

## SELF REALIZATION IN THE *LEYENDAS* OF GUSTAVO ADOLFO BÉCQUER

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There is ample evidence that Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer was greatly affected by his unconscious fantasies. In the "Introducción" to his *Libro de los gorriones* he refers to "este otro mundo que llevo dentro de la cabeza,"<sup>1</sup> and in "Hojas Secas" he describes a trance-like state when his spirit explores the workings of this mysterious inner world (642). In *Rima LXXV* he tells us that the mind continues to be active when the body sleeps, and Kessel Schwartz has observed that in the moment just before going to sleep Bécquer experienced what modern psychology calls "hypnagogic manifestations" that have their origin in the unconscious (202). The contents of this deeper level of awareness provided the basis for many of his literary works,<sup>2</sup> and his description of how this occurs helps us understand an important aspect of his creative thought. With this in mind, let us look at Bécquer's "Introducción" more closely.

He begins by describing a state of insomnia during which he is agonizingly aware of the unconscious creations which await the recognition of his conscious mind. He then personifies the unconscious as a feminine figure which gives birth to an endless swarm of strange children. Because he senses that these rebellious children of his imagination are about to overwhelm his conscious mind, Bécquer recognizes that he must find an outlet for his powerful stream of psychic energy: "Necesario es abrir paso a las aguas profundas, que acabarán por romper el dique" (40). Although it is difficult to find a form that adequately reveals their ineffable nature, he must do so in order to function in the world of objective reality. Then, once he has purged the inner self of its excess weight, his spirit will ascend to a dimension of pure consciousness: "De una hora a otra puede deslizarse el espíritu de la materia para remontarse a regiones más puras" (41).<sup>3</sup>

John H. Hartsook has stated that "Bécquer's accounts of the workings of the subconscious in the process of creation are remarkably faithful to the cumulative findings of modern psychologists" (253). I have also found that Bécquer's thinking shows a strong resemblance to the theories of Carl Gustav Jung. Therefore, after a brief look at Jung's ideas, I will examine Bécquer's *Leyendas* from a Jungian perspective, in the hope that this will enhance our appreciation and our understanding of his work.

Jung based his psychoanalytic method on the theory that all consciousness has as its base a collective unconscious which is independent of both space and time. Since each self is a projection of this collective unconscious, it has within it both masculine and feminine characteristics. Jung referred to the feminine aspect of man's unconscious as the "anima,"

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<sup>1</sup> All quotations from Bécquer's work will be taken from his *Obras Completas* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1969).

<sup>2</sup> John Hartsook has said of Bécquer that it is "the trance-like state of reverie which furnished him with the stuff out of which he forged his poetic creations" (255). Eugene Del Vecchio also discusses Bécquer's unconscious creative activity in "Schlegelian Philosophical and Artistic Irony in Bécquer," (220-225).

<sup>3</sup> Julian Palley refers to this topic in his study, "Bécquer's Disembodied Soul," (185-192).

and to the male aspect of the female unconscious as the “animus.” The anima and the animus are often personified in dreams and fantasies, and as two of the most important archetypes, they exert a powerful influence on an individual’s behavior. Jung says that the anima corresponds to the maternal Eros which he defines as the “function of relationship,” while the animus corresponds to the “function of discrimination” which is associated with the male Logos (“The Syzygy,” *CW*, Vol. 9-2, 14).<sup>4</sup> In our study of Bécquer’s *Leyendas* it is the anima which will be our main concern.

As Jung and Freud both recognized, the unconscious is the repository for large amounts of psychic energy. If this energy is repressed, like a boiling pot that is tightly sealed it tends to explode. In psychological terms this means that if the conscious mind represses the unconscious, it will react by producing neuroses and other forms of irrational behavior which influence our conscious activities. Jung feels that the unconscious is not in itself a negative or destructive force, but if it is constantly ignored, it will arrange situations and events which thwart our conscious intentions.

This does not mean that we are at the mercy of the unconscious; when an imbalance occurs the unconscious will give us signals which, if they are recognized and acted on, will help to restore the balance. The important thing is to integrate the unconscious into consciousness, thereby relieving the pent-up psychic energy and, at the same time, creating a state of balance between the different parts of the self. In the final analysis, Jung says, “the decisive factor is always consciousness, which can understand the manifestations of the unconscious and take up a position toward them” (*Memories...*, 187).

When we relate this to what was stated with regard to the anima, it is clear that this important archetype may have either a negative or a positive nature, depending on whether it has been integrated into consciousness. If this is not done, the anima may express herself in moods of depression or uncertainty, and in extreme cases she may cause a complete mental breakdown. Because of this negative potential, Jung feels that “the anima is a factor of utmost importance in the psychology of a man where emotions and affects are at work. She intensifies, exaggerates, falsifies, and mythologizes all emotional relations with his work and with other people of both sexes. The resultant fantasies and entanglements are all of her doing” (“Concerning,” *CW*, Vol. 9-1, 70). The anima exerts such a powerful influence that everything she touches becomes numinous, that is, magical or supernatural. On the positive side, when a man makes an active effort to assimilate his inner feminine nature, the anima can become a sort of “angel of light,” like Beatrice in Dante’s *Paradiso*, who serves as a guide in the world of the unconscious as she points the way to the highest truths.

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<sup>4</sup> Speaking of the anima, Jung has observed: “every man carries within him the eternal image of woman.... This is fundamentally unconscious, an hereditary factor of primordial origin engraved in the living organic system of man, an imprint or ‘archetype’ of all the ancestral experience of the female.... Since the image is unconscious, it is always unconsciously projected upon the person of the beloved, and is one of the chief reasons for passionate attractions of aversions,” (*Memories*, 391).

Coping with the anima is not an easy task, but it is possible to achieve a stable relationship where the individual is enriched by the contents of the unconscious. This is what Jung calls the “process of individuation,” which he defines as the process by which a person becomes a complete psychological individual. Achieving this state of psychic unity or wholeness in which the unconscious has been thoroughly integrated into consciousness is therefore the final stage of self-development; as Jung puts it: “it also implies becoming one’s own self. We could therefore translate individuation as ‘coming to self-hood’ or ‘self-realization’” (“The Relations,” *CW*, Vol. 7, 173).

Finally Jung points to a special relationship between the concept of individuation and the Christian religion. He says that individuation is indispensable for certain people, not only as a therapeutic necessity, but as an image of the highest goal we can achieve, which corresponds to the Christian ideal of the Kingdom of Heaven which “is within you.” In religious terms, the process of individuation is equivalent to a state of harmony with the source of all consciousness which is God.

After this brief look at Jungian psychology, we can see that Bécquer has done precisely what was necessary to come to terms with the anima which gives birth to the rebellious children of his unconscious. Because he saw the danger of repressing the contents of the unconscious, he recognized their importance by personifying them in his works of art. Now even more similarity with Jung’s ideas will be evident, as we examine the *Leyendas*, paying particular attention to the role of the anima, and to the progress which the different characters make toward the completion of the process of self-realization.

A great deal has been said regarding the importance of Bécquer’s “ideal woman”; however, little attention has been given to the psychological aspect of his work. Other than the previously mentioned articles of Kessel Schwartz and John H. Hartsook, perhaps the most important psychological study is Kay Engler’s “Archetypal Patterns in Bécquer’s *Leyendas*.”<sup>5</sup>

At the beginning of her article, Engler reminds us of José Pedro Díaz’ assertion that the main theme of Bécquer’s *Rimas* is “el destierro,” or what she calls “a profound sense of alienation from self and world” (6). She then points out that this same sense of alienation, and the resulting search for psychic wholeness, is an important theme in Bécquer’s *Leyendas*. We will see that Bécquer’s protagonists strive with varying degrees of success to reach a state of psychological development which is equivalent to the process of individuation; some end in total failure, but others make progress toward their goal. The *Leyendas* which fall within the scope of the present study have been separated into three groups: 1) those where there is no psychological growth: “Tres fechas,” “La ajorca de oro,” “Los ojos verdes,” “El rayo de luna”; 2) those where, although the process of individuation is not completed, some positive elements are found: “El caudillo de las manos rojas,” “La cueva de la mora,” “El gnomo”; and 3) those where the protagonist is more or less successful in his quest for wholeness: “El Cristo de la calavera,” “La promesa,” “Creed en Dios.”

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<sup>5</sup> See also “El problema psicológico” by Arturo Berenguer Carisomo, *La prosa de Bécquer* (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1974), 118-120.

## I

In the first group of *Leyendas*, the protagonist is completely passive in that he either does not choose to act, or else his actions are controlled by the anima who serves as the voice of the unconscious. With the exception of “Tres fechas,” the *leyendas* in this group have a negative anima-figure, and they all conclude with some sort of tragic outcome that offers no hope for the future.

1. “*Tres fechas*”. In this *leyenda*, the protagonist never tries to make contact with the woman on whom the anima is projected. On three different occasions, he visits the city of Toledo. On his first visit, he walks through the streets where his eye is caught by a window full of flowers; although he has seen no one, when the curtain is raised he assumes that he is being watched by a woman, “porque indudablemente, a aquella ventana... sólo una mujer podía asomarse, y cuando digo una mujer, entiéndase que se supone joven y bonita” (352-353). Although he does not know who she is, he is certain that she is no stranger: “Yo la conocía. Ya sabía cómo se llamaba y hasta cuál era el color de sus ojos” (353). On a second visit to the city, he sees someone wave to him from the window of a convent, and on a third and final visit he enters this convent to watch while a young woman becomes a nun. Assuming that it is a same woman he encountered on his previous visits, he feels once again that she is someone he has always known:

El resplandor de todas las luces la iluminó y pude verle el rostro. Al mirarla tuve que ahogar un grito. Yo conocía a aquella mujer: no la había visto nunca, pero la conocía de haberla contemplado en sueños; era uno de esos seres que adivina el alma o los recuerde acaso de otro mundo mejor, del que, al descender a este, algunos no pierden del todo la memoria. Di unos pasos adelante... me acometió como un vértigo... (368).

We will see that Bécquer often uses the sensation of “vértigo” as an indication that his protagonist is under the influence of the unconscious. Since the anima is an archetype of the collective unconscious, she has a sense of timeless familiarity that is projected on the woman who captures a man’s attention. As Marie-Luise von Franz observes: “It is the presence of the anima that causes a man to fall suddenly in love when he sees a woman for the first time and knows that this is ‘she.’ In this situation, the man feels as if he has known this woman intimately for all time; he falls for her so helplessly that it looks to outsiders like complete madness” (180). It is this feeling of having known the woman that causes the agonizing sense of loss that the protagonist feels when he sees her enter the inner sanctuary of the church: “Yo estaba conmovido; no; conmovido, no; aterrado. Creía presenciar una cosa sobrenatural, sentir como que me arrancaban algo preciso para mi vida, y que alrededor se formaba el vacío; pensaba que acababa de perder algo... y sentía ese inmenso desconuelo sin nombre” (367). Having lost the anima “para siempre,” he is doomed to incompleteness, as though he has lost an essential part of his own self.

2. “*La ajorca de oro*”. The presentation of María as a negative anima-figure is evident from the beginning of “La ajorca de oro”:

Ella era hermosa, hermosa con esa hermosura que inspira el vértigo, hermosura que no se parece en nada a la que soñamos en los ángeles y que sin embargo, es sobrenatural; hermosura diabólica...

Él la amaba; la amaba con ese amor que no conoce freno ni límite... Ella era caprichosa, caprichosa y extravagante... (115)

Again, the sensation of “vértigo” is indicative of a flood of psychic energy that wells up from the unconscious. In Bécquer’s *Leyendas*, diabolical spirits can also be seen as negative unconscious influences. María’s supernatural beauty reveals the numinous character of the anima, and her extravagant and capricious nature foreshadows the destructive influence she will have when she asks Pedro to steal the Virgin’s golden bracelet.

This *leyenda* also has a positive anima-figure represented by the Virgin, whose location in the cathedral symbolizes the Divine Center of being.<sup>6</sup> Like the negative anima, the Virgin is a numinous figure surrounded by a nimbus of supernatural light: “su imagen colocada en el altar mayor sobre un escabel de oro, resplandecía como un ascua de fuego” (116-117). The golden bracelet—“Parece un círculo de estrellas arrancadas del cielo”—is an image of cosmic wholeness which is naturally associated with the good anima. Since Pedro has made no effort to escape the influence of the negative anima, his contact with the Virgin is not a beneficial one, and when he approaches the altar to take the bracelet, his sense of “horror” reveals the fundamental wrongness of the unbalanced state he has entered. Significantly, when he is about to remove the bracelet from the Virgin’s arm, he closes his eyes: “cerró los ojos para no verla” (121). This voluntary lack of vision not only symbolizes his rejection of the good anima, but also reinforces the idea that he is acting under the influence of the unconscious.

Eventually, he is forced to open his eyes, and in this moment of conscious recognition he finds that he is surrounded by a throng of living statues:

La catedral estaba llena de estatuas que... habían descendido de sus huecos... y lo miraban con sus ojos sin pupila. Santos, monjes, ángeles, demonios, guerreros, damas, pajes, cenobitas y villanos se rodeaban y confundían en las naves y en el altar... mientras que arranstrándose por las losas, trepando por los machones, acurrucados en los doseles, suspendidos en las bóvedas, pululaba como los gusanos de un inmenso cadáver, todo un mundo de reptiles y alimañas de granito. (122)

Bécquer has projected the contents of Pedro’s unconscious in the description of these statues. The multitude of human figures with their impersonal eyes “sin pupila” symbolize the collective aspect of the unconscious which confronts him with his guilt. The horrible figures in the second part of the description represent the destructive forces which have resulted from his failure to take conscious control of his actions. His final madness—“El infeliz estaba loco”—reveals the unbalanced state of his psyche which he is now unable to control. Jung has stated that “the insinuations of the anima, the mouthpiece of the unconscious, can utterly

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the temple and the Gothic cathedral as symbols of the divine Center, see Cirlot (314 and 317).

destroy a man" (*Memories...*, 187), and because Pedro has not made an effort to assimilate the unconscious, his mind is torn apart by this encounter with the anima.

3. "*Los ojos verdes*". Jung has found that water is the most common symbol for the unconscious, and in "*Los ojos verdes*," the unconscious is represented by the water of a spring wherein an evil spirit dwells. The protagonist, Fernando de Argensola, refuses to follow the advice of his mentor, Íñigo, who warns him not to approach the spring. Íñigo is a personification of the "wise old man," the archetype of the superior master and teacher, and Fernando's stubborn refusal to follow his advice can be seen as a tendency to repress the unconscious. In this case, the negative anima takes the form of a beautiful water-sprite with whom he falls desperately in love.<sup>7</sup>

At first, Fernando has some conscious understanding of what is happening; but he does nothing to reinforce this understanding, and his infatuation intensifies until he is no longer able to control his actions. Commenting on the tendency to ignore the unconscious, Jung has observed: "The chief danger is that of succumbing to the fascinating influence of the archetypes, and this is most likely to happen when archetypal images are not made conscious. If there is already a predisposition to psychosis, it may even happen that the archetypal figures, which are endowed with a certain autonomy... will escape from conscious control altogether and become independent, thus producing the phenomenon of possession" ("*Archetypes*," *CW*, Vol. 9-1, 39). Fernando is indeed "possessed" by the negative anima, and when she calls him to join her, he falls into the water and disappears: "Las aguas saltaron en chispas de luz y se cerraron sobre su cuerpo, y sus círculos de plata fueron ensanchándose, ensanchándose, hasta expirar en las orillas" (141). The disappearance of his body under the water shows us that Fernando has been reunited with the unconscious, but the circles of water which "expire" on the shore suggest that his individuality is destroyed when it returns to its source.

4. "*El rayo de luna*". Manrique, the protagonist of "*El rayo de luna*," does not project his anima on a woman of flesh and blood. He is portrayed as a solitary figure who avoids the company of others. He is a poet and a dreamer who lives in solitude because it permits him to give free rein to his imagination.

One night at midnight when the moon is full, Manrique leaves the city and crosses the river to enter the forest surrounding a ruined convent:

Manrique, presa su imaginación de un vértigo de poesía, después de atravesar el puente, desde donde contempló un momento la negra silueta de la ciudad... se internó en las desiertas ruinas de los Templarios. La medianoche tocaba a su punto. La luna que se había ido remontando lentamente, estaba ya en lo más alto del cielo, cuando al entrar en una oscura alameda... Manrique exhaló un grito... (164)

When he sees a flash of white which he believes to be a woman's dress, he exclaims: "Ésa, ésa es la mujer que yo busco..." (164).

<sup>7</sup> Jung refers to this type of anima figure as a nixie, and he states that "she is a mischievous being who crosses our path in numerous transformations and disguises, playing all kinds of tricks on us, causing happy and unhappy disillusion, depressions, ecstasies, outbursts of affect" ("*Archetypes*," *CW*, Vol. 9-1, 25-26).

Within the framework of Manrique's symbolic fantasy, the bridge between the city and the forest represents the border between the conscious and the unconscious. The city is the world of consciousness from which Manrique flees, and his entry into the deserted ruins of the forest suggests that he has identified himself with the contents of the unconscious.<sup>8</sup> Again we find the sensation of vertigo, and the image of the moon is a further indication of unconscious influence.<sup>9</sup> Thus, when Manrique imagines that the patch of moonlight is a woman's dress, it is evident that he has become a victim of the forces represented by the anima. We also see that he is not searching for a real woman, but rather the feminine counterpart of his own self: "es un espíritu hermano de mi espíritu, que es el complemento de mi ser" (169). Like the narrator of "Tres fechas," he feels that he will easily recognize this woman whom he has never seen: "si la encuentro, estoy casi seguro de que he de conocerla" (168).

In psychological terms, the incident in the forest can be seen as a sign that Manrique should act to restore the balance of his psyche. Jung feels that a state of psychic imbalance may be beneficial, because it can result in a change for the better: "I regard the loss of balance as purposive, since it replaces a defective consciousness by the automatic and instinctive activity of the unconscious, which is aiming at a new balance and will moreover achieve this aim, provided that the conscious mind is capable of assimilating the contents produced by the unconscious, i.e., of understanding and digesting them" ("Relations," *CW*, Vol. 7, 162). When Manrique re-enters the city in search of the unknown woman this can be seen as a positive element, since it is there, in the world of conscious reality, that he must find a way to release the pent-up psychic energy that his earlier actions have produced. The crucial moment comes after he has spent the night outside a house thinking that it is the home of his beloved. When a servant tells him that no woman lives in the house, he has an opportunity for conscious recognition, but this does not happen, and the unconscious influence grows even stronger: "había buscado en vano a aquella mujer desconocida, cuyo absurdo amor iba creciendo en su alma, merced a sus absurdas imaginaciones" (170).

Finally, Manrique decides to return to the forest, showing that he has rejected the opportunity for conscious realization. Once again the moon is full, and once again he sees a flash of white which seems to be a woman's dress. Rushing to the spot where it appeared, he begins to laugh hysterically, because he has finally realized that the elusive white figure he has been pursuing is only a ray of moonlight. With this, Manrique returns to the world of consciousness, but he does so without having been able to assimilate the contents of the unconscious. Instead he has gone to the opposite extreme, where he now rejects everything that has to do with the unconscious.

And what is worse, he has also lost contact with the anima and the function of relationship that she represents. When his mother tells him that he is still young enough to find a woman he loves, he replies, bitterly: "¡El amor!... El amor es un rayo de luna."

<sup>8</sup> Cirlot says that the forest is a symbol of the unconscious (107).

<sup>9</sup> Jung sees the image of the moon as a "cosmic element" which has its origin in the collective unconscious ("Relations," *CW*, Vol. 9-1, 160). For Cirlot the moon is associated with intuition and magic, and when it has a negative meaning, "it alludes to error, arbitrary fantasy, imaginative sensitivity" (207).

Just as he has rejected the unconscious, Manrique has now lost faith in everything that is related to the feminine principle: "Cántigas..., mujeres..., glorias..., felicidad..., mentira todo, fantasmas vanos que formamos en nuestra imaginación" (172). Jung tells us that permanent loss of the anima means a diminution of vitality and human kindness which results in premature rigidity, fanatical one-sidedness and obstinacy ("Concerning," *CW*, Vol. 9-1, 71). It is not surprising, therefore, that Manrique now enters a state of lethargy and indifference to others: "inmóvil casi, y con una mirada vaga e inquieta como la de un idiota, apenas prestaba atención a las caricias de su madre ni a los consuelos de sus servidores" (171). For Manrique, the signals from the unconscious were not enough to bring about a state of balance, and the result is a sterile life of inactivity and stagnation.

## II

In the second group of *leyendas* none of the protagonists reach a state of psychic wholeness, but all are active in their struggle with the unconscious. The first two protagonists encounter a positive anima-figure with whom they strive to unite. Their quest for union ends with death; however, in both cases there is a suggestion that in dying some form of union was achieved. Other critics have emphasized the tragic ending of these works, but in view of Bécquer's affirmation of life after death,<sup>10</sup> the outcome is not totally negative.

1. "*El Caudillo de las manos rojas*". This *leyenda* contains the story of Pulo's struggle to rise above human weakness and reach a state of spiritual perfection. Having killed his brother in order to possess Siannah, the woman he loves, Pulo is told by a mysterious hermit that he must undertake a long and difficult penance. During this time, he and Siannah are not to have physical relations; however, Pulo gives in to his desire, and while he sleeps, Siannah mysteriously disappears. Like Manrique, Pulo has lost the anima, but he does not become passive; rather, he agrees to perform another difficult task which, if he is successful, will reunite him with Siannah and purge him of his guilt. Because of his impatience, he fails again, and he finally decides that only his death will allow him to atone for his crime. He asks Siva (the god of destruction) to forgive Siannah for any responsibility she may have had in the brother's death, and he prays that he might see her once more before he dies. As he stabs himself with his own sword, Siannah miraculously reappears; then, when Pulo's body is burned on a funeral pyre, she throws herself into the flames.

In psychological terms, it can be said that in killing his brother Pulo has rejected the part of himself which belongs to the family, which in this case represents the collective unconscious. Siannah is the good anima, the angel of light and meaning who can restore his relation to the universal family. Before he can join her, however, he must act to correct an over-evaluation of the ego which has upset the balance of his psyche. Pulo differs from the other protagonists we have seen in that he pays attention to a sign from the unconscious,

<sup>10</sup> In the third letter *Desde mi celda*, Bécquer has expressed his ideas about life after death: "En cuanto al alma, dicho se está que siempre he deseado se encaminase al cielo... Cada día me voy convenciendo más que de lo vale, de lo que es algo, no ha de quedar ni un átomo aquí" (535). M. García Viñó examines Bécquer's view of death in *Mundo y trasmundo de las leyendas de Bécquer* (75-78).



represented by the archetypal figure of the hermit, and he also labors actively to improve his character. His desire for physical pleasure and his impatience cause serious damage to his quest for spiritual growth, but in the end he is able to overcome these things by the public admission of guilt, and by his self-sacrifice. Siannah's reappearance, as well as her decision to join him in death, suggests that he has attained his goal of spiritual wholeness.

In this case, death may be interpreted as a fundamental change which puts an end to one state of existence so that another may begin. As Cirlot has put it: "Death is also the source of life... In the positive sense, [death] symbolizes the transformation of all things, the progress of evolution" (74).<sup>11</sup> Looked at in this way, Pulo's physical death represents the necessary destruction of the ego, and the realization of the higher self, represented by his reunion with the anima, is synonymous with the end of his struggle to rejoin the whole.

2. "*La cueva de la mora*". Although the external circumstances differ, the same psychological symbolism that we found in the previous *leyenda* is present in "*La cueva de la mora*." Once again the protagonist suffers from a case of ego-inflation that results in his death, and once again he is reunited with the anima in the act of dying.

An unnamed Christian nobleman is taken prisoner by the Moors, and during his captivity he falls in love with the daughter of his captor. He is eventually rescued by his soldiers, but he soon becomes despondent because he has lost his beloved. Like Manrique in "*El rayo de luna*," he reacts to the loss of the anima by entering a state of indifference and passivity: "el alma del caballero se había llenado de una profunda y extraña melancolía y ni el cariño paterno ni los esfuerzos de la amistad eran parte a disiparla" (237). Eventually, the nobleman breaks out of his lethargy and decides to act. However, when he prepares to retake the fortress where he was held prisoner, it becomes evident that this decision was overshadowed by his obsession with the anima. Fearing that the Moors will gather reinforcements and retake the fortress, his friends beg him to leave, but the nobleman refuses to heed their advice because he does not want to be separated from his beloved. A short time later the Moors attack, and in the course of the battle he is mortally wounded. The Moorish woman leads him through a secret passage to a cave below the fortress, and as he is about to die, he asks for water: "¡Tengo sed! ¡Me abraso! ¡Agua!" (239). Going in search of water, the woman is seen by the Moorish soldiers, and she is also mortally wounded.

It is clear that the nobleman's overwhelming desire to possess the anima is the result of his refusal to pay attention to the unconscious. However, he is given another chance to save himself when the anima acts as his guide to the world of the unconscious, represented by the passage beneath the fortress. In terms of the symbolism discussed earlier, his desperate thirst can be seen as the need to assimilate the unconscious in order to relieve the tension caused by his psychic imbalance. Because he finally recognizes this need, the nobleman is able to take conscious control of his self as he admits his guilt and offers her the water: "Al verla cubierta de sangre y próxima a morir, recuperó su razón y conociendo la

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<sup>11</sup> A. D. Inglis also feels that Siannah's decision to die with her husband implies the idea of life after death: "These [words], coming from Bécquer are not words of doom but carry the promise of continuing experience" (25-26).

enormidad del pecado que duramente expiaban, volvió los ojos al cielo, tomó el agua que su amante le ofrecía y, sin acercársela a los labios, preguntó a la mora: —"¿Quieres ser cristiana? ¿Quieres morir en mi religión y, si me salvo, salvarte conmigo?" (240). When she indicates her acceptance, he pours the water over her head in an act of baptism, as he invokes the name of God.

Like Pulo at the end of the previous *leyenda*, the nobleman must balance his egotism with a conscious act of self-sacrifice, and having done this he is able to unite with the anima and achieve a state of wholeness. Once again death can be seen symbolically as the annihilation of the ego, which makes possible the birth of the true self.

3. "*El gnomo*". "El gnomo" has a more complex structure than the other *leyendas* we have examined. In addition to the main plot which deals with Marta and Magdalena, it has two sub-plots, and all three can be related to the process of individuation.

The first sub-plot concerns a shepherd who wanders through a maze of subterranean passages in search of a lost animal. Once again, the underground passage can be seen as a symbol for an encounter with the unconscious. The evil spirits that he encounters—"en su hueco seno, viven unos espíritus diabólicos"—represent what Jung has referred to as the "shadow", the inferior personality which has been repressed because of its incompatibility with the conscious self. These underground spirits are the gnomes, who are the jealous guardians of an immense hoard of gold and jewels. When the shepherd finds the treasure, he is overcome by a feeling of greed. He has fallen victim to an obsession of the lower self, and he must therefore pay the price of his weakness; "Había sorprendido el secreto de los gnomos, había respirado su envenenada atmósfera y pagó su atrevimiento con la vida" (219). However, the shepherd's defeat by the shadow elements of his psyche was not a total one since he is still able to respond to a sign from the good anima. When he hears the bell of the hermitage of Nuestra Señora del Moncayo, he invokes the name of the Virgin, and he finds himself above ground once again. Before he dies, the shepherd has regained conscious control of his self, and once again the death of the ego is necessary before the balance of the psyche can be restored.

The second sub-plot deals with the story of a shepherdess and a king, and here for the first time, albeit in the secondary characters, the process of individuation is brought to its conclusion. The king is at war with his enemies, and since his resources are exhausted, he is about to lose his throne. In this moment of conflict which threatens to disrupt the unity of the self (symbolized by the throne) a shepherdess reveals the existence of an underground passage, and she gives the king a rich treasure of jewels and gold with which he can pay his soldiers. Then, taking his army through the subterranean passage, the king gains an easy victory which saves his crown—"asegurando la corona en su cabeza" (225).

The fact that she knows the way through the underground passage shows that the shepherdess represents the good anima who acts as a guide to the world of the unconscious. Because he willingly accepts her advice, the king receives the "treasure," which enables him to go forward in his task of self-realization. In this case, the treasure can be seen as a symbol of truth and meaning that is associated with the positive anima-figure. The circular form of

the crown is a symbol of wholeness and unity, while the crown itself stands for the highest goal of spiritual evolution (Cirlot, 69-70). Indicating that this goal has in fact been reached, the king goes on to establish a permanent relationship with the good anima; he marries the shepherdess to one of his favorites, and he builds her a fortress where she can watch over the frontier of his kingdom, in the same way that the anima serves as a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious.

In the story of Marta and Magdalena we are not dealing with an anima projection. Like the two women whom Bécquer describes in *Rima XI*, they represent two different types of character, or two different parts of the self. Marta's materialistic and selfish nature represents the lower, instinctive aspect of the self, while Magdalena's sensitive and loving nature stands for the higher, spiritual portion of the self.

The sisters' visit to the spring represents an encounter with the unconscious, which is the source of all consciousness. As they listen to the wind and the water, they experience another level of awareness: "aquel sonar eterno del aire y el agua empezó a producir una extraña exaltación, una especie de vértigo..." (228). What the two sisters experience in this moment of "vértigo" is in keeping with their character. Marta hears the voice of the water, as it appeals to her selfish desire for material pleasure:

Yo he adivinado que tu espíritu es de la esencia de los espíritus superiores... Ven; te daré tesoros para que vivas feliz, y más tarde, cuando se quiebre la cárcel que lo aprisiona, tu espíritu se asimilará a los nuestros, que son espíritus hermanos, y todos confundidos, seremos la fuerza motora, el rayo vital de la creación, que circula como un fluido por sus arterias subterráneas. (231)

Marta is promised a life of continued happiness; however, as in the case of Fernando in "Los ojos verdes," this union with the spirits of the water represents an impersonal existence in which her individuality is absorbed by the collective unconscious—"tu espíritu se asimilará a los nuestros." Thus, when Marta follows the gnome at the end of story, she falls into the water and disappears from the world of consciousness.

Magdalena, on the other hand, does not hear the voice of the water, since she is in tune with a higher level of consciousness represented by the wind. Instead of a desire for self-gratification which leads to a loss of self in the collective unconscious, the wind speaks of a love which unites, while preserving the identity of the self:

¡Desdichado el que, teniendo alas, desciende a las profundidades para buscar oro, pudiendo remontarse a la altura para encontrar amor y sentimiento!... Yo te traeré en un beso fecundo el germen vivificante de otra flor hermana tuya y rasgaré las nieblas para que no falte un rayo de sol que ilumine tu alegría. Vive oscura, vive ignorada, que cuando tu espíritu se desate, yo lo subiré a las regiones de la luz en una nube roja. (231-232)

Magdalena is told to live quietly without egotism—"vive oscura, vive ignorada"—and then her soul will find love on a higher level of consciousness. At the end of the *leyenda*, she returns to her village, and to her former identity. But all that is found of Marta is her broken

water jug, a further indication that as the water of the broken container has been lost in the spring, Marta's consciousness has returned to its source.

### III

Several of the works examined previously have shown that only in death was it possible to complete the process of individuation. In this third group of *leyendas*, Bécquer shows that it is also possible to move toward that goal in this life, without reaching the final point of self-sacrifice.

1. "*El Cristo de la calavera*". Alonso and Lope, the two protagonists of "El Cristo de la calavera," are in love with the same woman and, similar to what we encountered in "El gnomo," they can be seen as two aspects of the same person: "Estos caballeros, iguales en cuna, valor y nobles prendas, servidores de un mismo rey y pretendientes de una misma dama... juntos habían hecho sus primeras armas, y en un mismo día, al encontrarse sus ojos con los de doña Inés se sintieron poseídos de un secreto y ardiente amor" (204). Here the emphasis is not on the difference in their character, as in the case of Marta and Magdalena. Instead, they represent the splitting, or the dissociation of the self which results from the negative influence of the anima.<sup>12</sup>

Inés de Tordesillas is a vain and selfish woman who takes pleasure in the conflict which she provokes among her admirers. Both Lope and Alonso have allowed themselves to be dominated by their passion for Inés, so that in the end a violent conflict is inevitable. As they prepare to begin their duel, their only source of light is a lamp that illuminates an image of Christ with a skull at its feet. Three times they touch swords, and three times the light disappears. This seemingly supernatural opposition to their conflict causes them to remember that they had once been best friends. While they embrace each other, they are able to laugh at their former obsession for Inés. As the story ends, the two friends ride off together—"cabalgaban juntos"—having been reunited by their triumph over the negative anima. The conscious mind is once more in control, and the unity of the self has been preserved.

2. "*La promesa*". In this *leyenda* we have a good example of what Jung refers to when he speaks of the danger of repressing the unconscious, and we also have an indication of the conflict that this produces between the masculine and the feminine parts of the self. As the story begins, Margarita is crying with her head bowed "hacia la tierra." Her association with the "ground" not only foreshadows what happens at the end of the story, but also serves to focus our attention on the fact that she represents the earthy, feminine principle. She also represents the female Eros—the function of relationship to the other—which Jung associates with the anima. Pedro, who is also the Count of Gómara, represents the male principle—the discriminating or cognitive function of the male Logos—that clashes with the feminine Eros: "Margarita, para ti el amor el todo, y tú no ves nada más allá del amor. No obstante, hay algo tan respetable como nuestro cariño, y es mí deber" (242).

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<sup>12</sup> Kay Engler also sees the relation of Lope and Alonso as "the doubling or splitting of a single protagonist into two protagonists" (8).

By trying to hide his identity, the Count has placed a barrier between himself and Margarita, which shows that he is unwilling to come to terms with the feminine qualities that she represents. She asks to be treated as an equal—“Ve a mantener tu honra: pero vuelve..., vuelve a traerme la mía” (243)—but it is evident that the Count does not intend to fulfill his promise to a person he considers his inferior.

Then, when the Count cannot control his horse during the battle with the Moors, this shows that he has lost control of his actions. The horse is a symbol of the unconscious,<sup>13</sup> which has been repressed and now turns against the conscious self. The mysterious hand which appears from nowhere to turn the horse and save the Count from certain death can be seen as a supernatural, i.e., unconscious, warning that he must restore the balance of his psyche; as he exclaims to his squire: “Yo debo hallarme bajo la influencia de una maldición terrible. El cielo o el infierno deben de querer algo de mí, y lo avisan con hechos sobrenaturales” (246). This warning is not enough to make him act, and as the following passage clearly shows, he is still a victim of the unconscious:

El conde de Gómara, acompañado de su fiel escudero, atravesó por entre los animados grupos sin levantar los ojos de la tierra... Andaba maquinalmente, a la manera de un somnábulo, cuyo espíritu se agita en el mundo de los sueños, se mueve y marcha sin la conciencia de sus acciones y como arrastrado por una voluntad ajena a la suya. (249)

From the perspective of the ego, to be at the mercy of the unconscious—“el mundo de los sueños”—is indeed to be controlled by a will other than its own.

The fortuitous appearance of the *juglar* who sings the “ballad of the dead hand” can be seen as another warning from the unconscious. The first two stanzas repeat what we already know, that Margarita (the good anima) has been rejected by the male portion of the self. The last two stanzas describe Margarita’s death, which was caused by her brothers, who feel that she has dishonored the family. The brothers and their harsh code of honor which favors the male point of view are a symbol of the psychic imbalance caused by the repression of the female principle. The image of Margarita’s hand, which does not sink below the earth like the rest of her body is another sign of imbalance or incompleteness, that can only be remedied by her reunion with the male principle.

This time the warning from the unconscious produces the desired effect when the Count accepts the fact that he will find peace of mind only if he fulfills his promise to Margarita. As he kneels by her grave and clasps her hand, they are finally joined in marriage. This ceremony represents what Jung calls the *coniunctio oppositorum*, the joining of opposites, when the two parts of the self are reunited as one. It also represents a decisive point in the process of individuation, when the unconscious is integrated into the conscious self. Although Margarita had to suffer physical death because of the male tendency to repress the feminine principle, the flowers which appear on her grave each Spring symbolize her final triumph. The flower can be seen as a symbol of the “Center,” a mandala-like image that stands for a state of psychic wholeness.

<sup>13</sup> Eric Neumann says that the horse is a symbol of the masculine unconscious (217). Cirlot has also observed that the horse represents the “natural unconscious, instinctive zone” of the self (145).

3. "*Creed en Dios*". In Teobaldo de Montagut we have another striking example of unconscious repression, which is followed by a return to a balanced state that leads to individuation. Because Teobaldo's mother dies when he is born, he grows up without the influence of the feminine principle. This means that in this *leyenda* the anima plays a small but still significant role.

Before her death, Teobaldo's mother had a prophetic dream in which she gave birth to a serpent which, moments later, was transformed into a white dove that rose up to disappear among the clouds. Besides the connotation of evil which is associated with the serpent, it is also "expressive of abnormal stirrings in the unconscious, that is, of a reactivation of its destructive potential" (Cirlot, 274). The white dove suggests the idea of purity, and Mircea Eliade states that the image of a bird in flight stands for the idea of spiritual evolution (105). The combination of these contradictory symbols seems to indicate that, after a period of evil, Teobaldo will undergo some sort of spiritual transformation.

True to his symbolic prophecy, Teobaldo begins to lead a life of violence and destruction. One day when he is hunting, he encounters a priest who warns him that God will punish him if he does not change his ways. Teobaldo replies that he does not believe in God; furthermore, since he has found no game to pursue, he will amuse himself by killing the priest. Just as he is about to carry out his threat, a wild boar is seen, causing him to mount his horse and rush off in pursuit. He whips his horse ferociously and is about to catch the boar, but the wild pursuit is too much for his horse which finally dies of fatigue. At that moment, a mysterious page appears leading another horse. Eager to continue the chase, Teobaldo leaps on his new mount, which begins to run so rapidly that he cannot control it: "Había partido a escape; pero a un escape tan rápido, que, temeroso de perder los estribos y caer a tierra turbado por el vértigo, tuvo que cerrar los ojos y agarrarse con ambas manos a sus flotantes crines" (179-180).

Like his mother's dream, these events can be understood symbolically. Since he has experienced a total lack of feminine influence, Teobaldo has an unbalanced approach to life. The wild boar symbolizes the destructive, masculine part of the self, which has split off and become difficult to control. The archetypal figure of the priest can again be seen as a warning from the inner self, and Teobaldo's denial of God is equivalent to a rejection of the unconscious. The mistreatment of his horse (as in "*La promesa*," the horse is a symbol of the unconscious) can be seen as a further act of repression, which leads to a complete breakdown of the relationship between the different levels of the self. His inability to control the new horse shows that it is the unconscious that now directs his actions. When Teobaldo feels a sensation of vertigo and is forced to close his eyes, this also shows his lack of conscious control.

The images which follow indicate that Teobaldo has left the orderly realm of rational consciousness and has entered the chaotic and impersonal world of the collective unconscious: "Ya no le quedaba duda de que era el juguete de un poder sobrenatural que lo arrastraba, sin que supiese adónde, a través de aquellas nieblas oscuras, de formas caprichosas y fantásticas" (181). Then, in a cosmic vision whose wealth of symbolic imagery rivals that of works like the Book of Revelations, or the *Divine Comedy*, Teobaldo is shown the existence of an entire other-worldly dimension whose reality he had previously

denied. Here he comes in contact with the feminine element which has been missing since the death of his mother. As the celestial veil is rent, he has a vision of Paradise where the first figure he sees is that of the Virgin; and then for the first time he hears the voice of his mother: “Teobaldo oyó entre aquellas voces, que palpitaban aún en el éter luminoso, la voz de su santa madre, que pedía a Dios por él” (184). Finally, the vision ends when he approaches the highest point of Paradise where God Himself resides. Teobaldo tries to look, but his unbalanced spirit is not pure enough to receive the divine image:

Él quiso mirarlo. Un aliento de fuego abrasó su cara... y arrancado del corcel y lanzado al vacío como la piedra candente que arroja un volcán, se sintió bajar y bajar, sin caer nunca; ciego, abrasado y ensordecido, como cayó el ángel rebelde cuando Dios derribó el pedestal de su orgullo con un soplo de sus labios. (185).

The focus of Teobaldo’s awareness returns to normal consciousness—“como si despertara de un profundo sueño” (186)—; he finds that over a hundred years have passed and that his castle has been converted into a monastery. Showing that the encounter with the unconscious has produced a profound change in his character, he decides to become a priest. Here the monastery is a symbol of the spiritual “Center,” and by choosing to enter it Teobaldo has taken a major step on the path that leads to self-realization. When asked about his identity by the monk who admits him to the monastery, he replies only: “Yo soy... un miserable pecador.” But as an indication that in the end he finally realized his true self, we have the inscription from his tomb: “Yo fui el verdadero Teobaldo de Montagut, barón de Fortcastell... Cree en Dios como yo he creído y ruégale por mí” (173). Once again Bécquer shows that by choosing to sacrifice the ego, and by paying attention to the unconscious, it is possible to achieve a state of psychic wholeness.

The fact that Bécquer describes human nature in a way that so closely agrees with Jungian psychology helps to explain the universal appeal of his literary creations. Not only do his works have great aesthetic value, as many critics have previously demonstrated, but they also serve as a psychological model which points the way to a balanced existence.

What we have seen in the *leyendas* is reinforced by what Bécquer has expressed in the *Rimas*, many of which contain a description of the numinous figure of the anima. In *Rima VIII* he also describes his belief that it is possible for the self to rise above its limitations and experience a higher level of consciousness where the individual is in harmony with the Whole. In Bécquer’s words:

me parece posible a do brillan [las estrellas]  
subir en un vuelo  
y anegarme en su luz, y con ellas  
en lumbre encendido  
fundirme en un beso...

Like most people, the poet has his moments of doubt. But then he goes on to affirm that the experience of belonging to this higher form of consciousness is an assurance of his own participation in the divine source:

En el mar de la duda en que bogo,  
ni aun sé lo que creo;  
¡sin embargo, estas ansias me dicen  
que yo llevo algo  
divino aquí dentro! (411).

A final conclusion that may be drawn from the present study is that Bécquer's attitude was probably less pessimistic than many writers have previously believed. We began by recalling the remarks of José Pedro Díaz in which he states that a feeling of alienation—"destierro"—is the basic theme of Bécquer's writing, and it is clear that this view has been widely accepted. What this study shows, however, is that his feeling of alienation was not Bécquer's final view of life.

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