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Lawless, G. (2015). 'The Problem of the Future in Nineteenth-Century Spain'. *Hispanic Research Journal*, 16(2), 147-62. <https://doi.org/10.1179/1468273715Z.000000000117>

**Published in:**  
Hispanic Research Journal

**Document Version:**  
Peer reviewed version

**Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:**  
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

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## **The Problem of the Future and Nineteenth-Century Spain**

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**This article examines the problems and paradoxes in the representation of the future in three nineteenth-century Spanish works: *El futuro Madrid* by Fernández de los Ríos (1868), ‘Madrid en el siglo xxi’ by Neira de Mosquera (1847) and *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* by Juan Bautista Amorós (Silverio Lanza). While these texts demonstrate Spain’s participation in the general movement towards using the future as a setting for literary works, they do not corroborate the theory that the nineteenth century was a time of optimism and belief in the doctrine of Progress. Concepts derived from discussions of the future in the history of ideas, such as *historia magistra vitae*, are shown to be relevant to discussion of these futuristic fictions, in sometimes unexpected ways.<sup>1</sup>**

**KEYWORDS:** Time, futuristic fiction, Progress, Fernández de los Ríos, Silverio Lanza, Neira de Mosquera

Accounts of the ways the future was imagined in the nineteenth century have often turned to authors of early science fiction such as H. G. Wells, Jules Verne, or, in the case of Spain, Nilo María Fabra (Clarke, 1965 and 1979; Santiáñez-Tió, 1995; Echevarria, 2007; González Romero, 2010). In this article, however, I examine three texts that are not science fiction, by any definition of the term, but that are nevertheless explicitly set in future time. In the final

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<sup>1</sup> The research for this article was carried out with financial help from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.

chapter of *El futuro Madrid* (1868), Ángel Fernández de los Ríos skips five years ahead to appraise the effect of the reforms he recommends. This text broadly conforms to a history of the idea of the future that describes the nineteenth century in terms of belief in continual improvement, although some features suggest that the author is not always convinced by his own arguments. Certain aspects of Reinhart Koselleck's (2004) history of the future can be recognized in Antonio Neira de Mosquera's 'Madrid en el siglo xxi' (1847). Neira de Mosquera's story, however, does not so much confirm these accounts, as slip through the gap left between an appeal to tradition and a plea for progress. The past is understood in terms of *historia magistra vitae*, while counterfeiting historical artefacts is deplored; Spain is accused of failing to change and of failing to remain true to itself. Attempts to place Juan Bautista Amorós's *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* (1890) on accepted timelines of the history of the future present further difficulties. In this novella Amorós, better known by his heteronym Silverio Lanza, turns attempts to control the future into a form of insanity. Taken together, the three very different texts dismantle our association of the nineteenth century with optimism and belief in progress. Nevertheless, they do illustrate the increasing tendency of writers around this time to use the future as a setting for their works.

Literary historians such as Brian Stableford (2008), Paul Alkon (1987), I. F. Clarke (1965 and 1979), or Brian Aldiss (1973), have traced the evolution of futuristic fiction, beginning with isolated examples in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when imaginary places gradually gave way to future time, moving through the avalanche of short stories and novels of the late nineteenth century, and continuing with the proliferation of the genre in the twentieth century when it was linked to the growth of science fiction. The close ties between futuristic and science fiction in this latter phase have sometimes, though not always, been understood as an intrinsic characteristic of the genre. By arguing the case for futuristic fiction as separate from science fiction and considering it as a genre in its own right, Alkon diverges

from much critical writing on the subject, whether in a British, French, North or South American context. He argues that the importance of ‘prose narratives explicitly set in future time’ is independent of subsequent developments in science fiction. ‘Works that break the taboo against tales of the future’, he explains ‘are a significant development marking the emergence of a form unknown to classical, medieval, and renaissance literature’ (1987: 3-4). For Clarke, in contrast, futuristic fiction is practically synonymous with science fiction. In *The Pattern of Expectation*, while he is ostensibly talking about the development of futuristic fiction, what he is really doing is looking at ‘the changing relationship between science and society during the last 200 years’ (Clarke, 1979: 8). Elsewhere, he claims that ‘Futuristic fiction is the mode evolved naturally by a technological civilisation to consider itself’ (Clarke, 1980: 11). The arguments developed in this article follow Alkon’s approach rather than Clarke’s, but cast the net even wider to include texts that are not strictly speaking fiction either. Rather than focusing on science and technology, or measuring the accuracy of these writers’ predictions, I concentrate on the imaginative leap involved in representing a specific future and what this reveals about changes in the relationships between past, present and future time.

The earliest known nineteenth-century example of the use of a future setting in Spanish literature is *El anteojo mágico, ó La vision de los dos palacios en el bosque* from 1820.<sup>2</sup> *El anteojo mágico* is an allegorical representation of the long-anticipated demise of absolutism, published at a crucial moment in Spanish history, at the start of the trienio liberal when it seemed that the future of the nation could realistically be controlled by calculated human action. Following this, in 1845-46, Gabino Tejado published a serialized novel in the

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<sup>2</sup> There is an earlier work, by C. Gamiadosi, from 1729, *La vision del loco*, Pages y rodrigones, where the date of birth of the narrator is given as 39 May, 3896. It is possible, probable even, that further reference was made to future time in eighteenth-century sueños and visiones, but in this example at least, the date provided is an indication of the narrator’s madness rather than a projection into the future. This work aside, and given the dearth of research into the use of future time in Spanish literature, it is more than likely that there are examples of futuristic fiction that predate 1820.

Revista Literaria de El Español. The frame of the novel is set in the future, though the plot unfolds in the author's own time. Like Tejado, many authors of futuristic fiction used the periodical press to publish their stories, with contributions ranging from single-page sketches — for example Primitivo Andrés Cardaño's 'Las ciencias en los siglos venideros' (1852) — to series which, when collected, would run to several volumes, notably, Antonio Flores's *Ayer, hoy y mañana* (1863-64). Towards the end of the century, several established authors used the press in this way (Azorín, Ángel Ganivet, and Leopoldo Alas, for example), as is evidenced in the recent anthology *De la Luna a Mecnópolis*, edited by Nil Santiáñez-Tió (1995). By far the most prolific, however, was Nilo María Fabra, whose stories were published in book form in the 1880s and 1890s and released in critical editions in the twenty-first century.

Like Fabra and so many others, Antonio Neira de Mosquera published his futuristic story, 'Madrid en el siglo xxi,' in the periodical press, in this case *El Siglo Pintoresco*. His contribution to the genre, however, has never been anthologized, even in the recent collection, *Cuentos futuristas*. Clearly the editors of this anthology were tasked with selecting a very small number of texts, but their rationale is nevertheless revealing:

Los siete cuentos que ofrece la presente antología son una breve muestra de un subgénero literario menospreciado en nuestro país hasta fechas recientes: la novela científica, la ciencia ficción o, por emplear el término tan querido a nuestros abuelos, la novela futurista. (Arellano, 2000: 7)

Although a popular choice, the periodical press was not the only location for imaginary journeys into the future. When writing recommendations for reform, urban planners and interested non-specialists sometimes made brief incursions into the future,

imagining what their cities would look like when or if their alterations were carried out. The final chapter of *El futuro Madrid* (1868) by Ángel Fernández de los Ríos is probably the best-known example, but others include the last chapter of *Viaje crítico alrededor de la Puerta del Sol* by Manuel Ossorio y Bernard (1874), and all of *Zamora del porvenir* by Eduardo Julián Pérez (1888).

On the stage the future also became a familiar location; plays and zarzuelas were written and performed in which the future setting played a key role. In 1876, the two couples in the zarzuela by Miguel Ramos Carrión and Carlos Coello, *El siglo que viene*, travelled to the twentieth century in a comically ill-fated attempt to avoid each other's company. *Madrid en el año dos mil*, by the duo Perrín and Palacios played to critical acclaim in 1887 from January to March in the Teatro de Variedades. Contemporary reviews in the *Revista Contemporánea* and *El Día* attest to the popularity of the work while also drawing attention to the absence of any convincing plot development. Costume, stage sets, and spectacle took centre stage instead. According to *El Día*, the work was 'un éxito ruidosísimo. Las magnificas decoraciones, los elegantes y ricos trajes y lo agradable y ligero de la música fascinaron á los espectadores, haciéndoles olvidar los defectos del libro' (14 January 1887). *La Correspondencia de España* noted that when 'las decoraciones pintadas por los señores Bussato y Bonardi' appeared on stage, 'fueron llamados á escena los pintores entre nutridos aplausos' (14 January 1887). At the other end of the spectrum is the eminently serious three-act drama by José Diaz Valderrama, *Isabel de Castilla y Pedro de Braganza en el año de 1876*, published and performed in 1856. The work represents the future union of Spain and Portugal as a deliberate and intended result of a marriage between the eponymous protagonists, and is a product of the Iberian union movement. Neither science, nor technology, is involved, but the setting of the work in an imagined future is quite deliberate and fulfils a specific function.

Futuristic texts in Spain were therefore plentiful, even if they may not have proliferated in quite the same way as they did in Britain in the final decades of the nineteenth century after the publication in Blackwoods of ‘The Battle of Dorking’ (see Clarke, 1965). This brief summary of some of the patterns followed by futuristic texts in Spain from the earliest known example in 1820 to the end of the century shows first, that the future was not the exclusive property of science and second, that the future was becoming ubiquitous, even finding its way into texts that did not advertise themselves as fiction. In what follows, I consider some of the points of similarity and difference among three imaginary visits to the future, highlighting also the inconsistencies and paradoxes contained within the individual texts. I question histories of the future that view the nineteenth century solely in terms of optimism and unflagging faith in the powers of progress.

Written in Paris by Ángel Fernández de los Ríos, published in Spain as a series of articles in *La Época*, *El Imparcial* and *El Universal* during the months immediately after the 1868 September Revolution and in book form that same year by the Ayuntamiento Popular de Madrid (see Bonet Correa, 1975: xxxvi), *El futuro Madrid* is, for the most part, a series of recommendations for the development of Spain’s capital city, including detailed instructions about the creation of residential areas, the development of public spaces, widening and lengthening of specific streets, and, inevitably, the demolition of others. The publication date is important not only because it coincided with the end of the reign of Isabel II, ‘a period of intense urban reorientation that witnessed the reconstruction of the modern capital’ (Vázquez, 2001: 32), but also because the author believed at this point that his plans could, and just might, be put into practice: ‘With *El futuro Madrid* Fernández de los Ríos hoped to exploit the potential for realizing his changes after the liberal revolution of 1868, when technology, financial capital and recreational tastes seemed ready to back Madrid’s expansion into the countryside’ (Frost, 2008: 161). Carlos María de Castro’s plans for Madrid, which were

largely supported by the government of Isabel II and which informed development and planning in Madrid for decades after the original proposals were made in the late 1850s and in 1860, ‘directed new growth into virgin land while it disregarded the existing city’ (Neuman, 2010: 96; see also Shubert, 1990: 47-49). Fernández de los Ríos’s vision, however, ‘called for complete reform of the existing city and expansion’; it ‘blended a global view of the city with specific project reforms, and included new institutions and reforms of existing ones’ (Neuman, 2010: 97). *El futuro Madrid* consists in large part of a list of practical recommendations aimed at improving the living conditions of its inhabitants while simultaneously creating a capital city worthy of Spain. For example, by engineering spaces where citizens could buy and sell food, prices would be lowered and the quality of the goods on offer improved, thus circumventing unnecessary and expensive regulation and exploitation:

Pueden y deben establecerse almacenes, mercados especiales, donde el labrador y el ganadero vengan directa y libremente á vender sus frutos y sus ganados, sin la presión y los artificios de los especuladores y corredores, de tal modo confabulados hoy para hacerse dueños exclusivos del mercado fijando á su sabor el alza y la baja de los precios, que el productor tiene que sucumbir á sus cálculos de acaparamiento, y viéndose privado de la libertad de vender sus productos, obligado á ceder á la fuerza del monopolio. (Fernández de los Ríos, 1868: 270)

As in this example, throughout *El futuro Madrid*, specific measures are targeted at achieving larger aims. There is no social good that cannot be attained, no ill that cannot be remedied through judicious urban planning and the reconstruction of space. Fernández de los Ríos did not view practical considerations of the influence of planning on the quality of life

of Madrid's citizens as limited in scope, however; urban planning and political projects were indistinguishable and could be used to generate national and civic pride. Thus far, then, *El futuro Madrid* conforms to a model of nineteenth-century optimism in human ability to construct the future.

Repeated reference is made to the need to break with tradition and make the future of Madrid distinct from the past. Possibly because he thinks this new future will be so different, Fernández de los Ríos includes an account of the history of Madrid since the Austrian-Habsburg dynasty. And, just as revolution was to transform the political and social organization of Spanish society in an unprecedented way, so the destruction and construction of new infrastructures, buildings, streets, plazas and monuments would instil the revolution in the daily life of the citizens. In this much, *El futuro Madrid* conforms to widely accepted accounts of changes in the way the future has been imagined over time; for the nineteenth century, the future was bright:

For most of this [the twentieth] and the previous century, the future was a bright and shining presence. Scientific progress, faith in social engineering, and impatience with tradition engendered countless cornucopian forecasts. (Lowenthal, 1995: 386)

The move from optimism to pessimism, from never-ending progress to the decline of the West, is generally dated to the twentieth century, when worldwide wars, developments in the potency of weapons, and theories of relativity and chaos are thought to have put paid to the belief that, with enough information of the right sort, the laws of the universe could be steadily harnessed to the human will (see, for example, Lowenthal, 1995: 385; Echevarría, 2007: 96; Bauman, 2000).

El futuro Madrid and its author have been described as utopian (Moya González, 1986; Bonet Correa, 1975). Indeed, the work looks on first inspection like a paradigmatic instance of what Zygmunt Bauman meant when he argued that ‘Modern utopias were never mere prophecies, let alone idle dreams: openly or covertly, they were both declarations of intent and expressions of faith that what was desired could be done and will be done’ (2000: 131). But nineteenth-century optimism was by no means a universally adopted attitude, as the coeval theories of degeneration demonstrate (Pick, 1989). It should not be surprising, therefore, that El futuro Madrid questions its own plausibility; it implicitly acknowledges that the necessary preconditions for this ideal world were beyond the realm of the possible. Fernández de los Ríos starts with a resounding claim that his plans and projects were not the stuff of fantasy: ‘[no] intentamos lanzarnos por los espacios imaginarios, para complacernos en forjar mejoras fantásticas’ (1868: 13). Nevertheless, in the final chapter of the text, he steps clearly into the realm of speculation, inviting his readers to jump five years into the future:

[S]upongamos en fin que el mundo ha envejecido, no un siglo, sino un lustro, y concédanos el lector un resto de atención para acompañarnos [...] en un paseo imaginario por la villa, dedicado á contemplar cómo se desarrolla en esos cinco años el cuadro del Futuro Madrid. (1868: 331)

This invitation is followed by a description of the destruction of the last remains of the antiguo regimen — church bells are rung for the last time, the Bourbon dynasty is torn down like so many buildings — and the creation of a fair society, with abundant employment, affordable goods, and stable prices. As with all things that are too good to be true, however, certain conditions must first be met:

Supongamos que la revolucion no es para la patria un pronunciamiento más; supongamos que, por primera vez, la capital de España se encamina a ser digna metropolí de una gran nacion; supongamos que los resultados de la exclaustracion, la desamortizacion y las reformas con ellas enlazadas no se malogren esta vez; supongamos que el plan que acabamos de desarrollar, cuidando de pedir, no sólo lo posible, sino lo fácil; no sólo lo económico, sino gratuito, se lleva a cabo en su mayor parte. (1868: 331)

At the same time as he expresses optimism about the future of Madrid and of Spain and asserts that this new society can in fact be built, Fernández de los Ríos lists so many conditions and prerequisites that he introduces a note of desperation and erodes the reader's faith in the solidity of his future Madrid. Bonet Correa, in his introduction to a recent edition of *El futuro Madrid*, notes that 'Si no fuese porque se ocupa de problemas jurídicos, económicos y sociales de una manera concreta y aportando soluciones concretas habría que pensar que era una especie de utopista' (1975: xli); not utopian exactly, but 'una especie de utopista', a delusionary. Inevitably, Fernández de los Ríos's contemporaries were sceptical, as a review of *El futuro Madrid* that appeared in the *Revista de España* in 1869 shows: 'No hay para qué decir hasta qué punto son convenientes y aun útiles, si no todos, la mayor parte de los planes que se contienen en el libro [...] pero lo que no nos parece es que sean tan fácilmente realizables (ni aun procediendo de un modo revolucionario) como el autor se imagina' (Anon., 1869: 479).

If the reviewers in the *Revista de España* were sceptical about whether the proposals could be put into practice, in 'Madrid en el siglo xxi', Antonio Neira de Mosquera questioned whether Spain would ever change at all. In 'Madrid, sub specie aeternitatis', the one

scholarly article dedicated to Neira's story, Lee Fontanella argues that 'Neira criticizes Spain for its self that would not be; furthermore, his fantastical projection into 2047 constitutes an implicit affirmation of constancy' (1970-71: 210-11). Reinhart Koselleck (2004), using the same terms as Fontanella, compares the understandings of future time in the political thought of early modern Europe and in Christian eschatology. Making change the exclusive province of the afterlife or the Day of Judgment is akin to assuming, in Koselleck's reading of Machiavelli, that human nature is unchanging and that calculations can be made on this basis that are valid for all time:

Sub specie aeternitatis nothing novel can emerge, whether the future is viewed in terms of faith, or of sober calculation. A politician could become more clever or even cunning; he could refine his technique; he could become wiser or more farsighted: but history never conveyed him into unknown regions of the future. (2004: 21)

Koselleck is illustrating a paradigm shift that he contends occurred around the time of the French Revolution, when a future time came into existence that was radically distinct from past time and that could be constructed and shaped by human action.

Three themes stand out among Koselleck's careful semantic analyses. First, the belief that the present age has a new perspective on the future that is without precedent. Second, the belief that changes for the better are accelerating. Third, the belief that human beings are more and more capable of making their own history. (Ricoeur, 1984-88: III, 210)

Koselleck looked at the future as something specific to a time and a place — Europe after the Enlightenment — but he only did so for the particular period he was studying. He thus gives the impression that preceding periods were indistinguishable in so far as they lacked this future perspective. Peter Burke, in his introduction to *The Uses of the Future in Early Modern Europe* (2010), attempts to refine Koselleck's thesis, suggesting that while attitudes to the future widened, it is less convincing to speak of a 'discovery' of the future. David Carvounas (2002) likewise tries to historicize pre-modern notions of futurity, though his target is always to elucidate the unique significance of modern understandings of the relationship between past, present and future.

Such caveats aside, Koselleck's often meticulous study provides a useful frame of reference for understanding 'Madrid en el siglo xxi'. Neira's story, despite being set explicitly in the future and written some time after the Enlightenment watershed, fails to sit comfortably within this history of the idea of the future. Neira claims, as Fontanella has noted, that nothing of substance would be different in the Spain of the future; paradoxically, however, his almost dystopian description of Madrid in 2047 seems designed to convince his readers that everything must change. The story offers evidence for the persistence of early-modern understandings of the future, but is also intent on bringing about the type of paradigm shift described by Koselleck.

Hesitation regarding the relationship between past and future extends to unease about the use and abuse of literary traditions. As Fontanella has so amply demonstrated, 'Madrid en el siglo xxi' is dense with intertextual references and invokes a range of literary sources, primarily Mariano José de Larra's 'La nochebuena de 1836' and 'El día de difuntos' (Fontanella 1970-71: 205-06). On the first page, the narrator elliptically states his intention to 'retratar las costumbres de nuestra época', saying that he will not resort to the fashionable Romantic or Gothic devices, 'los escalofrios de las noches en vela y los tumbos por los

tejados mal alumbrados de la luna' (Neira de Mosquera, 1847: 36). Instead, he quips, he will use talking animals or an intelligent servant. The narrator falls asleep and he and his servant find themselves falling out of space towards Spain, 'una montaña casi rodeada de agua' (1847: 38). 'The aerial vantage point', Fontanella informs us, 'is a device commonly used in nineteenth-century literature', with origins in Luis Vélez de Guevara's *El diablo cojuelo* (1970-71: 206). Martina Lauster has since illustrated just how extensive this usage was, in her overview of the use of what she calls the Asmodean viewpoint across the European periodical press (2007: 134-45). Neira's story adds a temporal dimension when the narrator and his servant fall out of time into Madrid in the year 2047. On arrival, the pair are given a guided tour by a 'desconocido [que] hablaba casi en francés' (1847: 38). Madrid has been divided into a 'corte antigua' and a 'corte moderna' (1847: 39ff). Particular targets are singled out for criticism: urban planning, the growth of advertising, female poets, the influence of French on the Spanish language, perversion of the national theatre, and hypocritical social interaction. The last place that master and servant visit in 2047 is a statue of Larra, resting on the remains of a monument to Cervantes. When they move to intervene and protect their literary progenitor from a crowd that was 'arrojando sobre ella [the statue of Larra] una buena porcion de pergaminos en fólío', their guide tells them that 'Entre nosotros parecen mal los arranques generosos' (1847: 41). After an appropriately incisive retort, the narrator makes his move toward the crowd, but before the mob has a chance to erupt in anger, he falls suddenly into his own bed, following in the wake of the narrator of his literary starting point, 'La nochebuena de 1836'.

In Neira's nightmarish vision, the future is shaped by two antithetical operations: twenty-first-century Madrid is both slave to fashion and incapable of innovation. The latest trends in opera, theatre and language are all imported, fashioning Spaniards into pale imitations of their contemporaries. Incapable of distinguishing between genuine creativity

and reproductions, ‘El vulgo confundia por lo regular la invencion con la reproducci3n’ (1847: 39). Spain remains ‘la Espa1a de todos tiempos. Despu3s de una calle ancha, un callejon sin salida — la historia de los primeros cuarenta a1os del siglo XIX’ (1847: 39). So, while the narrator fakes surprise at the extravagant customs and practices of the twenty-first century, they are familiar to him precisely because Spanish society is the same as it was in his own day. Indeed, before he and his servant land in Madrid after their dreamlike flight, ‘Una voz misteriosa nos dijo entonces — H3 ah3 tu patria: all3 abajo no hay mas que voces; alguna que otra vez un trastorno; nunca un cambio’ (1847: 37). In this way, the story builds towards its concluding question: ‘¿El Madrid del siglo XXI era un retrato 3 una parodia de la coronada villa del siglo XIX?’ (1847: 41).

In its treatment of the uses of history, ‘Madrid en el siglo xxi’ provides a counterexample to the section of Koselleck’s thesis that, before the watershed of the late eighteenth century, ‘Precisely because nothing fundamentally new would arise, it was quite possible to draw conclusions from the past for the future’ (Koselleck, 2004: 197), and that after this, the relationship between past and future became radically different. However, it would be an oversimplification to deduce from this that Spain was, in this respect, merely lagging behind its northern neighbours. In Neira’s story, the past, like the future, is subjected to two apparently mutually exclusive operations: fetishization and amnesia. The citizens of twenty-first-century Madrid constantly attempt to commemorate the past. Denizens of the ‘corte antigua’ take home artefacts in order to restore them (Neira de Mosquera, 1847: 39), while ‘La mayor parte de los habitantes del moderno barrio todo lo querian inmortalizar’ (1847: 40). Such attempts to preserve the past result in at best cheap imitations and, at worst, profaning the resting place of the dead during an attempt to create a national pantheon: ‘Nuestro cicerone nos decia al oido que no se podia buscar otra panteon mejor que la misma Corte. Al desenterrar un numero considerable de cajas mortuorias rotas y deshechas, se

encontraban los huesos humanos revueltos y hacinados sin que fuese fácil ni posible presentar un esqueleto completo' (Neira de Mosquera, 1847: 40).<sup>3</sup> While berating them for the creation of cheap replicas of the past, in an apparent paradox, Neira also criticises the future citizens of Madrid for failing to learn from past mistakes:

En las corridas de caballos se apostaba á porfia y el oro español era derrochado para probar la agilidad y soltura de los franceses ó ingleses. En estas apuestas se gastaban cuantiosas sumas y al fin y al cabo los extranjeros se daban de ojo para llegar al hipódromo y los habitantes de la coronada villa perdian siempre que jugaban. Se conocia que en el siglo XXI no era muy conocida la historia política de España.  
(1847: 40)

History does repeat itself, and if Spaniards would only remember this, then perhaps things would be different. The past provides a guide for the future — *historia magistra vitae* — but it must also be left behind to make way for change.

'Madrid en el siglo xxi' is clearly about describing the future, in the sense it imagines the city and its inhabitants in a particular future scenario. However, it may also have been conceived as a means of changing the future, by functioning as a warning to readers and consequently as an incentive to change. Mark Currie in *About Time: Narrative, Fiction and the Philosophy of Time* (2007), identifies three types of prolepsis: the simple flash forward, structural prolepsis, and rhetorical prolepsis. In structural prolepsis, the time narrated is structured and informed by the perspective of the time of narrating. For example, the narrator might highlight details or events that only assume importance once the outcome of the story is known, or that prepare the reader for the eventual outcome. But it is rhetorical prolepsis

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<sup>3</sup> This may be a reference to Goya's missing skull. Interestingly, the three images that accompany the text in *El Siglo Pintoresco* are reminiscent of Goya's *Caprichos* and *Desastres de la guerra*.

that is most pertinent here. Rhetorical prolepsis is ‘the anticipation of an objection and the preclusion of that objection by incorporating a counter-argument into the discourse’ (Currie, 2007: 31); it ‘prevents the future it anticipates in the act of anticipating it’ (p. 39). If Neira’s story is intended to alter the course of the future, then this creates a tension between the other message of the story, which is that Spain never changes and will never change. Straining against each other, these readings suggest both a belief in the power of human action and a sort of fatalism. This duality is echoed in Neira’s use of Larra as ‘a jumping-off point for literature of his own’; ‘As Larra sometimes modeled his literature on other literature, so Neira often modeled his literature on that of Larra’ (Fontanella, 1970-71: 200). ‘Madrid en el siglo xxi’ is either an original work demonstrating an ability to seek inspiration in the past, or a servile and inferior copy of Larra’s earlier efforts. If the latter, Neira himself would be like his twenty-first century writers: ‘Las plumas ya no servian para escribir y en vez de ellas se habia descubierto un medio ingenioso para copiar en el papel los pensamientos ajenos, por medio de las tijeras’ (Neira de Mosquera, 1847: 39). Concerns about the use of technology are also evident here (see Fontanella, 1982: 153-55). If the former, the story offers a way forward that would bridge the gap between past and future, enable Spain to learn from its mistakes without sacrificing the possibility of change. Ultimately, the story leaves it to the reader to answer this question.

If Neira’s story both illustrates and challenges the debates surrounding the history of the idea of the future, Juan Bautista Amorós’s novella, *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte*, is even more intractable. Amorós is usually referred to by his heteronym, Silverio Lanza. This conflation of author and heteronym has meant that the significance of this literary device has been almost completely overlooked. This is despite the fact that Amorós does distinguish himself from Lanza by presenting himself as the editor of Lanza’s work. Such metafictional games are clearly appealing in the twenty-first century. But, even according to a much earlier

critic, the Austrian Hermann Bahr, Amorós was one of the most important writers in Spain in the late nineteenth century. Bahr claimed to have found the ‘seeds of a national and modern future exclusively in the bohemian world’ and that Amorós’s particular brand of pessimism made Ibsen look positively optimistic (Bahr, 2004 [1891]: 233).<sup>4</sup> Their contemporary Luis París summarized *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* succinctly as ‘una historia imaginaria, que sucede en un país fabuloso, en una época hipotética, y en la que toman parte un cura lascivo, un juez venal, un hombre honrado, dos mujeres perseguidas y algunos comparsas’ (París, 1890: n.p.). The novella is one of three works written by the fictional homodiegetic narrator, Silverio Lanza, and published by Amorós that form the series *Historia de un pueblo* (see Lawless, 2013: 229-30). The ‘pueblo’ is Atargea, a country whose capital city is Granburgo, but *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* is set in the small town of Villaruin, ‘en el siglo xx del cristianismo, durante la dominación de la raza culta’ (Amorós y Vázquez de Figueroa, 1999: II, 170). A recently qualified juez de delitos, Licurgo Redondo is sent to Villaruin, which is not, we are told repeatedly, in Sparta. Licurgo tries to abduct a young and beautiful orphan, Loreto. When the village priest stages a feeble attempt at a rescue, Loreto in all innocence watches as her two would-be lovers fight their way to their death; they fall over the edge of a precipice into the ‘foso del Purgatorio’ (Amorós y Vázquez de Figueroa, 1999: II, 212). She then goes to the cemetery to say goodbye to her recently deceased mother and finds the gravedigger with his trousers down around his ankles standing over the naked corpse. The sight drives her permanently mad. From then on, Lanza and other villagers take care of Loreto, but are unable to prevent her from lifting her skirts whenever a stranger approaches. The plot of the novella, then, is the story of how the Law and the Church conspire with circumstances to make an innocent girl go out of her mind. The lines ending the plot and

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<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank Henriette Partzsch at the University of St Andrews and Ruth Littlewood at the University of Sheffield for their help with this untranslated German work.

preceding the final section of the novella reiterate the point made at the beginning, that Villaruin is not in Sparta, and connect this to Loreto's sad story:

Hoy sigue Loreto loca y recorriendo diariamente el camino que va de Villaruin [al] cementerio, y sigue en el pueblo porque nos hemos jurado unos cuantos de llenar de curas y jueces el foso del Purgatorio si Loreto se ve molestada por un cura o un juez. [...] Duerme Loreto en casa de Bienvenido y come en la mía.

Ayer estaba peinándola mi esposa, cuando de súbito me preguntó la loca niña.

– ¿Por qué hay malos?

– Pues para que valgamos algo los buenos.

– Y, ¿por qué hay malos en Villaruin?

– Porque Villaruin está donde está.

– Y, ¿dónde está Villaruin?

– No sé, hija; pero te aseguro que Villaruin no está en Esparta. (Amorós y

Vázquez de Figueroa, 1999: II, 215)

Amorós refers us here to the story of Sparta told by Plutarch (1996) in his description of the life of Lycurgus (Lawless, 2013: 235-36). Lycurgus, Plutarch tells us, transformed the country, completely overhauling its systems of government and legislation and intervening in every aspect of Spartan life, from child-rearing to funeral rites. The state eventually returned to its former ways when Lycurgus died. The repeated references to Sparta and Lycurgus in *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* in relation to the judicial system and government in general provide a critique of the abuse of state authority in Villaruin and Atargea, and, implicitly, of Spain during the Restoration. While it would be a mistake to equate Atargea directly with Spain, as if it was a mere substitution of names, clearly the criticisms levelled at the

administrative, judicial and political systems of the twentieth-century fictional country are also aimed at nineteenth-century Spanish society. More broadly, though, Sparta and Lycurgus are used to undermine unquestioning belief in human ability to enforce justice, create a just society through laws, or shape the systems and structures upon which a future society might be based. Atargea does not resemble Sparta under Lycurgus's rule, and even if it did, this felicitous arrangement would not outlast its designer.

The epigraph of *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* is 'Convencidos de que Dios se hizo hombre, pretenden los hombres hacerse dioses. Mal oficio' (Amorós y Vázquez de Figueroa, 1999: II, 168). Amorós added a footnote here, explaining 'Coloco aquí la moraleja para hacer más fácil la lectura de este libro a aquellas personas que no tienen costumbre de entender lo que leen' (1999: II, 168). In one reading of this, attempting to organise the future is impossible, and those who attempt it will suffer the consequences of their arrogance, destroying the lives of other in the process. Licurgo's idle wonderings at the start of the novella about what he will achieve when he takes up his new post in Villaruin function as an early warning. He begins full of good intentions, and thinks himself unworthy of the task. Conversing with a general on the train to Villaruin, he grows in confidence, then in pride, and by the time he has arrived he has decided to leave behind his village sweetheart and search for a more elegant and noble wife he will be able to bring to court. After a few years in Villaruin, these pipedreams have vanished and he has condemned himself to a life of small-town corruption (1999: II, 173-79). Amorós thus questions whether or not it is possible for individuals to orchestrate change in a country or state; furthermore, he asks whether or not it is a good idea or a 'mal oficio' to think in these terms and on this scale. Neira's images of Madrid, *sub specie aeternitatis*, appear again here: 'Siempre que me ocupo de estos asuntos, me asombro de que la humanidad crea cándidamente que ha resuelto algo emancipándose de la sotana y quedándose cogida entre los pliegues de la toga' (Amorós y Vázquez de Figueroa,

1999: II, 206). Despite these apparent similarities and recurring tropes, however, there is an element of *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* that was not present in ‘Madrid en el siglo xxi’. For Amorós, as for Neira, people could be relied upon to abuse power; for Amorós, this makes it necessary to think about the untold monstrosities of which human beings are capable, and ensure that their opportunities for carrying out such acts are curtailed in advance. The paradox contained in the final section can be understood in these terms.

The last chapter of *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* is a letter from the narrator, Silverio Lanza, to his doctor on the subject of persecution complexes. Dispensing rapidly with questions of purely medical interest, Lanza describes two hypothetical situations. In the first, worker Q assassinates king P, believing the king wants to have him dismissed. Worker Q is put on trial but escapes the gallows when his doctor testifies that he is suffering from a persecution complex. In scenario two, seconds before the assassination, the same king P gives orders to chop off worker Q’s head, thus avoiding his own assassination, which has not happened yet. Amorós combines these two mutually exclusive scenarios and presents his readers with the moral paradox of *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte*:

El rey alega que se la había metido debajo de la corona que aquel obrero proyectaba asesinarle.

Convendremos también en que el rey padecía del delirio de las persecuciones.

Pero V. y yo [Lanza and his doctor], que, en este caso, estamos en el secreto, sabemos muy bien que si Su Majestad no hubiera andado listo le hubiera ido muy mal. De ningún modo se debe llamar loco a quien, con tan extraordinario acierto se libra de la muerte.

Si aquí el rey aparece como un loco que se cree perseguido es porque existe un obrero que persigue locamente. (Amorós y Vázquez de Figueroa, 1999: II, 218).

The king cannot be diagnosed as suffering from a persecution complex if somebody is actually trying to kill him. However, if he acts to prevent this, his actions will eliminate the evidence of his persecution and render the attempted assassination hypothetical and consequently fictitious. The problem can be restated more simply: before you can do something to avoid a particular event in the future, you have to envisage the possibility that that event will happen. If you then successfully take action to ensure that that particular scenario cannot happen, that future event will never have been, and your actions become meaningless: 'A man can change his trousers, his club, or his job. Perhaps he may even change the course of world history or the state of scientific thought. But one thing that he cannot change is the future, since whatever he brings about is the future, and nothing else is, or ever was' (Smart, 1968: 21).

Bearing in mind that *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* is explicitly set in the future, then this final section functions as an instruction to the reader to reconsider what he or she has just finished reading in the light of possible, but averted, futures, futures that never were, or that never will have been. On the one hand, prolepsis is employed as a warning: society must change or it will become as corrupt as *Atarjea*. Here again, *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte* echoes the concerns and structures of 'Madrid en el siglo xxi'. On the other hand, however, the letter from Lanza to his doctor disturbs this reading, by taking preventative action to its logical conclusion; it hints that acts of violence can be justified in the name of a future that never will have been. The narrator's response to the paradox he has just described is as follows:

Pero me río de que todas esas causas sean originarias del delito de las persecuciones, porque creo en mi conciencia que si se fuesen a analizar todos los casos de tal locura,

veríase que son enfermedades producidas por el tratamiento, por el bárbaro tratamiento de la persecución con que los humanos pretenden curarse sus afecciones morbosas.

Es necesario que al aparecer un atacado del delirio de las persecuciones se procese a toda la humanidad para saber quién fue el perseguidor. Es muy agradable salvar la vida de un hombre declarándole irresponsable, pero es más justo hacer sentir la pena al responsable efectivo. (Amorós y Vázquez de Figueroa, 1999: II, 219)

In some cases, the cure can be worse than the ailment; attempting to redesign the future runs this risk of causing an even greater injustice than the one that might have been averted. The idea that the future can be planned, constructed, shaped by human intervention does not evoke here dreams of egalitarian societies. Instead, it represents a spectrum of threats to individual sanity and social cohesion.

Amorós's reputation in Spanish literary history rests mainly on claims by several of his critics that he anticipated the developments of the generation of 1898. For Santiáñez-Tió, this is precisely why he never attained critical success or popularity in his own time: 'Son las pautas intrínsecas a este discurso, su constitución como "obra abierta" [...] lo que multiplica la plurisignificación, el vértigo, y muy posiblemente, el fracaso del público en los últimos veinte años del siglo XIX' (1993: 31). It would be reductionist, however, to find Amorós's work interesting purely because he was ahead of his time. In the first place, he can be read in terms of a wider engagement with the future in Spanish literature; points of comparison could be found in Antonio Flores's playful and encyclopaedic *Ayer, hoy y mañana* (1863-64), or Leopoldo Alas's version of *Armageddon*, 'Cuento futuro' ([1886] 2003). In the second place, identifying the features of Amorós's work that subsequently became de rigueur does nothing to draw out what it has to say about ways of understanding the future. Ni en la vida, ni en la

muerte raises the spectre of the abuse of power, double-guesses the future, and explores the paradox of a strategy of using an imagined future to prevent that very future happening.

In conclusion, thinking about the future was not confined to nor determined by the scientific and technological; conflating futuristic with scientific means neglecting many texts that interrogate the changing structures of the meaning of the future. Reading these texts together with recent attempts to historicize the future reveals some curious problems; rather than conforming to accounts of changes in the meaning of the future, they illustrate some of the difficulties of imposing broad narratives on the history of the idea of the future. They do not follow the established pattern of a clear move from nineteenth-century optimism to twentieth-century pessimism and increasingly apocalyptic scenarios; instead they articulate highly ambivalent and complex attitudes that resist schematic periodization. Despite the apparent mismatch, however, Koselleck, Lowenthal, Ricoeur, and others have supplied a set of concepts that help to focus readings of these texts, highlighting both the similarities and differences in approach among writers dealing in the future. All three texts are ambivalent but they are also, to some degree, paradoxical. So, while Fernández de los Ríos seems to provide a perfect example of nineteenth-century optimism, closer scrutiny reveals fault lines and fractures where one would expect solidity. A sceptical view of human nature is taken in both ‘Madrid en el siglo xxi’ and *Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte*, both of which also employ forms of prolepsis in order to avert the very futures they envision. In the former, demands are placed on the reader to work through the possible relationships between past, present and future; in the latter, the narrator hints that attempts to drive change, by narrator or reader alike, could lead to consequences only a deity could predict.

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**Este artículo examina los problemas y paradojas en la representación del futuro en tres textos españoles del siglo XIX: El futuro Madrid de Fernández de los Ríos (1868), ‘Madrid en el siglo xxi’ de Neira de Mosquera (1847) y Ni en la vida, ni en la muerte de Juan Bautista Amorós (Silverio Lanza). Mientras estos textos demuestran la participación de España en la tendencia general de usar el futuro como escenario para las obras literarias, no corroboran la teoría de que el siglo XIX era una época de optimismo y fe en la doctrina del progreso. Se demuestra la relevancia no siempre predecible de algunos conceptos derivados de los debates en torno al futuro en la historia de las ideas, por ejemplo la historia considerada como historia magistra vitae.**

**PALBRAS CLAVE:** Tiempo, ficción futurística, progreso, Fernández de los Ríos, Silverio Lanza, Neira de Mosquera

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