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"Galdós as Disablitity Observer: The Mendicant and Militant Leg- and Foot-Afflicted"

Vernon A. Chamberlin

Like his European contemporaries and his Spanish predecessors during the Romantic movement in Spain, Galdós described and utilized many lame and crippled characters in his works.[1] Some aspects of this creativity have been studied. First, we have the case of the eponymous protagonist in *Tristana,* which has attracted critical attention since the time of the novel's publication in 1891.[2] Also, with the publication in 1975 of Concha-Ruth Morell's letters to Don Benito—which makes clear that she is the prototype for the protagonist—critical interest has taken a new turn; and, an attempt has been made to answer the question of why Galdós should choose to amputate the leg of the character, who is clearly a stand-in for his beautiful young mistress.[3] Most recently, attention has been called to the relationship between certain lame characters and the devil—one of whose hallmarks is lameness—in *Fortunata y Jacinta*, *Miau*, and *Ángel Guerra*.[4]

However, there remains yet to be studied other lame and crippled characters who appear throughout Galdós's fiction, from the first of his novels to the very last of his *Episodios nacionales*. The aim of the present essay is to show the breadth and accuracy of Galdós's observation, as well as the role of these remaining foot- and leg-afflicted in the works, ranging from minor *costumbrista* types to the protagonist of an entire series of the *Episodios nacionales.* To facilitate this presentation, we are categorizing these characters broadly as mendicant and militant *cojos*, with the latter rubric including diplomatic service to end or prevent a war.

Mendicants

In his very first novel, *La Fontana de Oro*, Galdós records that being a *cojo* could be an asset when one is begging. As Clara Chacona is on her well-known nocturnal "via crucis," late in the novel, she stops to ask directions from a female mendicant, "una mujer andrajosa que traía un niño de la mano, y otro en brazos" (156). The woman is using the children to touch the heart of potential almgivers and pleads: "Una limosna, señora, por amor de Dios, que tengo mi marido en cama, y estos dos niñitos no han probado nada en todo el santo día . . . Siquiera un *chavito.*" Then, as two men approach, the mendicant commands the boy, "Muchacho, cojea. El muchacho cojeó y se acercaron a los caballeros, repitiendo

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su muletilla lastimosa para sacar limosna." The accuracy of Galdós's scene is attested to in an article appearing in the magazine *El Museo Universal*, which also featured the conversion of part of the royal patrimony at El Pardo into "un asilo de pobres." The beneficial impact of this asylum was soon apparent, and the magazine could affirm that "[ahora] puede decirse que ha cambiado el aspecto de las calles de Madrid donde á una con verdaderos pobres, tullidos, cojos, ciegos y mancos demandando el pan lastimeramente, se veían muchos holgazanes y mocetonas que alquilaban hijos y contaban lástimas para conmover los pechos de los transeúntes" ("Asilo" 231).[5]

Mendicant *cojos* were accustomed to gathering at public celebrations, most notably at the *Romería de San Isidro* near Madrid. In *Nazarín*, the eponymous protagonist spends his first night away from Madrid in the company of "tres mendigos, una pareja o matrimonio y otro más joven y con una pierna de palo." These beggars, who complain that they are "más pobres que el que inventó la pobreza" (1711), have been beseeching alms in the *poblacho*s near Madrid, and intend to descend on the capital to beg at the *Romería de San Isidro.* Father Nazarín is so touched by their poverty that he gives them his very last coin (which he himself had begged earlier in the day). Thus, the *cojo* (and his two mendicant companions) not only serve to reflect quotidian realism, but are also a means of revealing the essential goodness and generosity of Galdós's protagonist.

Further mention of the *cojos* at the *Romería de San Isidro* occurs in *La desheredada* when they receive alms from Isidora Rufete: "A todos los cojos, estropeados, seres contrahechos y lastimosos, les arrojaba una moneda" (1093). Isidora's attendance and extravagant spending at the annual *Romería de San Isidro* without the permission of her lover/protector results in her expulsion from the house in which Sánchez Botín had installed her as his mistress.

Because the *Romería de San Isidro* occurred only once each year, the *cojo* needed a daily venue for begging. Entrances to churches were a favorite place because of Christian emphasis on charitable giving to the less fortunate. Probably the best-known example of beggars in the vicinity of a church entrance occurs in the opening scenes of *Misericordia*, as our author describes the mendicants inside the *pasadizo* leading to the door of the San Sebastián church in Madrid. Among them is a cripple:

> Algunos pasos más allá, a corta distancia de la iglesia, se apoyaba en la pared, cargando el cuerpo sobre las muletas, el cojo y manco Eliseo Martínez, que gozaba el privilegio de vender en aquel sitio *La Semana Católica.* Era después de Casiana, la persona de más autoridad y mangoneo en la cuadrilla y como su lugarteniente o mayor general. (75–76)

Because he has the task of keeping order among the beggars outside the church, and yet he is a cripple with no real authority, Eliseo Martínez is sometimes the object of verbal abuse from other members of the group when he attempts to correct them. For example, his command to be quiet and more dignified provokes a sarcastic tirade, tinged with envy from la Burlada. This woman accuses him of having considerable wealth accumulated from his sales of *La Semana Católica* and of having two sons who help him financially. One of these progeny is a *torero* and the other a tavern employee, who receives many *propinas*

from prostitutes. During her tirade, la Burlada is interrupted by almsgivers leaving the church. On this particular occasion, most of the coins distributed "iban a parar en las manos diligentes de Eliseo" (83). Another time, as a wedding party leaves the church, there is such dissatisfaction with the unequal distribution of the alms that Eliseo and his helper, la Casiana, are unable to maintain order within their group—and the police have to reestablish control for them.

Eliseo Martínez's role in *Misericordia* is a minor one, as he serves to present the environment in which Benina is currently striving. He has no importance in the plot development, but on one occasion he does stop other mendicants from gossiping about Benina: "Ea, que estamos en la casa de Dios, *señoras*—dijo Eliseo dando golpes en el suelo con su pata de palo. Guarden respeto y decencia unas para otras, como manda la santísima *dotrina*" (87).

Also in *Misericordia*, Galdós later presents another *cojo*, and a 1904 issue of the magazine *Alma Española* attests to the accuracy of Galdós's descriptive realism concerning his unnamed "lisiado sin piernas" (9).[6] The *revista* presents a pictorial sketch of a similar (perhaps the very same) individual that Galdós had described as "un lisiado sin piernas, que andaba con los brazos" (234). This severely handicapped person, whose body is only "de medio cuerpo arriba," conducts Benina to a place where Almudena is doing religious penance: "Allá se fué Benina despacito, porque el sujeto que le guiaba era de lenta andura, como quien anda con las nalgas encuadernadas en suela, apoyándose en las manos en dos zoquetes de palo" (234).

Later this same individual becomes the spokesman for the poor people who are besieging Benina for alms, as they use "de intérprete al hombre despernado, que se expresaba con soltura, como si con esta facultad le compensara la Naturaleza por la horrible mutilación de su cuerpo" (242). Thus, Galdós's c*ojo*, who has a referent in external reality, teaches that no matter how great a handicap, one can always be of help to others. Additionally, this character not only illustrates the sympathy that Galdós can feel toward such an individual, but also his admiration for developing a compensatory skill.

In addition to *Misericordia*, *cojo* mendicants are also present in *Gloria* and *Casandra.* In the latter, an unnamed "mendiga *coja*" speaks two lines, as she replies to an inquiry and confirms that there is indeed a new female beggar at a nearby church. This information helps the male protagonist Rogelio and his friends find a ragged beggar, whom they believe to be a reincarnation of the novel's villain, Doña Juana de Samaniega. The latter had been killed by the novel's protagonist Rogelio; therefore, he has but to shout "Casandra" at the ghostly figure in order to be rid of Doña Juana forever (218–19).

In both volumes of *Gloria*, the preference for a religious ambience is again evidenced. Gloria's uncle, Don Ángel de Lantigua, a bishop of the Church, is accorded attention by some *cojos* in the first volume: "Acompañábanle a un lado y otro su secretario y el paje, y seguíanle varios cojos, tullidos y toda la pobretería del camino, anhelantes de que les echase bendiciones, pues algunos las estimaban en más que las limosnas" (574). The presence of these physically handicapped is one of many techniques the author uses to communicate the goodness, as well as the resulting high esteem which Don Ángel merits

and receives. In the second part of *Gloria, cojos* merely serve in the recording of quotidian realism. At the conclusion of a church service, which Gloria attends, "[N]o quedaban sino algunos ancianos inválidos, dos cojos, y las nubes de incienso, suspendidas con imperceptible movimiento en el aire" (602).

Preference for begging in the vicinity of a church is also seen in the opening chapters of the *Episodio nacional* entitled *Zaragoza.* When the narrator/protagonist Gabriel Araceli and his friend Don Roque arrive in Zaragosa, they are forced to spend the night in the ruins of a monastery destroyed by the French during their previous siege of the city. Among the mendicants finding shelter, there is an affable c*ojo*, who begs at a nearby church during the day. He is "un infeliz lisiado, un hombre que acababa en las rodillas y se ponía en movimiento con ayuda de muletas o bien andando a cuatro remos, viejo, de rostro jovial y muy tostado por el sol" (670). The *cojo* introduces himself: "Yo soy Pepe Pellajas, y me llaman por mal nombre *Sursam Corda,* pues como fuí hace veintinueve años sacristán de Jesús . . . y cantaba . . . ; pero esto no viene al caso, y prosigo diciendo que yo soy *Sursam Corda* y pue que hayan ustés oído hablar de mí en Madrid" (671).[7] *Sursam Corda* is even able to take Gabriel Araceli to places in the city, "[andando] con toda la agilidad de sus muletas" (673), as he serves as an eyewitness narrator concerning important people and events during the first siege of Zaragosa—before the *Episodio* will be focusing on the second siege of the city.

Galdós's *cojos* differ from his blind characters in that they are never seen singing for alms, nor selling printed copies of their songs (as do those blind balladeers, so thoroughly described in Caro Baroja's *Ensayo sobre la literatura del cordel*). The only hint at such an activity may be that found in *El caballero encantado,* where the protagonist Tarsis/Gil has a brief encounter with "una pareja de mendigos: él caduco y patizambo con un voluminoso morral al hombro; ella, jovenzuela, canija y andrajosa, con un morral chico y una bandurria vieja" (317). A physical handicap (usually blindness), a musical instrument, and a *morral* for carrying the songs to be sold by an accompanying person were a frequent combination as seen in Spanish paintings, magazine sketches, and short stories.[8] Thus, Galdós's description of the beggars in *El caballero encantado* suggests that the *cojo* could be not only a guide, but also a helper to a blind musician by carrying and selling printed songs, including those presently being sung.

Two nineteenth-century attitudes concerning the mendicant *cojo* may be seen in *Fortunata y Jacinta*. The first concerns Manuel Moreno-Isla, who spends most of his time in Protestant England, where he has become more British than Spanish in many respects. One night, Moreno remembers an encounter earlier in the day with an aggressive beggar who was exploiting a leg affliction:

> Tales espectáculos indignaban a Moreno, que al verse acosado por estos industriales de la miseria humana, trinaba de ira. Pues cuando se volvía para no verle, el maldito haciendo un quiebro con su ágil muleta, se le ponía otra vez delante, mostrándole la pierna. Al aburrido caballero se le quitaban las ganas de dar limosna, y por fin le dió para librarse de persecución tan terrorífica. Alejóse del pordiosero, renegando. "¡Ni esto es

> país, ni esto es capital, ni aquí hay civilización! . . . ¡Qué ganas tengo de pasar el Pirineo!" (344)

When it seems later that the *cojo* actually has entered his bedroom, Moreno's initial response is to throw a book at the imagined mendicant, but soon the anglophile thinks more compassionately: "El infeliz se ha de buscar la vida de alguna manera. No tiene él la culpa de que no haya en esta maldita tierra establecimientos de beneficio [como en Inglaterra]" (344–45). This incident with the *cojo* becomes one of the motivating factors in Moreno's upcoming decision to leave Spain and return to England. Contrasting with Moreno's view of the mendicant *cojo* is that of the more Spanish, and more traditionally Catholic, Guillermina Pacheco: "Mientras más padezcamos aquí, más gozaremos allá. [. . .] El mendigo de la pierna se irá al Cielo derechito, con su muleta y muchos de los ricos que andan por ahí en carretela, irán tan muellemente en ella a pasearse por los infiernos. [. . . Dios] da siempre lo que nos conviene" (351).

A mendicant *cojo* in *Ángel Guerra* is included among the needy admitted at the opening of Ángel's charitable institution: "[A este] paticojo, no le daban ración tan grande como él creía merecer. Cuando no devoraba el tío aquél, echaba sapos y culebras por su boca desdentada. Había sido carretero, llamado por mal nombre *Maldiciones*." Moreover, he points up the danger of having the two sexes living together, because he terrifies another resident, Lucía, "amenazándola con una mano de palos si no se dejaba seducir" (1475). His libidinous action parallels in an overt manner the same, but still disguised, feelings that Ángel Guerra is attempting to sublimate in relation to Leré.

When upbraided by Ángel Guerra for his conduct toward Lucía, *Maldiciones* becomes indignant: "'Para lo que usted me da, ¡cójilis! . . . Mátanle a uno de hambre, y luego le piden virtud . . . ¡recójilis!' Recogió sus alforjas vacías, y se fué. No podía vivir sino en la mendicidad vagabunda, y sentía la nostalgia de las puertas de las iglesias, en las cuales llevaba veinte años de honrada profesión de cojo" (1476). However, *Maldiciones* returns in a few days in the company of another mendicant and begs for readmission, which is immediately granted. However, his attitude has not improved, for he and his companion "hicieron como que trabajaban; pero no hacían más que charlar y fumar cigarrillos, esperando la hora de comida y cena" (1491).

This *cojo* serves to stimulate the *ángel* facet of Ángel Guerra's dualistic personality and shows the extent of the protagonist's increasing compassion for others. Not only does Ángel allow the *cojo Maldiciones* to return to his charitable institution, but he also tolerates his negative attitude—and, most importantly, Ángel even remembers him by name in his will, making specific provisions that will insure the cripple's lifelong care.[9]

In *Torquemada en la cruz*, the blind aristocrat Rafael del Águila prefers to run away from home rather than accept Torquemada into the family. Rafael naively thinks that Christian charity will sustain his new occupation of blind mendicant, even without the customary musical instrument or an entertaining dog. However, he survives only one night on the streets. Harsh reality includes not only having to sleep on a hard bench, but also the fact that the only person he encounters is another beggar. When Rafael asks the latter if he also is blind, the mendicant replies with "voz bronca de mendigo, [. . .] 'No,

gracias a Dios. No soy más que cojo; pero de los dos cabos, y manco de la derecha... La perdí dando un barreno'" (1004). Like Rafael, this mendicant's father suffered business failure and exploitation by usurers. The *cojo* also has conflicts with the women in his family, not with his sisters as in Rafael's case, but rather with his daughters. The latter have expelled him from their house, and in reply to Rafael's asking if they are "señoras," he replies, "Señoras de pingajo y damas del tutilimundi, [. . .] púas coronadas." Then, confirming an earlier statement that he does not think much of talkative *ciegos*, "el cojo se fué, arrastrando la pata, echando demonios por su boca, entre gruñidos bestiales, babeándose como un perro con moquillo" (1004).

Rafael's experience with the *cojo* is not only a major factor in causing him to return to the family circle, but it also adds depth to his characterization, revealing for the first time that Rafael can have non-self-centered, compassionate feelings for others. He reflects, "Pobre señor [. . .] Sus hijas, por lo que dijo, son . . . ¡Qué abismos nos revela el fondo de la miseria, cuando bajamos a él!" (1004). Galdós's fellow novelist, the feared literary critic Leopoldo Alas, was moved by this scene, finding in it a touch of the Shakespearian and the Biblical: "La escena en que el ciego fugitivo duerme al sereno delante de lo que fué su palacio de la Castellana, el encuentro del ciego y del cojo, son cosas dignas del gran soñador de tristezas sombrías que ideó al Rey Lear abandonado de sus hijas, sin luz, sin lecho, como Job, desamparado de todo consuelo" (261).

Sometimes a relative might provide financial assistance and forestall mendicity. Such is the case with Roque (no surname), who in *Ángel Guerra* is the husband of Justicia, the niece of Francisco Mancebo. The narrator explains the cause of Roque's *cojera*:

> Carpintero de banco, trabajaba en la Catedral, y el Lunes Santo del 83, en el acto de armar el Monumento, hallándose mi hombre en el andamio que hasta la bóveda se eleva [. . .], tuvo la desgracia de marearse y se cayó. [. . . Le] recogieron con una pierna rota y una mano estropeadísima. [Aunque provisto con una pierna de palo] había perdido dos tercios de su habilidad y destreza. (1331)

After a slow recovery, Roque returns to work in the cathedral, where Mancebo secretly subsidizes his wages in order that the *cojo* might believe that he is still capable of earning a living for his family. Mancebo had hoped that after his fall, Roque would cease to procreate children, but each year Mancebo has a new nephew to support. Thus, Roque's primary function in the novel is to give additional details concerning the more prominent personage of Mancebo, highlighting his goodness and elucidating why this aging priest, whose ecclesiastical status should exempt him from family worries, has the principal preoccupation of supporting seven nephews.

At other times, having a good employment and multiple skills prior to a crippling accident can be the basis for a satisfactory life. Such is the case in *La desheredada*, with the character Matías Alonso, who had the misfortune of losing one of his legs on a hunting excursion. No mention is made of a subsequent artificial limb, or if crutches were necessary. Instead, the narrator concentrates on the successful adjustment made to a sedentary mode of life. Formerly, this *cojo* had been a *montero* and accompanied the

Marqués de Aransis on his hunting expeditions; now, he has become the *concerje* of the Aransis mansion for the marchioness, who is away most of the time.

> Era un hombre casi viejo, de buena pasta, honrado y comedido. Vivía allí con su mujer enferma, de la cual no tenía hijos, y la mitad del día se la pasaba trabajando en carpintería, por pura afición, bien haciendo marcos de láminas, para lo que tenía especiales aptitudes, bien arreglando muebles antiguos para vender a los aficionados. [. . .] Manejaba los capitalitos de algunos manchegos que querían colocar su dinero en fondos públicos. Y ved aquí un banquero que pasaba horas largas limpiando metales, quitando el polvo, haciendo recorrer tejados y chimeneas, y cobrando, por ayudar al administrador, los recibos de inquilinato de muchas casas que el marquesado posee en Madrid. (1027)

Although Matías Alonso has no important role to play in *La desheredada*, Galdós tends to make him an integral part of the novel by relating him to some of its important characters. He is "algo pariente de los Miquis" (1027), and his wife is a sister of Juan Bou, the lithographer who becomes one of Isidora's suitors. This *cojo*'s only participation in the storyline is to grant Isidora permission to take a trip, accompanied by Bou, through the Aransis mansion.

Even though Galdós omitted any reference to prosthetic devices for Matías Alonso, he did at least recognize in the second volume of *La desheredada* that such an industry existed. Isidora Rufete lives for a time with the Costaño family, who own an orthopedic shop. Galdós's narrator comments:

> Sostenía el crédito del establecimiento y ganaba mucho dinero, porque desgraciadamente para la Humanidad, parece que ésta es una vieja máquina que se desvencija y deshace, hallándose cada día más necesitada de remiendos y puntales, o llámense muletas, cabestrillos, fajas, cinchas, suspensorios, etc. Nada, nada, nos desbaratamos. Unos dicen por gozar demasiado, y alguien echa la culpa a las armas de precisión; pero cualquiera que sea la causa, ello es que la Ortopedia tiene un porvenir tan brillante como el de la Artillería. Son dos ciencias complementarias como la Filosofía y el Alienismo. (1112)

However, ten years later in *Tristana,* Galdós will have Dr. Miquis advocate only imported prosthetics: "Después de todo, las piernas se sustituyen por aparatos mecánicos que fabrican los ingleses y alemanes, y con ellos se anda mejor que con estos maldecidos remos que nos ha encajado la Naturaleza" (1995).

Although no details of leg amputations for such characters as Roque and Matías Alonso are given, we know that such operations were not uncommon, and that they were not only difficult for the patient, but also for friends of the amputee. Thus, in *Fortunata y Jacinta,* Juanito Santa Cruz is able to use as an excuse for being very pale the lie that he has just been to visit his friend José Moreno Vallejo. The latter had in fact suffered a leg amputation that very day, after a fall from a horse, but this was not the reason for

Juanito's paleness. Rather, it was caused by the death of his and Fortunata's son and the fact that Juanito had been walking behind the hearse when chanced upon and detained by his mother (416).

Details of a nineteenth-century amputation are to be found in (the already much-studied) *Tristana*. The chief surgeon there is Augusto Miquis, whose prototypical referent was Galdós's personal friend, Dr. Tolosa Latour, who championed the use of chloroform in learned articles, and Galdós has Dr. Miquis successfully insist that this fictional operation be done with chloroform (257–68).[10]

Militants

As Galdós mentioned in his focus on the orthopedic shop in *La desheredada*, military service was indeed hard on many participants. A case in point is that of José Milmarcos, a pensioned veteran of the *Guerra de África* in *Prim*. This ex-sergeant is proud to have sacrificed a leg for the glory of Spain—and General Prim. Much esteemed in his *pueblo*, enthusiastic Milmarcos's main function is to provide details of Prim's exploits during the war of 1859–60, which enabled the general to become a leading figure in the national arena (532–35).

Another dedicated Galdosian creation is the sailor "Medio-hombre" in *Trafalgar*. After forty years of service, he has "una pierna de palo, el brazo izquierdo cortado a cercén más abajo del codo, un ojo menos, la cara garabateada por una multitud de chirlos en todas direcciones" (211). During the famous naval engagement, "Medio-hombre" ("Marcial, no recuerdo el apellido") is a major participant, and he is thankful to have only a wooden leg when a shot tears off the end of it (245). He subsequently, however, does not survive the sinking of his ship. Clearly, "Medio-hombre" is a distinctive character who engrosses the reader in the ferocious naval battle presented in *Trafalgar*.

In *Los cien mil hijos de San Luis*, one of Spain's successful guerrilla warfare commanders is "el valiente Cojo de Lumbier." His importance to the storyline is that the protagonist Salvador Monsalud is able to join the company of "el Cojo," and thus participate with the *guerrillero* in a significant victory (1633). Additionally, in *España trágica*, one encounters another amputee, Romualdo Cantera, better known by his nickname, which combines the Madrid district of his origin and his physical handicap: "El Cojo de las Peñuelas." Cantera is a "bravo capitán [. . .] que lleva una pata de palo, marca el paso como nadie, y es oficial más gallardo y más apuesto frente a su tropa" (885). He is a member of the "Milicia Nacional, salvaguardia de la libertad y escudo contra los buscones de rey y faranduleros de la reacción" (884–85). His handicap and his bravery are called to the attention of the *Episodio*'s protagonist, Vicente Halconero, who is using his own "cojera [. . .] leve y bien disimulada" as justification for not joining in the armed struggle (885). Subsequently, in *La primera república*, this same "Cojo de las Peñuelas" reappears. Now Cantera is associated with the *Milicias Republicanas*, those who have just established, and are now celebrating, Spain's first Republic (1100). Clearly, Galdós is recording that Romualdo Cantera's *cojera* has not stopped him from being a successful soldier and making an important contribution to Spanish national history.

Another *cojo*, Pablo Rodríguez, gained celebrity status as "El Cojo de Málaga," when he applauded and danced for joy in the *Cortes* to celebrate the promulgation of the *Constitución de Cádiz*. For this offence against the King and the Church, he was later arrested and sentenced to death. At the very last moment, "con un pie en el cadalso," Rodríguez was saved by the intercession of the British Ambassador, as Fernando VII decides that he does not want to "malquitarse con la Gran Britania por un cojo más o menos." Thus, as the narrator of *Memorias de un cortesano* says, "el *Cojo de Málaga* no llegó a bailar en la cuerda" (1283). Further mention of this historical personage occurs in *La Fontana de Oro*, where a liberal angrily charges that "Coletilla," a thinly disguised General Francisco Ramón Eguía, "delató al *Cojo de Málaga*" (24). Also, in *El terror de 1824*, the king complains that if circumstances do not improve for him, "pronto tendremos al *Cojo de Málaga* en el Trono" (1776). Clearly, Galdós has recorded for reader delectation a memorable figure of Spanish history, one who was active in politics in spite of his handicap.

Further evidence that Galdós is aware that a wooden leg does not foreclose the possibility of state service is seen in the case of the North American ambassador to Spain, for the latter has such a prosthesis. Thus, in the penultimate *Episodio, De Cartago a Sagunto*, the protagonist Tito Liviano has an unpleasant dream to the effect that, already in 1874, war with the United States over Cuba is inevitable. Concerning this dream, he relates: "En este cuarto estaban conferenciando ahora Castelar y míster Sickles. Todavía estoy oyendo el traqueteo de la pata de palo que gasta el ministro de los Estados Unidos." However, another character reassures Tito that war is not coming and that "Castelar y el cojo Sickles arregláronla con los bartolillos y bizcochos borrachos que usa la diplomacia" (1210). Earlier in *España trágica,* it was Prim who was negotiating with "míster Sickles, embajador de los Estados Unidos [. . .] el que arrastra una pierna de palo" (922). This repeated mention of the American embassador's *cojera* attests to Galdós's attention to realistic detail and accuracy, as he had earlier shown with the sound effects of a non-appearing *coja* in *El doctor Centeno* (1328).[11] The fifth series of the *Episodios nacionales* has the distinction of having a c*ojo* protagonist for the entire series of six novels. Earlier, in *Napoleón en Chamartín*, Galdós had the protagonist of the first series, Gabriel Araceli, declare himself an amputee—metaphorically speaking. This temporary status occurred at a low point in Gabriel's life experience; not knowing what to do, he felt "tullido, y con muletas" and as unfortunate as a street-begging *cojo*. The latter must take whatever is given to him and must also renounce any goals, because he has no legs to facilitate movement toward them (577). Now, however, in the last series of the *Episodios*, the protagonist's foot affliction is an actual fact and is introduced during the preceding series in *Aita Tettauen*, where Vicente Halconero is seen as a child:

> [Con] rostro como de un ángel, torcido y desaplomado el cuerpo, y así estaba cuando, de resultas de la caída de un caballo (de cartón), se le formó un bulto en la pierna, y éste se resolvió en tumor, que hubieron de sajarle los doctores del pueblo con éxito equívoco, pues luego se reprodujo con mala traza y acerbos sufrimientos de la criatura. Afligidos los padres, y temerosos de que su primogénito, si curaba, se les quedase cojo, acordaron trasladarse a Madrid para emprender allí nuevo tratamiento con asistencia de los mejores facultativas de la capital. (99)

Unfortunately, this change of residence did not bring about the desired cure. At age thirteen, in *La de los tristes destinos,* Vicente Halconero is seen:

> [S]u cojera no era de las que exigen muletas; sentaba en el suelo los dos pies; pero la flojedad de la pierna impedía el ritmo de la perfecta andadura humana. Se auxiliaba de un recio bastón, que era como pierna auxiliar, por más que el pobre chico disimulaba su defecto, no lograba que sus tres pies dieran un andar suelto y gallardo. (646).

In *España trágica,* the reader again sees Halconero, now at age twenty:

> Su rostro melancólico, de viril belleza delicada, casi lampiño, reproducía las facciones de Lucila y las del Apolo de Belvedere. Aunque la corrección clásica no alcanzaba al cuerpo mezquino y endeble, ésta no carecía de gentileza y arrogancia. Su cojera modificada por el purito de disimularla, había llegada a ser una imperfección casi distinguida y de buen tono como la cojera de Lord Byron. (872)

Like Lord Byron, Halconero is very resentful concerning his handicap. Most importantly, he feels that it has kept him from achieving truly great accomplishments. For example, as already noted in our discussion of "El cojo de las Peñuelas" in *España trágica*, Halconero declines a suggestion to join the *Milicia Nacional*, explaining that "se consideraba incapacitado para mandar una compañía en los batallones patrióticos, porque su cojera, aunque leve y bien disimulada, era incompatible con la desenvoltura y arrogancia militar" (885). He settles for becoming a deputy in the *Cortes*, and when engaged in negotiating the Convenio de Vergara, which ended the first Carlist War, harsh weather and rough terrain exacerbate his lameness, "obligándole a unos andares enteramente grotescos" (*Vergara* 1013), which earns him the nickname "*Pataarrastrando*" (1013–14).

Diane Urey finds one aspect of generalized negative characterization in Halconero's *cojera*:

> In *España trágica* he is a youth with a classically beautiful, "casi lampiño" face, but with a body that is "mezquino y endeble." His "cojera" is "casi distinguida"; he has one of those "medias voluntades" and "inteligencias en tres cuartos de madurez." A reader's response to this portrait and to all of Halconero's halfway achievements and near distinction could be disappointment, pity or even scorn. He is certainly not the protagonist one might hope for or expect [. . .]. Halconero's contentment with mediocrity thwarts the reader's expectations from previous series and the general literary expectations that a hero seek some goal, and either reach it or, in failing to do so, be devastated. (162–63)

Certainly, Halconero is the weakest, most mediocre of all the protagonists in the *Episodios*. Galdós achieves this distinction, in part, by creating him—and having him act—at a great ironic distance from his historical referent, Lord George Gordon Byron. The latter, who was also afflicted by lameness from a childhood misfortune, did not let his handicap

stop him from many achievements and the receiving of international accolades.[12] Thus, one may perceive in Galdós's character an incarnation of the depressed, disillusioned status of the Spanish nation and its lack of forceful, competent leadership. As Geoffrey Ribbans concurs: "Halconero [closely identified with *la Revolución Gloriosa* of 1868] clearly conveys much of Galdós's own ideological positions, its hopes and its disappointments; and the revolution is seen like Halconero, as crippled." Therefore, the handicapped narrator-reflector "evolves, like Spain, towards calculated moderation and reconciliation" (153).

Conclusions

For more than forty years, from his first social novel to the last series of his *Episodios nacionales*, Galdós utilized lame and crippled characters in a number of ways. Those examined in the present study are at polar opposites in the Spanish societal structure: nonproductive beggars contrasting with active military men and public servants. The foot- and leg-afflicted give testimony to Galdós's depiction of quotidian reality in nineteenth-century Spain, where mendicant *cojos* were so numerous that they stimulated government action and generated polar-opposite public opinions concerning their status. Because they were such a common sight, it is easy for the protagonist of the first series of *Episodios* on one occasion to compare his temporarily unfortunate situation to that of an immobile street beggar and imagine that he too is an amputee, a person who must accept whatever is given to him and not be able to ambulate toward any goal. Contrastingly, other foot- and leg-afflicted, some of whom are historical personages, not only overcome their handicaps to the point of earning a living, but also make contributions to national, and, most particularly, to Galdós-esteemed liberal causes.

Although the lame and crippled examined in this study are often minor characters, they usually aid in the delineation of other, more important characters, as well as serve to interconnect other characters, or move the plot forward. However, a lame character has the distinction of being elevated to protagonist of the final series of the *Episodios nacionales.* Here, Galdós uses the great ironic distance between this protagonist and Lord Byron, who had a similar affliction, in order to emphasize his own creation's mediocrity and lack of achievement, thus facilitating Vicente Halconero's symbolizing late nineteenth-century Spain.

Although writers in earlier centuries often ridiculed the foot- and leg-afflicted, Galdós's interest in the *cojos* examined in this study is benign and a reflection of his love of variegated humanity.[13] His didacticism includes the need to feel compassion for the handicapped, and also to learn from their coping mechanisms as some of his characters adjust well to their misfortune, develop compensatory skills, help others, and even make significant contributions to national life. Like other contemporary European writers, and Goya in one of his paintings, Galdós's inclusion of and creativity with the *cojo* testifies that he was truly a concerned witness of his time.[14]

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Notes

[1] Contemporary novelists and their *cojo* characters include Flaubert's Hippolite in *Madam Bovary,* Zola's Gervaise Macquart in *L'Assommoir* and La Teuse in *La Faute de l'abbe Mouret,* as well as Dickens's Tiny Tim Cratchet in *A Christmas Carol.* In Spain, during the Romantic movement, the *cojo* is a major character in Estébanez Calderón's novel *Moros y cristianos* and he is a minor character in Ángel Saavedra's drama *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino.*

[2] For a detailed summary, see Sánchez (110–27).

[3] See Chamberlin, "Closure" (17–19).

[4] Details in Chamberlin, "Lame Characters" (47–54).

[5] In *Cánovas,* Cresencia relates how five years of her childhood were made wretched because her mother had rented her to a blind man: "De los cinco a los diez años anduve por las calles, descalza, con un ciego que tocaba la bandurria. Largo tiempo pasé durmiendo en un banco, sin más abrigo que unos trapos indecentes, [. . . entre] mendigos asquerosos y borrachines" (1281).

[6] In this sketch, entitled "Peines para calvos," this cripple and another (with a wooden leg) have been invited to the Maundy Thursday foot-washing ceremony in the royal palace, which Galdós exposes as a "farsa" in *La de Bringas* (1585). Another sketch, whose accompanying dialogue begins, "¿A dónde vas con esa muleta?", satirizes the safety of the Spanish railway system (*Alma Española* 10).

[7] For the significance of the nickname *Sursam Corda*, see Chamberlin, "Cultural Nicknames" (22–23).

[8] The best painting which shows how the blind singer and his guide carried, and had ready for sale, the *romances* they sang, is that of Domínguez Béquer (1805–41), according to Caro Baroja (52). In Luis Coloma's short story "Ranoque," the title protagonist, an eight-year-old boy, is forced to carry a heavy *morral* replete with "coplas y romances impresos" (102).

[9] For more on *Maldiciones,* see Chamberlin, "Lame characters" (51–52).

[10] Tolosa Latour was interested in the question of chloroform as a "veneno de la inteligencia." He translated articles and engaged in polemics on the subject, defending the anesthetic's practical applications. See, especially, José Ribera y Sans, "¿Es el cloroformo un veneno de la inteligencia?" and Manuel Tolosa Latour, "¿Es el cloroformo un veneno a la inteligencia? Contestación al artículo del Señor Ribera."

[11] When only a wall separates Felipe's sleeping quarters from a convent, he can hear the early-rising nuns: "Una de ellas debía de ser coja, porque claramente sentía el acompasado toqueteo de dos muletas" (1328).

[12] Byron was certainly an incarnation of Romantic heroism. A prolific writer and lover, his enthusiasm for freedom motivated him to go to Greece to support that country's war of independence from Turkey. For details regarding his lameness and other aspects of his life, see Bigland (23–24).

[13] Had Galdós been writing a hundred years earlier, especially if he had lived in England, he would have observed that the lame, the crippled, and the amputee were very cruelly treated (Lund 110; Dickie passim). In fact, it was considered the norm to ridicule and have great fun at the expense of these unfortunates. This attitude and conduct permeated every level of society, from children on the streets to London theaters with ubiquitous interludes: "the 'crutch dance' in which cripples,

hunchbacks, and amputees were employed to hobble about in ludicrous fashion" (Dickie 14). The wealthy also commissioned both public and private entertainment in which the handicapped were shamelessly ridiculed. As Simon Dickie has demonstrated, such cruelty is also evidenced in the numerous and very popular "Jest Books," which contained pertinent jokes, illustrations, and short stories (11). The standard derogatory nickname for the cripple was Mr. Hopkins, and for the amputee, "Timber Toe" (13). Charles Kany's *Life and Manners in Madrid: 1750–1800* confirms ridicule and humor at the expense of the handicapped in the Spanish capital; but, with examples from Ramón de la Cruz's *sainetes*, he particularizes only the blind (62–66).

[14] Goya's *cojo* is also blind; hence, the title of the sketch is *El ciego trabajador* (Gassier 228).

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