

SOVEREIGN BIRTHS, EMPIRE AND WAR IN BENITO PÉREZ GALDÓS'S FIRST SERIES OF *EPISODIOS NACIONALES*

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An imperial power invades and occupies an authoritarian country in the name of more enlightened, liberal, democratic values. The occupation initially seems successful, and many of the political elites of the invaded nation realign themselves with the new regime. The vast majority of the natives, however, are far less hospitable than the occupier might have imagined, and while the empire's military forces easily seize and control key cities, throughout the country resistance to occupation quickly erupts into a popular insurgency characterized by guerrilla warfare. Longstanding assumptions governing the legitimate uses of violence are abruptly rewritten, and the empire is slowly bogged down in a war it will ultimately lose. At the same time, as insurgent violence escalates, native representative assemblies gather to imagine the political future of the nation in the form of a new constitution. These are the first decades of the 1800s, the occupied nation is Spain, and the enlightened empire is Napoleon's.

The almost uncanny resonance of this tale throughout much of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, marked as they have been by questions of invasion, occupation, liberation, non-state violence, insurgency, and nation-building, speaks eloquently to the potential value of revisiting representations of the Napoleonic era.¹ Indeed, my interest in beginning with this particular evocation of Napoleonic imperialism is primarily to focus on war and empire and their relationship to the symbolic birth of modern Spain as narrated in the ten novels comprising the first series of Benito Pérez Galdós's *Episodios nacionales*. Arguably Spain's most highly regarded novelist after Miguel de Cervantes, Galdós publishes the series between 1873 and 1875, and the novels focus on historical events from 1805 to 1814. The series is the most protracted nineteenth-century Spanish novelistic treatment of the Napoleonic occupation and Spanish War of Independence, surpassing even Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in extension, and it continues to garner critical attention today, as readers venture beyond Galdós's better-known *novelas contemporáneas* in order to understand more fully his complex, evolving conception of history and its relationship to the novel-genre.²

In keeping with the classic features of the historical novel, the *Episodios* artfully blend meticulously researched historical narrative with the fictional adventures of the series' protagonist-narrator, Gabriel Araceli, and it is precisely the characteristic interplay between historical verisimilitude and fictional invention that imbues these novels with a curiously contemporary resonance for our own, putatively postmodern age in which the distinctions between history and fiction seem to have become

more nebulous than they were once thought to be.³ On the historical front, the *Episodios* take up a sequence of events that by the 1870s had already been firmly established as major turning points of modern Spanish history. Readers of the first series move through the Battle of Trafalgar (*Trafalgar*), the machinations of the royal family (*La Corte de Carlos IV*), the Aranjuez uprising and the May 2nd Madrid revolt of 1808 (*El 19 de marzo y el 2 de mayo*), Napoleon's entry into the Spanish capital (*Napoleón en Chamartín*), the Battle of Bailén (*Bailén*), the sieges of Zaragoza and Gerona (*Zaragoza* and *Gerona*, respectively), the birth of Spanish liberalism in Cádiz (*Cádiz*), the world of guerrilla warfare (*Juan Martín el empecinado*), and the decisive victory over the French at the Battle of Salamanca (*La Batalla de los Arapiles*). The first series of *Episodios* is in this regard a veritable catalogue of the "moments that matter" (Dendle *Galdós y la novela* 41-42) as constructed by the dominant nineteenth-century histories of the day.⁴

The recognizably fictional dimensions of the *Episodios* and their relationship to the historical scope of the series are no less compelling. Beyond a sweetening of the historical pill, fiction in the *Episodios* seems to dialogue with and often augment Galdós's historical commitments. Gabriel Araceli, the central character of the series, offers a fine example of the phenomenon. In his double role as the primary narrator and protagonist of the ten novels, he is a fascinating fictional conceit. He represents a bridge between the *then* of history and the *now* of its telling (Rodríguez 53-55). An aging narrator who remembers, he incarnates the nexus between past and present, and the first-person narration of these *Episodios* marks them as a very particular kind of historical novel. They are fictionalized historical *memoir*, a narrative form that unavoidably establishes an especially intimate relationship to history. Presiding over each novel is a fictional, testimonial "I," a voice whose authority is in large measure predicated on having lived the history it narrates. By fictionalizing memoir, the *Episodios* thus subtly encode history not merely as a narrative representation of the past but as the memory of lived experience; that is, precisely the sense of the past that was disappearing from a generation that by the 1870s had not lived through the Napoleonic occupation.

Similarly, as many readers of the *Episodios* have noted, the basic plot that meanders across the ten novels resonates with the historical material in important ways. Like the national historical narrative, Gabriel Araceli's personal story is also a tale of difficulties overcome on the way to new foundations. Over the course of the series readers are privy to Gabriel's slow maturation and social ascent from childish *pícaro* in *Trafalgar* to general in the Spanish army by the end of *Los Arapiles*. At the same time, the sentimental tale that crisscrosses the first series, the story of Gabriel's seemingly impossible, relentlessly thwarted love for the young aristocratic heiress, Inés, culminates in successful marriage by the close of these *Episodios*. If the historical component of the first series stages the birth of modern Spain in struggle

against Napoleon, the sentimental fiction—a protracted marriage plot in which social hierarchies are overcome to form a new union between aristocracy (Inés) and a young, largely self-made bourgeoisie (Gabriel—represents the emergence of the new social order that slowly asserted itself over the course of the century. History and fiction would thus appear to walk harmoniously hand in hand.⁵

Scholarship on the first series of *Episodios* has consistently focused on these very issues, and in particular on the national, patriotic pedagogy Galdós attempts to convey to his contemporaries in the wake of the Revolution of 1868. Most readers of the series have noted that it is, among other things, an effort to remind the 1870s reading public of the nation’s nineteenth-century history in order to contextualize its present more fully. Perhaps for this reason, the nation and its representation have tended to eclipse—or more accurately, subsume—questions of war and empire in critical discussions of these *Episodios*. The ease with which the routine violence of empire and war can turn into unexamined givens, along with the particular generic framing of these novels, appears to have contributed to a relative downplaying these issues. While the geopolitical terrain traversed in the first series is unabashedly imperial (Napoleon in Spain), and while the novels repeatedly deliver representations of the ravages of war (gruesome violence accompanies each *Episodio*), the very generic designation, *Episodio nacional*, seems to have successfully inscribed war and empire within a national optic that in effect makes such violence ancillary to the central organizing historical drama of the “birth” of modern Spain. The *Episodios* effectively enjoin readers and critics to engage Gabriel’s narratives as novels of *the nation* before thinking of them, for example, as war novels, or as novels of empire.

It is one of the more powerful ideological effects of Gabriel Araceli’s tale across the ten novels, and in what follows, I will be focusing on this effect in order to make clearer the symbolic nexus established between the modern Spanish nation, empire and war. I hope to explore these issues primarily by focusing on sovereignty, which as it happens, is a thematic concern that spans the first series of *Episodios*: the historical dimensions of the series center on the birth of modern Spanish national sovereignty in the context of Napoleonic imperialism, while the parallel development of the more overtly fictional, sentimental plot-line that traverses the novels takes up Gabriel Araceli’s ascent to sovereign self-possessed individualism. Sovereignty is in this sense a subject that binds the imperial, the national and the individual in these *Episodios*, and my intention in what follows is to make clearer some of the ideological valences of the way the concept is configured in each of these domains.

Given the extension of this corpus—ten novels, well over 1,000 pages—I will be taking up these issues by focusing on a series of general, tacit proposition that traverse the first series. In a sense they are key unspoken ideological premises that structure Gabriel Araceli’s tale. The first proposition is that

imperial sovereignty—understood as the exercise of ultimate authority over extranational politics and peoples— is other; it is almost without exception marked as geographically or temporally elsewhere or foreign, not something pertaining to the Spain of the early 1800s. To put it more simply, in the first series of *Episodios* the exercise of imperial power is consistently represented as something in which *other* nations engage. Early in *Trafalgar*, for example, Gabriel recalls a map of Europe that he imagined as a child after hearing discussions of Napoleon's enterprises:

Oía hablar mucho de Napoleón, [...] me lo figuraba caballero en un potro jerezano, con su manta, polainas, sombrero de fieltro y el correspondiente tabuco. Según mis ideas, con este pergenio, y seguido de otros aventureros del mismo empaque, aquel hombre, que todos pintaban como extraordinario, conquistaba la Europa, es decir, una gran isla, dentro de la cual estaban otras islas, que eran las naciones, a saber: Inglaterra, Génova, Londres, Francia, Malta, la tierra del Moro, América, Gibraltar, Mahón, Rusia, Tolón, etc. Yo había formado esta geografía a mi antojo, según las procedencias más frecuentes de los barcos, con cuyos pasajeros hacía algún trato; y no necesito decir que entre todas estas naciones o islas España era la mejorcita. (9-10)⁶

The humorous, childish naïveté of the map notwithstanding, this image lays out rather clearly a cartography of imperial power that informs the first series *grosso modo*: empire is represented as exterior to the Spanish nation, which is clearly bounded—here an island. More specifically, in this scheme imperial power is the very exteriority within which Spain—and nations more generally—are positioned.

In subsequent novels, as the narrative moves into the Napoleonic occupation proper, the logic whereby imperialism is figured as exterior to the idea of the nation remains curiously intact, despite the physical presence of Napoleonic forces on the Iberian peninsula. This is achieved by what in effect is a proliferation of Gabriel's islands of nationhood within the Iberian peninsula itself, and the islands roughly correspond to the list of place-names that the narrator announces early on in *Trafalgar*. Steeped in patriotic sentiment, it is a list that as many have noted offers a rudimentary sketch of the *Episodios* to come:⁷

Sobre todos mis sentimientos domina uno, el que dirigió siempre mis acciones durante aquel azaroso periodo [...] ¡aún haces brotar lágrimas de mis ojos, amor santo de la patria! [...] A este sentimiento consagré mi edad viril y a él consagro esta faena de mis últimos años, poniéndole por genio tutelar o ángel custodio de mi existencia escrita, ya que lo fue de mi existencia real. Muchas cosas voy a contar. ¡Trafalgar, Bailén, Madrid, Zaragoza, Gerona, Arapiles!... De todo esto diré alguna cosa, si no os falta la paciencia. (16-17)

Just as significant as their blueprint-function for the series as whole, however, is the way these names rhetorically condense national history or the spirit of the nation into a series of sub-national sites, as if the sequence of synecdoches that the list constructs were deposits of Spain's national essence within a sea of Napoleonic imperialism, the bearers of national history precisely at a time in which the peninsula was awash in French imperial power. This logic is particularly on display in siege novels such as *Zaragoza* and *Gerona*, where the conceptual opposition between empire and nation is spatialized: the besieged cities and their occupants clearly become representatives of the nation as a whole, while empire is represented as the force that presses in from the outside. At the height of the siege of Zaragoza, for example, the narrator evokes the city in terms of a quasi-eternal, disembodied force that in effect stands in for the spirit of the resistant nation. The city of Zaragoza comes to incarnate a national essence forged in anti-imperial struggle:

Zaragoza no se rinde. La reducirán a polvo: de sus históricas casas no quedará ladrillo sobre ladrillo; caerán sus cien templos; su suelo abriráse vomitando llamas; y lanzados al aire los cimientos, caerán las tejas al fondo de los pozos; pero entre los escombros y entre los muertos habrá siempre una lengua viva para decir que Zaragoza no se rinde. (250-251)

A more subtle, but equally effective vehicle by which imperial sovereignty is marked as other appears in the consistent use across the ten novels of the term "los imperiales," as a synonym for Napoleonic forces:

Hasta entonces no había ocurrido ninguna colisión sangrienta entre los imperiales y los andaluces. (*Bailén* 74)

También alcanzamos a ver a lo largo del camino la interminable fila de carros donde los imperiales llevaban todo lo cogido en Córdoba. (*Bailén* 262)

Los imperiales [...] dominaron de tal modo la posición, que al cabo de un cuarto de hora de estéril tiroteo, vimos que era preciso buscar la nuestra un poco más arriba, entre Vallecas y el callejón de Sevilla. (*Napoleón en Chamartín* 188)

Los imperiales, al penetrar, encontraron inmenso número de cuerpos destrozados, y montones de tierra y guijarros amasados con sangre. (*Zaragoza* 87)

Los imperiales habían levantado varias baterías. (*Gerona* 43)

Venían los imperiales desprevenidos, con aquella fatua confianza que tanto les perjudicaba; (*Juan Martín el Empecinado* 85)

En resumen, la guerra no tomaba mal aspecto para nosotros; por el contrario, parecía en evidente declinación la estrella imperial, después de los golpes sufridos en Ciudad-Rodrigo, Arroyomolinos y Badajoz. (*Los Arapiles* 22)

Again, the implicit logic is clear: French forces are imperial while Spanish resistance is merely national; *imperial* is literally made synonymous with foreign, non-Spanish.

The correlate to this conceptual structure leads to a second basic proposition running through the first series, which is that *Spanish sovereignty is not only not-imperial but is in fact constitutively anti-imperial*. In the first series of *Episodios* the nation in effect *comes into being* through anti-imperial struggle. Opposition to empire is what makes the nation congeal as such. In *El 19 de marzo y el 2 de mayo*, for example, Gabriel describes the crowd amassing for what would become the famous May 2nd uprising as follows:

Componíanla personas de ambos sexos y de todas las clases de la sociedad, espontáneamente venidas por uno de esos llamamientos morales, íntimos, misteriosos, informados, que no parten de ninguna voz oficial, y resuenan de improviso en los oídos de un pueblo entero, hablándole el balbuciente lenguaje de la inspiración. La campana de ese arrebató glorioso no suena sino cuando son muchos los corazones dispuestos a palpar en concordancia con su anhelante ritmo, y raras veces presenta la historia ejemplos como aquel, porque el sentimiento patrio no hace milagros sino cuando es una condensación colosal, una unidad sin discrepancias de ningún género, y por lo tanto una fuerza irresistible y superior a cuantos obstáculos pueden oponerle los recursos materiales, el genio militar y la muchedumbre de enemigos. El más poderoso genio de la guerra es la conciencia nacional, y la disciplina que da más cohesión el patriotismo. (240)

As a representation of national community, the passage is extraordinarily rich in detailing many of the tell-tale features of nineteenth-century nationalism as a metaphysical, quasi-spiritual phenomenon, conveyed here by the basic acoustic metaphor of a calling that has no identifiable form or source and that is nevertheless simultaneously both intimate and colossally unanimous. If this is nationalism's phenomenology, however, the narrative context makes clear that what has catalyzed the event to begin with is empire. The nation constitutes itself as a spirit that is dialectically linked to imperial power by way of opposition. The bell that rings when hearts are ready to beat in accord with the hymn of the nation is in this regard an alarm bell warning that imperial subjugation threatens. In short, the nation as described in this passage is of a piece with anti-imperial struggle, and in this regard Galdós offers a genealogy of nationalism more in line with Lukács than with Benedict Anderson. For the Lukács of *The Historical*

Novel, readers may recall, it is war—specifically warring during the Napoleonic era—that gives rise to national modern national consciousness:

The Napoleonic Wars everywhere evoked a wave of national feeling, of national resistance to Napoleonic conquests, an experience of enthusiasm for national independence. [...] [I]t is clear that these movements—real mass movements—inevitably conveyed a sense and experience of history to broad masses. [...] Thus in this mass experience of history the national element is linked on the one hand with problems of social transformation; and on the other, more and more people become aware of the connection between national and world history. (25)

Nowhere is this mutual implication of empire and nation clearer than in one of the more celebrated closing passages from *Zaragoza*, where the very essence of the nation is posited in terms of resistance to imperial power. As the narrative of the siege comes to an end, Gabriel recalls the Napoleonic years as follows:

aquella tempestad que conturbó los primeros años del siglo y cuyos relámpagos, truenos y rayos aterraron tanto a la Europa, pasó, porque las tempestades pasan, y lo normal en la vida histórica, como en la naturaleza, es la calma [...] Lo que no ha pasado ni pasará es la idea de nacionalidad que España defendía contra el derecho de conquista y la usurpación. Cuando otros pueblos sucumbían, ella mantiene su derecho, lo defiende, y sacrificando su propia sangre y vida, lo consagra, como consagraban los mártires en el circo la idea cristiana. El resultado es que España, despreciada injustamente en el Congreso de Viena, desacreditada con razón por sus continuas guerras civiles, sus malos gobiernos, su desorden, sus bancarrotas más o menos declaradas, sus inmorales partidos, sus extravagancias, sus toros y sus pronunciamientos, no ha visto nunca, después de 1808, puesta en duda la continuación de su nacionalidad; [...] Grandes subidas y bajadas, grandes asombros y sorpresas, aparentes muertes y resurrecciones prodigiosas, reserva la Providencia a esta gente, porque su destino es poder vivir en la agitación como la salamandra en el fuego; pero su permanencia nacional está y estará siempre asegurada. (284-285)⁸

Empires, it would seem, belong to the winds of history, while the nations they buffet take on a quasi-eternal permanence. In consonance with nineteenth-century national imaginings more generally, the nation is outside of history or at the least impervious to it. And this despite the ultimate capitulation of the city of Zaragoza to Napoleonic forces in this novel. More subtly, however, the passage also suggests

that national sovereignty is embodied in violent struggle itself, as if to say that there is nothing more quintessentially Spanish than armed resistance to empire.

The opening lines of *Juan Martín El Empecinado*, which focuses on the world of the guerrillas, make this relationship clear:

Anteriormente he contado a ustedes las hazañas de los ejércitos, las luchas de los políticos, la heroica conducta del pueblo dentro de las ciudades; pero esto, con ser tanto, tan vario y no poco interesante, aunque referido por mí, no basta al conocimiento de la gran guerra. Ahora voy a hablar de las guerrillas, que son la verdadera guerra nacional; del levantamiento del pueblo en los campos, de aquellos ejércitos espontáneos, nacidos en la tierra como la hierba nativa, cuya misteriosa simiente no arrojaron las manos del hombre; voy a hablar de aquella organización militar hecha por milagroso instinto a espaldas del Estado, de aquella anarquía reglamentada, que reproducía los tiempos primitivos. (5)

Like the May 2nd insurgents, the guerrillas come together spontaneously, without the intervention or direction of other parties and with little or no relationship to the state—an important phenomenon in the context of Gabriel’s attunement to the potential manipulation of mob-violence by political interest elsewhere in the series.⁹ The guerrillas are in this sense where the nation manifests itself in its truest form—“la verdadera guerra nacional”—, and Gabriel’s horticultural imagery leaves little doubt about their profoundly native quality as the earth begets congenital guerilla-plants to defend itself. At the same time, the atavistic temper of this template for the nation is not difficult to discern. In the guerrillas is the Spain that has always been, the Spain of primitive times, the Spain that has eternally defined itself in struggle against empire: Numancia against Rome, Bernardo del Carpio against the Frankish empire, and a panoply national icons—El Cid, Pelayo, etc.—that are part of the grander myth of liberating “the nation” from dominion. It is no coincidence that these personages figure prominently across the first series, and were we to look into their eyes we would undoubtedly see the same thing we would find in the faces of the rebelling masses: the eternal, undaunted, quintessentially Spanish spirit of an anti-imperial “freedom fighter.”

This basic pattern, in which the threat of subordination spurs the autochthonous assertion of sovereignty is of course also clearly on display in Gabriel’s own trajectory over the course of the first series. Indeed, if one of the basic effects of historical fiction is to underscore and exploit the proximities between narrative fiction and historical narrative, it is partly in order to explore the way in which these two narrative modes and their representative strands reciprocally engage and illuminate one another. In

such a context, it is not surprising that Gabriel's social ascent in the first series can so readily be analogized with the story of the nation without necessarily hardening into allegory. It is an example of the phenomenon Lukács would come to refer to as “the specifically historical derivation [...] of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarities of their age” (19). Within the realm of social and interpersonal relations, Gabriel Araceli's trajectory is in this sense also one that moves from subordination to sovereignty, here understood in terms of the self-possession of the bourgeois individual as posited by classical liberalism.¹⁰

Another way of putting this is to note that if the marriage-plot culminating in Gabriel's union with Inés can be read as auguring the bourgeois social order to come, this outcome is itself predicated on the protagonist's prior successful transformation into a subject in his own right. More specifically, it depends on his having become a political subject at the level of social interactions, a player at the table of interpersonal power relations who can make a claim to Inés before her mother, the countess Amaranta. This is no small feat given Gabriel's servile beginnings as Amaranta's palace servant. An early encounter between the two characters in *La corte de Carlos IV* conveys the power-relations that govern their initial interactions:

Cuando sentí el ruido de la puerta, cuando vi entrar a la hermosa dama, [...] parecióme que un ente sobrenatural se me acercaba, y temblé de emoción. -Has sido puntual -me dijo-. ¿Estás dispuesto a entrar en mi servicio? -Señora -contesté sin poder recordar ninguna de las frases que traía preparadas-, estoy con mucho gusto a las órdenes de usía para cuanto se digne mandarme. [...] -Bueno -continuó la diosa-. Ya comprendes que entrar en mi servicio sin más recomendación que el propio mérito es más de lo que pudieras desear. Amaranta estaba sentada frente a mí, como he dicho: su mano derecha jugaba con un grueso medallón pendiente del cuello, y cuyos diamantes, despidiendo mil luces, deslumbraban mis ojos. Tanta era mi gratitud y admiración hacia aquella mujer, que no sé cómo no caí de rodillas a sus plantas. (126-127)

By the end of the series, in *La batalla de los Arapiles*, this very same Gabriel will not only be reckoned as a social equal by the countess, but he will be deemed worthy of her daughter's hand. The scene in which the marriage is arranged is tellingly simple, divested of the markers of social distinctions, and inclusively colloquial. Gabriel has in effect become “one of the family”:

-Hija mía, ¿tienes inconveniente en casarte con Gabriel?-No, ninguno -repuso ella con tanto aplomo, que me dejó sorprendido. Con inefable afecto besé su hermosa mano que tenía entre las mías. -¿Está tranquila y satisfecha tu alma, hija mía? -Tranquila y satisfecha

-repuso-. [...] Ambos nos miramos. Un cielo lleno de luz divina, y de inexplicable música de ángeles flotaba entre uno y otro semblante... (377-378)

Just as important as the transformation itself, however, is the primary mechanism of this metamorphosis over the course of the ten novels, and to put it succinctly, that mechanism is war. The phenomenon registers the social mobility that soldiering in fact afforded men of all stripes throughout the nineteenth-century, to be sure, but it also insinuates a third proposition that I believe subtends the first series. Simply put, the proposition is that *behind Spain's new bourgeois citizen stands the figure of the anti-imperial fighter*. If the guerrillas are a template for the nation collectively, it follows that the soldier-guerrillero becomes the template for the new citizen. And here Gabriel's narrative suggestively gestures to one of the primal scenes of the militarization of nineteenth-century politics in Spain. One need only consider the culminating image of Gabriel's military exploits, which comes just before the resolution of the sentimental plot, in order to appreciate the symbolic link between anti-imperial violence and bourgeois selfhood. The closing image of Gabriel on the battlefield in *La batalla de los Arapiles* is as follows:

En aquella confusión de gritos, de brazos alzados, de semblantes infernales, de ojos desfigurados por la pasión, vi un águila dorada puesta en la punta de un palo, donde se enrollaba inmundo trapo [...] Devoré con los ojos aquel harapo, que en una de las oscilaciones de la turba fue desplegado por el viento y mostró una N que había sido de oro y se dibujaba sobre tres fajas cuyo matiz era un pastel de tierra, de sangre, de lodo y de polvo. Todo el ejército de Bonaparte se había limpiado el sudor de mil combates con aquel pañuelo agujereado que ya no tenía forma ni color. Yo vi aquel glorioso signo de guerra a una distancia como de cinco varas. Yo no sé lo que pasó: yo no sé si la bandera vino hasta mí, o si yo corrí hacia la bandera. Si creyese en milagros, creería que mi brazo derecho se alargó cinco varas, porque sin saber cómo, yo agarré el palo de la bandera, y lo así tan fuertemente, que mi mano se pegó a él y lo sacudí y quiso arrancarlo de donde estaba. Tales momentos no caben dentro de la apreciación de los sentidos. (326)

Gabriel's last act on the field, indeed his last military action in all of the first series, is in fact to bring down this imperial insignia, after which he is swarmed by the enemy, is gravely wounded, and loses consciousness. When he finally comes to, it will be to resolve the remaining threads of the sentimental plot and ensure his marriage to Inés. To put it in symbolic terms, after the eagle is vanquished, middle class domesticity is promptly ushered in. "Yo pongo aquí punto final—he writes as the series comes to a close—"con [...] gran placer mío por haber llegado a la más alta ocasión de mi vida, cual fue el suceso de

mis bodas, primer fundamento de los sesenta años de tranquilidad que he disfrutado, haciendo todo el bien posible, amado de los míos y bienquisto de los extraños” (393). Indeed, the links between anti-imperial soldier and bourgeois *pater familias* have been structurally embedded in the series all along, for these two personae are in effect the two faces of Gabriel as soldier-protagonist and Gabriel as aging bourgeois narrator. In step with most first-person narrative, then, the process by which the character has become the narrator comes into relief toward the end of the tale. Its collective resonance is clear: just as the aging middle-class narrator is, in effect, the result of the young protagonist’s wartime efforts, so too the mature, bourgeois Spanish nation is symbolically positioned as the product of the War of Independence.

With these ideological structures in view, it will be useful to turn finally to more direct consideration of the representation of war itself in the first series of *Episodios nacionales*. It is a paradoxical facet of these novels that can be summarized by the fourth basic proposition that crisscrosses Gabriel’s 10-novel tale. Simply put, in the first series *war’s destruction is productive*. War is the very crucible in which both the new nation and its emergent social identities are forged. Most fascinating about this proposition, however, is that it emerges from a discourse also characterized by a consistent criticism of that very violence. No *Episodio* transpires without the attempt to represent and tacitly condemn the consequences of orchestrated killing. In *Trafalgar*, for example, Gabriel Araceli’s initial childish zeal for maritime conflict is unceremoniously dismantled as he confronts the reality of the violence in which he is participating. Neither he nor the readers of his tale are spared the details of the suffering that is unleashed at battle:

La sangre corría en abundancia por la cubierta y los puentes, y [...] el movimiento del buque la llevaba de aquí para allí, formando fatídicos dibujos. Las balas de cañón, de tan cerca disparadas, mutilaban horriblemente los cuerpos, y era frecuente ver rodar a alguno, arrancada a cercén la cabeza, cuando la violencia del proyectil no arrojaba la víctima al mar, entre cuyas ondas debía perderse casi sin dolor la última noción de la vida. Otras balas rebotaban contra un palo o contra la obra muerta, levantando granizada de astillas que herían como flechas. La fusilería de las cofas y la metralla de las carronadas esparcían otra muerte menos rápida y más dolorosa, y fue raro el que no salió marcado más o menos gravemente por el plomo y el hierro de nuestros enemigos. (148)

Subsequent novels confirm that the detailed representation of war’s violence is a consistent feature of Gabriel’s narratives. In a famous scene reminiscent of Goya’s *Los fusilamientos del 3 de mayo*, Gabriel comes to witness the May 3 executions:

recorrí como un insensato el primer patio y el segundo. En este [...] no había más que franceses; pero en aquel yacían por el suelo las víctimas aún palpitantes, y no lejos de ellas las que esperaban la muerte. Vi que las ataban codo con codo, obligándolas a ponerse de rodillas, unos de espalda, otros de frente. Los más extendían los brazos agitándolos al mismo tiempo que lanzaban imprecaciones y retos a los verdugos; algunos escondían con horror la cara en el pecho del vecino; otros lloraban; otros pedían la muerte, y vi uno que rompiendo con fuertes sacudidas las ligaduras, se abalanzó hacia los granaderos. [...] los granaderos hacían fuego una o dos veces, y los sacrificados se revolvían en charcos de sangre con espantosa agonía. Algunos acababan en el acto; pero los más padecían largo martirio antes de expirar, y hubo muchos que heridos por las balas en las extremidades y desangrados, sobrevivieron después de pasar por muertos hasta la mañana del día 3 [...]. (289-290)¹¹

In *Bailén*, which narrates a celebrated Spanish victory over the French, Gabriel reviews the ravages inflicted on the enemy:

Quando recorrimos el campo francés, pudimos observar la terrible situación de nuestros enemigos. Los carros de heridos ocupaban una extensión inmensa, y para sepultar sus tres mil muertos, habían abierto profundas zanjas donde los iban arrojando en montón, cubriéndoles luego con la mortaja común de la tierra. [...] Los soldados sanos sufrían los horrores del hambre, alimentándose muy mal con caldos de cebada y un pan de avena, que parecía tierra amasada. (261-262)

Similarly, in *Zaragoza*, Araceli gives grisly, first-hand accounts of the cumulative effects of war, hunger and disease on the inhabitants of the city:

Ya no se comía. ¿Para qué, si se esperaba la muerte de un momento a otro? Centenares, miles de hombres perecían en las voladuras y la epidemia había tomado carácter fulminante. Tenía uno la suerte de salir ileso de entre la lluvia de balas, y luego al volver una esquina, el horroroso frío y la fiebre, apoderándose súbitamente de la naturaleza, le conducían en poco tiempo a la muerte. Ya no había parientes ni amigos; menos aún: ya los hombres no se conocían unos a otros, y ennegrecidos los rostros por la tierra, por el humo, por la sangre, desencajados y cadavéricos, al juntarse después del combate, se preguntaban: «¿quién eres tú? ¿Quién es Vd.?» (260-261)

Such examples attest to the narrator's deliberate interest across the first series to represent in unflinching detail the devastating consequences of war on both sides of the conflagration. To ascribe a quasi-pacifist dimension to such gestures, however, misses the point that, rhetorically, such violence is ultimately

narrativized as a materially and symbolically productive force.¹² War's horrors have in effect been positioned as the labor pains that accompany the birth of the modern nation and its new bourgeois subject.

The four propositions we have considered—empires are foreign, the nation is anti-imperial, citizens are freedom fighters, and war is productive—can readily be understood in terms of liberal myth-making or ideology, and one should not dismiss or underestimate the importance of the first series of *Episodios nacionales* as a disseminator of this “freedom narrative” among the Spanish reading-public of the 1870s, 80s and beyond. In contrast to earlier, romantic-historicist constructions of Spanish identity as essentially Christian, medieval, and premodern, the first series of *Episodios* delivers a narrative in which struggle against imperial oppression becomes the touchstone for the birth of modern Spain. In this regard, the project may in fact be the most protracted Spanish literary construction of national identity in terms of the political struggle for freedom. Yet, despite the more progressive vision of the nation implied by the liberal historiography from which Galdós drew, one cannot help but notice the kind of mystification that Gabriel’s tale simultaneously carries out vis-à-vis Spanish imperial history. In the basic dialectic of nation against empire, the first series in effect eclipses the history of Spanish imperialism. It is not that traces of the Spanish empire are not present in these novels—at one point Amaranta threatens to have Gabriel shipped off to the Viceroyalty of Perú, and from time to time secondary characters recall past imperial glory in order to contrast it with the struggle against Napoleon.¹³ It is more simply that such instances are extraordinarily few and far between and, more importantly, that they do not form part of the narrative of the nation. In the first series of *Episodios* Spanish imperialism is symbolically expunged from the national imaginary, which is constructed in opposition to French imperialism.

The fact that what Napoleon invaded and occupied in 1808 was itself the power-center of a vast transatlantic empire; the fact that the Peninsular War clearly catalyzed Spanish American independence movements which were inspired, ironically enough, in the Spanish people’s own anti-imperial struggle; the fact that the Courts of Cádiz drew representatives, not only from the peninsula but from Spanish America as well and that the question of America was absolutely central to its proceedings; in short, the fact of an actually-existing imperial Spanish nation during the Napoleonic era is all but effaced by Gabriel’s tale. Similarly, the fact that Spain, and modern European nation-states more generally were themselves formed by processes of conquest, as most Spaniards who are not Castilian can still attest, is

veiled by the story of the nation's formation in the crucible of anti-imperial struggle. The foundational violence of the nation-state vis-à-vis its own sub-national actors (ethnic, linguistic, and regional others) fades away in the face of Gabriel's rhetoric of heroic national resistance to foreign oppression. In this regard, Gabriel's narrative is suffused with that distinctively modern ideological structure in which one's own freedom—whether individual or national—is imagined as something of one's own making, having little or nothing to do with somebody else's oppression. At the same time, his tale provides a fascinating glimpse of a common modern “structure of feeling” concerning war, a structure that in effect manages to have its humanitarian ethics and eat its bellicose cake too.¹⁴

It would be hasty, however, to conclude from the above that Galdós or the first series of *Episodios nacionales* themselves simply propagate this ideology. What Galdós does is by definition more subtle, more complex and more literary, for the first series in effect locates everything we have examined in the preceding pages within the words and thoughts of its characters. More specifically, what Galdós delivers to readers is, in the end, an image of how this ideological constellation comes into play within the mind and memory of an aging nineteenth-century liberal Spanish patriot named Gabriel Araceli.¹⁵ The seeming opposition between empire and nation is a striking revelation if one recalls that throughout most of the nineteenth century, and even as the novels were going to press in the 1870s, Spanish political discourse had repeatedly attempted to construct nation and empire as indistinguishable from one another. In this regard the first series suggests something that recent historical inquiries into nineteenth century Spanish nationalism can easily overlook; that is, the conceptual *separation* of nation and empire that was undoubtedly operating below official political discourse at the level of the everyday living experience of most Spanish citizens.¹⁶ Similarly, there is a disturbingly contemporary ring to the unreconciled tensions between Gabriel the humanitarian critic of war, on one hand, and Gabriel the warrior on the other. Indeed, the fact that such ambivalence persists to our own day in the form of the common framing of war as a “necessary shame” speaks eloquently to the persistence of this structure of feeling within the psychic life of modern citizenry.

In the end, it is no surprise that the propositions we have considered should come so clearly into view over the course of a narrative concerning the emergence of the modern—in this case, modern Spain, and its modern bourgeois citizenry—, for as postcolonial thinking continues to remind us, the very idea of European “modernity” has always in some sense been shadowed by empire, and by implication war.¹⁷ This is so in part not only because of the “civilizing mission” that so often accompanied imperial agendas—nominally, Napoleon invaded Spain in order to modernize it—, but also because throughout Europe and the Americas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, successful

resistance to imperial power itself became a template for imagining the birth of the modern. In such a context, it is worth recalling with Fredric Jameson the profound affinities between modernity and the organized violence we call war:

“The West”—he observes—“has long [...] found itself unable to think the category of the ‘great collective project’ in terms of social revolution and transformation. But we have a convenient substitute [...]: For us, and as far back in ‘modernity’ as we can determine, the great collective project [...] is simply war itself. It is finally as a war machine that the efficiency of the state is judged; and no doubt modern warfare offers a very advanced form of collective organization indeed. (211-212)

Within the universe of the first series of *Episodios nacionales*, the relationship between war and the modern is, no doubt, as intimate as Jameson suggests. At the same time, however, Gabriel Araceli’s tale also accomplishes something more difficult to find within standard histories of modern Spain. In its examination of the relationship between the individual and the collective, in its analogizing of the birth of the nation and the birth of the bourgeois subject, and in its probing of the nexus between the *then* of the Napoleonic era and the *now* of 1870s Spain, the series tacitly fuses together two disparate traditions of thinking concerning modern sovereignty. In effect, it suggests that there is a close relationship between the *sovereign nation* (commonly inscribed within an intellectual tradition that includes Bodin, Rousseau, Hobbes, Montesquieu) and the *sovereign individual* (typically associated with Lockean thinking and classical liberalism). By symbolically turning war into birth and the warrior into the bourgeois subject, Gabriel’s story subtly registers something about modern political order itself. While identification with the heroic *guerrillero* by a largely bourgeois Spanish reading public in the 1870s can certainly be read in terms of national mythmaking, such identification also begins to contaminate the realm of peaceful, civic life and bourgeois domesticity with the violence of war. It points to a lingering conscience concerning the violence that subtends the quotidian order of the day, a violence that, as recent political theorists have argued, is ultimately grounded in the sovereign power over life and death themselves.¹⁸ In this sense, beyond national liberal mythology, Gabriel’s tale in the first series of *Episodios nacionales* also suggests what the popular adage continues to remind us: that politics is simply war by another name.

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¹ It is no surprise that in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, analogies with Napoleon's invasion of Spain were quickly drawn in the press and across the "blogosphere." Writing for the *Christian Science Monitor* in early 2007, Peter Grier reported that the US military itself continues to make use of the analogy: "The Army's counterinsurgency handbook contains an admonitory example of what happens when campaigns are not well designed. When Napoleon occupied Spain in 1808, he and his commanders gave little thought to how difficult it might be to subdue the Spanish population. [...] In the end, Napoleon had to deploy four times as many troops as he had started with. [...] The effort drained the resources of the French empire. 'It was the beginning of the end for Napoleon,' according to the US Army manual" (3).

² For a classic treatment of the subject across Galdós's oeuvre, see Ribbans.

³ Urey has been among the more assiduous readers of Galdós as a postmodern ironist *avant la lettre* (*The Novel and Galdós*).

⁴ Source studies have underscored a wide array of historiographic sources for the novels of the first series. While not exhaustive, Hinterhäuser (55-91) remains a good introduction to the subject. Galdós's historical research was for the most part based on extant histories and first-person testimonies.

⁵ The socially symbolic dimensions of Gabriel's character, his development, and his marriage to Inés have been discussed extensively. See for example, Hinterhäuser (290-294), Regalado García (27-28, 32), Dennis (44-51), Montesinos (107-108), and Dendle (*Galdós: The Early* 43-47). There is similarly a wide array of commentary on the various narrative genres with which Gabriel's story resonates: the Spanish picaresque novel, Dickensian reworkings of the picaresque, the Byzantine novel, the chivalric novel and its Cervantine rewriting, and the popular novel or "novela de folletín." For a useful, brief recent discussion and summary of these generic intertexts see Esterán (63-70).

⁶ All citations of the *Episodios* are from digitized editions available online through the Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes (www.cervantesvirtual.com). Page numbers correspond to the pagination of each edition.

⁷ See, for example, Hinterhäuser (25), Cardona ("Apostillas"), and Dendle (*Galdós y la novela* 35-40).

⁸ Cardona (*Del heroísmo*) has situated this passage within a generalized discourse of heroism that he finds in the early *Episodios*.

⁹ In *Napoleón en Chamartín* Gabriel observes the following, for example: "¿No habéis observado que todos los movimientos populares llevan en su seno un germen de traición, cuyo misterioso origen jamás se descubre? En todo aquello que hace la plebe por sí y de su propio brutal instinto llevada, se ve tras la apariencia de la pasión un tejido de alevosías, de menguados intereses o de criminales engaños; pero ningún sutil dedo puede tocar los hilos de esta tela escondida en cuyas mallas quedan enredados y cogidos mil bárbaros incautos" (165).

¹⁰ For a lucid analysis of the Lockean conception of self-possession and its relationship to private property, see Simmons (222-298).

¹¹ Goya looms large among the pictographic sources from which Galdós drew in the first series. “En *El 19 de marzo y el 2 de mayo* continúan las huellas de Goya [...] Galdós ha tenido a la vista los conocidísimos cuadros de *La carga de los mamelucos* y *Los fusilamientos del 3 de mayo* (Hinterhäuser 84).

¹² For a detailed analysis of “productive war” in *Trafalgar*, for example, see Iarocci (“Virile”).

¹³ Unearthing the traces of empire within the *Episodios nacionales* remains a task in progress. See Coffey for a series of probing articles on Galdós and colonial history.

¹⁴ Williams famously defines the structure of feeling as follows: “We are talking about [...] specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships; not feeling against thought but thought as felt and feeling as thought [...] We are then defining these elements as a ‘structure’: as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension” (132).

¹⁵ It is precisely in the gap between Galdós and Araceli that the ironic potential of the first series of *Episodios* opens up. This is not to say that the series necessarily undermines Gabriel’s formulations; what it does do, however, is position his life-world and turn of mind as objects of reflection in their own right.

¹⁶ Schmitt-Nowara has recently traced the way Spanish nationalism was suffused with its imperial identity in the common formulation, “la España ultramarina.” Blanco has also pointed to the rhetorical construction of an imperial nation within nineteenth-century political discourse. For a broader reflection on the status of the colonies that remained after the 1820s, see Fradera.

¹⁷ See, for example, Dussel. For more protracted discussion of the topic as it pertains to nineteenth-century Spain, see Iarocci (*Properties*).

¹⁸ See for example, Agamben’s rewriting of the political as fundamentally biopolitical (i.e. predicated on foundational distinctions regulating power over life and death).