La desheredada: The Institution and the Machine

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When Galdós scholars turn to *La desheredada*, they demonstrate a nearly unanimous compulsion to linger over the depiction of the madhouse in the first chapter of the novel. Such intense critical attention is well deserved. The implicit contrast between the author's dedication to teachers—representatives of a rational, intellectually-sponsored upward mobility—and the infraworld of unreason and blasted intellect could not be more wrenching. Further, as Galdós critics have quite rightly noted, the lugubrious presence of the asylum lingers throughout the novel, suggestively pointing to the inherent madness of society or the imminent breakdown of the major characters.[1] The madhouse, marginalized outside the city, suggests a form and a force that impose limits on civilized (*civitatis:* state, city) behavior and cannot be integrated within it. Nevertheless, society borrows the dark, mysterious confines of institutionalized madness in a disguised form; the problem of the city, explored so thoroughly in other Galdós novels, is here given a frightening twist as the institutions designed to provide an orderly, disciplined, *reasonable* urban life become deeply implicated in the production of entirely opposite qualities. The madhouse infects the city and there is no escape from the extraordinary, distopic community that serves as a model for contemporary urban life. In this "carnavalesco mundo" (969), the madhouse confines, but does not cure, schools do not teach, homes do not instill family feeling, jails cannot imprison the truly criminal elements of society, and even the Church, mentioned briefly but tellingly in the novel, serves perverted functions as the locus of social display or as a convenient spot for loose women to encounter prospective clients.

The asylum is an emblematic presence, and the enclosure and perversion first glimpsed there extend into situations and levels of society radically remote from it. "Te llamas *Envidiópolis,*" says the mad Rufete, "la ciudad sin alturas; y como eres puro suelo, simpatizas con todo lo que cae . . ." (965). In a city of depths rather than heights, madness rather than reason, Miquis' recognition of the overshadowing presence of the institution is unsurprising: "La vida toda es cárcel, sólo que en unas partes hay rejas y en otras no" (1129). Even Isidora in a first instance recognizes the liberating effect of real rather than metaphorical walls; the hated prison has at least freed her from the suffocating enclosure in a life of prostitution (1128). The imprisoning enclosure has even touched the dream palace of the Aransis family. The marquesa recognizes, and posthumously regrets, the imprisonment of her daughter (1025), does not recognize and approves of the emprisonment of her young grandson, whom she obliges to practice, ten hours a day, "música [de Beethoven] que [la marquesa] estaba cansada de oír" (1024).

The blighting image of a society marked by repressive enclosure is documented historically as well as symbolically. Robin Evans notes that in

contrast to the eighteenth-century prisons, which seemed to provide a distorted microcosm of society, in the nineteenth century, "the wider world began to borrow characteristics from the prisons" and he briefly discusses the similarity in spatial relationships between tenement housing and the surveillance-oriented prisons of the time (404-5). In *La desheredada* both private and public spaces are contaminated by this promiscuous borrowing; the home which becomes a work place (the sewing shop of the Relimpio women) is as insalubrious and as alienating as the factory where Mariano is brutalized, and the hive of tenements surrounding the factory call up a vision of prison cells used to confine whole families rather than single criminals or madmen. Even the streets, for the homeless young boys or the harried prostitutes, imprison as surely as the "penitenciaria para jóvenes delincuentes" or the Modelo.

In recognizing the role of institutionalized madness, Galdós critics have greatly furthered our understanding of the novel and have provided a context for much useful exegesis. Yet, *La desheredada* is a novel of heights and depths—or rather, in "la ciudad sin alturas," of depths and greater depths. If this much-commented institutional overlay provides the "suelo" of the novel, a grounding and a firm ground for analysis, its underground foundation has yet to be uncovered. Less has been said of the novelistic "subsuelo"—the latent subtext that serves as an objective correlative of this perverse enclosure. To the madhouse or the prison or the shabby tenement dwellings with their wearisome ascents of innumerable stairs, can be counterposed the underground factory, to which the worker descends as if in descent to Hell. To the madman, unchanging in his obsession, and his "carcelero-enfermero [que] es una máquina muscular" (968) correspond the factory workers and the brutalizing machine with its ceaseless, monotonous, senseless motion, to which they are wedded. "There is a—let us say—a machine," writes novelist Joseph Conrad to a friend:

> It evolved itself . . . out of a chaos of scraps of iron and behold!—it knits. I am horrified at the horrible work and stand appalled. I feel it ought to embroider—but it goes on knitting. . . . And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself; made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart. . . .
>
> It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions—and nothing matters. (56-57)

Conrad's relentless machine is destructive without conscious viciousness though as an amoral agent of darkness and an avatar of unending production without tangible results it can produce viciousness in its human victims. "It knits us in and it knits us out"; indelibly stamped by passage through the machine, the worker loses his individuality and becomes part of the mass, fades into the anonymous crowd, adopts a profound indifference: "and nothing matters."

Machines of all sorts whir, tick, and grind throughout this Galdós novel: from the atrocious "maquinaria" of the indoor plumbing used to

give cold showers to agitated inmates of the asylum (970) to the train that cuts through the middle of the squalor in Mariano's tenement area (1002), to the "Matusalén de los relojes" (1017) that signals the hours of work for the Relimpio girls, and the "máquina de pitillos" used by don José (1018). Machines large and small define and circumscribe life in the city, machines that sometimes horrify, sometimes amuse, sometimes languish forgotten among other dusty items of bric-à-brac on crowded bureaus, and are mentioned only in passing. Unsurprisingly, the ubiquitous machine in its most malevolent aspect has its effect on the unfortunate Rufetes as well: on Isidora to a lesser but still crucial extent, on Mariano in a greater and more explicitly detailed degree.

In one reading, Galdós' novel could seem a specific narrativization of the charge in the nineteenth-century anarchist press that the bourgeoisie, "auxiliada por la división del trabajo y el empleo de las máquinas, ha hecho que la mujer y el niño no escapen a la esclavitud del salario" (qtd. Andreu 23). It is important to bear in mind, however, in the reinsertion of the novel into concrete historical circumstances, that such associations open up rather than exhaust possibilities for analysis, and suggest a tactical deployment of alternatives rather than the fabrication of an enclosed edifice of meaning. For if Galdós often seems to delight in detailing the technological marvels of his age, he is also attentive to the change in perspective they ultimately effect upon society. For this reason attention to the role of the machine in the novel demands recognition of an interplay between the ceaseless functioning of mechanical forces and the concrete solidity of the institution that houses them. Such attention to the machine requires as well examination of the individual inextricably knit into the infernal functioning; in Foucault's words, "it is not that the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated in it, according to a whole technique of forces as bodies" (217). The omnipresent machine, precisely, horribly, rigorously meaningless, nevertheless offers space for a precautionary study of its fabricating force.

For Isidora, the sewing machine is proposed as her means of salvation from a life lived too intensely in imaginative fabrications. Augusto Miquis, the charming quack, prescribes a healthy dose "del ajetreo de máquinas de coser . . . para tomar a todas horas" (1113) as a specific cure for her illusions of upward mobility—a bitter medicine that Isidora rejects out of hand; to allow her dreams to be knit into the machine would be, she intuitively recognizes, to destroy their essence. Not the least of her objections is the complete docility Emilia and Leonor show towards their unending toil, their poorly paid subjection to the demands of family economy and the whirring machine. Efficiently, composedly, the daughters of Relimpio allow their lives to be knit up: "Las niñas trabajaban para las camiserías. Tenían máquina, y cosiendo noche y día, velando mucho y quedándose sin vista, allegaban de cinco a siete reales diarios" (1015).[2] Isidora looks upon their meticulous labor, their subordination to the machine, with understandable repugnance. Her romantic reflections on labor befitting one of her noble station eliminate all but

dainty feminine handiwork: "la costura, la fabricación de flores o encajes . . . y no pensó en ninguna otra clase de industrias, pues no se acordaba haber leído que ninguna de aquellas heroínas [de novela] se ocupara de menesteres bajos, de cosas malolientes o poco finos" (1074).

The simple shirts sewn by the Relimpio women are concrete examples of exactly the type of work that Isidora and her novelistic models will not accept. The shirts are "poco finos," and the enslavement to the demands of household economy and the requirements of the machine represent "menesteres" much less prestigious than delicate handiwork. There is a lack of delicacy as well in Emilia's affection for the machine: "Había llegado a amar la máquina como se quiere a un animal querido; conocía los secretos de su maravilloso artificio. . . . Semanalmente la engrasaba con cariño . . ." (1016). Quite clearly, none of Isidora's heroines would take such interest in a machine, none would be subjected to "la pestilencia del petróleo" in their long hours of delicate labor, though they might, romantically, suffer under the same necessity as the Relimpios to buy "el pan de hoy con los ojos de mañana" (1017).

Intelligent, resourceful Emilia does not feel repressed by her work; if the picture portrayed by the Relimpio girls is not precisely that of a mechanical sublime, it is certainly nonnegative, exerting a cautionary influence in the text against any facile Luddite overgeneralization. Yet, despite her uncritical acceptance of the material conditions of her labor, the fact remains that the machine has altered Emilia's relation to the social order. The reciprocal relationship between herself and her machine is evidence of the degree to which she has been, perforce, as carefully fabricated in and by it as the endless stream of men's shirts she produces.

Isidora, like Conrad, finds the sewing (or knitting) machine appalling; she too feels stifled by such an oppressive presence and dreams of ladylike fine embroidery. Inevitably, Isidora rebels against don José's well-meaning attempts to teach her to use it: "Isidora no podía comprender aquel endiablado mete y saca de hilo superior, que por tantos agujerillos tiene que pasar hasta que lo coge en su horadado pico la aguja, y empieza, debajo de la placa, la rápida esgrima con el hilo interior" (1016). Though she fabricates much, Isidora refuses to insert herself into the devilish fencing of the needles that would knit her up as they fabricate the society in which she is compelled to live.

For Mariano, the relationship to the machine is far closer and more compelling. The thread that threatens his sister is transformed in his case into a firm rope, and Emilia's love for and domination of the sewing machine is converted into a fierce hatred of and subjection to the machine housed in the infernal factory where he is employed. Mariano's fall parallels Isidora's, but in the novelistic subtext of his misfortunes the overlapping of the great social institutions is far more explicit. Tenement, factory, prison: the trajectory of Mariano's life is clear, the emblematic identity of the institutions evident.

Mariano shows himself from the first to be recalcitrant to discipline. He quickly escapes from as many schools as his aunt can find to accept him, seeing no difference between school and prison except in the

ease of escape from the former. He is subsequently put to work in a rope factory—another and more inescapable prison during the hours dictated by the inexorable clock. In his free time, he escapes his tenement home and his aunt for the streets and the "presidios sueltos del porvenir" (1051). Everywhere, he confronts the same contraction of possibilities, the same brutal repression of free spirit by warping walls that always confine him ever more closely, that gradually become more tangible until with the death of Zarapicos he is claimed by an actual prison. And the institutions are mapped over each other more specifically in the conversation between "un señor concejal y un comisario de Beneficencia, que a la sazón paseaban por el barrio, eligiendo sitio para . . . una escuela" as they witness, horrified, the death of Zarapicos:

> —¡Y nos ocupamos de escuelas! ¡Presidios es lo que hace falta!
> —Escuelas penitenciarias, o cárceles escolares . . . Es mi tema.
> —Escuelas, señor de Lamagorza.
> —Presidios, señor don Jacinto.
> —Yo digo que jardines, Froebel.
> —Yo digo que maestros de hierro que no usan palmeta sino fusil Remington. (1007)

In these echoing voices the reader feels the conflation of school and prison, the interchangeability of education and punishment in the "cárceles escolares" where their "maestros de hierro" attend to discipline: steel men armed with rifles for educating children of the machine age.[3]

Though pushed to the extremes of madness and crime, Mariano is a true child of the machine age. His introduction into the novel is prefaced and mediated by a trip through the nightmarish rope factory where he is employed. Isidora, with la Sanguijuelera as her guide, enters first into a dark beehive of activity, a "casa celular para pobres," impossible to visualize in its entirety because of the poor illumination. At the heart of this depressing construction is the darker shadow of a tunnel and from its mouth emerges a rope in the process of being laid by an expert workman "que salía de la oscuridad . . . con paso tan igual y uniforme como el de una máquina." In contrast to the silent, efficient man-machine, the rope he is making seems almost alive and its cries of pain join the buzzing voices of the poverty-stricken dwellers of the surrounding tenements: "los hilos montaban unos sobre otros, quejándose de la torsión violenta, y en toda su magnitud rectilínea había un estremecimiento de cosa dolorida y martirizada." Deep within the tunnel, invisible even to la Sanguijuelera's sharp eyes, is another man-machine, a more crucial one: the hidden child who operates the heavy wheel described in the novel as "la fuerza impulsora, alma del taller." The great treadmill which twists the threads into rope, the heart and soul of the factory's operation, is shrouded in mystery and it can only be discerned in silhouette, with great effort, in a "figura semejante a las extrañas aberraciones ópticas de la retina cuando cerramos los ojos deslumbrados por una luz muy viva." As they approach the great wheel, still surrounded by darkness, Isidora's aunt draws her attention to the nearly-invisible motor force: "¿Ves aquellas dos centellitas que brillan junto a la rueda? . . . Son los ojos de *Pecado* . . . (981-82).

The light of Mariano's eyes contrasts with the dark shadow of the wheel, a wheel which is itself described metaphorically as an afterimage, a perversion of sight caused by a light too intense to bear. Yet the analogy can only hold partially; the wheel is lightless, a darker presence within a too-intense darkness—shielded by the tunnel not only from light but also from the optical aberrations of light. Neither image nor afterimage, the treadmill is, nevertheless, an ineluctable product of contemporary technology. For as Octavio Paz shrewdly observes, "No es la técnica la que niega a la imagen del mundo; es la desaparición de la imagen lo que hace posible la técnica." Exactly so. Furthermore, to replace the lost image/afterimage of the world are constructions that "son absolutamente reales, pero no son presencias; no representan: son signos de la acción y no imágenes del mundo" (317), forces without form, patterns of labor without object. "Signos de acción" or "signos en rotación": Galdós' description of the treadmill fits perfectly into a discussion of a mechanism which is real but never present, which is defined by the law of a monotonous, inescapable, self-identical rotating motion, a motion which twists the fibers of the rope and twists as well the sensitive nerves of the spectator. Like a mechanical version of Fate, like Conrad's machine, the rhythms of the treadmill form the rope and deform the lives of those too closely associated with it. For Mariano, the work is meaningless drudgery, sheer pointless exertion without pleasure or profit, a foretaste of the prison which is his destiny as the bearer of the name *Pecado* with its suggestion of concealed criminality. For the spectator, the bright points of light in the dark beside the wheel reveal no human presence; the child who turns the wheel is silent, faceless, deprived of light: unseeing and unseen. If it is true, as Mehlman has observed in another context, "that the future of the novel is with that excellence of *vision* which is the distinguishing mark of 'realism'" (124), certainly Galdós' novel here suggests a strikingly different formulation in which clarity of vision is precisely what is put into question. For while Galdós captures the sounds of the machine in the tortured screams of the rope and the far-away metallic buzz of the treadmill, it is precisely the *sight* of the technological marvel which is not encompassed in language. The treadmill, emblem of a coercive power, does not allow itself to be captured by the novelist's vision, not even through recourse to analogy, a demonstrably ineffective ploy insofar as it is applied to the machine. Mariano's treadmill is simply alien to the novelist's linguistic reconstruction. Paz would agree: "así la técnica no es propiamente un lenguaje. . . . Es un repertorio de signos dueños de significados temporales y variables: un vocabulario universal de la actividad, aplicado a la transformación de la realidad . . . (317). This unseen torturing of reality into a mechanistic shape is a crucial issue in the subtext of the novel.

In his brilliant analysis of British prison architecture in the early nineteenth century, Robin Evans goes even further than a recognition of the mute transformatory power of technology described by Paz when he uncovers the (im)moral dimension of the machine. Technology, he finds, "was not merely an aid to morality [but] a necessary precondition of the very morality it created" (198). Bentham's Panopticon prison, with its contrasts of light and darkness, its power relationships intimately tied to

the mechanisms allowing sight and preventing warders from being seen, is one such application of technology. More to the point, however, were the ancillary contraptions developed with the purpose of "grinding rogues honest" (qtd. Evans 198) as a way of obtaining power over the prisoners' very minds. The Panopticon, Evans notes, "was to be a factory with a monopoly of cheap labour" (217), of laborers like Mariano "on whose part neither dexterity nor good will were to be reckoned upon" (Bentham qtd Evans 217). Significantly, the treadmill was chosen as the perfect mechanism for punishment and production, and its adoption was, as Evans notes, "a sure and healthy way of reintroducing terror into the prisons" (303). Work performed on the treadmill could be precisely measured, could combine solitary confinement with production, would obviate the need for exercise yards, and would enforce a precise and inescapable sequence of movements. If divorced from production and profit by counterweighting the wheel, it became sheer pointless labor efficacious for "breaking down the moral structure of the mind" (Western qtd Evans 303).[4]

Spanish prison reformers were equally concerned with the moral fabric of their prisoners, a fabric which education was called upon to mend. Manuel Lardizábal y Uribe in his "Discurso sobre las penas" (1782), signals the importance of education and labor in rehabilitating criminals, for "la ociosidad y la mendicidad son las fuentes más fecundas de delitos y de desórdenes" (qtd Aparicio Laurencio 55). Similarly, the vocal nineteenth-century prison reformer Concepción Arenal emphasized the value of four branches of education—moral, religious, industrial, and literary—identified by her as the ideal spiritual cure for the disease/mental illness of criminality. With this striking introduction of the religious-spiritual element, the prison is called upon to take over one of the central functions of the Church: "la redención de penas" (Aparicio Laurencio's phrase), the forgiveness and expiation of sin. Arenal concludes: "Yo considero una prisión como un hospital, solamente que en vez de cuerpo, tenéis enferma el alma . . ." (qtd Aparicio Laurencio 103). The prison is a substitute church, a hospital for souls (an insane asylum?), and significantly, a factory as well. It is worthy of mention that the form prison industry took in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Spain is remarkably similar to the labor undertaken by Mariano and Emilia; tasks relating to spinning, weaving, and sewing of cloth or rope products predominated to such a degree that private enterprise protested and, in 1850, the government responded by dismantling prison workshops except those of "paños de Toledo y el de lienzos de Madrid."[5] The prison, thus, conflates asylum, hospital, school, factory, and church; that asylum, hospital, school, factory, and church come to be seen as prisons is a not unexpected contamination. What is surprising is that the public at large can so easily ignore the relation so manifest to Mariano and his father.

Power and the selective use of sight are intricately knitted together in *La desheredada* in other ways as well. The powerful and those who pretend to power are concerned with being seen. Indeed, they are constantly on display throughout the text: in the theater, in the churches, in the

slow processions of their coaches at the proper hour to see and be seen abroad. Such sight (or sightings) is essentially non-reciprocal; those who are seen are those with power. The underclass remains, like Mariano in his horizontal pit, unseen and unremarked. Mariano's factory/prison, a reverse Panopticon where the prisoner of the treadmill is shrouded in darkness, epitomizes the wasteland of contemporary industry where power is wielded with inhuman and immoral indifference to the unseen men ground into the machine. The form of Mariano's final rebellion is, in this repressive context, completely logical. He tears away from the treadmill, attempts to take control of his life, to break into the light, to be seen, to give himself a face and a name if only through madness and atrocity.

Other machines depicted in the novel tend to repeat and intensify the imagery of repression demonstrated in the rope factory. Well-meaning Juan Bou's printing shop is essentially similar to the tunnel treadmill in this respect[6]; it too is dark, controlled, and emprisoning, fostering the combination of "malignidad y de la estupidez" (1133) which becomes Mariano's typical expression. The long, dark tunnel of the rope factory twists itself into the "verdadero laberinto" of Juan Bou's establishment which, like the tenement beehive that surrounds the factory, is constructed bit by bit as chance or necessity dictates. The press where Mariano prints, and later composes, *aleluyas*, occupies, as may be expected by now, "la peor y más lóbrega parte" of a shop where "todo era viejo, primitivo y mohoso." Under these insalubrious working conditions, Mariano becomes pale and taciturn; the old press with its "quejidos de herido y convulsiones de epiléptico" (1080) seems more human than its operator.

The link between factory and prison already adduced is here given explicit form, for Mariano is spatially trapped between "la horrible guillotina" and the querulous old press, emprisoned during the daylight hours in a dark, cell-like basement room, his only companions another boy from his ghetto who works alongside him and "el tal arte [que] había sido encarcelado allí para expiar las culpas . . ." (1080). Ominously, in this basement room Mariano himself becomes an author—within a few months he is adept at the mechanistic composition of rhymes for the *aleluyas*—and the "tal arte" that he practices is so debased as to be metaphorically criminal. Joaquín could have been speaking of Mariano when he says that "los novelistas han introducido en la Sociedad multitud de ideas erróneas. Son los falsificadores de la vida, y por esto deberían ir todos a presidio" (1121).

More ominously still, in practicing the profession chosen for him by his sister, Mariano comes closer and closer to conflating the first great institution described in the novel, the insane asylum, with the factory/prison in which he has been employed. For Mariano's father, the road to Leganés also began in a printing house: "Mi padre entró de corrector de pruebas en una imprenta donde se hacía un periódico grande, muy grande . . . Trabajaba todas las noches junto a un quinqué de petróleo que le abrasaba la frente. Se tragaba mil discursos, artículos sueltos, decretos . . ."

(973). When he arrived home, Rufete began to compose more speeches, articles, laws, and decrees. His son, who works on an ancient press once used to publish a clandestine newspaper, manipulates "las cajas, donde yacía en pedazos de plomo el caos de la palabra humana," sets mediocre verses into type, and entertains himself with new and remembered "romances de matones, guapezas, robos, asesinatos, anécdotas del patíbulo" (1080). The parallel between father and son, whose mechanically mediated association with language leads to madness, is further pointed up in the novel's passing reference to Canencia, the madhouse scribe, whose attacks of insanity are signalled by the claim that he has "dos máquinas eléctricas en la cabeza" (975). Mariano, too, on being changed from the hated printing press to the lithography machine, finds himself so hypnotically attracted to it that the machine is, to a great extent, internalized. Mariano "sentía que se le comunicaba el vértigo de ella [la máquina], y por momentos se suponía también compuesto de piezas de hierro que marchaban a su objeto con la precisión fatal de la Mecánica" (1081): machines entering the head, breaking down, as Western predicted, "the moral structure of the mind." This mechanistic vertigo is not far from the final vertigo Mariano experiences just before madness, crime, and the mechanism are joined in the failed assassination attempt that would guarantee him, the one time soul of the rope factory, a piece of rope at last, and would insure this composer and typesetter of *aleluyas* and *romances de ciegos* a secure place in the next run.

Mariano's final downfall is not precipitated from the printing shop, however. There is still another factory association, briefly mentioned, and it is there that, implicitly, Mariano loses his last shreds of sanity and seals his fate by his acquaintance with Gaitica. Isidora, in her prison cell, hears from Miquis of her lost brother: "Ha vivido algún tiempo en un tejar, . . . y dos mujeres que encontramos . . . nos dijeron que, habiendo caído enfermo con calenturas, le habían llevado al hospital" (1130). Miquis promises to tell Isidora more of her brother's life in the tile works, a promise which remains unfulfilled in the novel, but her aunt reveals a bit more about Mariano's present state of health: "Le hemos de poner dentro de un cántaro en un cuarto oscuro, como a las maricas, para enseñarle a hablar . . ." (1132). Between the tile works and the hospital, all hope of Mariano's eventual rehabilitation is lost; the dark room has become his only refuge, enclosure and exclusion his only mode of existence. In the tile works *(tejar)*, Mariano's fate is set, the threads of his sanity are knit up *(tejer)* and snipped off.

This warping or foreclosing of possibilities by the machine is by no means unique to the Rufete clan. Mechanization is a pervasive metaphor that sends many of the characters, at one time or another, in search of their human identities like the madwoman "que corre por pasillos y salas buscando *su propia persona*" (970). One's own self is not always easy to find. Humanity itself is "una vieja máquina" falling into disrepair (1112), more obviously in the asylum, but quite clearly outside it as well. Canencia writes with such care and precision that he "parecía escribientil máquina" (971). Isidora's father "huía maquinalmente" from the asylum

caretakers. And with good reason. Galdós describes the madhouse guard as the most unpleasant of State employees: "carcelero-enfermero, es una máquina muscular . . ." (968). Far from the literal asylum, in the heart of the city, Encarnación's neighbor ties and unties her scarf "con ese movimiento maquinal que en la gente chulesca hace las veces del movimiento de abanico" (1146), don José walks away "como desconcertada máquina" (1161) at the end of the novel, and even Isidora's imagination has a mechanistic element: "Isidora se entregaba maquinalmente, sin notarlo, sin quererlo, sin pensar siquiera en la posibilidad de evitarlo, al enfermizo trabajo de la fabricación mental de su segunda vida" (986). This liminal incursion of the mechanical into seemingly insignificant detail is crucial; such decisions at the level of word choice suggest the unacknowledged extent of the diffusion of the machine and hint at subtle coercive strategies affecting the society at large. As Foucault convincingly argues, the effect of pervasive coercion (like that of the machine in this novel) is a shift in attitude towards the body: "the human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. . . . Discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience)" (138). Even poor Isidora's fabrications are not exempt—not only does she give herself up mechanically, but gives herself to mechanistically tainted productions, the fabrications that are warp and woof of a fabric strained by passage through the machine. She can reject the sewing machine, but there is no way to resist identification with the culture and society the sewing machine represents.

The process of de-individuation is obviously most clearly mapped in Mariano, despite the fact that his fabrications in the novel do not compete in power or complexity with those of his sister. Knit into the machine at an early age, the boy's human essence is soon identified with the alien mechanism. Though he tries to define himself as an autonomous being in opposition to authority with his violent act at the end of the novel, his rebellion is so confused, so overlaid with tired cliché borrowed from Juan Bou, so filigreed with his own mad, impotent rage, that his identity is effaced by the very act that should have defined it and the walls of literal and figurative prisons rise up around him for the last time.

The seemingly inevitable reabsorption of the self-defining act poses a curious problem in relation to the work of art. Bueno de Guzmán, in another of Galdós' novels, refers to the tale of his family background as "aquel prolijo cuento, historia o pliego de aleluyas" (1680), suggestively pointing to the author's ironic, unseen presence shaping and distorting the "realistic" text. Threads could be woven between Galdós, the ironic *aleluya* author, Mariano, who tried to live out similar compositions, and Rufete, the mad chronicler of the city. Furthermore, Galdós is clearly aware of the relationship of his novel to the infamous fictions read by Isidora as well as to the execrable *aleluyas* and *romances* of Mariano, and he is aware as well of the relationship of his own art to the mechanisms of the printing shop where other artworks languish in prison—or ought to.

The novelistic "subsuelo" of *La desheredada* conceals a writing

machine which, like Conrad's machine, knits up the lives of the characters it depicts. Like the treadmill, the writing machine is the soul of the narrative, an unseen motive force that can be glimpsed only partially, only intermittently in the luminous afterimage of the dazzling text. Like the printing press in Juan Bou's basement which once published "un periódico rojo" and now still suffers "un dejo de la fiebre literaria que por tanto tiempo estuvo pasando entre sus rodillos y su tambor" (1080) though it is now set to printing *aleluyas* and *romances de ciegos*, Galdós' novel manipulates the intricate resistances of history and fantasy as the two are forced together between "sus rodillos y su tambor" in his writing machine.

Finally, the darkness which is a common feature of these machines and their operation suggests a pugnacious relationship to the Panoptic schema so dear to other realistic or naturalistic writers. Mehlman points to "that ability to *see* social reality despite one's preconceptions" (121), tacitly placing the author in the role of the "carcelero-enfermero" who supervises and disciplines the madmen in his charge. Zola makes such a connection more explicitly when he announces the goal of his novelistic method as "to study phenomena in order *to control* them" (176) [my emphasis], and Seltzer, drawing out the implications of such an analysis, asks rhetorically, "Is it not possible to discover in this fantasy of surveillance a point of intersection between the realist text and a society increasingly dominated by institutions of discipline, regularization, and supervision—by the dispersed networks of the 'police'?" (529-30). To observe, to describe, to write: are these methods not in some sense forms of domination over "la sociedad presente como materia novelable" (Galdós, *Ensayos*)? If the novel and the institution seem at times to be in open conflict, are they not also, in some dark basement, in collusion? Is there, as Seltzer suggests, "a criminal continuity between the techniques of the novel and those social techniques of power which inhere in these techniques" (535)? Unlike the medieval *romances* which reflected the creation of figures of heroic stature, the *romances de ciegos* and the *aleluyas*/novel of Galdós point, as critics of *La desheredada* have often noticed, to a process of carefully chronicling the aberrations of delinquents or mental patients—the negative afterimage of a heroic sun. Such light entertainments hide the darker workings of a machinery criminal both in content and in method. What is celebrated is, in Foucault's words, "the symbolic figure of an illegality kept within the bounds of delinquency and transformed into discourse—that is to say, made doubly inoffensive" (284); that is, illegality is kept within bounds and out of sight whether the motivating impulse derives from the force of machinery or the form of a fiction. Galdós' novel both resists and recuperates this play of light and dark, this introjection of the romance into the novel, carefully negotiating the difficult exchange between documentation and sensationalism. From its opening in the madhouse to its closing in the unsightly (hence unseen by polite society) slums of Madrid, *La desheredada* traces a rigorous deception with the mechanically-oriented functioning of the institution while at the same time reaching toward a proto-cybernetic portrayal of a self-reflexive (in)human machine. The resulting merger of technique and

technology, the mingling of delight and disillusionment with social and novelistic machinery, should serve at the very least to make the reader uneasy with all such covert impositions of control, including that underwritten in and disowned by this novel.

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NOTES

1. The connections between the scene and Galdós' Spanish adaptation of Naturalism have been well established and extensively documented. Important studies such as those of Gilman, Russell, Gordon, Labanyi, and Rodgers point specifically to this aspect and discuss the significance of inherited madness in the novel. Diane F. Urey finds the first chapter emblematic in a slightly different sense. For her, the opening scene in the madhouse "outlines the prevalence of this essential ironic conflict between appearance and reality, and extends it with vivid imagery to the Madrid of the reader which lies beyond the asylum's walls" (7). Durand shares her judgment though he emphasizes the socio-historical circumstances for such a conclusion in his interpretation of the novel.
2. Montesinos cites the historically verified exploitation of women employed as seamstresses in Spain: "Las condiciones del trabajo de la mujer en España . . . eran algo indescriptibles; en España lo eran tanto más cuanto la pobretería castiza no hubiera permitido de todos modos otra cosa. . . . [E]ra increíble lo que ganaba una de estas pobres chicas para dejarse la vista en unos vestidos. . . ." (101)
3. This point could be further reinforced by reference to the evident ambiguity of the quality of education provided in the institutions depicted throughout the novel. Such education as is offered in existing schools is of dubious moral value, as Galdós suggests with the object case of Melchor Relimpio "recién salido del vientre de la madre Universidad, tan desnudo de saber como vestido de presunción" (1015). Conventional education offers a training merely for more refined criminality than that learned in the prisons, which are already schools of a type ignored by the commissioner and his friend. Near the end of the novel, when Muñoz y Nones, a man for whom "la honradez es negocio" (1140) promises a place for Mariano in his projected "Penitenciaria para jóvenes delincuentes" (1143), the reader is left to ponder if the lessons actually taught will emphasize the immorality of the lawyer or the less covert vice of Gaitica.
4. While Evans' entire book makes fascinating reading, especially pertinent passages include pp. 211-217 on the Panopticon and the question of morality and pp. 295-309 on the use of the treadmill in British prisons.
5. Aparicio Laurencio, p. 91. His information is cited principally from Vicente Boix, *Sistema penitenciario del Presidio Correccional de Valencia* (1850). The list of occupations reads like a catalogue of contemporary industry. Prisoners were employed to make rope and thread, to weave mats and fine fabrics, to sew shoes and silk stockings. There were also, significantly in view of Mariano's later employment, prisoners employed in a printing press and book binding operation.
6. It is Bou who works directly with the treadmill's closest approximation in the shop. On his desk, Galdós tells us, "la piedra en que dibujaba [estaba]

puesta sobre un disco de madera giratorio con cuyo mecanismo él le daba vuelta como si fuera un papel" (1081). The reader may well ask if Bou's "ojo rotatorio" is a compensatory adjustment of sight to his "disco giratorio."

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