



“Beethoven” and “Sigue Beethoven”: The Sonata-Form Structure of Galdós’s *La desheredada*

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It has been demonstrated that while creating the novel *Tristana*, as well as the first volume of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, Galdós did clearly follow the musical pattern known as sonata form.¹ This musical design is most frequently used as the basic structure for the first or last movement of a sonata (and sometimes also for the first movement of a symphony, as in the case of Beethoven’s Third [*Eroica*] Symphony). In creative fiction it has served as a model for such well-known authors as James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, and Anthony Burgess.² Because Galdós suggests in two consecutive chapters, “Beethoven” and “Sigue Beethoven,” that *La desheredada* might be read as if it were a sonata, the purpose of the present study is to explore the structure of the novel as sonata form, as has been done with *Tristana*. Further, we shall suggest why Galdós chose *La desheredada* to be the first of his sonata-form novels.

Musicologist Leonard Ratner has pointed out that one of the most distinguishing features of the sonata form is its similarity to a formal argument or debate, with the main parts being the exposition, development, recapitulation, and coda:

The first premise is the home key, represented by thematic material which we shall call A.

The second premise is the contrasting key, represented by thematic material which we shall call B.

The home key makes its point with A; the point is refuted by the contrasting key with B. This refutation takes longer to accomplish than the initial argument; it also makes its final point with great emphasis. (We are now at the end of the exposition.)

The premise of contrasting-key material is undermined by the digressions and explorations of the development.

Home-key A material returns (recapitulation) to reestablish the first premise, *but* in order to settle the argument and reconcile the two contrasting premises, the home key later incorporates the B material, showing that there can be unity, after all, between A and B. To

make its point more powerfully, the home key asserts itself with great emphasis (coda). (240)

Galdós's novel *La desheredada* follows a similar structural plan, and the main correspondences between this novel and a typical sonata form can be outlined as follows:

Musical equivalent

Exposition

Initial A theme

Initial B theme

A theme restated

B theme restated

Transition to development

Development

Recapitulation

Coda

Galdós's chapters

Volume I, Chapters 1-3

Volume I, Chapter 1

Volume I, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3,
paragraphs 1-38³

Volume I, Chapter 3, paragraphs 39-70

Remainder of Volume I, Chapter 3

Volume I, Chapter 4

Volume I, Chapters 5-18

Volume II, Chapters 1-9

Volume II, Chapters 10-17

Volume II, Chapter 18

Let us now examine the details of Galdós's working out of this pattern. We shall do so in chronological order, beginning with the exposition.

Exposition

In this opening portion Galdós, like a musical composer, presents (in the customary symmetrical pattern) the main themes he will be working with throughout the rest of the novel. He commences by presenting his A theme—illusion and irrationality⁴—as the novel opens with a focus upon the extravagant and bizarre behavior of mental patients in the Leganés asylum. The most notable inmate, and incarnation of the A theme, is Tomás Rufete, the father of Isidora, the protagonist. However, before the end of the first chapter, one sees that Isidora, who has come to visit her father on the day he happens to be dying, does not herself live in a world of complete reality. She affirms that Tomás Rufete is not her biological father, and the assistant to the asylum's director, who at this juncture seems grounded in reality and very wise, plays into Isidora's illusion: “[SÍ], entiendo, entiendo. Usted, por su nacimiento, pertenece a otra clase más elevada, sólo que circunstancias [. . .] le hicieron descender [. . .]” (I, i, 1: 27).⁵ However, this assistant, Canseca, soon becomes unhinged himself; we learn that he has also been a patient here for thirty-two years, and thus may be considered yet another personification of the A theme. After the asylum's director has to tell Isidora that her father has died, Augusto Miquis, a young medical student who happens to be a childhood acquaintance from Isidora's home town, consoles her and offers to accompany her back to Madrid. Together, they leave the asylum, “la morada de la sinrazón” (I, i, 4: 35), as Galdós concludes the initial presentation of his A theme.

After the presentation of the opening A theme, Beethoven characteristically created a “connecting episode.” Galdós follows suit with a focus upon Isidora's existing thoughts

and feelings. This focus continues until her visit the next day to her aunt, Encarnación Guillén, popularly known as *La Sanguijuelera*.

Now clearly following the sonata-form pattern, Galdós's B theme (his answering contrast to the A theme) predominates in chapters 2 and 3. This new theme—reality—is made manifest by means of the chapter-title protagonists, *La Sanguijuelera* and Mariano. The former, Isidora's sixty-eight year old aunt, is quite grounded in reality, which is a prerequisite for surviving as an independent shopkeeper in a lower-class Madrid neighborhood. After some getting-reacquainted visiting, the colorful *Sanguijuelera* takes Isidora to visit her thirteen-year-old brother, Mariano, who is working in a rope factory under the most horrible conditions. Here we certainly see the harsh reality of life as it is, vivified by the all-too-common nineteenth-century exploitation of child labor.⁶ Clearly the two eponymous chapter protagonists, individually and in tandem, offer a strong contrast to those who had earlier personified the A theme, as Galdós now completes his initial answering and contrasting B theme.

As in the music of a sonata form, Galdós's A theme now comes back to emphasize its previous premise. The author does this (II, iii) as Isidora elaborates on her earlier statement to Canseca in the Leganés asylum: Tomás Rufete is not her father. Moreover, she affirms that she and her brother are children of a *marquesa*, and she has legal documents to prove her claim. Thus, as is customary in the sonata-form pattern, Galdós's A theme now has returned with greater intensity, while at the same time it presents a number of sub-themes that open possibilities for further development.

At this juncture, as in a musical composition, the B theme is given a final chance for rebuttal. *La Sanguijuelera*, who has a “gran sentido para apreciar la realidad de las cosas” (I, iii: 55), begins mocking Isidora's aristocratic pretensions with deflating sarcasm. Finally, she grabs a stick and beats Isidora on the head. When the stick breaks, she combines the two parts and is able to strike still harder, even after Isidora falls to the floor. Although Isidora would like to resist, “devolviendo cólera por cólera, hubo de rendirse al fin [. . .]. En sus veinte años, Isidora tenía menos fuerza que la sexagenaria Encarnación” (I, iii: 56). Clearly the B theme is much the stronger here, and it has triumphed in its contention with the A theme.

Thus we have arrived at the end of Galdós's exposition. The two themes—illusion and irrationality versus reality—have been presented, rebutted, re-presented, and once again rebutted. Both themes are now ready for further development and interplay throughout the rest of the novel, significantly with the B theme having had the last word in the formal or debate sense and showing so much more strength than the A theme as to make its final triumph at the end of the novel seem likely.

Transition to the development section

In music—and certainly in Beethoven's sonatas—there is nearly always a transitional passage (using the A theme) that leads to the development section. In Galdós's novel, a similar transitional passage occurs in chapter 4. Having recovered from the beating by her aunt, Isidora now reveals her thoughts and feelings as she interacts extensively with

Miquis during his guided tour of well-known sites in Madrid: El Retiro, El Prado, and La Castellana. Very importantly, Isidora considers herself too highborn and sophisticated for any romantic involvement with the reality-grounded medical student. Then at the climax of the chapter (with transcendent authorial foreshadowing of the novel's ending) Isidora enthusiastically identifies with the “[mujeres de] las mantillas blancas” (I, iv, 4: 81-82)—prostitutes hired to protest the reign of Amadeo I—whom she mistakenly believes are aristocratic ladies, worthy of emulation. Thus we see the A-versus-B counterpoint of reality/pragmatism and illusion/fantasy, set forth in yet another variation.

Development section

Before entering into a discussion of the long development section, let us pause to consider the main features of this part of the sonata form. The purpose of this section, as its name suggests, is to develop the themes set forth in the exposition. The composer is at liberty to unfold and explore the manifold possibilities in each theme, modifying, fragmenting, complicating, and embellishing as much as his talent will permit. This is one of the more challenging segments of a sonata-form structure and a place where the composer may demonstrate his resourcefulness and imagination. However, there is one thing a composer must do: he is obliged to undermine gradually the key of the B theme (which had appeared the stronger, more triumphant at the end of the exposition) so that its ultimate surrender and subsequent fading away, near the end of the entire sonata-form section, will seem logical and readily acceptable to the listener. Ratner states that “as a rule, the section called the *development* goes far afield harmonically, creating a great deal of instability; toward the end the harmony settles so that a cadence to the home key of the A theme is first promised, then accomplished at the recapitulation [the section following the development and preceding the coda]” (238).

Let us now see how Galdós creates his own novelistic parallel to a musical development section (I, v-II, ix). Basically he is unfolding and exploring various possibilities of his contending illusion and reality themes, illustrated through a beautiful young provincial woman who disdains working for a living and attempts to reside in the Spanish capital and pursue an irrational lawsuit. The latter is part of a completely unrealistic quest to become acknowledged as a biological member of an old aristocratic family. As the contending themes continue to interact, a number of sub-themes (initiated already in the exposition) are also given attention. These include Isidora's haughtiness, her love of luxury, her belief that her brother can be educated, and her financial irresponsibility.

With chapter 5 opening the development section, the A theme predominates as Isidora reacts to the fact that a handsome aristocrat, the *Marqués viudo de Saldeoro*, has left his calling card. This causes her to feel so superior to Miquis that she breaks off an engagement to attend the theater with him. Thus she can devote the entire evening to her fantasies, even imagining in great detail how each of the next four days and evenings will transpire.

Not included in her fantasies are the everyday events of her brother and his associates. Thus the B theme can and does predominate as chapter 6 realistically features boys at

play. Climactically the realistic elements turn violent with Mariano killing another boy and being arrested (I, vi, 3: 111-19).

Meanwhile the A theme is continuing (chapter 7) as Isidora goes shopping in Madrid. First she stops for Mass, but the service for her is only a backdrop for reverie. Now it is revealed that her notion about being the as-yet-unrecognized daughter of a *marquesa* comes from novels she has read: “Yo he leído mi propia historia tantas veces” (I, vii: 123). Her weakness for luxury and superfluous items, as well as her inability to be practical with her money, are repeatedly demonstrated in this chapter, entitled “Tomando posesión de Madrid.” Thus, when she arrives home, “cargada de compras” (I, vii: 127), and learns of her brother’s arrest, she has difficulty even scraping together enough money for cab fare to visit him in jail.

In chapter 8 Galdós introduces three new voices of his A theme. The first is José Relimpio, a blood relative of Tomás, Isidora, and Mariano Rufete. As such, this “hombre que no servía para nada” (I, viii, 1: 130) carries the same hereditary traits that predispose the family towards irrational thought and behavior. So also does his son Melchor, whose manifestation of the family weakness is seen in repeated, completely unrealistic get-rich-quick schemes. Of a different sort is Melchor’s mother, Doña Laura. Although a representative of reason vis-à-vis her delusionary boarder Isidora (I, viii, 2: 141), Laura reveals herself to be out of touch with reality concerning all aspects of the life of her unemployed son, Melchor.

An important innovation of an entirely different kind occurs in chapters 9 and 10 as Galdós gives a purposeful authorial clue to the sonata-form structure as pattern for the entire novel.⁷ In chapter 9 (“Beethoven”) he presents the grandson of the *Marquesa de Aransis* actually playing a piano sonata, while simultaneously Galdós grants a look at the Aransis family history. Galdós’s descriptions of the intricacies of Beethoven’s artistry (I, ix, 1: 158-59) display the author’s ability to pattern a work of his own using musical techniques and analogies. The narrator says (in part):

Una idea sola, tan sencilla como desgarradora, aparecía entre el vértigo de mil ideas secundarias y se perdía luego en la más caprichosa variedad de diseños que puede concebir la fantasía, para aparecer al instante transformada. [. . .] De modulación en modulación, la idea única se iba desfigurando sin dejar de ser la misma, semejanza de un historión que cambia de vestido. Su cuerpo subsistía, su aspecto variaba. (I, ix, 1: 158)

External evidence also indicates that Galdós’s knowledge of Beethoven’s sonatas was sufficient to enable him to follow the latter’s structural designs. Rafael Moragas indicates that Galdós’s mastery of Beethoven’s music was achieved by strenuous application: “[D]on Benito descifraba trabajosamente las sonatas de Beethoven en un armonium que tenía cuando vivía [. . .] en Madrid” (qtd. in Verdaguer 176). A letter from Manrique de Lara confirms Moraga’s suggestion that Galdós worked hard at analyzing Beethoven’s compositions. Apologizing to Galdós for having to miss an appointment, Lara remarks, “Confío en que mañana podré hacerlo y no sólo podremos concertar el andante de Beethoven, sino hacer un primeroso y detenidísimo estudio de la armonía” (qtd. in

Sopena Ibáñez 26). The letter also suggests that Lara was serving as a consultant to Galdós, for he notes, “Tenga la seguridad de que para mí es una honra muy grande y un verdadero placer el ser de alguna utilidad para Vd.” (qtd. in Sopena Ibáñez 26). Yet another friend who knew that Galdós was interested in the analysis of Beethoven’s works was the pianist and composer Joaquín Malats, who wrote to Galdós: “Ahora estoy estudiando la sonata op. 111 de Beethoven [. . .] ya verá Vd. Es sencillamente monumental” (qtd. in Sopena Ibáñez 136). And Galdós himself said in 1902 in the *prólogo* to *Alma y vida*:

Tracé y construí la ideal arquitectura de *Alma y vida*, siguiendo por espiritual atracción, el plan y módulo de la composición beethoviana, y no se tome esto a desvarío, que el más grande de los músicos es quien mejor nos revela la esencia y aun el desarrollo del sentimiento dramático. (900)

However, in chapter 10 of *La desheredada* (“Sigue Beethoven”) Galdós, who was both a consummate pianist and organist, acknowledges how challenging a Beethoven sonata can be. Even as Isidora is visiting the Aransis mansion and fantasizing about possessing its luxuries, the narrator’s friend, Dr. Miquis, attempts to play one of the sonatas in the book left on the piano. Before long he has to acknowledge his insufficient talent: “—¡Pobre Beethoven mío!—exclamó el estudiante, dejando de tocar y haciendo un gesto de desesperación—. ¡Qué lejos estabas de caer entre mis dedos!” (I, x: 171).

In chapters 9 and 10 Galdós also continues with his customary A-theme/B-theme contention. Isidora voices the A theme as she identifies with the luxuries of the Aransis mansion and persists in the illusion that they will soon be hers. Juan Bou, the reality-based proletarian from the other extreme of Spain’s social structure, is the contrasting B-theme representative.

Additionally, one might even postulate an A-theme/B-theme interplay concerning the Beethoven sonata itself. The narrator talks about the difficulties of playing Beethoven (theme B); Miquis tries to play it and fails (theme A, optimism and illusion, overcome by theme B, his inability to play it well). The latter also contrasts with the inherent beauty of Beethoven’s music when played well (theme A).

In contrast to the second sonata player, Galdós himself shows no evidence of any difficulties in following his own structural plan, for in chapter 11 (“Insomnio número cincuenta y tantos”) he again presents his A theme, now with unrelenting vigor. Isidora’s fantasies are now so intense that each night they keep her awake hour after hour. Not only does she believe that she will be rich, but also that the *Marqués* will marry her. Her one realistic insight into her personal circumstances occurs near the end of the chapter and concerns her health: “En mi cabeza hay algo que no marcha bien. Esto es una enfermedad” (I, xi: 176).

A respite from such intensity, and a complete change of pace, occurs in chapter 12 (“Los Peces [Sermón]”) as Galdós leisurely introduces the Pez family. Only at the climax of the chapter does it become clear how much this political family incarnates the B theme, since they are interested in helping Isidora only because her uncle (*el canónigo*) in La Mancha is

their local representative. Certainly they do not see any validity in Isidora's aspirations: "Esto es novela. [. . .] Admitámoslo en las novelas ¡pero en la realidad . . . !" (I, xii, 3: 190). Even more suggestive, Isidora's beloved *marqués* (Joaquín Pez) is only interested in seduction.

Thus it is understandable that the A and B themes collide head-on in chapter 13 ("Cursilona") as Joaquín Pez attempts to obtain sexual favors. In exchange for financial support, he offers to install Isidora in a house of her own. Although greatly tempted, Isidora resists and Pez loses his composure, labeling her *cursilona* (I, xiii: 197).

After Pez and Isidora reconcile, Galdós intensifies his narrative—appropriate at this juncture for a novel whose first volume will be published separately—by bestowing upon his B theme the vigor of a musical cadential drive. That is, he has harsh reality predominate through four chapters (I, xiv-xvii), which include all but the final chapter of volume I. Thus in chapter 13 ("Navidad") the misery of Isidora's situation is emphasized through juxtaposition with the Relimpio family's Christmas Eve merrymaking. Isidora and her brother, Mariano, are forced to eat alone in her room. With good humor, Miquis (always a representative of the B theme) pops in to deprecate her fantasies. She, however, is in no mood to enjoy this, as she is able to offer only very meager food to her brother, and the latter is unappreciative and highly insulting. Then (in "Mario promete" [I, xv]) the brother subsequently drops out of school and "descendió [. . .] hasta el nivel más bajo, concluyendo por incorporarse a las turbas más compatibles con su fiereza y condición picaresca. Granujas de la peor estofa [. . .] formaban su pandilla" (I, xv: 221). Subsequently, the climax of volume I occurs as the *Marquesa de Aransis* (in "Anagnórisis" [I, xvi]) tells Isidora personally and emphatically that her pretensions are without merit and that Isidora certainly is not her granddaughter. As a consequence, the denouement of volume I becomes Isidora's reaction to this reality, including her sexual surrender to Joaquín Pez (I, xvii), who had earlier offered to establish her as his mistress in a house of her own.

Notwithstanding the strong cadential drive just described—which really closes the story line of volume I—Galdós brings back the A theme in a coda-like chapter for enhancement (paralleling the customary musical coda at the conclusion of an entire sonata-form structure). This is accomplished as the final chapter (I, xviii) explains clearly why the A theme has been so strong and so persistent throughout the volume, and why accordingly it thus merits the final (debate-like) statement.

Entitled "Últimos consejos de mi tío el canónigo," this chapter illustrates in great detail how, since very early childhood, Isidora has been indoctrinated by her mentally ill uncle with the multiple errors and fantasies which she has revealed throughout volume I. Moreover, the illusion theme is delightfully corroborated here by the fact that the uncle lives in La Mancha and is surnamed Quijano-Quijada; his letter of *consejos* to Isidora is clearly a parody of Don Quijote's advice to Sancho prior to the latter's becoming the governor of an island.

It is significant to note that in the chapter just described, Galdós has departed from the usual sonata-form pattern. Ordinarily, one would not expect to see such a coda-like

chapter at the midpoint of a sonata-form novel. However, since *La desheredada* was published in two volumes, it needed a good, strong, reader-satisfying chapter to close volume I. This was done by capping the B-theme cadential drive of chapters 14 through 17 with an A-theme coda in order to have the volume be a self-contained, aesthetically pleasing work of art in its own right (and marketable to the public). Thus Galdós's departure from the musical pattern was dictated by the demands of the publishing format and does not constitute a flaw in the novel's sonata-form structure.

Volume II

Galdós's initial chapter of volume II picks up the story line thirty-four months after the close of volume I. Dr. Miquis has told the narrator what has happened to Isidora since the reader last saw her. Isidora has now been set up as a kept woman by the *Marqués Saldeoro* in a house of her own. Although the *Marqués* (Joaquín Pez) has not married her, she has given birth to a macrocephalic child. Certainly the latter is a reflection of one of the aspects of the A theme, for Dr. Miquis warns Isidora that her "delirante ambición y vicio mental le darán una descendencia de cabezudos raquíuticos" (II, i: 256). Appropriately this chapter is entitled "Efemérides" (diary or journal), for each paragraph in the second half of the chapter begins with a date (for example, "1873. 1º de marzo") and tells what is happening in Isidora's life (the A theme), juxtaposed against a background of concurrent national events (political turmoil and civil war), which show that the B or reality theme is also still continuing in this second volume. By the time the monarchy has been restored (early 1875), Isidora has activated her lawsuit and still has her love of luxuries, but a new reality of discord with Pez (about money and other women) as well as new problems with her brother now plague her.

Chapter 2 ("Liquidación") is tripartite. The first section is devoted exclusively to the A theme as the narrator addresses Isidora directly and admonishes her for living a "vida ilusoria y fantástica" (II, ii, 1: 267). He finds particularly detrimental her love of luxuries, her lawsuit, her illusion that her brother can be educated, and, especially, her waste of time and money on Pez. The second section of the chapter illustrates the seriousness of the latter problem. Isidora has received a letter from Pez, who once again needs money, so she implores her aunt, *La Sanguijuelera*, to loan her 2000 *reales*. Clearly functioning again as an incarnation of the B theme, *La Sanguijuelera* once more has an opportunity to point out Isidora's weaknesses before she agrees to the loan. Even such a loan is not sufficient, and Isidora has to supplement by sending José Relimpio out to pawn personal items. The third and final section of the chapter presents Isidora as still moneyless and having now pawned nearly all her furniture (except her bed).⁸ Consequently, she decides that she will have to earn a living. Having read about other young women who were forced to work in order to pass from "la humildad de la buhardilla al esplendor de un palacio," she exults:

¡La honrada pobreza y la lucha con la adversidad cuán bellas son! Pensó, pues, que la costura, la fabricación de flores o encajes le cuadraban bien, y no pensó en otras industrias, pues no se acordaba de haber leído que ninguna de la heroínas se ocupara de menesteres bajos, de cosas malolientes o poco finos. (II, ii, 3: 281)

Emphasis on the A theme continues in the next chapter (II, iii), entitled “Entreacto en la iglesia.” A month after we last saw her, Isidora still has had no time to select an occupation: “Entre bañarse, peinarse, vestir y arreglar a ‘Riquín’ [su hijo], se le iba la mañana” (II, iii: 285). In the afternoons she likes to go to church, not only for the superficial aspects and pomp of the services, but more insistently to see and envy the important and aristocratic people present. She fantasizes that winning her lawsuit will soon allow her to take her proper place among them. However, José Relimpio (who has been Isidora’s A-theme companion in the most recent chapters while he enthusiastically keeps their financial records) now tells her that she is not only broke, but deeply in debt. Consequently, Isidora has no recourse but to accept as a lover/protector the very opposite of her heart’s desire: Sánchez Botín, a non-elegant, older, non-aristocratic, repugnant man whose attention she repeatedly attracted at church. Although Galdós does not repeat the presentation in volume I of characters playing a Beethoven sonata, the title of the fourth chapter of volume II, “A o B . . . , Palante,” might lead the reader into thinking of two contending (musical) themes as he or she approaches the chapter. Might Galdós be inviting the reader to speculate which theme will be featured in this new chapter? In any case, in the opening paragraph the narrator reiterates the clear-cut distinction between Isidora (always an incarnation of the A theme) and her brother, Mariano (B theme).⁹ Then Galdós decides to proceed with the B theme, subsequently bifurcating it as he moves from a focus on Mariano to the introduction of a new personification of the reality theme, the lithographer Juan Bou. The latter is the proletarian entrepreneur to whom Mariano becomes apprenticed. The rest of the chapter focuses on Bou, his business, his apprentices, and his relationship with Mariano. Only at the end of the chapter does the narrator reveal that Juan Bou likes (as does Galdós) to think in binary terms, and to move them forward, as we see that both “A o B” as well as “palante” are speech and thought characterizations specific to Bou (II, iv, 2: 301-04)—and that they are probably the source of the chapter’s title. Nevertheless, by leaving the title unexplained, Galdós has made connections again with the musical substructure.

Chapter 5 (“Entreacto en el café”) serves as a transition from B back to A. Mariano, now seldom working and addicted to gambling and womanizing, spends a great deal of time in a café. José Relimpio, continuing to represent the A theme, comes to the café seeking solace from Mariano. He feels this need because Isidora’s new protector, Sánchez Botín, refuses him admission into the house where the latter has installed Isidora as his mistress. Relimpio subsequently serves as a conduit to an end-of-chapter focus on Isidora. The latter is as beautiful and well-dressed as ever, but her reputation has disintegrated. As she is about to go forth on a mysterious errand, the narrator reveals, “[C]uantos la encontraban sabían que [ya] no era un *lady*” (II, v: 311).

Notwithstanding Isidora’s new status as Sánchez Botín’s mistress, she has a secret assignation with Pez (“Escena vigésima quinta” [II, vi]), where she enthusiastically gives full rein to her A-theme tendencies. Pez, now for the first time, functions also as primarily an A-theme representative, especially as he excuses his past failures and misconduct: “Yo vivo en lo ideal, yo sueño, yo deliro y acato la belleza pura, yo tengo arrobos platónicos” (II, vi: 322). However, Pez has enough grip on reality to accept the money (which Isidora has raised with great difficulty) and to refuse to recognize their child legally.

The A theme with a focus on Isidora continues in chapter 7. She is in fact the title protagonist, its “Flamenca Cytherea” (or *Venus flamenca*). Rebellng against Sánchez Botín and his domination, Isidora defies his prohibition to participate in Madrid’s annual *Romería de San Isidro*:

El vestirse de pueblo, lejos de ofender el orgullo de Isidora, encajaba bien dentro de él, porque era en verdad cosa bonita y graciosa que una gran dama tuviera el antojo de disfrazarse para presenciar más a su gusto las fiestas y divertimientos del pueblo. En varias novelas de malos y buenos autores había visto Isidora caprichos semejantes, y también en una célebre zarzuela y en una ópera. (II, vii: 326)

When Isidora returns from the *romería*, she finds Sánchez Botín furious also because he has learned that she had pawned (in order to help Pez) some of the jewelry that he had given her and replaced it with fakes. Much harsher reality than she had expected now assaults Isidora, as Sánchez Botín terminates their relationship, and she leaves his house that very night. The B theme continues to predominate now as her former protector tells the departing Isidora, “Isidora [. . .] oye la voz de un amigo. Vuelve en ti, reflexiona, acuérdate de lo que muchas veces te he dicho. ¿Por qué no has de entrar en una vida ordenada? Yo estoy dispuesto a auxiliarte, proporcionándote un estanco. [. . .] Puedes contar con el estanco” (II, vii: 333-34).

Reality continues to triumph over Isidora in chapter 8 (“Entreacto en la calle de los abades”). Forced to take refuge in José Relimpio’s house, now commandeered by his son Melchor, Isidora’s impracticality and love of luxuries soon has her so compromised financially that she is forced to surrender sexually to Melchor. This unhappy situation is resolved only when Melchor is forced to flee the city, just one step ahead of the police. As occurred at the end of the previous chapter, Isidora is once again without a protector, and, most importantly, now without funds for everyday necessities.

A third, more sincere protector offers himself to Isidora in the following (ninth) chapter (“La caricia del oso”). Here the A and B themes clash intensely as Mariano’s employer, Juan Bou, and Isidora tour the Aransis mansion. While Isidora silently takes great pleasure in examining all the mansion’s treasures (which she thinks her lawsuit will soon obtain for her), Bou vociferously denigrates them all. For Isidora, this is “la profanación más odiosa. Era como el hereje que pisotea la hostia” (II, ix: 356). Bou also offends her sensibilities when he abominates the aristocracy and wishes for its destruction. Only when he discovers Isidora weeping in a bedroom where she has found refuge does Bou remember Isidora’s lawsuit and that this mansion is the very one to which she aspires. His subsequent, sincere proposal of marriage is rejected as Isidora experiences “horror y asco. Toda la nobleza de su ser se sublevó alborotada, llena de soberbia; [. . .] ella era noble” (II, ix: 358-59). Thus one sees clearly that at this point in the novel there is no possibility of a reconciliation of the contending A and B themes. Both themes are still in strong opposition, and their contention must continue.

We are, however, now at the end of the development section. The author has certainly explored the possibilities of what can happen to a beautiful, young provincial who

disdains working for a living as she attempts to live in the capital and pursue an irrational lawsuit. Even the harshest kind of reality, as was prefigured at the end of the exposition section when *La Sanguijuelera* savagely dominated Isidora, seems now to be no match for the A theme's protagonist. Thus we see that, analogous to the dynamics of a sonata-form structure, the strength of Galdós's B theme has been weakened, as it has interplayed with the A theme throughout the development section. As evidence of this we note, for example, that *La Sanguijuelera* herself is now reconciled to Isidora and even facilitates her irrational behavior by loaning her money. Moreover, Juan Bou, the incarnation of the B theme here at the end of the development section, is easier for Isidora to deal with than was *La Sanguijuelera* at the end of the exposition.

Recapitulation

The recapitulation section in a typical sonata form brings about a final settlement of the A-theme/B-theme contention or argument which has been the structural framework of the entire movement to this point. As the word "recapitulation" suggests, the material is also a restatement and review of the most important ideas and elements that have gone before—specifically, the basic conflicts are once again expressed. In addition, the composer must demonstrate that, in spite of the A-theme/B-theme contention, these two main themes can indeed coexist and have in fact some capacity for a certain amount of harmony and compatibility. Although this may have been shown from time to time earlier, it must now be demonstrated explicitly in order to prepare the listener to accept the yielding of the B theme at the end of the recapitulation section (rather than to expect the complete annihilation of one or both themes).

A musical composer can, in his or her recapitulation section, restate literally note for note the earlier material in precise chronological order. A novelist, of course, cannot, since he or she must constantly be introducing new material to hold the reader's interest and to move the story forward.¹⁰ This is Galdós's technique as he reviews (recapitulates) for the reader the fundamental conflict between illusion and reality—originally presented in the exposition—as Isidora continues to experience life in Madrid.

Let us see how Galdós accomplishes this recapturing of themes. Remembering, of course, his original sequence and symmetry, our author begins the recapitulation with emphasis upon the A theme. Just as a musical composer may present the listener with the repetition of a theme in a different key, so Galdós, early on in his recapitulation, shows his consummate skill as a novelist by the interesting variations on his original themes. Thus we find (II, x) that although Isidora still believes in her *nobleza* and suffers from "el loco amor al lujo y las comodidades," she, her son, and her godfather actually have nothing to eat (II, x, 1: 362). For help she turns to Miquis, who recalls (recapitulates) their long-ago Sunday-afternoon outing: El Retiro, El Prado, a shared orange, and his flirting with her (II, x, 1: 367). Once again Isidora is soon living in a private home, and again it is with the Relimpios. Now, however, with Doña Laura deceased, Isidora and her godfather live with the latter's married daughter (II, x, 2: 371-83). As in the exposition, Isidora cannot bring herself to do any work. Soon she again desires fine clothing, for now the *modista* who made her dresses when she was the mistress of rich men, lives upstairs. Miquis catches her there, but she again rejects his admonishments. Joaquín Pez again has a profound effect

on Isidora. Now he does not leave a fancy calling card; rather, he is poverty-stricken. After again being a disappointment to her host family, Isidora leaves them to become once more a kept woman, this time by Bou. Nevertheless, she is soon seeing Pez again; now instead of his bringing her money to survive, it is the other way around. Once again Isidora and Pez give full rein to their fantasies (II, xii, recalling II, vi). He tells her she will win her lawsuit, he will marry her, and they will travel the world together. She, however, now prefers to remain single and fantasizes about the luxuries she will soon have. Harsh reality soon follows these A-theme illusions when Isidora is arrested for falsification of documents (II, xii: 407-08).

Chapter 13 of volume II (“En el Modelo”) illustrates well our earlier assertion that a novelist (unlike a musical composer) cannot recapitulate material from the exposition section literally, nor in exact chronological order. Were this the case, Galdós would have begun his recapitulation section with Tomás Rufete in the Leganés asylum. However, he chooses to recapitulate this setting later in the volume when he places Isidora herself in a situation analogous to that experienced by her father. Imprisoned on the charges of document falsification, Isidora is incarcerated in Madrid’s newly constructed women’s prison.¹¹ Miquis is again present, and the sights and sounds of the institution are evocative of those presented in the novel’s opening chapter at the Leganés asylum. Once again the A theme shows great strength, as Isidora adapts to prison life by imagining that she is Marie Antoinette, a classic symbol of delusion (II, xiii: 411).

But paralleling Galdós’s technique at this stage of his exposition, the B theme becomes dominant when Mariano’s behavior again deteriorates. For some time now he has not only been associating with the lowest dregs of society, but has even been planting terrorist bombs (II, xiv, 1: 429-30). Finally, in a recapitulative echo of his earlier killing of a boy, he buys a pistol and attempts to kill the king (II, xvi: 456).

The title of the last chapter in Galdós’s recapitulation section (“Disolución” [II, xvii]) is quite appropriate, as now nearly all of Isidora’s illusions dissolve. Reality at last triumphs over irrationality and illusion. After Mariano’s attempted regicide, Isidora realizes that there is no hope of educating and reforming him. Additionally, now tired of imagining herself in the role of Marie Antoinette (II, xvii, 1: 459), Isidora signs documents relinquishing aspirations to the Aransis aristocracy in order to terminate her imprisonment.¹² She must also give up her illusion of a life with Joaquín Pez, *el Marqués Saldeoro*, for he has returned from Cuba a married man. Even her recently formulated contingency plan to marry Juan Bou has to be abandoned, for he has also married. Thus it is appropriate for Galdós to conclude his recapitulation section by recalling Isidora’s kept-woman status, since she now has to accept a new lover/protector.¹³ The latter is Gaitica, a gambler from the lowest dregs of society, who entices Isidora into his *casa-palacio*, saying:

Una persona que sale de la cárcel no puede hallarse en disposición de atenderse a las primeras necesidades. Así, cuando usted entre por puerta, hallará una modista y un chico de la tienda de sombreros que irá con muestras. [. . . Además] allí tengo un cuarto de baño. (II, xvii, 2: 466)¹⁴

For a time Isidora again seems to flourish and is repeatedly seen elegantly dressed. Before long, however, her friends note a marked deterioration in her clothing, physical appearance, and manner of speaking. After three months, she ends up abandoned by her protector (as was her fate at the end of the development section). Once again she has no money. And now, more serious than her earlier beating by *La Sanguijuelera*, she must endure having her beautiful face scarred forever by Gaitica's knife.

Coda

Galdós's last full chapter (II, xviii), excluding the narrator's own two-sentence *moraleja* (II, xix), constitutes his coda. Willi Apel and Ralph Daniel define the coda as a "concluding passage or section, falling outside the basic structure of a composition, and added to obtain or heighten the impression of finality" (62). The coda at the end of a sonata-form composition traditionally emphasizes the A theme in order to demonstrate that, although it was overshadowed at the end of the exposition and throughout the development section, it has triumphed and has the right to a final statement. However, the A theme itself, because of its constant contention and interplay with the B theme, has now ended up being considerably changed also.

Such a change is certainly noticeable in Isidora in Galdós's coda. In fact, as most critics have noted, we have an entirely different protagonist at the end of the novel. However, there is one illusion that she has not renounced: her belief that she deserves and needs luxuries ("el delirio de las cosas buenas" [II, xvii: 473]). Consequently, when a whoremongering procuress shows her the clothes that she can wear if she comes to work for her (II, xviii: 481), these desired luxuries become a motivating factor for Isidora's opting for prostitution.

Recent criticism has emphasized other motivating factors, such as a desire for independence or a need for self-expression. For example, Wifredo de Ráfols states:

Instead of committing suicide (an option she considers), she nullifies her social identity and re-invents herself. Instead of accepting charity or any number of offers of bourgeois economic security [. . .], she chooses prostitution and the relative economic independence it promises. [. . . Moreover, the] chapter title "Muerte de Isidora" represents not so much Isidora's moral suicide as an immoral homicide that is perpetuated by an insane and unjust patriarchal society. Whether by suicide or homicide, Isidora dies in name only. What dies with that name are her two mutually irreconcilable lives, as well as the eponymous fiction to which they gave rise (80-81).

Regardless of how one chooses to interpret Isidora's final accommodation with the only reality possible, considering her heredity and environment, I believe that another way of stating the truth of the last sentence in the above quotation is to affirm that the novel's two competing themes, like two contending musical themes, are indeed literally and figuratively at last played out. Isidora, with her unrelinquishable desire for luxuries, has no recourse finally except to integrate herself into the harsh realities of prostitution. Then

Galdós confirms, I believe, that the novel-long contention between the A and B themes is now over by having the alcoholic José Relimpio, the last remaining active incarnation of the A theme, expire. This action also allows the narrator to reiterate for a final time the axis of the novel's binary opposition: "Su muerte fue semejante a aquel dulce acceso de embriaguez que le transportaba, mediante una breve toma, *desde las miserias de la realidad a las delicias de una vida apócrifa*, compuesta con extraños fingimientos de juventud, pasión y energía" (II, xxvii: 489, emphasis added).

As this study has demonstrated, Galdós did clearly follow the sonata form as he created *La desheredada*, departing from it mainly to make volume I a self-contained, publishable work in its own right. His artistry in *La desheredada* occurred nineteen years before he openly acknowledged in *Alma y vida* that he followed "el plan y los módulos de la composición beethoviana" (900). *La desheredada* also precedes by ten years *Tristana*, where Galdós not only used the sonata-form structure, but also presented a character playing Beethoven sonatas. Further study will be needed to determine whether or not specific Beethoven sonatas can be identified as models for *La desheredada* and *Tristana*. In the meantime, let us note that in both novels Galdós made no effort to conceal what he was doing. In fact, in each he seems to be planting a playful clue (as he and other nineteenth-century novelists were wont to do) concerning his creativity.

Why should *La desheredada* be the first in which Galdós chooses to pattern his novel after a musical composition? We may never know for sure, but two factors should be considered. The first is his friendship with fellow music lover Dr. Tolosa Latour, who, as is well documented, served as the prototype for Miquis. It is possible that there may be some inside, personal humor in *La desheredada* as Galdós amiably presents Miquis as a bumbling sonata player. More importantly, it has been shown that Galdós simplified and sharpened the delineation of important characters as he moved from his initial (Alpha) manuscript to the final (Beta) version in order to make them stand in clearer opposition and apposition (Schnepf, "Naturalistic Content" 53-60; Urey 5). Such a procedure produces characters more conducive to the kind of interplay which is typical of musical themes in a sonata. Moreover, critics agree that *La desheredada* marks a definite change from Galdós's earlier novels, that it is the first of his *segunda época*, and that it contains elements of Zolaesque naturalism. For example, the same hereditary characteristics are shared by all the members of the Rufete family: Isidora, her father, her uncle, her godfather, and her brother. By making them all suffer varying degrees of mental illness and using them most frequently to carry forward his initial A theme (which at the end of a work always turns out to be the stronger), Galdós is able to effect in a very original way the naturalist's insistence on the inevitable consequences of negative heredity. Critics tend to agree that Galdós's naturalism is softer, "more mitigated" than Zola's (Pattison 63). An important key to a deeper understanding of this achievement (as Galdós moved away from the very strong naturalism of his Alpha manuscript)¹⁵ may lie in the interrelationship between Galdós's love of music and his novelistic creativity.

Notes

- ¹ For such demonstrations, see Chamberlin, “Sonata Form” (83-96) and *Galdós and Beethoven* (21-48).
- ² This point is established in Aronson (66), Cluck (153-224), and Burgess (Personal Interview, 19 October 1977).
- ³ This numeration includes one-line sentences in conversations, as well as the usual definitions of a paragraph.
- ⁴ In 1974, Frank Durand correctly identified the novel’s two major themes as illusion and reality, “which involve an alternating and fluctuating movement [. . . from one to the other].” However, he makes no mention of music or musical structure (191-201). Also, Robert Russell has pointed out a structural similarity concerning the initial ascent and subsequent descent of the protagonist in *La desheredada* and the typical naturalist novel (794-800). Again there is no mention of music or musical structure.
- ⁵ The numbers in parenthesis refer to volume, chapter, section (when applicable), and page.
- ⁶ Eamonn Rodgers finds Galdós’s description of the rope factory much like the naturalist “set piece” descriptions of industrial conditions in the late nineteenth-century (70). One of the best-known examples would be the foundry where Gervaise’s son, Etienne, works in Zola’s *L’Assommoir* (I, vi: 205-222).
- ⁷ These chapters have been discussed by Stephanie Sieburth (67-76) and Martha Krow-Lucal (20-31). Neither makes any mention of musical structure or sonata form.
- ⁸ The narrator says, “La cama dorada de la alcoba permanecía como núcleo y fundamento de la casa” (II, ii, 3: 279). For the symbolic connotations of the bed, as well as those of other furnishings in Isidora’s house, see Wright (230-45).
- ⁹ Here is the narrator’s complete statement: “Parece que la Naturaleza quiso hacer en aquella pareja sin ventura dos ejemplares contrapuestos de moral desvarío, pues si ella vivía en una inspiración insensata a las cosas altas, poniendo como dice San Agustín, su nido en las estrellas, él se inclinaba por instinto a las cosas groseras y bajas” (II, iv, 1: 289).
- ¹⁰ I am indebted to Anthony Burgess, author of the novel *Napoleon Symphony*, for confirmation of this opinion (personal interview, 2 November 1975; class lecture).
- ¹¹ For the political and financial scandals associated with the construction of this establishment, and Galdós’s interest in them, see Schnepf, “Scandal” (36-49).
- ¹² For the terrible conditions in this particular prison in the 1880s, including bribery, prostitution, and exploitive lesbianism, see Schnepf, “Scandal” (36-49).
- ¹³ In consonance with the fact that the recapitulation section in the music of a sonata form is shorter than the development section, Galdós reduces the number of Isidora’s lover/protectors from four to one.
- ¹⁴ For the newly-acquired importance of the *baño* in late nineteenth-century Spain, see Fernández Cifuentes (363-83).
- ¹⁵ For an appreciation of how Galdós also toned down or “mitigated” the stark naturalism of his own preliminary version of *La desheredada*, see Schnepf, “Naturalistic Content” (53-59) and “Creation” (61-65).

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