

THE GRAPHIC COMPONENT OF THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT OF GALDÓS'S *LA DESHEREDADA*: RESULTS, RELEVANCE, AND RAMIFICATIONS

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Scholars fortunate enough to gain access to the original manuscripts and galley proofs of Galdós's many novels—housed in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid and the Casa-Museo Pérez Galdós in the Canary Islands—will come across a fascinating array of drawings with human subjects.¹ This eye-catching artwork becomes all the more important when we recall Galdós's surprising statement given in 1914 in an interview with the well-known reporter, José María Carretero. Referring to the graphic component involved in the creative process, the novelist made the following revelation:

Para escribir me resulta un complemento [the graphic component] porque antes de crear literariamente los personajes de mis obras, los dibujo con lápiz, para tenerlos delante mientras hablo de ellos [...]. Tengo dibujados en lápiz a todos los personajes que he creado.

Together, these two vital bits of information—the existence of the manuscript and galley proof sketches along with Galdós's confession to Carretero—provide scholars with the tantalizing possibility of finding the actual starting point for the creation of memorable characters such as Isidora Rufete, Felipe Centeno, or even Fortunata. In spite of this enticing scenario, however, researchers have paid but scant attention to these drawings and, by extension, to the part they play in Galdós's creative process. Stephen Miller, a highly respected *Galdosista* who not long ago published valuable work on a separate aspect of don Benito's artistic capabilities, openly laments the lack of attention accorded the manuscripts drawings:

Más significativos son algunos de los abundantes dibujos que adornan las páginas manuscritas de las novelas galdosianas. No se estudian aquí por requerir un tiempo y acceso a los manuscritos que no tengo. Pero la cita galdosiana dada arriba de la entrevista de 1914 con Carretero, indica la relevancia de la investigación gráfica de los manuscritos de las novelas galdosianas. (13)

The present essay, therefore, addresses what one might arguably call one of the most significant gaps in Galdosian studies: the manuscript and galley proof drawings. It focuses on a limited number of sketches found in Galdós's 1881 novel *La desheredada* for several reasons. To begin with, this manuscript contains more sketches than any other manuscript or galley proof: a total of 59 drawings with human subjects. Equally important is the fact that during the years 1879-1881 Galdós found himself deeply immersed in the Madrid art world. He was working closely with the Mérida brothers on the illustrated edition of the *Episodios Nacionales* and he was developing the famous hybrid sphinx that he would use for his title page, publishing house, letterhead, and private furniture (Miller 221-41). And, perhaps most important of all, Galdós was laying the groundwork for a new approach to the novel, an approach that he would describe in very artistic terms. The primary goal of this essay centers on the connection of sketches to characters, a task significantly more complex than one might think. We will also, however, offer commentary

on how Galdós used this artwork in the composition process as well as on why we find such an abundance of drawings in *La desheredada*, the cornerstone of the contemporary novels.

Given Galdós's rare talent for creating detailed descriptions of characters, one might conclude that the job of connecting a sketch to a character would be relatively simple. Unfortunately, such is not the case. The sketches that the novelist has left us are what we could call first versions, devoid, for the most part, of those idiosyncratic descriptors that will make the characters so memorable. If we accept the fact that Galdós drew these characters *a priori*, we must conclude that he used them as a point of departure and certainly not as a finished product. It appears to us that the novelist moved from graphic to lexical in only quasi ekphrastic fashion. That is to say, he did not attempt a detail-for-detail transformation of his drawing into textual form. Instead of copying, Galdós tended to add textual details to the original graphic until, in some cases, the difference between the finished textual description and the original drawing becomes so great that the connecting process becomes more than a little problematic. To make matters even worse, Galdós provides no identifying tags, and he frequently positions his drawings pages or even chapters away from the primary textual description of the character in question.

The first two sketches that we have selected serve as a good case in point.² Found in Part I (ms. 134) of the manuscript, figure #1 features a rough-edged, middle-age man with a thick moustache, and a slightly oversized nose. There is a hint of some kind of marking above the right eyebrow and the left eyeball seems somehow abnormal. The basic details of the sketch point to only one character: the brutish lithographer, Juan Bou. The sketch itself is impressive, but Galdós's textual description found deep in Part II is what makes it come alive. The beard becomes even thicker; one eye bulges and seems to rotate; and the nose grows dramatically as Bou emerges as an almost primordial being with a delicate touch and a mysterious past:

Su cara enfundada en copiosa barba negra y revuelta, mostraba por entre tanto áspero pelo dos ojos desiguales, el uno vivísimo, dotado de un ligero movimiento rotatorio, el otro fijo y sin brillo; más abajo, y puesta como al acaso, una nariz ciclópea [...]. (Part II, 292-93)

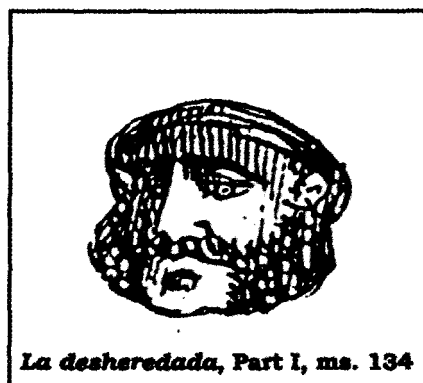


figure #1

The identification of the second sketch of a bearded man, also located in Part I (ms. 473), is somewhat more problematical. Here, we have a relatively handsome man with considerable facial hair and a not particularly small nose. Given the position of the sketch, the limited number of hirsute characters in Part I, and the average to moderate good looks of the subject, we can logically conclude that this is the initial version of Melchor Relimpio, one of Isidora's many lovers. But a curious transformation once again takes place as Galdós moves from the graphic to the lexical. Melchor—seen primarily through the eyes of his mother—becomes younger, more attractive, almost exceptional:

¿Cómo no, si Melchor era, según doña Laura, lo más selecto del orbe en hermosura, talento, y sociabilidad? [...]. Melchor [...] tenía la mejor fachada personal que pudiera desear un hombre [...] Tenía la barba negra, los ojos ídem; el pelo ídem; el entendimiento ídem [...] de modo que si este mes se le veía con barba corrida, el que entra llevaba patillas [...]. (Part I, 141)



figure #2

Isidora, however, is prone to see what others do not. Her view of Melchor seems to come from the original drawing: “Aquella hermosura tan ponderada por doña Laura, parecíale a ella ordinaria, y sus modales y vestir afectados y cursis” (Part I, 147). Then, in her “Insomnio número cincuenta y tantos,” she calls him “lindo ganso” (Part I, 170) or “asno bonito” (Part I, 171). Later, she refers to Relimpio's appearance as “vistoso, aunque nunca simpático” (Part II, 342).

The dense beards and the different angles of figures #1 and #2 make it difficult to identify one as Bou and the other as Relimpio. One explanation is that figure #2 is actually a second version of the lithographer. A second possibility is that we have here an example of spillage between one sketch and another. With so many characters and so many details to handle, it is certainly understandable that Galdós on occasion confused their multiple physical attributes. But whatever the explanation, the similarities between the two sketches underscore the kind of difficulties researchers can expect to find in this complex identification process.

There are only a few sketches with female subjects in the manuscript of *La desheredada* and the one selected for this essay is as problematic as the two we have just discussed. The drawing of the young handsome woman that we see in profile (Galdós

tended to face his sketches to the observer's left) appears in a circular frame. Her delicate features—from her slightly pursed lips to her tranquil eyes and enigmatic gaze—along with the nuanced shadowing give the drawing a sublime almost poetic quality. Taking into account the limited number of attractive females in the novel, the position of the sketch (early in “Tomando posesión de Madrid”) and the subsequent textual descriptions, one has to conclude that this is none other than the protagonist, Isidora Rufete.



Figure #3

On several occasions the terms that Galdós uses to describe Isidora seem to derive from this drawing. Early in the work, Encarnación Guillén tells her niece that “en la cara tienes mucho de ángel” (Part I, 40). Then, when Isidora eats an orange during her frolic through the park, Galdós writes: “Isidora ponía en movimiento los dos hoyuelos de su cara, que ya se ahondaban, ya se perdían, jugando en la piel. La nariz era recta. Sus ojos claros, serenos y como velados [...]” (Part I, 73). Later on, we find additional evidence that suggests that Galdós was creating Isidora in ekphrastic fashion. The description of Isidora, as she carefully prepares for her defining visit to the Aransis mansion, hints at more than a passing connection to the sketch:

Uno de sus mayores encantos era la gracia con que se compartía y derramaba su abundante cabello castaño alrededor de la frente, detrás de las orejas y sobre el cuello. Aquella diadema de sombra daba a su rostro no sé qué matices de poesía crepuscular, como si todo él estuviese formado con tintas y rasgos tomados de la melancolía y sosiego de la tarde. Sus ojos eran pardos y de un mirar cariñoso, con somnolencia de siesta o fiebre de insomnio según los casos; un mirar que lo expresaba todo, ya la generosidad, ya el entusiasmo, y siempre la nobleza. (Part I, 224)

Finally, when a desperate Isidora dramatically pulls aside her veil to reveal her face to the marquise, she creates a kind of impromptu portrait not unlike the sketch: “Con gentil arrogancia separó su velo para mostrar más completos el rostro y busto. Su cara se sublimaba por la fé. ¿Qué destello divino era aquel que de sus ojos emanaba?” (Part I, 232).

Isidora, of course, claims to be the “retrato vivo” (Part I, 232) of her putative mother, a contention that leads us to a second description linked to the manuscript drawing. Ironically, the

details of the sketch of Virginia that sits above the Aransis fireplace draw on the physical as well as the abstract qualities of Galdós's manuscript sketch. Consequently, figure #3 has both a graphic as well as a lexical referent within the text:

Era un retrato de mujer, en cuyo agraciado rostro hacía contraste la sonrisa de los labios frescos con la melancolía de los ojos pardos, debajo de las cejas más galanas que se han podido ver. Resultaba una doble expresión de enamorada y de burlona, y allí se echaba a ver el sentimiento hondo y fuerte, mal disimulado con la hipocresía de un carácter superficialmente picaresco. (Part I, 154)

As we can readily see, the similarities between Galdós's sketch and his subsequent lexical images of Isidora and Virginia are so convincing that it would be difficult to argue that he did not use the artwork as a model of sorts for the creation of both characters. We can also see, however, that the sketch represents a starting point, a work-in-progress so to speak, since it lacks several of the young women's key physical attributes not the least of which are Virginia's "cabello abundante" (Part I, 154) and Isidora's "abundante cabello castaño" (Part I, 224).

The identification of figure #4 offers a similar but distinct problem. Found in Part II of the manuscript, this drawing features a somewhat ineffectual looking, elderly man with a sloping nose, moustache and goatee. The subject, seen in profile facing to the left, has strands of hair but is essentially bald on the top front of his head. One notes a hint of sadness or melancholy in his eyes. But the most salient characteristic of the sketch is the one exaggeratedly large ear that seems to dominate the other details. Readers of *La desheredada* will not take long to recognize some—not all—of these traits as those of José Relimpio y Sastre, Isidora's inept but lovable shadow.

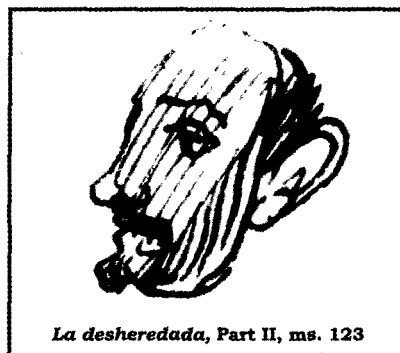


figure #4

In his initial lexical description, Galdós focuses on both the moustache and the baldness:

... no entraba en pieza alguna donde hubiese un espejillo, sin que, ya con disimulo, ya sin él, se echase una visual para examinar su empaque, y atusarse después el bigote, o poner mano en los contados cabellos que venían flébiles [sic] y pegajosos, desde la nuca, a tapar el gran claro de la coronilla. (Part I, 128)

The description of a depressed José later in Part II, however, seems somewhat closer to

what we see in figure #4:

Bien se conoce en su faz su martirio y las tristezas que está pasando. Ved su cara demacrada y lánguida, sus ojos impregnados de no sé qué melancolía de funeral; ved también sus mejillas, antes competidoras de las rosas y claveles, ahora pálidas y surcadas de arrugas. (Part II, 308)

The identification of figure #5 presents us with a different but still intriguing set of circumstances. Located in Part II, on a page where Galdós is describing Juan Bou, the sketch has nothing to do with the rough-edged lithographer. Figure #5 contains two very distinguishing features. The first has to do with the subject's eyes. Normally Galdós presents his drawings in profile and, as a result, we see only one eye. In this case, however, he provides us with a complete frontal view of an average looking, middle-aged man with a disconcerting stare, two details that suggest that vision and sight figure prominently in the make-up of this character. The second has to do with the long, drooping mustache that dominates the lower portion of the subject's face to such a degree that his mouth all but disappears behind the overabundant facial hair.

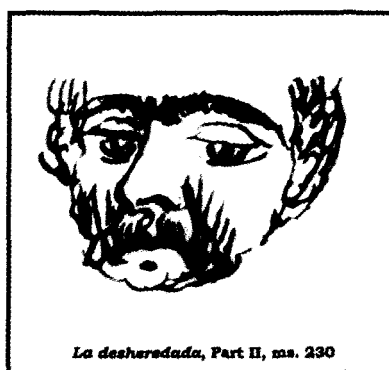


figure #5

Both the eyes and the limpid moustache indicate that this sketch represents Alejandro Sánchez Botín. He, of course, is the voyeur-cum-politician, who, when he first appears in the novel, is described largely in terms of his roving and penetrating eyes:

Una tarde [Isidora] notó que un señor la miraba mucho. Sus ojos, distraídos de cuanto en la iglesia había, pasaban por delante del orador (con no poca irreverencia) e iban derechos a buscar a Isidora al fondo de la capilla donde ponerse solía. A la tarde siguiente observó que aquel señor de los ojos irreverentes entraba acompañando a unas damas muy guapetonas [...]. Seguía mirándola [...]. El caballero, en verdad, no tenía nada de simpático; era muy descarado, bastante feo, morenísimo, de edad entre los cuarenta y cinco y los cincuenta [...].

Tercera tarde. Cuando Isidora salió, ya anochecido, vio en la puerta al señor mirón [...].

No se sabe cómo se puso al habla con Isidora el señor mirón; pero es indudable que se puso. (Part II, 288-90)⁴

Later in the novel, Galdós again centers his description on Botín's eyes as well as his drooping moustache:

Cuando palidece se pone la cara de un tinte ceniciento que causa horror. Si se quita las gafas sus ojos son tan feos, tan raros... Te digo que no se le puede mirar, porque los ojos parecen dos huevos duros, todos surcados de venillas rojas. Cuando el bigote se le desengoma y la barba negra y cana se le desordena, parece un escobillón inglés. (Part II, 326)

Galdós, then, clearly seems to have had figure #5 in mind, as he progressed through the creation of this political scoundrel. We still need to keep in mind, however, that several of Botín's defining physical and moral traits—his incipient girth, his small feet, and delicate hands along with his jealousy and pettiness—do not find their way into the sketch. And what this suggests is that while the artist in Galdós might have provided the initial mold for characters such as Botín, it was still the novelist in him that eventually came along to give them depth, breadth, and life.

In addition to these intriguing sketches of human subjects/characters, the manuscript of *La desheredada* contains one of the strangest drawings found in any of the original manuscripts or galley proofs. This bit of curious artwork is located in Part I, on the back of ms. 186 in a section that corresponds to chapter VI, "Hombres." What we see here is an almost child-like drawing that features a small man with the head of a fish. The subject seems to be seated on one side of a large open book, which seems to rest on top of a second, larger book. The sketch lends itself to several interpretations.

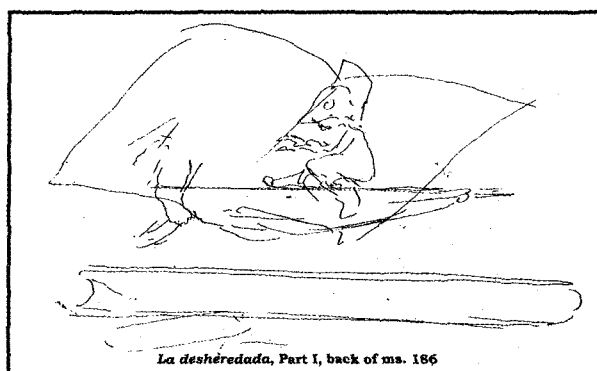


figure #6

To begin with, the figure immediately reminds the reader of the infamous Pez family, described by Galdós a few chapters later as having "escamas de plata y oro" (Part I, 180). Since the patriarch of this clan, Manuel José Ramón del Pez, is known for his questionable accounting practices, one might legitimately conclude that these two books—one open and accessible, the other closed and hidden—serve as graphic references to Pez's budgetary sleights of hand.

But perhaps the most thought-provoking explanation of this sketch has to do with the

metafictional aspect that it suggests. Isidora, of course, is a *novelera* and claims to have read her own life story on more than one occasion:

‘No es caso nuevo ni mucho menos,—decía. Los libros están llenos de casos semejantes. ¡Yo he leído mi propia historia tantas veces...! ¿Y qué cosa hay más linda que cuando nos pintan una joven pobrecita, muy pobrecita, que vive en una buhardilla y trabaja para mantenerse; y esa joven, que es bonita como los ángeles y, por supuesto, honrada, más honrada que los ángeles, llora mucho y padece, porque unos pícaros la quieren infamar; y luego, en cierto día, se para una gran carretela a la puerta y sube una señora marquesa muy guapa, y ve a la joven, y hablan, y se explican, y lloran mucho las dos, viniendo a resultar que la muchacha es hija de la marquesa, que la tuvo de un cierto conde calavera? Por lo cual de repente cambia de posición la niña, y va a habitar a palacios, y se casa con un joven que ya, en los tiempos de su pobreza, la pretendía, y ella le amaba... Pero si se ha acabado la misa. ¿Pies, para qué os quiero?’ (Part I, 119-20)

The drawing, one might legitimately conclude, hints at a similar kind of a novel within a novel. The open book in the top section of the sketch represents *La desheredada*, still a work in progress and with many possible conclusions. The book in the lower section, however, is closed and probably serves as a reference to Isidora’s past reading experience with pulp fiction. The curious subject, positioned where he can observe the entire scene, might easily be taken as the reader (us?) or even the composer (Galdós).

Finally, this odd sketch of a man with the head of a fish may have ramifications that go beyond *La desheredada*. A review of the drawings done in his youth in the Canary Islands shows that Galdós had both a penchant and talent for this type of drawing.



figure #7 (*Gran teatro de la pescadería* 29)

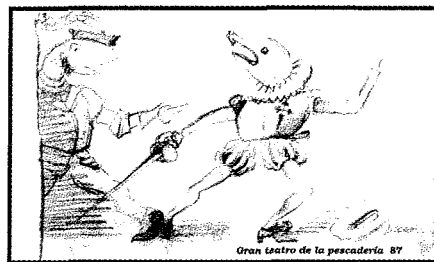


Figure #8 (*Gt de la pescadería* 87)

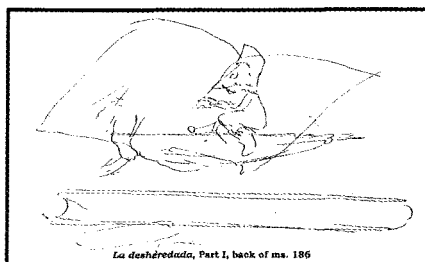


figure #9

The striking similarity between the sketch from the manuscript of *La desheredada* and the half-fish and half-man figures in *Gran teatro de la pescadería* suggests several possibilities. To begin with, it appears that Galdós used his early artwork as a point of departure for this and other subsequent sketches.⁵ And this conclusion, by extension, hints at the possibility that Galdós actually created a kind of warehouse of drawings—most of which came from his days in the Canary Islands—that later served as the ekphrastic starting point for many of the characters that he created during his long literary career.⁶ If this is indeed the case, then we must also ask ourselves if Galdós, in order to create his masterful Realistic and Naturalistic characters, depended more on graphic memories from an admittedly Romantic period in his life than on the firsthand observations that he frequently mentioned.⁷

In conclusion, in addition to the all-important initial publication of these sketches, the present essay draws critical attention to at least five important aspects related to artwork and *La desheredada*. (1) Future researchers need to be aware of the many pitfalls involved in the process of connecting graphic to lexical especially the fact that the position of the sketches frequently does not correspond to the primary textual description of the character in question. (2) Galdós made a bold revelation to Carretero about the existence of a series of *a priori* sketches that played a role in the creation of his characters—“tengo dibujados en lápiz a todos mis personajes”—but investigators should be aware that these sketches represent a starting point, not a finished product, and that as Galdós moved from art to text, he did so in only quasi ekphrastic fashion. Many of his characters’ unforgettable idiosyncrasies would appear well after the initial artistic rendering. (3) We now have substantial evidence—from fish/men to lions, nuns, and sphinxes—to conclude that Galdós recycled his drawings and that more than likely he warehoused his early artwork and then brought it into play again during his years in Madrid. (4) Compared to the other extant manuscripts and galley proofs, *La desheredada* contains an inordinate amount of sketches, many with a level of artistic sophistication that goes beyond what we have discovered in previous manuscripts.⁸ In addition to the importance of quality and quantity, we should not forget that Galdós was, at this juncture, deeply involved with the controversial question concerning the value of illustrations within a printed text.⁹ What all this information—more sketches, more attention to detail, the novelist’s privileged place in the art world of Madrid in 1881, and a clearly stated belief in the value of illustrated texts—seems to suggest is that at some point in the creative process Galdós at least considered the possibility of publishing *La desheredada*, the cornerstone of the Contemporary Novels, as an illustrated novel.¹⁰ (5) Our final connecting point between the lexical and the graphic centers on the decidedly artistic bent of Galdós’s famous statement to Francisco Giner de los Ríos about his goals for *La desheredada*: “Efectivamente, yo he querido en esta obra entrar por nuevo camino o inaugurar mi *segunda* o *tercera* manera como se dice de los pintores” (Cossío 62). For the researcher fortunate enough to have the opportunity to read Galdós’s revelation to Giner, as he or she looks through the dozens of impressive sketches found in the original manuscript of *La desheredada*, the impact is, to say the least, stunning. Perhaps Galdós still felt tempted

at this juncture to make this his first illustrated novel or perhaps he was finally acknowledging the vital role of art—and ekphrasis—in his creative process.¹¹ Whatever the case may be, the drawings found in *La desheredada*, the pillar of the Contemporary Novels, represent a heretofore untapped pool of invaluable critical material that more than likely still has much to give.

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NOTES

¹ For specific details on the quantity and quality of the artwork in all the original manuscripts and galley proofs, see Schnepf ("The Galdós Sketches").

² We want to offer our gratitude to the staff at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid for their help during several long summer sessions. The staff in the *Sala de Manuscritos* and *Reprografía* continually went out of their way to help us with everything from documentation to glossies. The drawings we are using in this essay come from enlargements made within the library. We have obtained written consent from the Biblioteca Nacional to use them. We have slightly enlarged the sketches for the sake of clarity.

³ All quotations from *La desheredada* are from the first edition published originally in *entrega* format. We have opted to modernize Galdós's orthography.

⁴ It is worth noting that this entire chapter, "Entreaeto en la iglesia," is dominated by eyes and the desire to see and be seen: "Mientras Isidora hacía estas y otras observaciones, notaba que algunas de las elegantes cofrades eran miradas tenazmente por los caballeretes, y que ellas solían mirarlos también con afectada distracción, de donde vino a considerar que si tanto flechazo de ojos dejase una raya en el espacio, el interior de la iglesia parecería una gran tela de araña" (Part II, 289).

⁵ The manuscript of the *La desheredada*, for example, also contains several sketches of lions that closely resemble the lions found in page 64 of the *Álbum arquitectónico*. We have also discovered in the manuscript of *La desheredada* several rough drafts related to the famous Egyptian sphinx that appears for the first time on the title page of the 1881 novel (ms. 57, 69, 120, and 492 of Part II). These sketches almost certainly have a direct connection to Galdós's *Atlas Zoológico* (1866-67, 29) where the novelist's two friends, León y Castillo and Bethencourt, are portrayed as a lion and an Egyptian sphinx respectively.

⁶ We know that Galdós frequently repeated sketches. Similar versions of the nun found in the manuscript of *La desheredada* (ms. 155), for example, are found in the manuscripts of *Los Apostólicos* (Ms. 222) and *La de los tristes destinos* (galley proofs).

⁷ In his prologue to the 1913 edition of *Misericordia*, Galdós mentions the long months that he spent studying and observing the beggars that lived in the poorest sections of Madrid: "[...] hube de emplear largos meses en observación y estudios directos del natural, visitando las guaridas de gente mísera ó maleante que se alberga en los populosos barrios del Sur de Madrid" (Shoemaker 108).

⁸ Some examples of these less sophisticated drawings can be found in: *Gloria* (1876-77), ms. 462; *Los Cien mil hijos de San Luis* (1877), ms. 363, *Un voluntario realista* (1878), ms. 346.

⁹ In his prologue to the 1881 illustrated edition of the *Episodios Nacionales*, Galdós writes the following: "Hay obras á las cuales la ilustración, por buena que sea, no añade nada. Esta, por el contrario, es de aquellas que, amparadas por el dibujo, pueden alcanzar extraordinario realce y adquirir encantos que con toda la buena voluntad no hallarías seguramente en la simple lectura" (Shoemaker 52).

¹⁰ In *Historia de la edición en España*, Jesús Martínez Martín points out that the *novela por entregas* was especially well suited for illustration, primarily because of the economic and linguistic level of the reading public (124-27). It is worth repeating that *La desheredada* was, of course, originally published as an *entrega*.

¹¹ Bly has adroitly demonstrated the multiple connections to and the impact of the visual arts in *La desheredada*. In this 1881 novel we find a variety of art forms—from famous works to broadsheets to cheap reproductions—pseudo connoisseurs, low-level artists, and great museums. But the presence of the sketches in the original manuscript adds both depth and breadth to the overall impact of art in this all-important novel. For more information on the role of art in *La desheredada*, see Schnepf's essay on Isidora's visit to the Prado Museum, as described in a deleted section of the original manuscript.

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