

The Manuscript of *El doctor Centeno*: A Preliminary Study

The autograph manuscript of *El doctor Centeno* is housed in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, where it is catalogued under signature MS 22227. It consists of 880 horizontal sheets and is stored in a box with gold lettering, which reads 'Perez Galdós. El doctor Centeno. Original'. This box also contains two letters, an envelope and a typed note, which reveal what happened to the manuscript after Galdós had completed work on it. The typed note (probably written by a member of staff at the Biblioteca Nacional) explains that Galdós gave the manuscript to the jurist and writer, Juan de Macías y del Real, as a gift in 1897, and then, in 1914, the latter gave the document to the critic, Anselmo González, who wrote under the penname of Alejandro Miquis. The note goes on to reveal that the manuscript reappeared in the Liceo Francés in Madrid at the beginning of 1984, although no explanation is given as to how it came to be there. It was presented to the Spanish president, Felipe González, on 12 January of that year by the wife of the French president, Danielle Mitterand, and it was subsequently handed over to the Biblioteca Nacional on 27 February 1984.

The two other letters contained in the box were both penned by Juan de Macías and are addressed to Anselmo González. The first letter, written in Madrid and dated 18 March 1914, explains that on 13 August 1897 Galdós had given De Macías the original sheets of his novel, *El doctor Centeno*. He goes on to write that as González had used the literary pseudonym of Alejandro Miquis for many years, and wished to own the manuscript, De Macías had decided to send him the document, acknowledging 'el preferente derecho que tiene 'Alejandro Miquis' para conservar *sus papeles de familia*'. The other letter is undated and extremely difficult to decipher, but the general gist is that Del Macías found himself in severely reduced circumstances and, as a result, was moving to King Street. It corresponds to the envelope addressed to Sr. Don Alejandro Miquis at the *Diario Universal* in Madrid, which is postmarked from London.

To date the manuscript of *El doctor Centeno* has received very little critical attention. Alan Smith lists it in his catalogue of the Galdosian manuscripts kept at the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, and provides information about the number of pages and dates of composition.¹ He also notes a few of the manuscript's most salient features, such as its drawings. However, given the nature of the undertaking, his study does not go into any depth. José-Carlos Mainer, in his recent edition of the novel, mentions the manuscript briefly, stating that it contains numerous corrections, which he describes as 'de alcance limitado', and he also makes reference to a number of the drawings.² With the exception of Smith's catalogue and Mainer's comments, Schnepf and Entenza de Solare appear to be the only other critics to have studied the manuscript of *El doctor Centeno* to date. Solare limits herself to pointing out a number of changes made to the manuscript, such as name changes, the practice of leaving gaps when Galdós was in doubt as to the name or term he wanted to employ, and changes to expression. However, she does not attempt to analyse these changes in any depth but rather uses them to highlight the potential for Galdosian manuscript studies.³ Schnepf includes *El doctor Centeno* in his *Initial, Collective View* of the manuscripts and, like Solare, restricts himself to pointing out the more overt aspects, such as extraneous material, new and different characters, and art work.⁴ Schnepf has dedicated one short article to the manuscript, which, again, focuses on its most prominent features, such as the changes made to the character of Pedro Polo.⁵ While these works highlight interesting aspects of the manuscript, their scope clearly does not allow for any in depth analysis of the document.

¹ Alan E. Smith, 'Catálogo de los manuscritos de Benito Pérez Galdós en la Biblioteca Nacional de España', *Anales Galdosianos*, 20 (1985), 143-56.

² José-Carlos Mainer, *El doctor Centeno* (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2002), p. 58.

³ Beatriz Entenza de Solare, 'Manuscritos galdosianos', in *Actas del Tercer Congreso Internacional de Estudios Galdosianos*, (Las Palmas: Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, 1989), pp. 149-61.

⁴ Michael Schnepf, 'The Galdós Manuscripts: An Initial, Collective View', *South Atlantic Review*, 62 (1997), 1-17.

⁵ Michael Schnepf, 'Galdós's *El doctor Centeno* Manuscript: Pedro Polo and other Curiosities', *Romance Quarterly*, 40 (1994), 36-42.

The manuscript itself is divided into two parts, which are each numbered independently. Volume I consists of 391 pages, numbered from 1 to 385, and Volume II contains 489 pages, numbered from 1 to 488.⁶ The reason for the discrepancy between the actual number of pages and Galdós's numbering is that the novelist, when revising his work, would occasionally add or omit pages and, in order not to affect the numbering of the other sheets, would give the new page the same number as the previous one followed by a fraction or ordinal number. Alternatively, he would group together various page numbers on the same sheet. Thus, in Volume I the extra page added between 290 and 291 has been numbered 290-2^o. Similarly, in Volume II, where pages 14 and 15 have been rejected, page 13 has become 13, 14 and 15. The size of the paper is 22 x 15.5 cm and paper of different qualities was used, some of which has yellowed slightly. The ink was originally black, although it has now faded to brown with age. Very little margin was left on either side of the sheet and each page contains, on average, 15-17 lines with approximately 10 words per line. The handwriting is often hard to decipher and it is further hampered by the numerous corrections that are made to the text, both above and below the line, sometimes of just one word but also of phrases and longer passages.

On the reverse of a number of the manuscript sheets there are pages that have been crossed-out in red or blue crayon. In Volume I there are 148 such pages, while Volume II contains 70. Most of these pages correspond to a primitive version of the novel, which, in accordance with previous studies on Galdosian manuscripts, will be referred to here as Alpha. A few of the reverse sides correspond to pages that were rejected from Beta, the final manuscript version, which was the one that was sent to the printers, as is indicated by the pencil marks of the various copyists who worked on the manuscript. Galdós often only wrote a few lines of text on the reverse pages that correspond to Beta before rejecting them.

⁶ Page 32 of Volume II is missing.

In the case of the EDC manuscript it is possible to construct a fairly complete picture of the early draft. Unlike Beta, this version is not divided into two volumes and is numbered straight through from 2 to 289, plus an unnumbered final page which sketches out the novel's closing events. Although initially it would appear that the first page of Alpha is missing, in actual fact it seems highly likely that the opening page of the primitive version was incorporated into Beta as page 1, and there are a number of reasons for thinking this. The ink, handwriting style and type of paper used for Beta page 1 are the same as those used on Alpha page 2, suggesting that they follow on. Moreover, the text itself also suggests a continuation between the two pages, with page 1 ending 'enga-' and page 2A beginning 'lanar'. In the final version page 2 the ink is different, the paper used is much thicker and less shiny, and the handwriting is much neater and smaller, suggesting that this page was written at a later stage. Therefore, if we take page 1 of the final version to be the original first page, the pages remaining from Alpha are as follows: pages 1-3, 6-7, 10-11, 13-15, 17, 19-39 (with pages 22-25 renumbered in the final draft as 26-29, and 36(?) -39 as 45-48), 41-60, 62-64 (renumbered as 80-82), 66-80 (with 79-80 renumbered as 112-13), 82-83, 85-87 (with 85-86 renumbered as 123-24), 91, 94-99, 104-159 (with 104 renumbered as 150, 115 as 164, 123-131 as 177-85), 161-187 (with 170 renumbered as 322, 171 as 324-2^o and 172 as 325), a page that is then numbered '189 á 200', 201-211 (with 204-05 renumbered as Volume II, 6-7, 206-08 as 9-11, and 209(?) as 18), 213-14, 218-45 (with 221-24 renumbered as 42-2^o-45 and 227-29 renumbered as 48-50), 248-56, 258-66, 269-89, plus the final unnumbered page.⁷

According to the deleted date on the first page, Galdós began work on the novel on 3 January 1883. The date on the final page of Volume II of the manuscript indicates that he completed work in May 1883 in Madrid. Although there are no dates to indicate when he completed Alpha and began work on Beta, there is a date at the end of

⁷ There are 32 pages missing from the 289 (+1) pages of Alpha, which are as follows: 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 16, 18, 40, 61, 65, 81, 84, 88-90, 92, 93, 100-03, 160, 188, 212, 215-17, 246, 247, 257, 267 and 268.

Volume I that reads '19-IV', which suggests that composition of Alpha and the first volume of Beta took nearly four months to finish. This date also suggests that composition of Volume II was much quicker. While work on the manuscript was completed by May, Galdós continued to work on the novel after this date. Although the galley proofs for EDC do not exist, it is clear from a comparison between the final manuscript draft and the first edition of the novel that Galdós continued to make changes to the text while correcting the proofs. These changes tend to be minor alterations at the word level, aimed at refining vocabulary, sharpening expressions and improving incisiveness.

As with most Galdosian manuscripts, EDC contains numerous drawings and sketches, many of which undoubtedly relate to the text, as Shoemaker explains:

El novelista trazó en los manuscritos de sus obras manos, cuerpos enteros, y, sobre todo, cabezas que se transformarían literariamente en los personajes de sus obras.⁸

In EDC, there is a drawing of the head of a stern-looking, bearded man on both 57A and 69A, possibly Pedro Polo. 26A, 34A and 42A all contain drawings of the head of a young man, who could either be Miquis, Cienfuegos or perhaps even Ruiz. There is a drawing of a sad-looking young woman on I, 141B and 146B, which Schnepf suggests could be Amparo or Higinia Balanguer Ostolé, the maid convicted in the 'crimen de la calle de Fuencarral'. However, the latter seems unlikely as the event took place in 1888, some five years after the manuscript was completed.⁹ As well as drawings of people, the EDC manuscript contains sketches of objects that relate to the text, such as I,147B that contains a drawing of a boot, which relates to Felipe's problems in finding respectable footwear. The drawings of a dressing table with a mirror and an unfinished table on I, 300B and 327B undoubtedly relate to Doña Isabel's

⁸ W. H. Shoemaker, 'Cómo era Galdós', *Anales Galdosianos*, 8 (1973), 5-18.

⁹ Michael A. Schnepf, 'Galdós's *El doctor Centeno* Manuscript: Pedro Polo and Other Curiosities', *Romance Quarterly*, 44 (1994), 36-42.

furniture collection. There are also other unconnected drawings, such as the sketch of two birds on I,140B and the sketch of an urn on I,137B. Other extraneous material in the manuscript includes a sheet that reads, in English, 'Gloria: A novel translated from the Spanish' (unnumbered, found on the reverse of I, 68B) and a note on the reverse of II, 450B that reads 'Estoy con medida onza de chocolate' and which may have been signed Benito.

Other interesting features of the manuscript are a list of definitive character names on 150A and a summary of chapter title headings on II, 380B. A couple of reverse sheets contain a few words, perhaps jotted down in a moment of inspiration. The reverse of II, 174B reads 'dos personas más había en la casa', while the reverse of II, 253B reads 'Tantas vueltas había dado en su espíritu virrey', in reference to Alejandro's playwriting activities. A number of pages contain partial plans of the novel. A150 contains the following:

Afición [illegible] de doña Claudia o Marcelina a la lotería, a la que juega siempre con estudio. Jugando con ella en participación, se sacó Amparo las 4 pesetas que le da a Celipo.
Descripción idealista de Amparo al despedir a Celipo.

157A, which is where the description of Doña Isabel and her house begins, includes the notes 'echar cartas, que vive al lado. Odio a los Miquis. Tradición de familia. Aseo, escrúpulos, gatos. Devoción'. On 189A Galdós leaves a note to remind himself to describe the guesthouse: 'Ahora descripción de la casa de huéspedes'. Page 281A sums up Volume II of the novel: 'Ruiz – comedia. Gran miseria – limosna. Flip e Ido piden. Diagnóstico – autopsia. Gran diálogo. Muerte'. The final unnumbered page of Alpha contains an outline of the final events of the novel:

Se enfada porque no lo han llamado.
Colecta para el entierro.... Ruiz no da nada.
Buscan ropa para vestirle. No hay.
Entre todos reúnen ropa.
Cienfuegos devuelve el dinero.
Ido quiere devolverlo; pero Felipe no lo consiente.
Ido y Felipe lo visten.

Ruiz [illegible]
D. Pedro no viene.
[illegible] con ropas de todos, y alguna prenda de Ido.
Cirila le desnuda.
Entierro.
Ido y Felipe.

Despite the lack of attention given to the *El doctor Centeno* manuscript, other Galdosian manuscripts have come under increasing scrutiny in recent years, although our knowledge of the creative process and evolution of a novel remains limited. Moreover, much of the knowledge that we do have is weighted heavily in favour of *Fortunata y Jacinta*, possibly giving a somewhat skewed perspective of Galdós's creative process. Ribbans notes that Galdós experimented continually from one novel to another, and that he was a 'restless seeker after diversity of technique, both in structure and in characterisation'.¹⁰ Therefore, his creative process is unlikely to be entirely uniform either, and in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture more work clearly needs to be done in this area. All these reasons indicate that the study of the genesis of *El doctor Centeno* can only serve to enhance our knowledge of Galdós's creative process, while at the same time contributing significantly to our understanding of the published text.

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¹⁰ Geoffery Ribbans, *Conflicts and Conciliations: The Evolution of Galdós's 'Fortunata y Jacinta'* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1997), p. 269.