

GUSTAVO ADOLEFO BECQUER: A BELATED ROMANTICIST

A THESIS

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## CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, who was one of eight children, was born in Seville the seventeenth of February, 1836. His father, Don José Dominguez Bécquer, a well-known genre painter of Seville, died when Gustavo was five years old, and four years later the mother died. A temporary home was provided for the children by an uncle who procured the future poet's admission to the colegio of San Telmo. The school was, however, soon suppressed by royal orders. Gustavo's godmother, Doña Manuela Monchay, took him into her home where he was allowed to read widely in her large library, and to follow his talent for painting. During this time he acquired material from the Latin classics that he was later to use in his legends and poetry. He was deeply impressed by the Odes of Horace. During this period, also, he was fascinated by the poetry of Zorrilla and attempted to imitate him. For two years he was an apprentice to a well-known artist of Seville and showed undoubted talent; but, at the age of eighteen, he gave up the work because he wanted to follow the career of letters. However, his talent for painting left a decided impression on his writing. The delicate touch of the painter is shown in frequent use of color words and in the minute detail with which his scenes are painted on the page. Form, especially that of woman, is symmetrical, and drawn with a sure hand.

Because his godmother wanted him to settle down to a mercantile life, he left her house, and went to Madrid where he intended to make a living by his writing. He soon found this plan to be impractical, however, and was forced to secure work as a copyist and translator. These years of his life

were marked not only by economic difficulties but also by physical and emotional strain. In 1861 he married Doña Casta Estéban y Navarro, who was older than he and who was of such a decided neurotic type that she caused him to suffer greatly. Soon after their second child was born, she left her home and children, and Bécquer found it necessary to care for the motherless family. At this time he was on the staff of El contemporáneo, a newspaper in which he published the greater part of his legends and tales. Bécquer's brother Valeriano, a portrait painter, had similar domestic difficulties and after a few months the two men and their children set up a temporary home together. It was a happy arrangement because Bécquer was deeply fond of his brother. They worked together in complete harmony, and each found a satisfaction in living that he had not found before. This period of contentment did not last long, however, because Bécquer became ill and was forced to leave the city. In 1864, accompanied by his brother, Bécquer spent a year in the deserted monastery of Veruela, in the mountainous region of northern Spain. During this time he sent to Madrid newspapers a series of literary letters which he entitled Desde mi celda. They contained his experiences with the country people near-by, and related legends and tales which were parts of the folklore of the region. In 1869, the brothers moved their families to Toledo where they remained several months. Bécquer wrote several tales during their stay in the old Moorish city, while his brother completed a set of woodcuts. Before the end of the year, they again moved to Madrid. Physical illness was united with mental and spiritual unrest. Financial conditions also proved a serious strain. Bécquer's dissatisfaction with his life caused him to take refuge in imaginative daydreams of love and of scenes of grandeur. He knew the bitter death of each dream, and out

of this intense feeling he brought to Spanish poetry a human tenderness that it had seldom known before. Valeriano Amador says of Bécquer: "Each note that he (Bécquer) draws from his harp is a tear, each line a poem, and each word a sigh."<sup>1</sup> One can read in his poetry the progress of a complete love story told in the first person although evidence indicates that these experiences could have taken place only in Bécquer's imagination.

Bécquer's best work was produced within the last six years of his life. His poetry reflected his emotional experiences. However, the material for his legends and tales was gathered from his observation of life in the provinces. His life in Madrid does not seem to furnish a background for any of his works. A few months after the sudden death of his brother Valeriano, Bécquer died December 22, 1870, at the height of his poetic career.

The romantic movement in Spanish literature lasted during the first half of the nineteenth century. Bécquer lived from 1836 to 1870. As may be seen, he wrote about twenty years after Romanticism in Spain began to wane as a movement. Bécquer was not part of a definite movement; he derived from no other romanticist such as Espronceda, the Duque de Rivas, or Zorrilla; but he shows the essential qualities of Romanticism. He was a romanticist as a result of his character, and not because of literary influence.

The following specific elements of Romanticism will be considered in this study: subjectivity; love; an emotional interest in nature; use of the supernatural; and revival of interest in the Middle Ages. Subjectivity

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1. Valeriano Amador, "Gustavo A. Bécquer, Estudio crítico biográfico" in Revista de España, Vol. 138, p. 281.

is the most important element in Romanticism. The romanticist considers love, hate, jealousy, religion, and the mystic elements of life in relation to his own inner life. In the Rimas of Bécquer, love and passion are put on a sublime level. There is no baseness, no carnality in physical love. The supernatural is sometimes shown in situations of horror and fear, and sometimes in elements of pure fantasy. The active mind of the romanticist inhabits the ruins of ancient peoples with priests, lovers, warriors, and spirits; and the reader's imagination is kindled by the daring feats of knights, the conquests of kings, and by the beauty of ladies. These stories give the poet an opportunity to escape from commonplace life. Bécquer has in his tales, legends, and poems all of these essential characteristics of Romanticism.

Bécquer is lyrical. Even when he is writing in prose form, his prose is so rhythmic that it closely resembles poetry. In his legends and tales, Bécquer frequently uses the canto form. Examples of this type of form are found in El caudillo de las manos rojas (I, 111-67),<sup>2</sup> Creed en Dios (II, 7-27), and La creación (I, 53-65). In these and other prose selections, Bécquer's choice of words often indicates the lyrical quality of his writing. Such words and expressions as the following, taken at random from prose selections, are more poetic, more lyrical, than are usually found in prose:

Flotan nubes de ópalo;

sobre la onda pura del Ganges se mece la simbólica flor del loto;

el día que muere y la noche que nace luchan un momento;

¿Oír las hojas suspirar bajo la leve planta de una virgen?

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2. Volume and pages for each reference to Bécquer's prose works will be indicated in parenthesis after the title. The Rimas, which are found consecutively in Volume III from pages 115 to 178, will be referred to by number only.

era tan airosa, tan blanca y tan rubia, que, como a las azucenas,  
parecía que Dios la había hecho de nieve y oro;  
la noche había cerrado y el viento gemía agitando las hojas de los  
árboles.

Las hojas secas is a good example of this type of lyric expression in a prose composition. Word groups as the following from Las hojas secas have the beauty and flowing intonation of poetry:

¡Que dulces eran aquellas lágrimas que nos prestaba el rocío de la noche y que resplandecían con todos los colores del iris a la primera luz de la aurora!

y huyeron las mariposas blancas y las libélulas azules,

cuando el cielo se corona de rayos de luz, y la tierra se viste de verdura y de flores, y el viento trae perfumes y cantos de pájaros y armonías distantes, y se ama y se siente una amada, ¡la vida es buena!

Rima IV gives Bécquer's own definition of poetry. Poetry, for him, does not consist of words placed in a certain form, but rather in the emotion of the selection. The first three stanzas of Rima IV point out that there may not always be poets, but that as long as nature exists there will be poetry.

No digáis que agotado su tesoro,  
De asuntos falta, enmudeció la lira:  
Podrá no haber poetas; pero siempre  
Habrá poesía.

Mientras las ondas de la luz al beso  
Palpitén encendidas;  
Mientras el sol las desgarradas nubes  
De fuego y oro vista;

Mientras el aire en su regazo lleve  
Perfumes y armonías;  
Mientras haya en el mundo primavera,  
¡Habrá poesía!

Nature as exemplified by light, the rays or the setting sun, and spring are, for Bécquer, proofs that herein lies an inspiration for poetry.

The next section of the poem states that as long as there is religion or any mystery that man cannot solve, there will be reason for poetry.

Mientras la ciencia a descubrir no alcance  
           Las fuentes de la vida,  
           Y en el mar o en el cielo haya un abismo  
           Que al cálculo resista;

Mientras la humanidad siempre avanzando  
           No sepa a dó camina;  
           Mientras haya un misterio para el hombre,  
           ¡Habrá poesía!

Religion is represented as the unknown mystery of life for which man seeks the answer but is never able to attain his end, while science is that mystery which man seeks to explain and is finally able to put into concrete, physical form. Poetry is a part of the unexplained mystery of life: it may often be considered as akin to religious emotion.

The emotions are then taken up. Bécquer believes that while there are joy, sorrow, hope, and love, there will be poetry.

Mientras sintamos que se alegra el alma,  
           Sin que los labios rian;  
           Mientras se llore sin que el llanto acuda  
           A nublar la pupila;

Mientras el corazón y la cabeza  
           Batallando prosigan;  
           Mientras haya esperanzas y recuerdos,  
           Habrá poesía!

Mientras haya unos ojos que reflejen  
           Los ojos que los miran;  
           Mientras responda el labio suspirando  
           Al labio que suspira;

Mientras sentirse puedan en un beso  
           Dos almas confundidas;  
           Mientras exista una mujer hermosa,  
           ¡Habrá poesía!

Poetry, for Bécquer, will last as long as there is the beauty of nature, the mystery of the unknown which one may call religion; and the joy, sorrow, and despair of love. His poetic creed is clearly explained

in the introduction to La mujer de piedra. "Yo tengo una particular predilección hacia todo lo que no puede vulgarizar el contacto o el juicio de la multitud indiferente" (II, 161). He expands this statement by adding that he likes wandering ideas that slip without leaving traces through the minds of men, like a drop of water on a marble tablet. In the cities that Bécquer visits, he seeks the narrowest and most solitary streets, and the darkest corners of inner patios in buildings. The women who most deeply impress him are those who have in their eyes a mystery that is not explained. In Cartas literarias a una mujer (III, 74) the lover says that poetry is the person of the beloved. This repeats Rima XXI in which poetry becomes for man, the woman he loves.

¿Qué es poesía? -- Dices mientras clavas  
En mi pupila tu pupila azul --;  
¿Qué es poesía? ¿Y tú me lo preguntas?  
Poesía... eres tú.

In La soledad (III, 98) Bécquer states that there are two types of poetry. One is magnificent and sonorous. It is the result of meditation and art and is beautified with all the artifices of language. The other is free of artifice and of form. The first poetry is more akin to melody, and the second to harmony. Bécquer would make his poetry that of the second type that is free from artifice and oratory, and springs largely from reverie and emotion. Bécquer would keep his poetry apart from contact with every-day life. His poetry may express the beauties of nature, or religion, or the emotions aroused by love.

CHAPTER II  
ELEMENTS OF SUBJECTIVITY

Subjectivity is the withdrawal from outer experience in order to concentrate on inner experience. The romanticist seeks within himself the answers to questions instead of seeking these responses in the outside world. As Professor Schutze<sup>1</sup> states in Studies in the Mind of Romanticism: "Romanticism is in itself subjective. It assumes that the most important part of reality is found within the individual." To the romanticist the self is the most important element in the universe. Bécquer brings out this importance of the self by the frequent use of the pronoun yo. Many of his legends and tales are written as if told in the first person, or as if told to Bécquer by some other person.

Romanticism has for its province the portrayal of the emotions, from the most violent passions to the most subtle intimations. The emotions take several forms: love, hate, and jealousy. There is also the ecstasy of religious experiences. Love is expressed by Bécquer in various aspects. He shows it in love of a man for an ideal, a dream, or a marble figure, or for a flesh and blood woman. He indicates that only a pure and unselfish love should be rewarded with a return of sentiment. Many of his legends and tales deal with love. In La mujer de piedra, Bécquer professes to fall in love with the statue of a beautiful girl on a tomb in a church. Although he visits the church every day to discover fresh evidences of perfection in the statue, he never discovers even who the lady was in

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1. Martin Schutze. "Studies in the Mind of Romanticism," Modern Philology. Vol. XVI, p. 281.

life. His love does not need a woman of flesh, or even the memory of her, as its object. El beso treats a company of French soldiers quartered in a deserted Spanish monastery. The captain of the group falls in love with the statue of the beautiful wife of a Spanish warrior. He brings his men to marvel at his treasure. At night when they all are drunk, the captain becomes jealous of the husband's statue and decides to kiss the statue of the wife. As he approaches her, his comrades are horrified at seeing the mailed gauntlet of the statue of the husband strike the captain and knock him to the ground, senseless. This story is a decided contrast to La mujer de piedra in that it is full of action and is not contemplative. These two tales show that love, for Bécquer, does not always need a concrete object: it may be only a phase of the imagination of the lover.

Tannenberg<sup>2</sup> says that Bécquer is a poet of pure love who deals with an ethreal and spiritual ideal rather than a physical attraction. In El gnomo, two sisters love the same man. They both seek the gnome's fountain for the treasure hidden there: that is, love in a symbolical sense. Magdalena is pure and unselfish in her love while Marta is extremely selfish. Magdalena returns to her home pale from fright but safe because of her pure heart, but Marta is lured away by the gnome because she was seeking love selfishly.

In La cueva de la mora, a Christian is held captive by Moors. While in captivity, he falls in love with the daughter of the Moorish chieftain, and even after he returns home, feels a profound love. He returns for her but is mortally wounded, and she carries him to a cave. Later when she leaves the cave to secure water, she is also wounded by an arrow shot by

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2. Boris de Tannenberg. La Poésie castillane contemporaine, p. 160.

Moors who wish to kill her lover. She shows the strength of her love by her efforts to carry him to a cave, and to bring water to quench his thirst. The Moors find both bodies the following day. For her, the man beloved was worth more than life.

El caudillo de las manos rojas shows deep and sincere married love. This is the tale of a man who murdered his brother and then went on a pilgrimage through the world in an effort to appease the gods. He calls on his wife who has been snatched from him as a punishment of the angry gods. He declares his wife to be the inseparable companion of his pain and his misfortune, and names her the only happiness that he has left on earth. She is finally returned to him, but only at his death. The story has an oriental background, and the action takes place along the Ganges river and in woods and temples of India. The wife follows him faithfully through all his misfortunes, even at the risk of her own life. Faithfulness is for her the supreme virtue. The story also depicts the struggle of the forces of good and evil for the soul of an individual.

In La venta de los gatos, Amparo dies of a broken heart when she is separated from her lover and his family. There is similarity to the two preceding tales in Un drama. Julia swears to wait for her lover when he flees after a fatal duel. His mother is persecuted because she will not tell where he is. He hears that Julia is to be married, and, believing that she is unfaithful to him, he stabs her at a masked ball. Soon afterward he receives a letter saying that Julia was to marry only to free his mother, and that she planned to kill herself after the marriage. The three tales and the drama bring out the faithfulness of the woman in love, and that such faithfulness causes her to believe that love is more to be valued than life.

Bécquer's Rimas depict love in a delicate and sensitive manner.

Rima LIII is noted particularly for the beauty of its word pictures.

There has been a lover's quarrel, and the imagination of the man foresees the day when other suitors will take his place on the balcony of his beloved and will stroll with her through the garden while whispering words of love to her.

Volverán las oscuras golondrinas  
En tu balcón sus nidos a colgar,  
Y otra vez con el ala a sus cristales  
Jugando llamarán;

.....

Volverán del amor en tus oídos  
Las palabras ardientes a sonar;  
Tu corazón de su profundo sueño  
Tal vez despertará;

Pero mudo y absorto y de rodillas,  
Como se adora a Dios ante su altar,  
Como yo te he querido....., desengañate,  
¡Así no te querrán!

Although the woman may find other lovers and other happiness, she will never again find love so unselfish and so self-sacrificing. Again in this poem, real love is shown to be that which is most willing to sacrifice self. There is also a feeling of pride on the part of the man who has given a love which can never be surpassed.

As there are many and varied aspects in the love of man for woman or of woman for man, so Bécquer shows these differences in mood and in environment. Rima XL shows less passionate love than many other of the Rimas, and yet this type of love seems to bring complete satisfaction and happiness to the lovers. In this Rima the lover is content to wander in the garden with his beloved.

Su mano entre mis manos,  
 Sus ojos en mis ojos,  
 La amorosa cabeza  
 Apoyada en mi hombro,  
 Dios sabe cuántas veces,  
 Con paso perezoso,  
 Hemos vagado juntos  
 Bajo los altos olmos  
 Que de su casa prestan  
 Misterio y sombra al pórtico.

The poem indicates the passionless contentment of satisfied love where the person beloved is enveloped in a hazy cloud and is adored rather than loved in the ordinary sense. Both lovers have passed the stage of passion and entered into that of contemplation and memories.

In direct contrast to this type of love, one finds that which is concerned with passion alone. In Rima XXV passion is caused by the mere sight of the person loved.

Cuando enmudece tu lengua  
 Y se apresura tu aliento,  
 Y tus mejillas se encienden,  
 Y entornan tus ojos negros;  
 Por ver entre sus pestañas  
 Brillar con húmedo fuego  
 La ardiente chispa que brota  
 Del volcán de los deseos,  
 Diera, alma mía,  
 Por cuanto espero,  
 La fe, el espíritu,  
 La tierra, el cielo!

In order to capture the passion that expresses itself in the shining eyes of the woman he desires, the lover would give up all hope of earthly attainment and even of the rewards of an after-life.

Bécquer's versatility in showing the varied elements in love is brought out clearly in the passage above and in the two which follow. The contrasts hold one's attention by their vividness. In the following lines of Rima XLVIII, the lover finds that his love is not returned and tears it from his

heart as if it were a weapon that had been thrust there.

Como se arranca el hierro de una herida  
 Su amor de las entrañas me arranqué,  
 Aunque sentí al hacerlo que la vida  
 Me arrancaba con él.

Rima L gives another picture of love. The lovers have placed love on a pedestal and worshipped blindly as a savage worships his wooden idol.

Lo que el salvaje que con torpe mano  
 Hace de un tronco a su capricho un dios,  
 Y luego ante su obra se arrodilla,  
 Eso hicimos tú y yo.

Dimos formas reales a un fantasma,  
 De la mente ridícula invención,  
 Y hecho el ídolo ya sacrificamos  
 En su altar nuestro amor.

From their imagination, the lovers have made an idol to which they have sacrificed even the reality of their love.

In contrast to the quoted poem in which love is personified in one woman, there is found in El rayo de luna, a character who loves many women. One he loves for her red lips, another because she is fair. These passing interests are based only on an ideal of love in the imagination of the lovers.

|Amar! Había nacido para soñar el amor, no para sentirlo. Amaba a todas las mujeres un instante: a ésta porque era rubia, a aquélla porque tenía los labios rojos, a la otra porque se cimbreaba al andar como un junco.(I, 169).

The individual is in love with love rather than with a woman. Love does not consist in physical attraction, but in an ideal founded on the beauty of woman. For this reason love may spring from even a chance view of a girl as occurs in Fres fechas. Bécquer was exploring the winding old streets

of Toledo when he chanced to see the curtains move at a window in a beautiful house of Moorish design. Some months later he had paused to make a sketch of a convent when a white hand was waved at him from a window, and he believed that he had seen the same woman for the second time. A year later he heard the bells ring and entered the church in time to witness the ceremony of the taking of the veil by his beloved ideal. These three dates were written in his memory although he was never to know the woman. This, again, is an example of an ideal and not of a physical love. El aderezo de esmeraldas (III, 13-22), tells the story of a man who hears a young woman express a desire for an emerald necklace in the shop window before which she is standing. As he continues his walk, he has a day dream in which he saves money for years and finally sends the lady the necklace without her finding out from whom it came. In this story likewise, the love exists only in the imagination of the lover.

Although he speaks of many women in his Rimas, Bécquer does not name them and critics agree that he probably did not have real women in mind when he wrote. Valera says: "I dare to suspect that none of these women ever lived in the world in which we all live in body."<sup>3</sup> Dr. Shone expresses the same idea in his article on Bécquer. He says that we cannot take the Rimas as a key to Bécquer's life because they give numerous situations which could not have been possible as time, opportunity, health, and money were all lacking in these days in which Bécquer contends that he loved first one woman, then another. His love affairs grew to such heights in

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3. Juan Valera, Florilegio de poesías castellanas del siglo XIX, p. 186.

his imagination that he was able to escape from the every-day world into one of love given and returned.<sup>4</sup>

Love, then, for Bécquer, was expressed in many and varied moods. In one mood it meant passion; in another, rest. At still another time it meant that love was more important than life and that the primary virtue was faithfulness. Love, for Bécquer, might be caused by association or by the mere sight of a pretty woman in the street. Love, in short, depended on the mood of the individual who felt it.

Religion is many times another part of the emotional reactions of the poet. Bécquer feels himself an intimate part of the universe. In Rima V, the poet pauses in wonder at the workings of his own mind.

Espíritu sin nombre  
Indefinible esencia  
Yo vivo con la vida  
Sin formas de la idea.

Although Bécquer does not understand the scheme of the universe, yet he feels himself a part of the divine plan. Religion is not for him a series of forms to be observed. It is rather a feeling of awareness that there is a guiding spirit over everything. Religion has a mysticism also as is shown in Maese Pérez el organista. A blind organist had played for many years at midnight mass on Christmas Eve. Just at the end of the mass, he fell dead. The following year a new organist takes his place, but the spirit of Maese Pérez returns to his organ and the priest celebrates the mass as if he were filled with supernatural power. The presence of the spirit of God is felt deeply by priest and worshipers alike.

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4. Irwin Shone, "Are the Rimas a Key to Bécquer's Life?" Hispania, Vol. XIII, pp. 469-84.

El sacerdote que oficiaba sentía temblar sus manos, porque Aquél que levantaba en ellas, Aquél a quien saludaban hombres y arcángeles era su Dios, era su Dios, y le parecía haber visto abrirse los cielos y transfigurarse la Hostia. (I, 75).

After a few moments there is heard supernatural music which is an indication of the heavenly hosts.

Después comenzaron a oírse como unos himnos distantes que entonaban las jerarquías de serafines; mil himnos a la vez, que al confundirse formaban uno solo, que, no obstante era no más el acompañamiento de una extraña melodía, que parecía flotar sobre aquel océano de misteriosos ecos, como un jirón de niebla sobre las olas del mar. (I, 75).

Religion, as shown by Bécquer, is either the acceptance of God as the calm but prevailing spirit that rules the universe, or the mystical appearance of God in moments of emotional exaltation.

Imagination is another form of subjectivity. Bécquer's vivid imagination often removes him from everyday existence to a place where he is alone. In La mujer de piedra,<sup>5</sup> the imagination endows a marble statue with life and beauty to such an extent that the poet falls in love with it. In La pereza the imagination considers repose the most important basis for thought. The individual who allows himself absolute lack of activity can often gain thought through imagination. Toil is, of course, to be rewarded, but the greatest reward will go to the man of contemplation and imagination because he is able to understand more of the universe. Imagination in dreams is shown in El aderezo de esmeraldas. A friend of the author tells a story of a poor young man who falls in love with a beautiful woman of the nobility when he sees her on the street. He has a day dream in which he saves money for years and buys her an emerald necklace which he gives her without her finding out who is the donor. After

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5. See above, p. 9.

the story is worked out, the reader discovers that the entire happening is a day-dream. Bécquer thus shows the power of a vivid imagination and that dreams cause the mind to lose the relation between reality and fancy. Imagination is used continuously and in many varied situations in Bécquer's work. Every object of the physical world is colored by his never-tiring imagination.

Pessimism or melancholy is a further characteristic of Romanticism. Bécquer feels pessimism in both life and death. Bécquer indicates that after tiring strife to reach a coveted end, death usually intervenes to snatch away the prize almost within one's grasp. After wandering for years in a quest to pay for the sin of killing his brother, Pulo, in El caudillo de las manos rojas,<sup>6</sup> finds only disappointment and death at the end of the journey. To the pessimist, death is the end. of all things. In Pensamientos, (III, 108-12), a lover says that he will know his beloved when he sees her because he carries an ideal of woman in his heart, but he cannot hope to find her until he sees her at her grave. His love is vivid and emotional, but absolutely hopeless. Death, for Bécquer, is also a state of aloneness. In Rima LXXXIII, he shows the death of a young girl. One sees the body immediately after death and follows the preparation for burial, the funeral service, and the interment. Bécquer's ever-recurring thought is that she can have no companion: she must experience death alone.

Cerraron sus ojos  
Que aún tenía abiertos;  
Taparon su cara  
Con un blanco lienzo;  
Y unos sollozando  
Otros en silencio,  
De la triste alcoba  
Todos se salieron  
.....

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6. See above, p. 10.

Despertaba el día  
 Y a su albor primero,  
 Con sus mil ruidos  
 Despertaba el pueblo,  
 Ante aquel contraste  
 De vida y misterios,  
 De luz y tinieblas,  
 Medité un momento:  
Dios mío, qué solos  
Se quedan los muertos!

While the day awakens with its usual clamor and activity, life in the girl is stilled and silent forever.

Las hojas secas is a fantasy used as a symbol of life with inevitable death to follow. There is a conversation between two dried-up leaves that have drifted together for a moment before the wind separates them forever. The author tells of the happy spring and summer through which they have passed, and shows that happiness in existence is only a prologue to death. In Rima LXVI, death is shown as complete oblivion. Nothing is to be left of the poet, even the place of his grave is to be unknown. Bécquer believed that man's only immortality was to be found in his works.

Subjectivity, one of the important elements of Romanticism, is shown by Bécquer in his treatment of imagination, of the emotions, and of pessimism. Even the most commonplace happenings are colored by the thoughts and emotions of the writer. Love, imagination, pessimism, and even religious experience are treated in relation to the inner life of the poet.

## CHAPTER III

## NATURE

Nature, for the romanticist, deals with the relation of the self to the external forces in the environment. Nature has two aspects for Bécquer. He sees the beauty of nature in its different moods and at different seasons, and he feels the profound effect of these moods of nature upon his inner life. Man also influences nature by putting into it the effect of his own thoughts and feelings. Different parts of the day leave varied impressions on the mind of the poet. El caudillo de las manos rojas<sup>1</sup> gives a vivid picture of night while there is a tropical storm raging.

La noche es oscura; el viento mugre y silba sacudiendo las gigantes ramas del baobab de las selvas; los genios blanden sus cárdenas espadas de fuego sobre las nubes, en que se les ve pasar cabalgando; el trueno retumba dilatándose de eco en eco en los abismos de las cordilleras; la lluvia azota el penacho de las palmas, y confundiéndose con los sordos mugidos de la tormenta, el prolongado lamento del vendaval y el temeroso murmullo de las hojas del bosque, se escucha por intervalos en rugido lejano, ronco y estridente, que parece formarse en la cavidad de un pecho de bronce. (I, 139-40).

The picture of night is made more vivid by an unusual use of words. Such expressions as the following were chosen at random from the selection:

el viento mugre y silba,

los genios blanden sus cárdenas espadas de fuego sobre las nubes,

la lluvia azota,

el temeroso murmullo de las hojas.

They paint pictures of such vividness that the impression is engraved on the mind. This is the objective side of nature. Bécquer shows his

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1. See above, p.17.

artistic talent in his description of even the smallest details of the stormy night.

Day is praised in Rima LXVII, in different seasons of the year. There is dawn which floods the day with its beauty; there is the beauty of the spring day with rain followed by flowers and of the winter day with snow.

¡Qué hermoso es ver el día  
Coronado de fuego levantarse,  
Y a su beso de lumbre  
Brillar las olas y encenderse el aire!

¡Qué hermoso es, tras la lluvia  
Del triste otoño en el azulada tarde,  
De las húmedas flores  
El perfume aspirar hasta saciarse!

¡Qué hermoso es, cuando en copos  
La blanca nieve silenciosa cae,  
De las inquietas llamas  
Ver las rojizas lenguas agitarse!

Varied aspects of nature are shown in Tres fechas.<sup>2</sup> The story concerns a man who counts as the most important dates of his life the days on which he sees the girl with whom he has fallen in love. He has returned to Toledo after an absence of several months since he first saw the movement of a curtain at the window of an old house. One day, as he strolls through a deserted square, he pauses to notice the variety of plants and flowers displayed.

.....En las lomas y los barrancos formados por sus ondulaciones, crecían a su sabor malvas de unas proporciones colosales, cerros de gigantescas ortigas, matas rastreras de campanillas blancas, prados de esa hierba sin nombre, menuda, fina y de un verde oscuro, y meciéndose suavemente al leve soplo del aire, descollando como reyes entre todas las otras plantas parásitas, los poéticos al par que vulgares jaramagos, la verdadera flor de los yermos y las ruinas. (I, 219).

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2. See above, p. 15.

This is uncultivated nature in all its wild beauty. There is no indication of the habitations or presence of man except for ruins.

The touch of the painter is shown in the words and in the care with which he gives details. There are few sombre or vivid colors in Bécquer's vocabulary. His colors are usually either given in pastel tints or are subdued by combination with other colors. The following examples of color were chosen from his prose and poetry:

ópalo; de polvo de oro; una capa roja; una pluma blanca; los ojos verdes; la azulada niebla del crepúsculo; el verde abanico de una palmera; dos llamas fosfóricas; negro plumaje (de un cuervo); los blancos caseríos; una maceta de campanillas azules; una tela blanca; una franja de azulejos brillantes; su cubierta de tejas vidriadas; verdes y amarillas; el cielo era de color de plomo; una nube de incienso azulado; su rubia cabellera; la corza blanca; tu pupila es azul; dos rojas lenguas de fuego.

Color words are found through his legends, tales, and poems in such quantities as to surprise the reader until he recalls Bécquer's training as a painter. Bécquer uses, furthermore, many jewels which add to his color words. He uses the opal, emerald, diamond, water stones in varied colors, turquoise, ruby, sapphire, and pearl frequently and often they are used in a symbolical sense as in Las Perlas, where the pearl is used as a symbol of vanity and luxury. Color words and precious stones are both shown in La creación in which dawn is breaking over the mountains:

Los aéreos picos del Himalaya se coronan de nieblas oscuras en cuyo seno hierve el rayo, y sobre las llanuras que se extienden a sus pies flotan nubes de ópalo, que derraman sobre las flores un rocío de perlas. (I, 58).

The veil of night is the dark mist through which the dawn breaks. Dawn breaking through this veil and lighting the hills, the sea, and the flowers, is given in El caudillo de las manos rojas.<sup>3</sup> The chieftain has wandered

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3. See above, p.19.

for an entire year in his effort to appease the Gods for the murder of his brother. One morning the beauty of the dawn breaks into his suffering and relieves him somewhat:

La aurora rasga el velo de la noche; de sus trenzas de oro se desprenden el rocío en una lluvia de perlas sobre las colinas y las llanuras; los horizontes del mar se encienden y las crestas de sus olas brillan como las escamas de la armadura de un guerrero en un día de combate; de las flores, húmedas aún con las lágrimas del crepúsculo, se eleva al cielo una columna de aromas en emanaciones; perfumadas emanaciones que los genios, cruzando sobre las nubes celestes y ambarinas,.....(I, 149).

All of the beauties of nature meet his eyes when the light of day grows stronger. After his fruitless wandering, he is weary and disspirited, but the scene spread before him softens his suffering.

Atoms of light seem to float in the air in Cartas literarias a una mujer. (III, 73-93). The poet wishes to answer the question: what is the sun?

En las crestas de las olas, en los ribetes de las nubes, en los muros de la ciudad, en el vapor de la mañana, sobre nuestras cabezas, a nuestros pies, en todas partes ardia la pura lumbre del astro, y flotaba una atmósfera luminosa y transparente, en la que nadaban encendidos los átomos del aire. (III, 85).

These pictures of nature, Bécquer paints with a sure hand. Human beings are placed in his legends, tales, and poems against a background of nature revealed in unforgettable beauty. Night and day are given in varying aspects. Dawn, sunrise, and rays of light on water and verdure receive prominence in his work. There is, however, another aspect of nature besides the one given in the above selections. Bécquer is interested in physical nature, but he is interested primarily in the effect that nature has upon man. This may be called subjective nature in contrast to the examples of nature quoted above. Solitude has an effect

upon the personality of one alone with nature. Los ojos verdes (I, 85-98) gives an indication of this effect. In this tale, Fernando has lost a deer in the chase. He wishes to follow it, and is forced to go alone because his companions are afraid of the evil spirit which inhabits the dense woods. He sees and falls in love with a beautiful lady with green eyes. Too late he finds that she is a water spirit, and just at the moment of his discovery, her arms pull him to his death in the green water;

La soledad, con su mil rumores desconocidos, vive en aquellos lugares y embriaga el espíritu en su inefable melancolia. En las plateadas hojas de los álamos, en los huecos de las peñas, en las ondas del agua, parece que nos hablan los invisibles espíritus de la naturaleza, que reconocen un hermano en el inmortal espíritu del hombre. (I, 93).

Nature is personified in the form of the woman with whom he becomes infatuated. In El caudillo de las manos rojas<sup>4</sup> the Chieftain watches the glory of the break of day, and after a few moments sees the sun rise.

El sol nace en Oriente; diríase al verlo que el genio de la luz, vencedor de las sombras, ebrio de orgullo y majestad, se lanza en triunfo sobre su carro de diamantes, dejando en pos de sí, como la estela en un buque, el polvo de oro que levantan sus corceles en el pavimiento de los cielos. Las aguas, los bosques, las aves, el espacio, los mundos tienen una sola voz, y esta voz entona el himno del dia. (I, 116).

The beauty of nature soothes his pain and distress, and gives him courage to continue his pilgrimage. This is an example of the effect that nature has upon the emotions of man. She has the power to change his melancholy into a feeling of passive submission to whatever the gods may have in store for him.

Many and varied emotions are aroused by nature in the mind of the individual. The disturbed mind of a solitary wanderer may even invest

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4. See above, p.21.

trees, rocks, and flowers with shapes to fit his imagination. El caudillo de las manos rojas<sup>5</sup> gives an example of trees that seem like monsters as the chieftain and his wife find themselves alone in a terrible storm.

Los gigantescos árboles se agitan, y retorciéndose como a impulsos de una horrorosa convulsión, comienzan a alfombrar el suelo con las pálidas hojas que se desprenden de sus ramas, como se desprenden los cabellos de la cabeza de un anciano. (I, 142).

The pilgrim finds that even nature is trying to punish him for his crime.

Other elements of nature such as wind and air are also treated by Bécquer. In El miserere (II, 111-125), one is filled with a feeling of dread by the sudden wind and the storm which arise. A musician has found an ancient bit of church liturgy, and in his efforts to fit music to the words of the theme, he goes mad. The story concerns the months through which his mental powers are degenerating.

El viento zumbaba y hacia crujir las puertas, como si una mano poderosa pugnase por arrancarlas de sus quicios; la lluvia caía en turbiones, azotando los vidrios de las ventanas, y de cuando en cuando la luz de un relámpago iluminaba por un instante todo el horizonte que desde ellas se descubría. (II, 117).

Even nature seems disturbed as the mind of the musician begins to break up. The disturbance reacts upon the already weakened mind of the writer and helps to cause its rapid degeneration.

In Recuerdos de un viaje artístico, La basílica de Santa Leocadia, (III, 59-71), Bécquer gives a short but complete picture of autumn and its effects on the observer. Nature is wrapped in a blue and melancholy veil of mist. The air of the sunless afternoons is icy. There is a profound silence which deadens the spirits and submerges one in meditation and sadness.

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5. See above, p. 23.

Había extendido el otoño ese velo de niebla azulado y melancólico, en que se envuelve la naturaleza al sentir el sopló helado de sus tardes sin sol, ese silencio profundo, esa vaguedad sin nombre, imposible de expresar con palabras, que apoderándose de nuestro espíritu, lo sumergen en un océano de meditación y de tristeza imponderables. (III, 60).

The mood of the individual changes to fit the mood of nature. Since nature is sad, the person also feels sadness.

For Bécquer, then, nature has two aspects. There are the objects of nature shown in the physical sense, and also the effect of this objective nature on the mind of each individual, and especially on the mind of Bécquer himself. His mind reacts to the moods of nature at different times of the day and at different seasons of the year. He is influenced by dark days to melancholy, by bright days, to happiness. His emotional life is often in harmony with the varying aspects of nature, and nature in turn is changed to fit the moods of the individual.

## CHAPTER IV

## ELEMENTS OF THE SUPERNATURAL

Supernaturalism was an important element of the romantic movement in all European countries. It was an essential part of the change from the rationalism of the previous period. Bécquer's legends and tales show his interest in all forms of the supernatural: witchcraft, spirits, fantasy, and especially in the devil. His stories are filled with witches, gnomes, devils, gods, and spirits of earth, air, and water. Almost all of his stories concerning the supernatural are laid in a setting of horror or fear as may be seen in the following examples. In Creed in Dios (II, 7-25), a mother has a dream in which her unborn child takes on the form of a horrible serpent. This dream foretells the evil nature of her son. In La promesa (II, 27-42), Pedro goes to war and while he is gone his betrothed dies from shame and grief. At her burial, the hand with the engagement ring is left uncovered. The hand remains above ground until Pedro is solemnly married to the dead woman by a priest. El beso<sup>1</sup> shows the statue of a husband defending the honor of the statue of his wife. In El monte de las animas<sup>2</sup>, Beatriz insists on Alonso's going to a haunted mountain to hunt a blue ribbon that she has lost from her dress. In the morning his body is found partly devoured by wolves. Beatriz goes mad and dies when she hears footsteps in her room and at dawn finds the blue bow that Alonso had gone to seek. In La cueva de la mora<sup>3</sup> the spirits of the lovers wander

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1. See above, p. 9.

2. See above, p. 4.

3. See above, p. 9.

through the Moor's cave at night. El gnomo<sup>4</sup> places love in a setting of horror. El miserere<sup>5</sup> shows the slow disintigration of the mental powers through influence of the spirits of long dead monks. "Carta Sexta" (II, 257-75), of the series Desde mi celda tells the story of a woman believed to be a witch who was pursued by the country people and finally forced to climb a stoney mountain side. As she scrambled up the steep incline, the watchers pushed over a large stone and crushed her. Carta octava (II, 293-309) of the same series of letters gives the story of Dorotea who sold her soul to the witches for beautiful dresses and jewels by means of which she was able to secure a sweetheart. In Los ojos verdes<sup>6</sup> Fernando is dragged to his death by the cold arms of a water spirit. In La ajorca de oro (I, 99-109), Maria Antúnez causes the loss of reason of her lover, Pedro Alfonso de Orellana when she persuades him to steal the jewels from the virgin in the church. When he attempts to steal the jewels, all the statues in the church come alive and the man goes mad. La cruz del diablo (I, 183-209) tells the story of a group of thieves led by the devil who terrorized the entire country side. The devil's armour was captured and made into a cross which was never approached by God-fearing people. In La corza blanca (I, 257-284) Garcés unknowingly kills Constanza, the woman he loves, when she is bewitched and forced to take the form of a white doe. La rosa de pasión (I, 285) is an interesting tale of a Jewish girl who leaves her religion to go to her Christian lover. Her father and other Jews capture her and crucify her. Years later a skeleton is found in which grows a flower more beautiful than has ever been seen before. The skeleton is never identified. The flower is given the name passion rose.

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4. See above, p. 9.

5. See above, p. 24.

6. See above, p. 23.

There are, however, two tales which are exceptions to the setting of horror. One is "Carta novena" (II, 311-324) of the series Desde mi celda in which the virgin descends from heaven to protect don Pedro Atares in a terrible storm. He erects a beautiful church in her honor. The other exception is Maese Pérez el organista<sup>7</sup> in which the spirit of God descends into the church to celebrate the Christmas Eve mass.

The elements of the supernatural as found in Bécquer will be taken up in the following order: witchcraft, devils, spirits, and other miscellaneous elements of the supernatural. The letters in Desde mi celda (II, 177-324) have numerous references to witches and to witchcraft. Bécquer, in Carta sexta (II, 257-74), tells of a trip he made over a little-known path. He stops to ask directions of a shepherd, and is directed over a path by which a witch was pursued to her death. The shepherd says:

Porque antes de terminar la senda--me dijo con el tono más natural del mundo--tendrás que costear el precipicio a que cayó la maldita bruja que le da su nombre, y en el cual se cuenta que anda penando el alma que, después de dejar el cuerpo, ni Dios ni el diablo han querido para suya. (II, 259).

The shepherd continues in such a natural manner that the reader feels that Bécquer understands the simple belief of the one who tells the story.

¡Ah, maldita bruja!, muchas hiciste en vida y ni aun muerta hemos logrado que nos dejes en paz; pero no haya cuidado, que a ti y a tu endiablada raza de hechiceras os hemos de aplastar una a una como a víboras. (II, 260).

Bécquer begs that the shepherd tell him the entire happening and he describes la tía Casca who was reported to be a witch. The country people determined to kill her and pursued her to the crest of a precipice where they rolled a boulder on her and crushed out her life. At the end of his tale the shepherd

7. See above, p. 15.

says: "La vieja de Lucifer tenía siete vidas como los gatos." this very belief in witchcraft is an important part of Romanticism. The above tale also has elements of realism in the terrific struggle that the witch carried on to save her life, but the selection as a whole is thoroughly romantic in conception and execution.

Carta séptima (II, 275-292) of the same series contains another witch legend. Bécquer's servant tells him that in the time of the Moors, the Spanish king wished aloud that he could erect a castle on a rocky promontory. An old man heard the wish and offered to build such a castle if he be allowed to rule it. The king laughingly consented and the old man asked a group of musulman shepherds to be his retainers. The old man went to the promontory and called on spirits to aid him in building the castle. The spirits began their building and continued throughout the night. In the morning the king could see a large castle, and was forced to redeem his promise. Romantic writers frequently use the tale of the building of a castle by supernatural powers. Carta octava (II, 293-311) of the same series is really a continuation of the legend mentioned above. The castle had passed into the power of the Christians, but they had ceased using it and had left it abandoned. There was nearby a priest so good, so kindly and charitable that his fame spread widely. His most notable exploit was liberating the castle from the witches that had begun to congregate there. He used holy water to drive out these evil spirits.

Pero el mayor (beneficio) sin duda fué el libertarlos, merced a sus santas plegarias y poderosos exorcismos, de la incómoda vecindad de las brujas, que desde los lugares más remotos del reino venían a reunirse ciertas noches del año en las ruinas del castillo, que, quizás por deber su fundación a un nigromante, miraban como cosa propia y lugar el más aparente para sus nocturnas zambras y diabólicos conjuros. (II, 294-95).

A niece, Dorotea, had come to live with Mosén Gil, the priest. During the festivals of the village she was left alone because she had neither beautiful clothes nor jewels. She became very ill-tempered, and one afternoon a ragged old woman approached her as she sat at the door of the priest's home. She revealed herself to be a witch and tempted the girl with jewels. Dorotea followed the witch's directions and many witches came into the house.

Dorotea, aunque temblando, hizo punto por punto lo que se le decía, y los gatos se convirtieron en otras tantas mujeres, de las cuales, unas comenzaron a cortar y otras a coser telas de mil colores. (II, 304).

The festival evening arrived and Dorotea went beautifully dressed and triumphed over all her rivals. She soon was asked in marriage by a wealthy young man. Now all of her uncle's prayers and supplications to heaven could not keep the witches from frolicking in the castle. Bécquer states that soon after hearing this story he was walking along an isolated path and saw the sister of la tía Casca, the witch who was killed with a large stone.<sup>8</sup>

De mí puedo asegurarles que no he podido ver a la actual bruja sin sentir un extremecimiento involuntario, como si, en efecto, la colérica mirada que me lanzó, observando la curiosidad impertinente con que espiaba sus acciones, hubiera podido hacerme daño. (II, 309).

By identifying himself with belief in witchcraft, Bécquer places himself definitely in the romantic group of writers.

In Creed en Dios,<sup>9</sup> Bécquer relates the legend of Teobaldo de Montagut, last baron of Fortcastell. Before the birth of her first child, the countess of Montagut had a dream in which she conceived and bore a horrible serpent.

8. See above, p. 28.

9. See above, p. 26.

Cuando la noble condesa de Montagut estaba en cinta de su primogénito Teobaldo, tuvo un ensueño misterioso y terrible. Acaso un aviso de Dios; tal vez una vana fantasía que el tiempo realizó más adelante. Soñó que en su seno engendraba una serpiente, una serpiente monstruosa que, arrojando agudos silbidos, y ora arrastrándose entre la menuda hierba, ora replegándose sobre sí misma para saltar, huyó de la vista, escondiéndose al fin entre unas zarzas. (II, 9).

The child's mother died at his birth. His father was killed fighting against the Moors. The boy's youth was passed like a hurricane, leaving tears and blood in his wake. One day when he was out hunting, he took refuge in a church and threatened to murder the priest. But, just at this moment, a cry from his followers called him to follow a strange monster. His horse died from exhaustion and he was left alone in the woods without having had a chance to kill the monster. A page appeared bringing a horse black as night which Teobaldo mounted. The horse rose to the clouds and to heaven itself, and Teobaldo saw into heaven in a manner similar to that described in Dante's Divine Comedy.

Y vió el arcángel, blanco como la nieve, que sentado sobre un immenso globo de cristal, lo dirige por el espacio en las noches serenas, como un bájel de plata sobre la superficie de un lago azul.

Y vió el sol volteando encendido sobre ejes de oro en una atmósfera de colores y de fuego, y en su foco a los igneos espíritus que habitan incólumes entre las llamas, y desde su ardiente seno entonan al Criador himnos de alegría. (II, 18).

Many souls came up and down the stairs. The saints and virgins were grouped around the mother of God. Farther away he saw the lost souls shouting and crying. As he tried to pierce the bright rays to see the face of God, Teobaldo found himself on earth and believed that he had been dreaming. When he tried to find shelter with the country people, they told him that Teobaldo Montagut had been carried away by the devil over a century ago.

Teobaldo becomes a monk in order to atone for his sins. Romanticism is again shown in the belief that the lord of Montagut had been bewitched and allowed to see into the very realms of heaven and hell.

La corza blanca<sup>10</sup> is a shepherd's tale of a hunt in which the shepherd wandered all night and in the morning found hoofprints of deer and footprints of some fairy-like creature resembling a woman. He is telling the tale to a nobleman and his daughter, Constanza. According to his story, a white doe came out of the woods leading several deer of the natural color.

Cuando, después de escuchar las palabras que dejó referidas, me incorpore con prontitud para sorprender a la persona que las había pronunciado, una corza blanca como la nieve salió de entre las mismas matas en donde yo estaba oculto, y dando unos saltos enormes por cima de los carrascos y los lentiscos, se alejó seguida de una tropa de corzas de su color natural, y así éstas como la blanca que las iba guiando, no arrojaban bramidos al huir, sino que se reían con unas carcajadas cuyo eco juraría que aún me está sonando en los oídos en este momento. (I, 265).

Don Dionis, father of Constanza, jests with the shepherd about his adventure. Garcés, one of the squires, is in love with Constanza. Garcés is hunting one day, and falls asleep in the forest. He is awakened by music and sees the does.

Mientras flotaban en el aire las suaves notas de aquella deliciosa música, Garcés se mantuvo inmóvil. Después que se hubo desvanecido, con mucha precaución apartó un poco las ramas, y no sin experimentar algún sobresalto vió aparecer las corzas,.....

Delante de sus compañeras, más ágil, más linda, más juguetona y alegre que todas, saltando, corriendo, parándose y tornando a correr, de modo que parecía no tocar el suelo con los pies, iba la corza blanca, cuyo extraño color destacaba como una fantástica luz sobre el oscuro fondo de los árboles. (I, 276-77).

Garcés followed the deer, but they had disappeared and in their place Garcés saw a group of beautiful women bathing. With them he saw Constanza. The

10. See above, p. 27,

women changed again to their previous form. Believing that he was the victim of an illusion, he pursued them and shot at the animals fleeing in the underbrush. He ran in the direction of the arrow which he had shot, and found to his horror not the white doe but Constanza what had been mortally wounded. He had killed her with his own hand. Romanticism is shown in this story of witchcraft in which Constanza is able to change her form through sorcery.

In Los ojos verdes, Fernando chases a wounded stag into a dense wood. He is warned by an old retainer not to follow the wounded animal because the wood is haunted.

Esa trocha--prosiguió el montero--conduce a la fuente de los Alamos; la fuente de los Alamos, en cuyas aguas habita un espíritu del mal. El que osa enturbiar su corriente, paga caro su atrevimiento. Ya la res habrá salvado sus márgenes; ¿Cómo la salvareís vos sin atraer sobre vuestra cabeza alguna calamidad horrible? Los cazadores somos reyes del moncayo, pero reyes que pagan un tributo. Pieza que se refugia en esa fuente misteriosa, pieza perdida. (I, 89).

Fernando followed the stag in spite of the warnings. In the days after he returned his old servant suspects that he has been bewitched.

Desde el dia, que yo siempre tendré por funesto, en que llegasteis a la fuente de los Alamos en pos de la res herida, diríase que una mala bruja os ha encanijado con sus hechizos. (I, 90).

Fernando explains that he has fallen in love with a woman who lives among the rocks at the fountain. He tells that she has beautiful green eyes. The servant again warns him of witches.

Pero mis padres, al prohibirme llegar hasta esos lugares, me dijeron mil veces que el espíritu, trasgo, demonio o mujer que habita en sus aguas, tiene los ojos de ese color. Yo os conjuro, por lo que más améis en la tierra, a no volver a la fuente de los Alamos. Un dia u otro os alcanzará su venganza. Y expiaréis muriendo el delito de haber encenagado sus ondas. (I, 94).

Fernando disregards the warnings and returns to the fountain where he is dragged to his death in the green water by the beautiful woman with the

green eyes. These examples give many phases of the use of witchcraft by Bécquer in his legends and tales. This frequent use of witches and witchcraft marks Bécquer as a romanticist.

Besides these examples of witchcraft, Bécquer has many other uses of the supernatural in his works. The use of the devil and other spirits is frequent. In El gnomos (II, 87-110), an old priest warns a group of girls not to linger at the fountain after dark. They laugh at him, and he tells them that a wandering shepherd many years ago had surprised the secret of the gnomes in that place.

Hace muchos años que un pastor, siguiendo a una res extraviada, penetró por la boca de una de esas cuevas, cuyas entradas cubren espesos matorrales y cuyo fin no ha visto ninguno. Cuando volvió al lugar, estaba pálido como la muerte; había sorprendido el secreto de los gnomos; había respirado su envenenada atmósfera, y pagó su atrevimiento con la vida; pero antes de morir refirió cosas estupendas.(II, 91).

He described the gnomes thus:

Medio escondidos entre aquella húmeda frondosidad discurrían unos seres extraños, en parte hombres, en parte reptiles, o ambas cosas a la vez, pues transformándose continuamente, ora parecían criaturas humanas, deformes y pequeñuelas, ora salamandras luminosas o llamas fugaces que danzaban en círculos sobre la cúspide del surtidor.....andaban los gnomos, señores de aquellos lugares, cantando y removiendo sus fabulosas riquezas.(II, 92-93).

The girls discussed the gnomes and two sisters, Marta and Magdalena decide to seek the gnome's treasure. The leader of the gnomes appeared to them.

El gномo era como un hombrecillo transparente: una especie de enano de luz, semejante a un fuego fatuo, que se reía a carcajadas, sin ruido, y saltaba de peña en peña, y mareaba con su vertiginosa movilidad.(II, 107-08).

Marta is a very vain girl who seeks love for selfish reasons, while Magdalena is self-sacrificing and seeks love unselfishly. Marta watches the spirit and finally follows it away, while Magdalena returns home. The

devil had taken the form of a gnome in order to lead Marta away.

La cruz del diablo gives another phase of the belief in the devil. Bécquer tells that he was walking through the country near Bellver in northern Spain, when he sees a large iron cross and stops to examine it. He is approached by a country-man and told that the cross belongs to the devil. When he arrives at the inn, Bécquer asks to be told the story of the cross. He is told that there was once an evil lord who disappeared for three years. When he returned and began to oppress his subjects they revolted, and he called on the devil to aid him. The natives attacked the castle and destroyed the lord and all his men.

Pero el diablo, que a lo que parece no se encontraba satisfecho de su obra, sin duda con el permiso de Dios y a fin de hacer purgar a la comarca algunas culpas, volvió a tomar cartas en el asunto. (I, 193).

Revels began in the partly destroyed castle. Many crimes were committed in the surrounding country and it was believed that the devil had collected a group of young men at the castle. One of the thieves confessed at death that the devil had urged him to join the band.

Hallándome solo y sin recursos de ninguna especie, el diablo sin duda debió sugerirme la idea de reunir algunos jóvenes que se encontraban en una situación idéntica a la mía, los cuales seducidos con la promesa de un porvenir de disipación, libertad y abundancia, no vacilaron un instante en suscribir a mis designios. (I, 196).

With the aid of a special prayer by a hermit the people finally captured the leader of the bandits, but they found that his armor was empty and knew that the devil had occupied it. They heated the armor and by means of prayers, supplications, and the sign of the cross, formed from it a huge iron cross. For this reason the country people fear the wayside cross and do not approach it. The superstition of these common people is based

on a genuine fear of the devil. As was stated above, this belief in the supernatural, particularly the devil, plays an important part in the work of romantic writers.

El miserere<sup>11</sup> concerns a wandering minstrel who goes mad through the effect of some malignant spirit when he attempts to transcribe a musical score for the words of an ancient mass sung by the souls of monks who had been murdered by bandits. The minstrel went to the ruins of the church to hear the singing, but could not remember all of the score. The leader of the bandits is considered one of the devil's aids by the country people.

Hasta aquí todo fué bueno; pero es el caso que este hijo, que por lo que se verá más adelante, debió de ser de la piel del diablo, si no era el mismo diablo en persona.(II, 115).

Again, all evil happenings in the community are traced to the devil. In La ajorca de oro<sup>12</sup> the entire blame for the stealing of a bracelet from the virgin in the church is laid to the beauty of María, a beauty seemingly lent her by the devil.

Ella era hermosa, hermosa con esa hermosura que inspira el vértigo; hermosa con esa hermosura que no se parece en nada a la que soñamos en los ángeles, que, sin embargo, es sobrenatural; hermosura diabólica, que tal vez presta el demonio a algunos seres para hacerlos sus instrumentos en la tierra.(I, 99).

Maria inspires her lover to attempt to steal a bracelet from the most sacred virgin in the cathedral. The statues in the church come alive to protect the virgin's ornament and the young man loses his reason. Doubtless this diabolical desire of the girl came from the devil himself. Bécquer's tales and legends are imbued with this belief in the power of the devil over everyday life.

There are other spirits in Bécquer's works besides witches and the

11. See above, p. 27.

12. See above, p. 27.

devil. In El caudillo de las manos rojas<sup>13</sup> the gods have complete charge of all happenings on earth. While Pulo is asleep his spirit leaves the body to watch over him. Later, when the caudillo is struggling with one of the evil gods in the form of a tiger and has conquered it, he sees it change into an immense serpent.

Pero lo que más asombro le causa es ver el sangriento cadáver del tigre extremecerse, y poco a poco, perdiendo sus primitivas formas, ir tomando, merced a una inconcebible transformación, las de una serpiente. (I, 143).

The serpent has begun to overpower Pulo when he is saved by an arrow shot from the home of the gods.

Ya el reptil, aprisionándolo entre sus anillos de bronce, lo estrecha y comienza a ahogarle; ya el puñal se ha escapado de sus manos desfallecidas, y el velo de la muerte se extiende ante sus ojos, cuando una flecha disparada de las nubes baja silbando y traspasa los de la serpiente. (I, 144).

When Pulo recovers consciousness, the god Vichemú appears to him.

Vichemú, cubiertas las espaldas con un manto de pieles, el arco tendido aún y el caraj de las flechas de diamante sobre el hombro, está a su lado de pie; la frente del dios toca a las nubes, y su sombra es inmensa como la que arroja el Himalaya sobre las llanuras al ocultarse el sol en los confines del Océano. (I, 145).

The spirit of his father leaves the tomb to guide Pulo throughout the night.

Pulo se arrodilla, y del tosco sepulcro del bosque se levanta una llama roja, que lanzándose al vacío comienza a caminar con dirección al ocaso. (I, 159).

Throughout the entire story Pulo is challenged and also defended by rival gods when he makes a pilgrimage to atone for the murder of his brother.

In "Carta novena" (II, 311-24)<sup>14</sup> from the collection Desde mi celda

13. See above, p. 24.

14. See above, p. 28.

Don Pedro Atares is lost and terrified in a lonely wood. He calls on the virgin for aid and she descends to him.

La madre de Dios oyó sus palabras y descendió a la tierra para protegerle (II, 316).

She told him that he could repay her by building a temple on the spot of her appearance. To carry out his promise, he built a very beautiful cathedral.

In La ajorca de oro<sup>15</sup> Pedro sees the very statues in the church come alive when he attempts to steal the virgin's bracelet.

Por un momento creyó que una mano fría y descarnada le sujetaba en aquel punto con una fuerza invencible.....La catedral estaba llena de estatuas, estatuas que, vestidas con luengos y no vistos ropajes, habían descendido de sus huecos y ocupaban todo el ámbito de la iglesia, y le miraban con sus ojos sin pupila.(I, 107).

El beso<sup>16</sup> also shows the statues coming alive to avenge an insult.

This power of the statues to assume movement is certainly an indication of the romantic tendency in the works of Bécquer.

In El miserere,<sup>17</sup> spirits of the monks inhabit the ruined church and chant a mass for the dead who has died without absolution.

Se ven brillar luces a través de las rotas ventanas de la iglesia; se oye como una especie de música extraña y unos cantos lugubres y aterradores que se perciben a intervalos en las ráfagas del aire.

Son los monjes, los cuales, muertos tal vez sin hallarse preparados para presentarse en el tribunal de Dios limpios de toda culpa, vienen aún del purgatorio a impertrar su misericordia cantando el Miserere.(II, 116).

The skeletons of the monks are clearly seen as they chant the mass.

Mal envueltos en los jirones de sus hábitos, caladas las capuchas, bajo los pliegues de las cuales contrastaban con sus descarnadas mandíbulas y los blancos dientes las oscuras cavidades de los ojos de sus calaveras, vió los esqueletos de los monjes,

15. See above, p. 36.

16. See above, p. 26.

17. See above, p. 36.

que fueron arrojados desde el pretil de la iglesia a aquel precipicio, salir del fondo de las aguas, y agarrándose con los largos dedos de sus manos de hueso a las grietas de las peñas, ....diciendo con voz baja y sepulcral, pero con una desgarradora expresión de dolor, el primer versículo del salmo de David.(II, 121).

Later other spirits join the chorus.

Los serafines, los arcángeles, los ángeles y las jerarquías acompañaban con un himno de gloria este versículo, que subía entonces al trono del Señor como una tromba armónica.(II, 123).

In Maese Pérez el organista<sup>18</sup> the spirits are also heavenly hosts.

Le vi, madre, no lo dudéis, vi a un hombre que en silencio y vuelto de espaldas hacia el sitio en que yo estaba recorría con una mano las teclas del órgano, mientras tocaba con la otra sus registros....y el órgano sonaba; pero sonaba de una manera indescriptible.(I, 84).

Later the figure of the man disappeared, but the organ continued playing.

Todo el mundo fijó sus miradas en aquel punto. El órgano estaba solo, y no obstante, el órgano seguía sonando.... sonando como sólo los arcángeles podrían imitarlo en sus raptos de místico alborozo.(I, 86).

Spirits, to the romanticist, may be either good or bad. Bécquer shows the influence of both in his tales and legends.

El cristo de la calavera (I, 239-56) is a tale of the time of the wars against the Moors. Doña Inés was a very proud and vain woman who wanted many lovers. Don Lope de Sandoval and don Alonso de Carillo were incited to fight a duel because of doña Inés although they were close friends. As they are about to kill each other, a supernatural voice stops them.

Al mismo tiempo hirió sus oídos el eco profundo de una voz misteriosa, semejante a esos largos gemidos del vendaval que parece que se queja y articula palabras al correr aprisionado por las torcidas, estrechas y tenebrosas calles de Toledo. (I, 252).

18. See above, p. 28.

The next morning dona Inés is much chagrined to see the two bitter rivals ride away to war together without bidding her goodby. They would have murdered each other if it had not been for the mysterious voice that warned them. This voice alone gives the tale its claim to romanticism.

In El monte de las ánimas<sup>19</sup> Alonso tells Beatriz of the supernatural revels on All Souls Eve.

Las campanas doblan, la oración ha sonado en San Juan del Duero,  
las ánimas del monte comenzarán ahora a levantar sus amarillentos  
cráneos de entre las malezas que cubren sus fosas. ¡Las ánimas!,  
cuya sola vista puede helar de horror la sangre del más valiente,  
tornar sus cabellos blancos. (II, 71).

The girl is vain, however, and sends her lover to his death by insisting that he go to seek a ribbon from her dress. The presence of ghosts and spirits clearly indicate the romantic nature of this tale.

In La promesa<sup>20</sup> a man goes away to war but swears to return to marry his sweetheart. She dies but some supernatural power causes the hand with his engagement ring to remain unburied. The hand haunts the unfaithful lover.

A todas horas, en todas partes, estoy viendo esa mano misteriosa que previene mis deseos y se adelanta a mis acciones.....siempre se halla delante de mis ojos, y por donde voy me sigue.....mirala aquí apoyada suavemente en mis hombros. (II, 35).

This supernatural appearance ceased only when a priest performed a solemn wedding ceremony at the side of the grave.. The tale is another indication that Bécquer is a romanticist.

In La cueva de la mora<sup>21</sup> the spirits of the lovers haunt the cave where they were killed.

19. See above, p. 26.

20. See above, p. 26.

21. See above, p. 26.

El soldado que disparó la saeta vió un rastro de sangre a la orilla del río, y siguiéndolo, entró en la cueva, donde encontró los cadáveres del caballero y su amada, que aún vienen por las noches a vagar por estos contornos. (II, 85).

There is still a different element of the supernatural and, therefore, of the romantic in La mujer de piedra.<sup>22</sup> After Bécquer had contemplated the statue of a beautiful woman, he began to feel that some mysterious spirit must inhabit the marble body. This spirit seemed to lend life to the statue. It was a life existing only in the imagination of the poet without movement or agitation. This, also, shows the use of the supernatural in Bécquer's works.

In addition to these three forms of the supernatural, witchcraft, the devil, and spirits, which are part of the elements of romanticism, and used by Bécquer, will be considered a few special uses of the supernatural which are not readily grouped under the above heads.

In La rosa de pasión<sup>23</sup> a strange but beautiful flower appears at the place at which Sara was crucified and buried.

Cuentan que algunos años después un pastor trajo al arzobispo una flor hasta entonces nunca vista, en la cual se veían figurados todos los atributos del martirio del Salvador; flor extraña y misteriosa que había crecido y enredado sus tallos por entre los ruinosos muros de la derruida iglesia. (I, 297).

This strange blood-red flower found on the spot of Sara's martyrdom bore on its petals the form of the crucifix.

The fantasy of the imagination is found also in the first letter of Desde mi celda.<sup>24</sup>

Estaba despierto, pero mis ideas iban poco a poco tomando esa forma extravagante de los ensueños de la mañana, historias sin principio ni fin, cuyos eslabones de oro se quiebran con un rayo

22. See above, p. 16.

23. See above, p. 27.

24. See above, p. 28.

de enojosa claridad y vuelven a soldarse apenas se corren las cortinas del lecho. (II, 187).

Just at the point of awakening from sleep, Bécquer finds his ideas taking form in imaginings having no beginning or end.

The two tales in which personification of inanimate objects is used also belong to fantasy. In Los ojos verdes,<sup>25</sup> water is personified and becomes a water sprite with beautiful green eyes. In El caudillo de las manos rojas,<sup>26</sup> sleep is shown as a body with ninety hands.

*El Sueño*, hijo de la tumba, levanta a esta voz la frente, entreabre los soñolientos ojos y agita sus noventa manos, en cada una de las cuales tiene una copa llena hasta los bordes de un licor soporífero. (I, 136).

Each hand of this strange fantastic being holds a cup of sleep-producing liquid. In La creación,<sup>27</sup> the god Brahma forms the emotions to place in his newly-made world.

Después encerró en redomas transparentes y de una materia nunca vista gérmenes de cosas inmateriales e intangibles, pasiones, deseos, facultades, virtudes, principios de dolor y de gozo de muerte y de vida, de bien y de mal. Y todo lo subdividió en especies, y lo clasificó con diligencia exquisita poniéndole un rótulo escrito a cada una de las redomas. (I, 57).

The figures of these elements are called up by the imagination of the poet.

Bécquer uses in his works, then, witchcraft, devils, spirits, and other supernatural elements suggested by the imagination. Most of his prose works may be classed as supernatural. This interest in the supernatural places him definitely in the group of romantic writers.

25. See above, p. 33.

26. See above, p. 37.

27. See above, p. 21.

## CHAPTER V

## RENEWED INTEREST IN THE MIDDLE AGES

A revived interest of the life of the Middle Ages is another element of Romanticism. Bécquer has numerous examples of the customs and life of the Middle Ages in his legends and tales. Tannenberg says in La Poésie castillane contemporaine.

Et en effet, quelques-unes de ses légendes sont charmantes, et il a écrit des pages exquises sur les antiquités monumentales de l'Espagne; il avait plus que personne le sentiment des ruines, des vieilles pierres.<sup>1</sup>

Bécquer shows in his prose the feeling and emotion aroused by the ruins of Spain. He has a real sympathy for these remains of a former civilization. It is stated in Poet Lore<sup>2</sup> that Bécquer is a dreamer living in the Middle Ages. In Carta cuarta (II, 229-242), of Desde mi celda (II, 177-324), Bécquer himself says that he wishes his readers to pause a moment to consider with attention the Middle Ages.

Lo único que yo desearía es un poco de respetuosa atención para aquellas edades, un poco de justicia para los que lentamente vinieron preparando el camino por donde hemos llegado hasta aquí, y cuya obra colosal quedará acaso olvidada por nuestra ingratitud e incuria. (II, 232).

This interest in the Middle Ages is divided into two parts. One is interest in and enthusiasm for the customs of the former century, and the other is a study of ancient buildings from the standpoint of both the artist and the architect. In his legends, the wandering minstrel plays a large part in the customs and life of the Middle Ages. La

1. Boris de Tannenberg, La Poésie castillane contemporaine, p. 161.  
2. Lawrence Woodman, "Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer, Spanish Romanticist." Poet Lore. Vol. XXVI, p. 521.

promesa<sup>3</sup> gives a good picture of the romero or minstrel. The background of these legends and tales of the Middle Ages is laid on the battle-field, and in this story the minstrel is singing to soldiers camped in their tents awaiting the battle:

Próximo a la tienda del rey y en medio de un corro de soldados, pajecillos y gente menuda que la escuchaban con la boca abierta, apresurándose a comprarle algunas de las baratijas que anunciablea a voces y con hiperbólicos encomios, había un extraño personaje, mitad romero, mitad juglar, que ora recitando una especie de letanía en latín bárbaro, ora diciendo una bufonada o una chorrería, mezclaba en su interminable relación chistes capaces de poner colorado a un ballesteros con oraciones devotas, historias de amores picarescos, con leyendas de santos. En las inmensas alforjas que colgaban de sus hombros se hallaban revueltos y confundidos mil objetos diferentes; cintas tocadas en el sepulcro de Santiago; cédulas con palabras que él decía ser hebraicas, las mismas que dijo el rey Salomón cuando fundaba el templo, y las únicas para libertarse de toda clase de enfermedades contagiosas; bálsamos maravillosos para pegar a hombres partidos por la mitad. (II, 38).

He also carries love potions, relics of the patron saints of the different towns in Spain, and many ornaments of glass and lead. He is, then, wandering peddler and physician. A pilgrim, who, however, is interested in music is shown in El miserere.

Hace ya muchos años, en una noche lluviosa y oscura, llegó a la puerta claustral de esta abadía un romero, y pidió un poco de lumbre para secar sus ropas, un pedazo de pan con que satisfacer su hambre, y un albergue cualquiera donde esperar la mañana y proseguir con la luz del sol su camino. (II, 112-13).

Such wandering minstrels and pilgrims were frequent visitors to monasteries and castles in the Middle Ages.

An intimate picture of family life is shown in El monte de las animas.<sup>4</sup> There is a coziness and bodily comfort which are not seen in the other selections about the Middle Ages.

3. See above, p. 40.

4. See above, p. 40.

Los servidores acababan de levantar los manteles; la alta chimenea gótica del palacio de los condes de Alcudiel despedía un vivo resplandor iluminando algunos grupos de damas y caballeros que alrededor de la lumbre conversaban familiarmente, y el viento azotaba los empomados vidrios de las ojivas del salón. (II, 68).

The customs of the Middle Ages as shown in Bécquer's work include, then, the singing of a minstrel to warriors awaiting the call to battle, the practices of religion as shown by the wandering pilgrim, and the quiet home life of the people.

Bécquer frequently places the setting of his stories in the Middle Ages. This is the time when feudalism played a large part in the life of the people. Each man was subservient to the one just above him in power, and the most powerful of the nobles were in submission to the king. La cruz del diablo<sup>5</sup> speaks of the feudal state in Spain.

Hace mucho tiempo, mucho tiempo, yo no sé cuánto, pero los moros ocupaban aún la mayor parte de España, se llamaban condes nuestros reyes, y las villas y aldeas pertenecían en feudo a ciertos señores, que a su vez prestaban homenaje a otros más poderosos, cuando acaeció lo que voy a referir a ustedes. (I, 187).

In this selection, as in several others, Bécquer states no definite time. The action of the story might have taken place in the Middle Ages, or it may take place in the present. An indication of the Middle Ages is shown by the presence of the Moors in Spain.

The power of the king over his subjects is shown also in El cristo de la calavera<sup>6</sup> in which the king calls his nobles to fight against the Moors.

El rey de Castilla marchaba a la guerra de moros, y para combatir con los enemigos de la religión había apellidado en son de guerra a todo lo más florido de la nobleza de sus reinos. (I, 239).

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5. See above, p. 35.

6. See above, p. 34.

In La corza blanca,<sup>7</sup> one of the nobles who had fought for the king in the crusades has returned to his castle to take his ease.

En un pequeño lugar de Aragón, y allá por los años de mil trescientos y pico, vivía retirado en su torre señorial un famoso caballero llamado don Dionis, el cual, después de haber servido a su rey en la guerra contra infieles, descansaba a la sazón, entregado al alegre ejercicio de la caza, de las rudas fatigas de los combates. (I, 257).

There is no definite time element shown in this story. The only indication given of its setting is that the nobleman had returned from the crusades where he had served the king.

In his wanderings in the cities of Spain, particularly Toledo, Bécquer became interested in the buildings erected during the Middle Ages, especially those erected by the Moors. It was the interest of a painter in the beauties of Moorish architecture. In his legends and tales he gives detailed and interesting descriptions of these ancient buildings. An old street with its houses is shown in Tres fechas.<sup>8</sup>

Hay en Toledo una calle estrecha, torcida y oscura, que guarda tan fielmente la huella de las cien generaciones que en ella han habitado; que habla con tanta eloquencia a los ojos del artista, y le revela tantos secretos puntos de afinidad entre las ideas y las costumbres de cada siglo, con la forma y el carácter especial impreso en sus obras más insignificantes, que yo cerraría sus entradas con una barrera, y pondría sobre la barrera un tarjetón. (I, 212).

One afternoon as Bécquer is strolling down the street in the old section of the city, his attention is attracted by a beautiful old house of medieval architecture.

Una tarde, sin embargo, al pasar frente a un caserón antiquísimo y oscuro, en cuyos altos paredones se veían tres o cuatro ventanas de formas desiguales, repartidas sin orden ni concierto, me fijé casualmente en una de ellas. La formaba un gran arco ojival,

7. See above, p. 32.

8. See above, p. 20.

rodeado de un festón de hojas picadas y agudas. El arco estaba cerrado por un ligero tabique,.....en medio del cual se veía, como contenida en la primera, una pequeña ventana con un marco y sus hierros verdes.(I, 215).

This arch and the ornamenting of walls and windows with rock in irregular designs were characteristic of the architecture of the Middle Ages. The windows were small and set at irregular intervals in a wall. Castles, during the feudal ages, were set on high hills or on mountain sides to furnish the people protection from enemies. In La cruz del diablo<sup>9</sup> we are shown one of these isolated strongholds.

Pues es el caso que, en aquel tiempo remoto, esta villa y algunas otras formaban parte del partimonio de un noble barón, cuyo castillo señorial se levantó por muchos siglos sobre la cresta de un peñasco que baña el Segre, del cual toma su nombre.

Aún testifican la verdad de mi relación algunas informes ruinas que, cubiertas de jaramago y musgo, se alcanzan a ver sobre su cumbre desde el camino que conduce a este pueblo.(I, 188).

Another castle of the Middle Ages is described in La cueva de la mora.<sup>10</sup>

Frente al establecimiento de baños de Fitero, y sobre unas rocas cortadas a pico, a cuyos pies corre el río Alhama, se ven todavía los restos abandonados de un castillo árabe, célebre en los fastos gloriosos de la Reconquista, por haber sido teatro de grandes y memorables hazañas, así por parte de los que le defendieron, como de los que valerosamente clavarón sobre sus almenas el estandarte de la cruz.(II, 77).

Churches erected after the Moorish fashion were also described by Bécquer.

In La mujer de piedra<sup>11</sup> we see such a temple.

Vagando al acaso por el laberinto de calles estrechas y tortuosas de cierta antigua población castellana, acerté a pasar cerca de un templo en cuya fachada el arte ojival y el bizantino, amalgamados por la mano de dos centurias, habían escrito una de las páginas más originales de la arquitectura española.(II, 162).

There are numerous figures of dwarfs. Arches extend across the front of

9. See above, p. 45.

10. See above, p. 40.

11. See above, p. 41.

the building. There are many pillars. The windows are of stained glass. The building represents a combination of Moorish and Gothic style so frequently seen in medieval Spanish architecture.

Bécquer's interest in the Middle Ages shows itself in various ways. He describes customs of the time, and writes of the minstrel, the wandering pilgrim, and the home life of the people. Furthermore, a number of his stories have medieval setting. Bécquer also shows an interest in the description of buildings of the Middle Ages, whether they have retained their original form or are in ruins. Among the buildings which he describes are private dwelling houses, castles, and churches. Buildings are described from the standpoint of the painter who sees everything in detail.

## CHAPTER VI

## CONCLUSIONS

By examination of the five preceding chapters, it may be seen that Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer had many characteristics similar to those of writers belonging to the romantic movement, even though he belonged to no set literary group in Spanish literature. The main elements of Romanticism are: subjectivity, including love and the other emotions and religious experiences; an emotional interest in nature; the use of the supernatural; and a revival of interest in the Middle Ages. Bécquer includes all of these elements in his poetry and prose. The poetry is concerned chiefly with love. The legends and tales contain examples of the inner life of the individual as shown in religion, imagination, and pessimism. These prose works also give nature an important place, and are full of supernatural happenings, and of the life and architecture of the Middle Ages. Bécquer's prose is so lyrical that it closely resembles poetic composition. These elements of Romanticism are so numerous in Bécquer's work that he must be included in the group of romantic writers.

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