora's contemporaries by referring to their great-grandchildren's future poor opinion of them. It also foreshadows don Próspero's concluding praise of the accomplishments of 1970 that have come about in spite of his predecessors. The other metanarrative connection to 1844 is a single but lengthy didactic footnote that Fósforos cannot resist including. He adds the note to explain that his portrayal of Mexico City as being illuminated at night in 1970 is not so far fetched, as it was extrapolated from experiments with flammable hydrogen bicarbonate being carried out in Paris. Fósforos recounts the details and progress of the experiment, and he abandons his technologically advanced fictional future completely as he addresses his readers of 1844 directly. "It seems ridiculous to say," he begins, and "The project seems harebrained at first glance," he acknowledges—that is to say, ridiculous and harebrained to someone in 1844. Fósforos ends by assuring the unnamed French scientist that if he imitates the work ethic of Daguerre, his labors are sure to bear fruit.

If Fósforos's primary purpose is to satirize the Mexico of 1844, his intent does not negate the fact that his vision of the national future is fairly optimistic. Although Mexico lacked the infrastructure and the political stability of Northern nations in his own time, still, a writer in Fósforos's position could envision the products of rapid advances in science and technology as motors powerful enough to drive Mexico's leap in development in the next century. It should be underlined at this point that, whoever Fósforos may have been, like many nineteenth-century Northern writers of science-fictional texts, he was *au courant* on the science of his day. All of the technology that appears in this story was extrapolated from the latest in nineteenth-century inventions from around the world: the daguerreotype process had just been perfected in 1839, the telegraph would only be put into actual use for the first time in the spring of 1844 in the US, and balloons were not used as steerable methods of transportation until the early twentieth century (see also the articles by "F.C." in *El Liceo Mexicano* on Electricity [30] and the construction and use of the thermometer [61]). It should also be mentioned at this point, however, that despite his portrayal of Mexico's tremendous progress in the text, there is a certain shortfall in the daring of Fósforos's vision. It is not unexpected that not all groups are represented as participating equally in the utopian "liberty, salubrity, and inalterable peace" of Fósforos's future: no mention is made of members of any but the governing class; the issue of race and racial minorities is not addressed; and the only woman in the story has to elope to escape a forced marriage with a cousin interested in her dowry. What is somewhat more surprising is that Fósforos has been unable to free himself from the concept of—and possibly belief in—European ascendancy. Although, with the episode of the funeral of the governor of the Californias, Fósforos shows that revolutions in transportation and communication have served to unite Mexico, he gives just as much importance to the fact that these technologies also now link Mexico more closely with Europe. If at first glance it seems that the future Mexico is on a par with Europe, even in this imagined utopia Europeans are the purveyors of culture and of science, as the only artists and scientists mentioned in the text are French or Italian. Perhaps Fósforos believed that national scientific and artistic contributions would come once Mexico had caught up with the North in terms of access to the products of scientists and artists. Don Próspero does speak early on of his hopes that the next Mexican generation "will cause a brilliant revolution in the sciences and arts," now that specialization is the accepted method of study (347); but apparently Fósforo did not believe that 126 years would be enough time to bring this about.

Páginas da história do Brasil escripta no anno de 2000 [Pages from the History of Brazil Written in the Year 2000, 1868-72]

Joaquim Felício dos Santos was a member of a prominent family from the state of Minas Gerais. A lawyer by training, he also worked as an educator, a businessman, a politician, and a newspaperman. He wrote in multiple genres, but he is best known for his historical text *Memórias do Distrito Diamantino* [Memoirs of the Diamantino District] and for the Indianist fiction *Acayaca*; he

himself considered his greatest work to be his multivolume project rewriting the Brazilian civil legal code. Felício dos Santos was writer, editor, and “the principal person responsible” for *O Jequitinhonha* [pronounced “Zhe-kee-chee-NYO-nya”], a four-page weekly newspaper based in the city of Diamantina and serving the northern part of the province of Minas Gerais (Teixeira Neves 21). Here he published *Brasil 2000* in almost weekly installments between 1868 and 1872. An ardent Liberal-cum-Republican, Felício dos Santos wrote *Brasil 2000* in direct response to specific political events of the day. It was a biting satire against the Brazilian Emperor and his regime, a sort of fictional complement to or “glosa” [“gloss”] of the contents of the newspaper’s front and editorial pages (Eulálio 104).

Some historical background is necessary to understand the driving force behind the work of this earliest known writer of Brazilian science fiction. Brazil’s independence process and the resulting political situation that continued throughout the nineteenth century are unique among Latin American nations. When Napoleon’s forces invaded Portugal, King João VI and the Portuguese royal court fled with sixteen thousand of their closest friends to Rio de Janeiro, a move, as Skidmore points out, “unprecedented not only in the history of the Americas but in the whole history of colonial exploration” (35). From 1815 to 1822, the state of Brazil enjoyed equal status to Portugal in a United Kingdom. In 1821 Dom João returned to Portugal, leaving his son, Pedro, as prince regent of Brazil; in 1822, with his father’s blessing, Pedro declared Brazilian independence and was crowned Emperor Pedro I of Brazil. After his father’s death in 1831, Pedro I returned to Portugal to assume the Portuguese throne, leaving his five-year-old son, the Brazilian-born Pedro II, to rule Brazil. The reign of Pedro II, referred to as the *Segundo Reinado* [Second Reign], lasted for most of the nineteenth century, and it is often compared to that of Queen Victoria for its length and stability. The violent rebellions against the colonizer and the internal upheaval that preceded independence and national consolidation in Hispanic America had virtually no counterpart in Brazil. Brazilian development during the *Segundo Reinado* looked good on paper: factories were being built at an increasing rate, railroad tracks and telegraph lines were expanding rapidly, the steamship had reduced what had been a two- to three-month trip up the Amazon to a mere nine days. A look beyond the numbers, however, reveals that the economic growth benefited only a wealthy minority and independent Brazil was continuing the colonial pattern of dependency within the country’s borders and in its relationship with Europe. Land ownership remained in the hands of an elite minority; the expanding railroads, instead of serving to unify the far-flung provinces of the vast Brazilian empire, “generally ran between plantation and port. Thus, they helped to speed exports to market rather than ... to create an internal economic infrastructure”; and Brazil extended telegraph lines to Europe (1874) before sending lines to its nearest neighbors (Montevideo in 1879, Buenos Aires in 1883) or to many of its own provinces (Burns 159-61, 168-71). This process of quantitative growth without real qualitative development contributed to the phenomenon of unequal modernity that persists in Brazil today. The *Segundo Reinado* lasted until 1889,

when Pedro, much weakened physically and politically, ceded power to junior military officers who rose up in a nearly bloodless coup.

Felício dos Santos had halted publication of *O Jequitinhonha* in order to attempt to change the Brazilian political situation from within when he was elected to a term in the legislature of the Empire of Brazil for 1864-66, but he left government in frustration after only a few months, as his attempts at political reform were virtually ignored. By the late 1860s the first cracks in the national political situation were already becoming visible. Brazil was embroiled in a costly war with Paraguay (1865-70) for which Dom Pedro II took much of the blame at home. When in July of 1868 Pedro II invited the Conservative Party to form a government despite a Liberal majority in the Chamber of Deputies, Felício dos Santos resumed publication of his newspaper with a vengeance. On August 23, 1868, the first installment of *Brasil 2000* appeared in its pages.

Despite the freedom enjoyed by the press at that time, the degree to which Felício dos Santos felt free to attack Brazil's political system and the figure of her monarch in *Brasil 2000* seems surprising. The text has, in fact, been called "the best critique of the monarchy in our country" (Magalhães 252). Some of Felício dos Santos's favorite anti-imperial and anti-status quo hobby horses were the alleged nonconstitutional intentions of the constitutional monarch; the institution of the lifelong senate term; the lack of any real difference between the Conservative and Liberal political parties; corruption among legislators; the centralization of political power and the economic infrastructure in Brazil to the detriment of provinces such as his own; the war with Paraguay; and the prevailing custom in Brazil of determining a person's worth based on social class, economic means, royal favor, and/or race rather than on individual merit. The list is quite particular to the Brazilian milieu, yet has marked similarities to Fósforos's targets in "México 1970." The mordancy of Felício dos Santos's satire can be attributed to his belief that he was publishing in the relative "anonymity" of *O Jequitinhonha* and subsequently that *Brasil 2000* would never reach farther than the newspaper's regional *mineiro* audience. The work was "ephemeral" by design, which is why he never republished it either in other newspapers or in book form, as he did several of his other serialized works (Eulálio 103-104). By all accounts, however, the impassioned literary editorial did not go unnoticed at court, and it is likely that his attacks on the monarchy in *O Jequitinhonha*, and particularly in *Brasil 2000*, were the deciding factor in Pedro II's rejection of Felício dos Santos's projected revision of the legal code (Teixeira Neves 26; Eulálio 107-108).

Brasil 2000 eventually sank into relative oblivion. A few historians and literary critics have revealed knowledge of the text, but only Alexandre Eulálio has written about it in depth. The fragility of the medium on which the text was printed meant that not even Eulálio had access to the complete work ("Páginas" 106n5); for the purposes of this study I have been able to read the majority of the text and Eulálio's summaries of most of the rest of it.¹³ Although we do not have either the beginning or a true ending of the text of *Brasil 2000*—Eulálio tells us that the text peters out in late 1872, rather than ending definitively

(103)—we do have something almost as good. On November 22, 1862 Felício dos Santos published a short story in *O Jequitinhonha* entitled “A História do Brasil escrita pelo Dr. Jeremias no Ano de 2862” [A History of Brazil Written by Dr. Jeremias in the Year 2862], which I have examined in greater detail elsewhere (Haywood Ferreira 155-63). According to Eulálio and to my own reading of the text, “Dr. Jeremias 2862” is the seed of what eventually became *Brasil 2000* (106). Both “Dr. Jeremias 2862” and *Brasil 2000* are futuristic utopias, and the narrational premise of each involves a nineteenth-century re-(pre-)edition of a history of Brazil brought back in time from the twenty-ninth or twenty-first century (with notes, excisions, and commentary by sundry historians, narrators, translators, and historical and/or fictional authorities from the two time streams). Eulálio goes as far as to call Felício dos Santos a “Júlio Verne sertanejo” [“Jules Verne from the Brazilian *sertão* region”] (103), but he does not analyze either of these texts as science fiction. *Brasil 2000* was only definitively reclaimed for the genre by Bráulio Tavares in the early 1990s, most visibly in the second edition of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* (in the entry on “Latin America”).

Eulálio describes the composition process of *Brasil 2000* as follows:

Joaquim Felício wrote the *History of the Year 2000* without particular care, practically [with the paper] on his knee, just at the deadline for handing material over to the typesetter. Without any very defined plan, the narrative constructs itself, bit by bit, and it varies infinitely according to the fantasy and the humor of the writer of the serial. (103)

Despite the rather loosely knit structure of *Brasil 2000* that resulted from such a writing process, the text can be divided into two clearly defined parts or, to use Eulálio’s term, “phases” (105-106). Phase one runs from August 23, 1868 through December 5, 1869, and phase two from December 12, 1869 through late 1872. The second phase of the text is referred to far more often by both historians and literary critics because it is more “action oriented” (Eulálio 105), because it contains the actual time-travel journey to the year 2000, because it is the “utopian” half of the tale, and/or because it contains Felício dos Santos’s—often accurate or “prophetic”—predictions about the Brazil of the future (Magalhães 252). The installments of the first phase of *Brasil 2000* do not devote a great deal of space to life in the future, but they do not have to in order to be considered sf since they are purportedly *from* the future. These time-traveling pages do not proclaim the progress and the scientific advances that were being or would be made in coming years so much as they describe the anti-scientific forces that were working against progress in Brazil in the nineteenth century. We are not shown the wonders of the republic but rather the evils of empire holding Republican forces in check.

Phase one of *Brasil 2000* is an unofficial, nonestablishment version of the events of 1868-69 in Brazil, a version written from the periphery of national power—though not, it should be remembered, from a position of complete powerlessness—and revelatory of the darker side of the center. What Felício dos Santos’s science-fictional history of Brazil’s present is able to do (that his historical text *Memórias do Distrito Diamantino* cannot) is to claim for itself the

authority of the ultimate victors, to say that this will be the official history, this will be how today's people and events are remembered in the future. Despite the literary realism of phase one of *Brasil 2000*, with its heavy emphasis on dialogues and diatribes, there is also a great sense of metanarrative play. As Alkon has observed, "Where fantasy is avoided, various metafictional devices often play an equivalent role in moving futuristic fiction away from unselfconscious realism" (*Origins* 193). Figures such as a nineteenth-century editor and a translator of the history book from 2000 leave clear and deliberate editorial scissormarks and opinions scattered throughout the text. The nineteenth-century editor writes in the body of the text: "Let us skip several pages dealing with the Saraiva Mission, the retaliatory actions, the protest of the neutral nations etc., etc. Then the historian continues: ..." (*Brasil 2000* 114). The translator puts the following comment in a footnote: "So as not to fatigue the reader, we will suppress a long and fastidious dissertation on diplomacy (Translator's Note)" (*Brasil 2000* May 16, 1869). Interjections such as these provide constant connection with the future-time perspective of the history text from the year 2000 by reminding readers that this is not simply a nineteenth-century history book that is being narrated in an omniscient style, but rather a mediated, retrospective view of nineteenth-century history, whose writer and mediators therefore *know* which facts and information will be most pertinent in the long run and which opinions and attitudes will turn out to have been the correct ones. Yet Felício dos Santos is so blatant about his narrative manipulation in *Brasil 2000* that the reader never forgets that this is a projected retrospective history written with an overt nineteenth-century agenda. Felício dos Santos's satire—and his sense of humor—extends to the very notion of the possibility of an unmediated, ultimate, true history and to his own endeavor to persuade the reader that this text is just such a work.

Phase one of *Brasil 2000*, then, is a dystopia in which Felício dos Santos paints the evils of Brazil's political system, of the Paraguayan War, and of the usurpers in the new Conservative Cabinet. He focuses on the figure of Pedro II as the personification of corrupt, nonprogressive forces that arrogate all power to the central government. To support his criticism, he links Dom Pedro with all that belongs to the outmoded past in a number of ways, both metanarrative and plot-centered.

The writer first makes it known that the monarchical system of government in Brazil will have fallen before the year 2000, and he has the Emperor himself betray his "true" motivations and character. This is done both in the outer frameworks of the history-2000 (in a footnote, one Dr. Sckwthrencoff cites a tradition that "was preserved until the fall of the Brazilian monarchy" [Dec. 5, 1869]), and within the text itself (at one point the fictionalized monarch himself recognizes that the Brazilian people will inevitably unite against him: "'Wretches, who one day will decide to rise up and contest the divine prerogatives of royalty!'" [Feb. 28, 1869]).

It is never made clear how the historian-2000 gained the fly-on-the-wall perspective of the latter example; at other points in the narrative Felício dos Santos prefers to place this type of insider's view within a citation of a text

written by someone else. Most—not all—of the writers of these intercalated texts are real, and they come from both the past and the future time streams; most—not all—of the texts are completely fictional or fictionalized works with real titles. For several weeks, for example, Felício dos Santos “cites” from a play, *Eleições do Ceará* [The Ceará Elections], supposedly written by the well-known writer and newly minted Conservative José de Alencar; in scene thirty-seven of this one-act play, Pedro II admits his tendency toward the accumulation of power to one of his ministers:

“In monarchies the nation is a great head on a rickety body, all the vitality of the extremities should flow to a single point, the capital.... Paris is France; London, England; Saint Petersburg, Russia; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Washington goes unnoticed on the world map: it is the capital of a savage, degenerate people, the scourge of nations, who disdain the supreme happiness of government by a crowned brow!” (Dec. 5, 1869)

The passage is of further interest for its association of Dom Pedro with Europe (the Old World) rather than the United States (the New World); Pedro II is repeatedly shown seeking approval and recognition from Europe and speaking against the decentralization of power in the US, a political model that is the bane of his existence.¹⁴ This inversion of Felício dos Santos’s own ideas is another example of how he uses the king’s view of the world as a foil for his own.

Felício dos Santos also relegates Pedro II and his monarchy to the past by portraying Dom Pedro as antiscientific and therefore antiprogess, unable to function in the modern world. Felício dos Santos makes this accusation in spite of the fact that Pedro II was a patron of the sciences and something of an amateur scientist in his own right. In *Brasil 2000* Pedro II is represented as a presumptuous dabbler who uses science as an instrument of imperial control, a vain man who believes that a scientific veneer will grant him status and respect from the European monarchs he longs to impress. One of many examples of the king’s complete ignorance of all things scientific is given in a (fictional) passage cited from a (fictional) scientific text by a (real) writer. Here Dom Pedro favors a new technique he has read about in a pamphlet claiming it is possible to produce detonators from roasted coffee beans (Feb. 21, 1869). Thus, instead of bringing Brazil to the higher level of technological sophistication required to produce detonators from the usual fulminate of mercury, the king invests national resources in low-tech quackery.

Phase two of *Brasil 2000* functions as an antidote to phase one; it is as much an anti-dystopia as a utopia. Here Felício dos Santos draws an even tighter connection between the two temporal threads of his narrative. In addition to bringing a text back in time, he sends a person traveling into the future. But he does not take the more usual course of choosing someone sympathetic to his own vision; rather than sending a person to admire, learn about, and bring ideas back from his ideal future, Felício dos Santos sends his fictionalized Pedro II.¹⁵ This rather abrupt turn of events begins in the episode of December 12, 1869, which opens with these words from the nineteenth-century editor: “We owe the reader an explanation of our title—*Pages from the History of Brazil Written in the Year 2000*. How, in the year of our Lord 1869, can you publish fragments of a

history book that will not be written for another 131 years?" The editor insists that a text that travels through time should not seem absurd in a world of instantaneous communication through space between America and Europe. He then makes a connection that would resonate with Brazilian readers in the 1870s: the text of *Brasil 2000* has been brought from the future by a medium. Spiritism had been brought to Brazil via France in the early 1850s, and by the 1870s it was enjoying wide popularity among the Brazilian elite (see Machado 68, 92). It is important that Felício dos Santos's choice of spiritism as a method of time travel be viewed in this context and in the context of typical science-fictional methods of travel through time and space prior to Wells's *Time Machine* (see, for example, Nicolson and the entries on "Time Travel" by Edwards and Stableford and "Sleeper Awakes" by Clute in the Clute/Nicholls *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*). Felício dos Santos was clearly not a believer in spiritism himself, and his inclusion of spiritism in the text should not be construed as a third-world, low-tech alternative to travel via technological means nor as evidence for the common and only partially correct characterization of Latin American sf as tending toward the "soft" sciences and the fantastic.

In a somewhat confused plot twist, the editor's promised explanation of how he obtained this history-2000 morphs into an account of Pedro II's trip to the future. The monarch's journey through time in *Brasil 2000* is immediately preceded by a (meta)literary experience:

It was 14 minutes and 23 seconds after 11 o'clock at night. Profound silence reigned in the palace of St. Christopher, everyone slept; only H.R.M. the emperor remained awake. Reclining near a table, H.R.M. was attentively devouring the marvelous adventures of Don Quijote of la Mancha ... the reading of which is permitted only to great monarchs.

"Oh! If only a prince were allowed to read about the history of his reign in the future!"

His majesty broke off. Through the shadows of his thoughts he discerned the pallid figure of a man. It was not an illusion. The man advanced, bowed, and kissed the imperial hand.

"Who are you? Where did you come from? What do you want?" the emperor asked.

"Dr. Tsherepanoff, your majesty's most humble servant. A native of Russia, I have just come from France; I have traveled 9,645 leagues today."

"A madman!."

"No, Sir, I am not a madman. I am a *medium*...." (Dec. 12, 1869)

After Dr. Tsherepanoff gives further evidence of his credentials as medium-to-the-monarchs, he puts the emperor into a hypnotic sleep.

Dom Pedro awakens on January 1, 2000. Instead of discovering the greatness of his legacy, he finds that a Republican government has decentralized Brazil and made it a federation. In the "confederation of the United-States of Brazil," transportation by "aerostatic packet" and communication via "electrical telegraphy" allow for power and influence to be shared equally among all Brazilian cities, towns and villages, uniting the entire country rather than concentrating power in the capital (Dec. 12, 19, and 26, 1869). In the text of this author from the provinces, Rio is reduced to a virtual ruin, and a statue of

Pedro I has been replaced with one of Tiradentes, a republican hero. Pedro II learns that he was deposed at some point, and that his body lies in a modest tomb in Italy, where most of his descendants are now hard-working farmers. When Pedro II happens to meet a Brazilian descendant, the man knows nothing of the former glories of his line and barely remembers that Brazil had ever been an empire.

Despite a few errors and exaggerations, Felício dos Santos was surprisingly successful in a number of his predictions for the year 2000. Brazil would indeed become a republic in his own lifetime. He also predicted the relocation of the national capital to the geographic center, an end to slavery in Brazil (1888), the population of Brazil in 2000 (within 20 million people), and the creation of a United Nations. But, as Fredric Jameson has noted, “the most characteristic SF does not seriously attempt to imagine the ‘real’ future of our social system. Rather, its multiple mock futures serve the quite different function of transforming our own present into the determinate past of something yet to come” (152). Felício dos Santos’s device of a history of the nineteenth century written in the year 2000 is a literalization of this transformative process. He was far less invested in representing an idyllic future in his text than in using that text to plant seeds of change in his own time. With another of his predictions, for example, he sought to prepare his countrymen for a change he believed to be inevitable. Although he was unable to predict the presidency of Lula, Felício dos Santos did imagine a president of mixed Indian and African ancestry, which was for his time and place an extremely unlikely possibility. Anticipating his readers’ rejection of the idea of such a president, he has his fictional nineteenth-century editor argue his case:

Peace, friend reader; our poor imagination does not come into this at all; it is reality.... Other times, other customs. Peoples are like individuals: their ideas, their principles, their tastes, their character change with the eras. The nineteenth century in which we live is not the same as the twenty-first. We say with Voltaire, “what things, what marvels our children will see!” In the twenty-first century color and birth are purely accidental qualities; people consider things from a rational point of view, they heed only the personal qualities of the individual. (*Brasil 2000* 139-40)

Felício dos Santos uses his chosen science-fictional narrative technique to particular advantage here: this is not supposition or invention, it is reality; this is not literary imagination (claims the author’s literary invention, the nineteenth-century editor), but historical fact. This is one of the beauties of the time-travel narrative; as McLemee has pointed out in his analysis of Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, the future may be radically different from the time traveler’s present, but “There is also the evidence of [the time traveler’s] senses: you can’t argue with success” (23).

In comparison with Fósforos’s vision of a twentieth-century Mexico, Felício dos Santos projects a Brazil that is far more secure in its sense of national identity and far less dependent on the North. Once the Brazilian republic has recovered from the backward conditions Felício dos Santos blames on the monarchy, it finds itself “rivaling the cultured nations of old Europe” (*Brasil*

2000 137). Brazil and other nations of the nineteenth-century periphery are now producers of science and of culture: the mechanism for steering dirigibles has been discovered by an African engineer from Timbuktu (Dec. 26, 1869); Pedro II reads a scientific treatise by Dr. Japoti, a celebrated chemist from the Macuné Indian tribe (139); more newspapers in African languages than European languages are available in the future Brazilian capital; and European students come to study at superior Brazilian universities. But if Brazil is the future while Europe is now the past, still Felício dos Santos cannot quite rid himself of the last vestiges of the mindset of dependency. In what is perhaps an unconscious slip into nineteenth-century rhetoric, a transportation engineer in the year 2000 explains the benefits of connecting the interior of Brazil with the coast with the phrase “Duty-free passage down the river was promoted, opening the republic to the sea, to foreign commerce, to light and civilization” (143). Felício dos Santos can see Brazil helping European and other central nations financially, politically, and even educationally, but he still refers to the “light and civilization” as coming from without rather than from within.

Felício dos Santos’s decision to transform a future history into a time-travel narrative reflects his increasing optimism about the future of Brazil. He himself went from being a Liberal to a full-fledged Republican during his years writing for *O Jequitinhonha*, while Pedro II went from an evenhanded user of his moderating power to a conservatively biased monarch at the head of a long and costly armed conflict. Still, the author of *Brasil 2000* had to live through nearly twenty more years of monarchy, of waiting for his country to take what he firmly believed was the key first step along the way to realizing its true potential. Felício dos Santos was a nation-builder, but as he began to run out of time to build as he saw fit, he created his own time in which to do so:

A patriot in a nation that was taking its first steps, surrounded by difficulties of every order, having its aspirations to become a great power curbed by the naturally inferior situation that we [Brazil] occupied in international politics, he turned to the blank page of the future where he would draft his dreams of greatness. In this way he sublimated his disenchantment and his dissatisfaction with contemporary reality at the same time as he spiritedly served his political faction. (Eulálio 107)¹⁶

Amid his musings on the wonders of his utopian future, Felício dos Santos writes rather wistfully, “Oh! if only some fairy, medium, or spiritist could prolong our lives until then!” (140). Before Joaquim Felício dos Santos died in 1895, he participated in the industrialization of Brazil; he saw slavery completely abolished (1888) and Pedro II and the Bragança monarchy fall (1889); and he was elected to a term in the Republican senate (1890).

***Viaje maravilloso del Señor Nic-Nac en el que se refieren las prodigiosas aventuras de este señor y se dan á conocer las instituciones, costumbres y preocupaciones de un mundo desconocido: Fantasía espiritista* [The Marvelous Journey of Mr. Nic-Nac in Which Are Recounted the Prodigious Adventures of This Gentleman and Are Made Known the Institutions,**

Customs and Preoccupations of an Unknown World: A Spiritist Fantasy, 1875-76]

Our third text, *Nic-Nac*, was published by Eduardo Ladislao Holmberg in weekly installments in the “Folletín” [Serials] section of the Buenos Aires newspaper *El Nacional* between November 29, 1875 and March 13, 1876. At this time, Argentina was just emerging from a period of national unrest. The domination of national politics by the *caudillos* of the mid-nineteenth century had been broken, and the aftershocks of the rebellion of Bartolomé Mitre, the losing presidential candidate in the elections of 1874, were almost over. National institutions were being founded left and right, and the watershed year of 1880, commonly cited as the point at which Argentina achieved national consolidation, was almost in sight. As discussed above, this was a time of great optimism about Argentina’s potential for development. The hegemony of scientific discourse was at its height, and it was now accompanied by a pragmatic drive to improve scientific education, as science was perceived as one of the keys to national progress. Argentina’s greatest educational reformer was the second president of the republic, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-88; presidency 1868-74). As part of his efforts, Sarmiento brought foreign scientists to Argentina to advance scientific knowledge of/in the country. The most important of these scientists was Carlos Germán Conrado [Karl Hermann Konrad] Burmeister (1807-92), but despite his contributions to Argentine science, Burmeister proved a disappointment on a number of levels. He did not share Sarmiento’s belief in Darwinism. His works on Argentina itself, such as his *Description Physique de la République Argentine* [Physical Description of the Argentine Republic], were largely published and distributed in Europe in French or German. Further, in the words of Holmberg’s son and biographer, “Dedicated to his scientific work, [Burmeister] did not attract a single young person, he trained no disciples” (Luis Holmberg 138-39). It fell to the Argentine Generation of 1880 to improve national scientific literacy and to build the foundation of an Argentine scientific establishment.

Holmberg was a prominent member of the Generation of 1880, although he was also well known in the Modernist circles of the subsequent generation. This “shining star of early Argentine natural science” was a licensed medical doctor, an Argentine Linnaeus who worked to catalogue the national flora and fauna, an educator who taught in most branches of the sciences from anatomy to zoology, and the director of the national zoo (Rodríguez 29). He was also a poet, a prolific writer of fiction short and long, and the person often credited with introducing three genres in Argentina and/or Latin America: the fantastic tale, detective fiction, and science fiction.¹⁷ While he was instrumental in importing scientific and literary ideas and trends from the North through his professional work and his translations of documents from English, French, and German, he was also a key figure in the movement for scientific and literary autonomy as a founder of the first scientific periodical written and published in Argentina by Argentines (*El Naturalista Argentino* [The Argentine Naturalist]), as a contributor to a project on national variants of the Spanish language (the *Diccionario del lenguaje argentino* [Dictionary of the Argentine Language]), and

as the author of *Lin-Calél*, an epic poem in the *indigenista* [Indianist] tradition. Holmberg was not merely interested in introducing the rest of the world to Argentina, but in introducing Argentina to itself. Perhaps Holmberg's "carácter de frontera" ["transitional/border character"] (Ludmer 173), his location in "between"—between generations, between intellectual disciplines, between national traditions—was what made him such an important national literary innovator and popularizer of science.

For Holmberg and his generation, national development was inextricably linked to the creation of a scientifically informed population. As he wrote in the *Advertencia* [Note to the Reader] of the first issue of *El Naturalista Argentino* in 1878, "The natural sciences, the sciences of observation, should be considered the foundation of modern progress" (qtd. in Pagés Larraya 18). Holmberg saw literature and science as natural partners in this process. "In order to awaken a love for Natural History in the Argentine public," he said in 1876, "it is indispensable that fairly literary language be used to present the material ... that the useful always be combined with the pleasant" (qtd. in Luis Holmberg 76). It is true to course, then, that when Holmberg finally became the one to present Darwin's theories to the general Argentine reading public, he chose to do so in a work of fiction, *Dos partidos en lucha* [Two Factions Struggle for the Survival of the Fittest]. In addition to defending Darwinism in the text of *Dos partidos*, we also find Holmberg recognizing a number of Northern writers for making science more accessible and more palatable to his compatriots. He cites scientists such as Flammarion and Figuier for their contributions toward putting science "within reach of all levels of intelligence" (70). He also cites writers of adventure and science-fictional tales such as Mayne Reid and Verne, particularly the latter, for having "sheathed the mysteries of science with a vaporous and attractive mantle" (70).

The influence of all of these writers is also clear in *Nic-Nac*, which Holmberg wrote during the same time period as *Dos partidos*. In the tale, Nic-Nac, a doctor, and a German medium called Friedrich Seele travel together to Mars. Not unlike the Europeans arriving in the New World, some of Nic-Nac's first actions on Mars are to name geographic features after places they resemble on Earth and to worry that the inhabitants might be cannibals. Nic-Nac and the doctor soon become acquainted with the landscape, beings, customs, and institutions of the red planet. Before Seele, who turns out not to be German at all, but a Martian who had been visiting Earth,¹⁸ leaves the two to their own devices, he endows each with a phosphorescent aura that will function as a protective shield against any aggression by the natives as well as overcome any language barriers, a sort of nineteenth-century version of the universal translator in *Star Trek* or the babblefish in *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. A series of adventures follow, including an interspecies love affair between the doctor and a Martian girl; Nic-Nac's visit with the local Martian leaders; and flight via some unnamed means to the capital city. At many points in the tale the Martians appear to be a more advanced, utopian civilization; at others they seem to possess flaws with marked similarities to those of their terrestrial counterparts. The text ends with Nic-Nac's return to Earth, where his efforts to share the

lessons of his journey result in his being treated like a modern version of the proverbial prophet in his own country: he is confined to an insane asylum.

The tale of Nic-Nac's fantastic journey has two distinct narrative frames. The outermost frame of the tale takes place in Buenos Aires on November 19, 1875, a week before Holmberg's *Nic-Nac* began to appear in *El Nacional*. In this frame we hear the voices of the inhabitants of Buenos Aires reacting to the news that Nic-Nac claims to have returned from a trip to Mars, and we read the latest news bulletins on the matter. Some citizens believe Nic-Nac, calling him "the daring Livingstone of outer space" (3); others refer to his supposed journey as "his harebrained and fantastic excursion" (4). The authorities are in agreement with the latter group,¹⁹ and Nic-Nac is declared mad. Over the next three days Nic-Nac writes the tale of his adventures in order to defend their veracity and his own sanity; his book, *Viaje maravilloso del Sr. Nic-Nac al planeta Marte* [The Marvelous Journey of Mr. Nic-Nac to the Planet Mars], is published on November 22. As this frame closes, the third-person narrator turns to address the reader directly, employing language similar to that which Holmberg had used to laud Verne's talents as a popularizer of complex scientific ideas. "In our times," the narrator says, "serious ideas do not fulfill their destiny except when they are wrapped in the mantle of fantasy.... let us then read Mr. Nic-Nac's book; it may resolve some important matter" (7).

The narrator's injunction is followed by the text of Nic-Nac's account, which is a framed narrative in its own right. The frame to Nic-Nac's tale is his own explanation of the mechanism he used for the first known space trip from Earth. Like Felício dos Santos's Pedro II, Nic-Nac achieves his displacement, or "transplanetation" (122), with the help of a foreign medium. Also, as with *Brasil 2000*, this method of transportation in *Nic-Nac* should not be read as an avoidance of technology in Latin American sf. Rocketships were not yet *de rigueur* for space travel in early science fiction, and Holmberg undoubtedly modeled Nic-Nac's voyage after the ideas of the French scientist, popularizer of science, and spiritist Camille Flammarion (1842-1925). Flammarion's 1872 story *Lumen* was a dramatization of ideas he had first expounded in several nonfictional books (Stableford, "Introduction" xiv). In the tale, Lumen is the spirit of a recently deceased Frenchman who describes the interplanetary travels of his spirit to his former student, Quærens. What humans call death is, according to Lumen, but the final separation of the body and the soul, which he sees as a continuation of the evolutionary process: "The earthly animal kingdom has followed, from its origin, this continuous and progressive march towards the perfection of its typical forms of mammalia, freeing itself more and more, from the grossness of its material" (97). Under the guidance of the medium, Seele, Nic-Nac decides to induce the separation of his "spirit-image" from his material body by depriving himself of "all that might debilitate the spirit by strengthening the material being," that is to say, by starving himself (*Nic-Nac* 18). His declared purpose is to gain a new perspective on the great questions of this life and the next: "It is necessary ... to liberate the spirit from the weight of the material being and to elevate it substantially to those regions that may perhaps serve to resolve the most difficult issues of the Universe" (10). But while

Flammarion uses spiritism to give his title character greater authority, Holmberg uses it both to claim greater authority for Nic-Nac and simultaneously to call Nic-Nac's authority into question. Lumen speaks to his student from a higher plane of existence, but Holmberg brings Nic-Nac back to Earth to tell his tale from our terrestrial, material plane, where Nic-Nac faces charges that his tale is the product of hallucination or of a deranged mind.²⁰

The invitation by the narrator to look below the surface of Nic-Nac's fantastic journey for a more serious subtext also has a literary echo in Nic-Nac's choice of reading material during his initial preparation for his trip. Immediately after making the decision to starve the body to feed the soul, he sits down with the same book Felício dos Santos's *Dom Pedro* was reading prior to his displacement: "As proof of my determination," Nic-Nac tells the reader, "I spent the rest of the day reading the description of the wedding of Camacho"; the chapter ends (18). Immediately after the wedding of Camacho in the second volume of *Don Quixote* comes the famous episode of the Cave of Montesinos. Upon being lowered into the cave, don Quixote says, "'I was, all of a sudden, overpowered by a most profound sleep'" (Cervantes 485). Don Quixote goes on to describe awakening in front of Montesinos's castle and the many marvelous things he witnessed in the company of Montesinos over the next three days, although Sancho Panza informs him he was gone only an hour and that a number of the events his master has described could not have happened. When Sancho doubts don Quixote's sanity aloud, the good knight rejoins: "'As thou art not experienced in the events of this world, every thing that is uncommon, to thee seems impossible'" (491). In addition to the comedic value of a starving man reading about a feast and to a literary interest (also seen in *Brasil 2000*) in Cervantes's use of narrative frames, Holmberg includes this reference to the *Quixote* as a second injunction to the reader to look beyond Nic-Nac's apparent insanity to the sense that lies beneath. Holmberg directs our attention from Mars to Earth, from fictional situations to real ones, from utopia to "topia."

Holmberg's Mars fluctuates between a direct analogy for Earth and a representation of a more advanced, utopian society that Terrans would do well to emulate. Chapter seven of *Nic-Nac*, the first chapter that takes place on Mars, ends with a direct statement that each continent of Mars has an equivalent on Earth (31). Chapter eight then opens with a declaration of Martian superiority: "Their advances, superior to those of the Earth, have been conquered by means of numerous sacrifices that today place them at the first level among planetary civilizations" (31-32). Nic-Nac later again implies that Martian society is the more advanced when he uses the nebular hypothesis (as H.G. Wells also did over twenty years later in *War of the Worlds*) to state that because Mars is an older planet than the Earth, Martian life evolved sooner (61). On the next page, however, he brings the Martians back to the level of Terrans, saying that Martians have evolved at a slower pace (62). The utopian Mars continues to reappear throughout the narrative. There is no illness on Mars; love on the red planet is "more elevated, more sublime" than on Earth (120); Martians themselves are more generous (126). Indeed, at one point Nic-Nac laments the need ever to return to his inferior home planet: "Ah! What a shame! ... to arrive

at the pedestal of glory and of hopes on the rosier of the planets, and to return to Earth to contemplate the same storms, the same valleys, the same faces.... What a shame! To rise so high only to sink so low!" (84).

When *Nic-Nac* arrives at the twinned Martian cities of Theosophopolis (city of God and of the wise) (48), his visit to the Sophopolis section seems to confirm the utopian characteristics of the planet's inhabitants. Sophopolis is the embodiment of Frye's characterization of utopias as "elite societies in which a small group is entrusted with essential responsibilities, and this elite is usually some analogy of a priesthood.... The utopias of science fiction are generally controlled by scientists, who of course are another form of priestly elite" (Frye 35). In Sophopolis the Academy of Sciences functions as the seat of government. It is also a substitute for a religious institution; weddings are held there rather than at a church because, *Nic-Nac* tells his readers, the Academy is "a more worthy temple, a more sacred building" (128). At the same time as he is elevating the sciences, however, Holmberg is turning a critical eye on scientists. He portrays the scientists in *Nic-Nac* as myopically focusing on their special fields of interest and as tending toward interdisciplinary squabbling. Upon witnessing an astronomer and a zoologist bickering, *Nic-Nac* exclaims, "Poor wise men! ... They are the same everywhere; always ill-humored, and not infrequently irrelevant!" (82). Eduardo Ortiz has persuasively compared the Sophopolitan scientists in *Nic-Nac* with Burmeister and the younger generation of German scientists that Sarmiento had brought to Argentina, whom Ortiz terms the "Córdoba Six." If Holmberg was indeed a "keen supporter of the German scientists" in their disagreements with Burmeister (Ortiz 60),²¹ he was also critical of them for staying inside their ivory towers and failing to spread scientific knowledge widely throughout their host country.²² Holmberg was more overt elsewhere in his criticism of Argentina's scientific dependency on the North and in his advocacy of his country becoming a producer of science.²³ In *Nic-Nac* he limits his commentary on the matter to the above-mentioned rather negative characterization of scientists and to the fact that, in the narrative, all scientists—canonical and occult, fictional and actual, identified and implied—are associated with the North: Seele, Gould, Flammarton, Burmeister, and the "Córdoba Six."

But if *Nic-Nac* describes Sophopolis, the semi-utopian "city of the wise," as a place in which "the light is of a white or rosy cast, and a pleasant yet at the same time rigorous majesty seems to have traced the lines of the buildings" (49), he does not characterize Theopolis, "the city of God," as such a model place:

The doors of the houses almost never open; a profound silence reigns during the day, interrupted only by the creaking, or rather the lamentations of some instruments that the inhabitants of Earth would call bells ... and by the sacred choirs that no one understands, because if they were to be understood they would lose their eminently mystical character. (48)

To the Argentine reader of Holmberg's time as well as to the alert reader today, Theosophopolis clearly represents the Argentine city of Córdoba, famous for being the seat of the Jesuits in Argentina and for the Academy of Sciences of Córdoba, founded in 1874. In his personal life Holmberg was a skeptic, but

publicly he attacked religious hypocrisy and intolerance rather than religion itself.²⁴ In *Nic-Nac* he is not interested in placing science above religion, but rather in mutual respect between the two, a respect he saw as one-sided in Argentina at that time: "The Sophopolitans viewed the inhabitants of Theopolis as their equals, but the latter, in their heart of hearts, saw an inferior in each Sophopolitan" (75). Holmberg's criticisms of religion in *Nic-Nac* are limited to the ostentatious, opaque, intolerant brand of Christianity practiced by the Theopolitans; unlike other Martian Christians, Seele explains to Nic-Nac, "the characteristic feature of their life is the exaltation of an abominable quality: hypocrisy; and this quality, converted by them into dogma, has brought more evils to Mars than all of the Martial/Martian wars and abuses" (73). As for his own beliefs, Nic-Nac sums them up with the words, "I am a Christian, but in my own way" (97).

From Theosophopolis, Nic-Nac and Seele cross an unpopulated plain that bears a strong resemblance to the Argentine *pampa* in order to reach the capital city of the country of *Aureliana* (*argentum* becomes *aurum*) on the coast. They find the unnamed capital city, much like the Buenos Aires of the time, divided by the factional squabbling that is, Seele tells Nic-Nac, "so common in countries that have not yet consolidated their internal organization" (145). Nic-Nac claims to have the most impartial view of the situation due to his outsider's perspective; the critical distance of "an extranatural being like myself, yes, I, Nic-Nac ... who is ruled by the single desire to learn and to judge" (165). Nic-Nac tries to convince the two major factions to value peace and national unity as a route to progress, saying, "The progress of nations is the favorite son of Peace" (146). He tries to make the factions realize that they are not two groups (on Mars they are given names other than "Nationalists" and "Autonomists") but one (never quite called "Argentines"). Although this situation is not resolved in the narrative, there is a sense of optimism at the end of the episode. As Nic-Nac and Seele leave the capital to return to Theosophopolis, Seele promises positive changes to come: "Later, when all is calm, we'll return, and you will see such a metamorphosis!" (173).

Once he has read Nic-Nac's account, the narrator, who now refers to himself as the "Publisher," declares that he is disillusioned and concludes that Nic-Nac suffers from "Planetary Mania" (186). The Publisher does, however, explicitly and implicitly rescue some of Holmberg's "serious ideas" from underneath the "mantle of fantasy" of Nic-Nac's Martian odyssey in this closing frame of the text. Rather tongue-in-cheek, the Publisher rejects the veracity of Nic-Nac's means of transportation, but he insists that Nic-Nac is to be believed on the matter of the existence of life on other planets. Further, the Publisher cites the testimony of "brilliant spirits like that of Flammarion" to support Nic-Nac's story, and he declares in his own right: "The plurality of inhabited worlds is not a fantasy born of a fevered brain, it is a necessity, a conquest of the human spirit, an homage to the greatness of the Universe" (184-85). The Publisher also gives indications of seeing the Argentines reflected in the Aurelians and understanding Nic-Nac/Holmberg's criticisms of them. But why, the Publisher asks, must Nic-Nac insist upon presenting his story using "that indefinable

vagueness of the concepts, those luminous forms, those indecisive glows" (185-86)? The same could be asked with regard to Holmberg's choice of using a science-fictional "mantle of fantasy" to speak to his countrymen. The Publisher's speculations provide answers to both questions, as he admits that "All of those elements that constitute the whole tale could not, perhaps, have been expressed in any other way" (186).

A Global Genre in the Periphery

We owe the reader an explanation of our title—"The First Wave: Latin American Science Fiction Discovers Its Roots." How, in 2007, can one publish an article that appears to claim that a few isolated texts that were all but lost for around 131 years constitute a wave?²⁵ In Latin American science fiction, as in Northern science fiction, it is common practice to talk of "waves," "golden ages," and "booms" when discussing the trajectory of the genre, although these terms are usually applied to time periods such as the late 1950s or the turn of the millennium.²⁶ With the reminder that in Latin America "the outside is also always inside" (González Echevarría 41), our texts of early Latin American sf can be located within the leading edge of what Suvin has termed the Euro-Mediterranean sf tradition's "fin-de-siècle cluster (ca. 1870-1910)" (87).

Of course, we must admit that, with the possible exception of the Argentina/River Plate region, our texts were not foundation stones for national sf traditions in their respective countries.²⁷ Eighteenth and nineteenth-century works of Latin American sf had little if any influence on the Latin American sf writers of subsequent generations because these works had virtually disappeared for several reasons: the condemnation of such works by the Inquisition, their limited distribution in periodicals and/or in small print runs of monographs, and the extremely local nature of the texts. Lately, however, these retrolabeled early works of Latin American sf seem to be coming into their own. They are now becoming valued as reflections of Latin American attitudes toward science, national identity, fiction, and other sociocultural issues of their times. And they are, at long last, becoming appreciated as evidence of the roots of Latin American participation in the sf genre.

The latest chronology of Latin American science fiction by Molina-Gavilán et al.—published in this issue of *SFS*—lists thirty-four works from seven different countries published before 1900. I am not claiming that this clustering of texts constitutes a wave of Latin American science fiction in and of itself; but I am suggesting that these works are evidence of Latin American participation in the global wave of science fiction in the nineteenth century. Bell and Molina-Gavilán are right to characterize our authors as having "no particular commitment to the genre," and they are equally right to say that there is "no cohesive science fiction tradition" in Latin America in the nineteenth century ("Introduction" 4). Fósforos, Felício dos Santos, and Holmberg wrote in many genres, literary and otherwise, and they did not identify themselves primarily as writers in the science-fictional vein. They were, however, all at least cognizant of or at most very engaged with the works and mores of the sf tradition, as we have seen. The writers of these thirty-four nineteenth-century texts may not have

been aware of each other or of the fact that together they were establishing a pattern of Latin American participation in the science fiction genre, but they were most certainly aware of the “bonds of kinship” between their texts and those of writers in the North. If, when characterizing Latin American science fiction, nineteenth-century authors and texts are taken into account, it will become clearer that the genre is more firmly anchored in Latin American literary and cultural history than has often been supposed. The genre should be seen not as just a space-age and computer-age phenomenon in Latin America, but as literature that has evolved over time, and has been adapted by Latin Americans to reflect their perspectives and to say what could not, perhaps, have been expressed as well in any other way.

A final note on what a better understanding of Latin American sf—early and later—can contribute to the Northerner’s understanding of the genre: in the North, especially in the United States, we suffer from a certain myopia in our perception of the world and its literatures. The Argentine sf critic Pablo Capanna has described this phenomenon as “the incapacity, characteristic of all imperial centers in history, to understand what occurs far from the center of power, or how those who live in the periphery think” (165). Latin American sf can provide some much needed correction to our vision; as Ginway puts it in her article, “A Working Model for Analyzing Third World Science Fiction,” “The subaltern or outsider position provides new and varied perspectives on hegemonic cultural production” (488). In his keynote address at the 2007 International Conference on the Fantastic in the Arts, Geoff Ryman spoke of science fiction as a “collective activity,” as a “continuity,” as a “mass dream”; and he characterized the science fiction of the center (my term) as suffering from an ethnocentric view of the world, from gender-bias, and from a limited view of the role of the “other” (we either shoot it or assimilate it).²⁸ Ryman then spoke of the potential for science fiction written in the periphery to help the genre to break away from its stereotypes and to contribute to the construction of a new mass dream. The retrolabeling of early Latin American science fiction is part of a process by which we are recognizing what Latin American writers have contributed, are contributing, and may contribute to the future of the genre.

NOTES

1. As Brian Stableford writes in the entry on “Proto Science Fiction” in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, “Hugo Gernsback clearly believed that he was merely attaching a name to a genre which already existed” (965). Gernsback’s “scientifiction” genre label had become “science fiction” by 1929. Like Stableford, I reserve the term “proto science fiction” for pre-nineteenth-century works. For texts written in the nineteenth century through 1926 I employ terms such as “early science fiction,” “science-fictional,” and “belonging to the science fiction tradition.”

2. Gernsback was not the first to recognize the existence of an sf tradition; nineteenth- and early twentieth-century writers and readers of science-fictional texts were well aware of the “loose bonds of kinship” of these texts to others. What Brian Stableford has written of scientific romance in Britain holds true as well for science fiction written in other Northern countries and in Latin America prior to 1926:

What entitles us to think of scientific romances as a kind is not a set of classificatory characteristics which demarcate them as members of a set, but loose bonds of kinship

which are only partly inherent in the imaginative exercises themselves and partly in the minds of authors and readers who recognise in them some degree of common cause. What binds together the authors and books to be discussed here is mainly that they were perceived by the contemporary audience as similar to one another and different from others. (*Scientific Romance* 4)

3. I am referring to the local reader base. Little science fiction from Latin American has been translated or reaches an international audience. A notable exception to this rule is the 2003 anthology *Cosmos Latinos*, edited by Andrea Bell and Yolanda Molina-Gavilán and published in Wesleyan University Press's "Early Classics of Science Fiction" series. Internet fanzines such as the Argentina-based *Axxón* (<<http://axxon.com.ar/axxon.htm>>) also make Latin American sf available to national and international readers of Spanish.

4. Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz dates the change of fortune in the reception and the writing of Mexican science fiction from the 1968 publication of Carlos Olvera's *Mejicanos en el espacio* [Mexicans in Space], and he sees a similar trend in the rest of Latin America at around the same time:

[With *Mejicanos en el espacio*] for the first time in this genre, the future is not a superior stage of human evolution, but rather an avalanche of prejudices and complexes shared by all with humor and without shame.

Since the 1970s, national [Mexican] science fiction, like Latin American sf, is taking new paths. Social criticism, a libertarian spirit, stylistic experimentation, and the search for less obvious themes are transforming the paradigms of the future visualized by the youngest creators. (*Biografías* 346; my translation)

The more recent phenomenon of retrolabeling the earliest works of Latin American sf is another sign of the increasing acceptance of the legitimacy of the genre there.

5. González Echevarría defines hegemonic discourse as "one backed by a discipline, or embodying a system, that offers the most commonly accepted description of humanity and accounts for the most widely held beliefs of the intelligentsia" (41).

6. This lauding of Brazil's natural conditions for greatness, or "grandeza," permeates Brazilian culture and also Brazilian sf. For more on this topic see Ginway (*Brazilian* 21-22, 204, 220n19); see also her contribution to the "Chronology of Latin American SF 1775-2005" (Molina-Gavilán et al., "Chronology").

7. All translations in this paper are my own unless otherwise indicated.

8. While some of these texts were claimed for the genre earlier (*Nic-Nac* by Goligorsky in 1968, "México 1970" by Staples in 1987), they have been consistently cited as foundational Latin American sf texts only in more recent years. The bibliography in the entry on "Latin America" by Mauricio-José Schwarz and Bráulio Tavares in the second edition of *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* lists *Brasil 2000* and *Nic-Nac*. All three texts are included in the important bibliography compiled by Yolanda Molina-Gavilán et al. in *Chasqui* in 2000 and in their revised and updated bibliography published in English in this issue of *SFS*.

9. The identity of Fósforos-Cerillos has been variously posited as either Sebastián Camacho y Zulueta (Fernández Delgado in the *Chasqui* and *SFS* bibliographies) or José Joaquín Mora (Trujillo Muñoz, "El futuro en llamas" 12). Lacking definitive proof, I base my characterization of the writer on the content of "México 1970" and on the fact that a number of other articles in the same issue of *El Liceo Mexicano* on sociocultural and scientific themes are signed "Fósforos," "Fósforos-Cerillos," or "F.C." I take this to indicate a certain degree of involvement on the part of this writer in the journal and in the publication mission proclaimed in its Introduction. "México 1970" is signed "Fósforos" at the end of the article itself (*El Liceo Mexicano* 348), and its author is listed as "Fósforos-Cerillos" in the index at the back of the issue.

10. I am indebted to Paul Alkon's discussions of the interplay of metafictional, realistic, and fantastic elements in his *Origins of Futuristic Fiction* (124-25, 193-206).

11. Here Alkon is summarizing and building upon ideas from Bronislaw Baczko's analysis of Mercier's *L'An 2440* [The Year 2440] in *Lumières de l'utopie* (165 n22).

12. There is some vacillation in the utopian portrayal of the estranged society in the case of *Nic-Nac*. My analysis of Holmberg's representation of the relationship between Europe and Argentina is based on another of his texts in addition to *Nic-Nac*: the 1875 science-fictional work *Dos partidos en lucha: Fantasia científica* [Two Factions Struggle for the Survival of the Fittest: A Scientific Fantasy].

13. I am indebted to Bráulio Tavares and to the staff of the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro for their help in acquiring copies of over a hundred pages of the manuscript.

14. This passage was also chosen from a number of possibilities because it provides fairly clear evidence of the influence of Mercier on Felício dos Santos. A footnote in chapter one of Mercier's *Memoirs of the Year 2500* reads: "The whole kingdom is in Paris. France resembles a rickety child, whose juices seem only to encrease and nourish the head, while the body remains weak and emaciated" (4).

15. Phase two of *Brasil 2000* is still an account of a mediated history text brought back from the year 2000. The text now includes the account of Pedro II's visit to the Brazil of the future, and the reader reads about it filtered, as usual, through the nineteenth-century editor et al.

16. I have changed this quotation from the plural to the singular. Originally it referred to both Joaquim Felício dos Santos and his *Brasil 2000* and to another, unlocatable, text by Justiniano José da Rocha.

17. The diversity of Holmberg's publications and his work as a scientific generalist at a time when specialization was increasingly valued is explained by Luis Holmberg as a necessary sacrifice during that generation in a country of "little scientific culture" (140-41). His reasoning shares a number of similarities with Nancy Stepan's arguments against the attempts by modern Latin American nations to reproduce the structures of Northern scientific research systems in the final chapter of her *Beginnings of Brazilian Science*.

18. In *Nic-Nac* the inhabitants of Mars are referred to as "Marcialitas" ["Martialites"], a nod to the warlike tendencies of some of the inhabitants. As these inhabitants only appear in a few chapters of the tale, we will use the more standard "Martians" to avoid confusion.

19. The two authorities mentioned, Mr. Gould and Dr. Uriarte, were public figures in Argentina at the time. Benjamin Gould (1824-96) was an American astronomer and the first director of the National Observatory, established at Córdoba in 1871. Dr. José María Uriarte was the first director (1863-76) of San Buenaventura, a mental institution in Buenos Aires.

20. While Flammarion's belief in and defense of spiritism eventually damaged his reputation in scientific circles, Holmberg continued his work as a respected scientist throughout his career. Pagés Larraya writes of Holmberg's attitude toward spiritism: "Although [Holmberg] may not have been a militant adept of these practices and even satirizes them ... it is common knowledge that they interested him greatly" (42). Holmberg's treatment of spiritism is less satirical in other works of fiction, but in *Nic-Nac* spiritism is used as a literary device. For more on the relationship between spiritism, science, and the popularization of science, see Moore (7, 19-22).

21. In the same article, Ortiz excludes *Nic-Nac* from the genre of science fiction (62-64), but the definition of sf that he uses does not take into account the permeable boundaries of the genre, especially at this time before it had been more rigidly codified by publishers, writers, critics, and tradition. Ortiz subsequently cites Verne,

Flammarion, Poe, and Hoffmann as important influences on Holmberg's work, though he identifies these writers only with the fantastic (84).

22. In 1878 in *El Naturalista Argentino* Holmberg compared certain scientists unfavorably to Verne: "Those men of science, who keep themselves completely isolated from the world that surrounds them without reaching them, are certainly not those who pour the heat and the light of the truth onto the populace" (qtd. in Luis Holmberg 136). Luis Holmberg identifies both Burmeister and "the German professors Sarmiento brought to form the Academy of Sciences in Córdoba" as being guilty of sundry acts of inaccessibility in the eyes of his father (139).

23. For further examples of Holmberg's declaration of Argentine scientific independence from Europe, see Luis Holmberg (4) and Eduardo Holmberg, *Dos partidos* (90, 113, 133).

24. For more on Holmberg's views on Christianity and the relationship between science and religion, see Luis Holmberg, chapter 9.

25. See, for example, the discussion of *Brasil 2000* above.

26. For a good discussion of the trajectory of Latin American sf, see Bell and Molina-Gavilán ("Introduction" 4-10).

27. A direct line can be traced from Holmberg to Leopoldo Lugones (1874-1938) to Horacio Quiroga (1878-1937) and on to Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) and Adolfo Bioy Casares (1914-99).

28. The text of this address has not yet been published, and so my comments are based on my own notes taken at the talk. Please see Ryman's text in a forthcoming issue of the *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* for a complete representation of his views on this and other sf matters.

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ABSTRACT

This essay examines three of the earliest works of Latin American sf together for the first time: “México en el año 1970” [Mexico in the Year 1970, 1844, Mexico], *Páginas da história do Brasil escripta no anno de 2000* [Pages from the History of Brazil Written in the Year 2000, 1868-72, Brazil], and *Viaje maravilloso del Señor Nic-Nac al planeta Marte* [The Marvelous Journey of Mr. Nic-Nac to the Planet Mars, 1875-76, Argentina]. Nineteenth-century works such as these have been added to the genealogical tree of Latin American sf in recent years. The addition of pre-space-age texts to the corpus of Latin American sf does more than provide its writers and readers with local roots: it broadens our understanding of the genre in Latin America and the periphery; it extends our perceptions of the role of science in Latin American literature and culture; and, together with later Latin American sf, it contributes new perspectives and new narrative possibilities to the genre as a whole.