

BRETON DE LOS HERREROS

By

John F. Griffiths,
A.B., University of Kansas, 1924.

Submitted to the Department of Hispanic Languages and Literature and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Approved by:

Instructor in Charge

Arthur L. Owen
Head of Department

Date

June 6, 1925

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter I	
Formative period -- introductory.....	1.
Chapter II	
Language and method.....	31.
Chapter III	
Social, political, and moral philosophy.....	41.
Chapter IV	
Bretón and romanticism.....	82.
Chapter V	
Summary.....	102.
General bibliography.....	107.
Special bibliography.....	109.
Index.....	111.

FORMATIVE PERIOD

Any extended discussion of the life of Manuel Bretón de los Herreros is unnecessary for the purposes of this paper, which is to be a study of the man as a writer of plays. For such a study, the events of his life, apart from his writing, are important only in so far as environment, especially his early experiences in life, helped to determine his social and philosophical viewpoint, and to give him a background of experience by which to judge life as it came under his observation.

He was born at Quel, province of Logroña in the year 1796. While yet a boy he was taken, with his family, to Madrid, and owing to the more or less general disruption of the educational institutions, as a result of political strife, his early education was necessarily incomplete, although not neglected.

When he was fifteen years old his father died, leaving the family impoverished. Little is known of Bretón's life between the time of his father's death in 1811 and his enlistment in the army, May 24, 1812. It may be that "he experienced in the home of some relatives, the bitterness that he so vividly paints in the "Comedia" of Los dos sobrinos."¹ It is one of his early works (May 30, 1825)

¹Marqués de Molíns: Bretón de los Herreros, Madrid, 1883; pg. 9.

and it is reasonable to suppose that it was the result of an experience still fresh in his memory, but if this supposition is correct, it must be that the writing and presentation of the play was a means of ridding himself of the feeling of bitterness, for, I believe, there is no hint of personal rancor of this sort in any of his subsequent productions.

He was not quite sixteen years old when he enlisted in the army, to serve against the French in Valencia and Catalonia, until in 1822, at the age of twenty-six, he received his absolute discharge and was given a minor political appointment under the liberal government. Little of detail is known of his military experiences, but it is quite evident that they had a profound and lasting effect upon his viewpoint of life in general. It is true that Bretón the poet was born, but it is no less true that Bretón the man was largely influenced by his soldier's environment among men who, by the very nature and spirit of the enterprise which brought them together, would naturally come to look upon life as a thing almost tangible in itself, to be enjoyed and appreciated for its own sake, and not for the superficialities that may be added to it by a vain society, in a vainglorious attempt to change it -- to make something out of it, that it does not of itself contain. It was this association with "el pueblo" as represented by

men of all types and characters, and from various parts of the country that clearly played an important part in developing his naturally keen power of observation, and in the formation of his social and philosophical viewpoint, giving him, at the start, a broad, albeit superficial understanding of human nature.

If, instead of being left in a time of political turmoil to live as a man among men, fighting and suffering with his fellow soldiers, playing and rejoicing with them in care-free hours, he had been experiencing a carefully cradled and conventionally tutored youth, it is hardly conceivable that he ever would have come to that open-minded appreciation of values in life that enabled him to create one situation after another, wherein the petty superficialities and unworthy ambitions of certain types of people are so ridiculously contrasted with the things in life that are really worth while. And if he had spent his youth in the narrowing atmosphere of a certain social group, whose every move is governed by convention, instead of being billeted here and there among the ordinary homes of his country-men, seeing life as they live it, sympathizing with them in their natural passions, desires, and ambitions, and seeing the humor, the ridiculousness, and often the disgusting pottiness of many of their social precepts and customs, from the detached point of view of one whose only responsi-

bility was to obey orders as they were given and to live his life one day at a time, it is not probable that he could have created so many different types¹ of characters with so few inconsistencies as between the characters themselves and their mental reaction to the life about them.

In any case he would still have retained the grace and flexibility of his versification, and the same linguistic dexterity, but with less abundance of wholesome subject matter, and with a less familiar viewpoint he would probably have been less buoyant and not so natural.

In considering the influence of Bretón the soldier on Bretón the poet, Roca de Togores wonders if anyone can imagine "the author of A Madrid me vuelvo or El Pelo de la dehesa confined in the chancellor's office of some embassy, or wearing himself out in the halls of the Congress of Venice, singing psalms in the chorus of a cathedral, or perplexing himself on the benches of an anatomical classroom, or of a chemical laboratory."² It would seem that he might possibly have written a Madrid me vuelvo with only the experience of a few weeks sojourn in some mountain

¹The "sameness" of which Bretón is justly accused, in so far as it applies to his characters at all, applies only to individuals within respective types according to my way of thinking.

²Molíns: op. cit., Madrid, 1883, pg. 17.

*See E. Piñeyro, El Romanticismo en España, Paris, n.d. (2nd ed.) pgs. 206-207.

village as a background, allowing for inconsistencies that would be expected from one not thoroughly acquainted with his character subjects. But El pelo de la dehesa is a play that is so excellent in its genuine humor and originality, in its cleverness and reality of character portrayal and presentation of mental processes, with a grateful absence of unnecessary elaboration that is so often present where a writer is treading unfamiliar ground and does not know when he has put in all the essentials, and to conceive of his writing it without being thoroughly at ease in dealing with a man of Don Frutos' type would call for more than an ordinary strain on the imagination. And being at ease in treating with Don Frutos must necessitate actual familiarity with the general make-up of men who would react as Frutos does to what were, to him, unacceptable conventions and customs of court life. But here is the answer that the author quoted above gives to his own question: "Ah! no; para ser el poeta mas popular de España, era preciso que viviese como el pueblo español de su epoca guerreando y riendo: de día algo en las plazas, de noche en los campamentos; alguna vez junto al brasero de la patrona, no pocas al rededor de la mesa de café y de la hoguera del vivac."

³Idem., pg. 17.

It was this singularly intimate acquaintance with the people in their domestic life, together with his inherent powers of observation and recognition, that enabled him to create plots, pleasingly artistic in their very simplicity, usually sincere in their reality, often fanciful and capricious, yet as a rule based on actualities not to be ignored. And it was his natural humor, his ability to see and recognize the comical and ridiculous in so many phases of life (taken seriously by the ordinary persons, who would see them from only one angle), together with his propensity for seeing as much as he could on the surface of things, instead of being satisfied to see less, but more deeply, that no doubt helped him through the long period of futile suffering and pointless strife of his people, to keep from either becoming embittered at life in general, or growing susceptible to the revolutionary, and all too aimless, spirit of romanticism that soon swept through Europe.

Because of his happy predilection for poetry, his love of beauty for its own sake in language and literature, his veneration for his own national theater of the past, and hope in the possibilities for its future, his determination to develop his natural facility in the handling of his language, and probably also because of his inborn mental energy and aptitude, Breton made more out

of his army life than a laboratory in which to carry on his interrupted studies of the humanities. It is a matter of record that he was continually exercising his poetic faculties in hymns, in patriotic poems, and in light sketches for his own gratification, and for the delectation of his comrades. The consistent sturdiness and vigor of expression in his plays, all the more surprising, as well as gratifying, for going hand in hand with his extraordinary grace and beauty of style in versification, his buoyancy, and even sprightliness, and his dexterity where awkwardness would seem venial⁴ are due to natural poetic talent, augmented by unstinted effort for improvement, but his inexhaustible supply of domestic expressions, the naturalness and indigenoussness of his Spanish, must be partly due to an early incorporation, into his own linguistic store, of selected vocabularies and native expressions from various sources -- made up partly of the men and women with whom he was in daily contact, and partly of the literary compositions that it was possible to obtain. That many of these literary models were detestable is unfortunate; the fortunate thing is that Bretón detested them, him-

⁴"...jugeteaba a veces no más que venciendo dificultades rítmicas." -- J. Cejador: Historia de la lengua y literatura Castellana, Vol. VI, Madrid, 1917, pg. 408.

self,⁵ and was influenced only by the elements of linguistic beauty and happy expressions he found in them.

This phase is worthy of the space which has been given to it, since it was the most important formative factor in the determination of his attitude toward the life about him, and in the development of his knowledge of the sort of life and people with which he largely dealt, at least in his many comedies of manners and customs. Take, for example, El polo de la dehesa, already mentioned, with its Don Frutos, a primitive Aragonese, who lacks all semblance of social polish, but who is enough bigger in all ways than the general run of people with whom he has spent his life, so that it is impossible to make him appear small and ridiculous, no matter how out-of-place he is, where it is so much more important to be able to dance all night than to be able to throw a weight further than any other man; where it is almost criminal to say "Dios guarde a vds.", instead of "beso a vds. los pies"; and where one must be able to wear tight-fitting shoes, but must not wonder about the current market price of mules. To picture such a man, so humorously absurd and yet so refreshingly genuine; so much stronger in his own element, than those who consider themselves so superior to him, are in their

⁵Molíns: op. cit., pg. 18

own -- all this calls for a thorough acquaintance with men in the "rough", and for a point of view in sympathy with their own, with respect to the conventional superficialities of the so-called ultra-civilized society, an acquaintance and sympathy that, if genuine, comes only from being one of them, at least in spirit.

In Scene III of Act II, after Remigio, who has the task of helping Frutos to throw off "el pelo de la dehesa", has finished the job of getting his protégé properly dressed and "cinched", the latter comes out to greet the girl whom he is to marry, and her mother, with the familiar air of one who is bound to assume that they, too, can see how foolish it all is, and here is the conversation that takes place:

Frutos: Por Vida.... Senores, beso
 a ustedes los cuatro pies.

Marquesa: Como cuatro pies!

Frutos: La cuenta
 no marra. Dos y dos....

Marquesa: Ya,

Frutos: Pues ya! los dos de mamá
 y los dos de mi parienta.

 Me ha dicho este caballero
 que es saludo muy grosero

el decir: Dios guarde a ustedes;
y que en Madrid a estas horas,
como pueblo mas cortés,
se estila besar los pies
verbalmente a las señoras.
Para hacerlo con mas gala,
yo al besar los he contado,
y mas hubiera besado
si mas hubiera en la sala.
Maldita sea la bota!"

There will be some who will see in the above lines only the graceful, easy, swinging rhythm and the perfect versification, even in this humorously brusque and spirited dialogue, that is so characteristic of Bretón, no matter what difficulties he must overcome in order to put in the required content, and nothing more.

There will be others who will see a picture of an unfinished man, absurd in his simplicity and social ignorance. There will also be those -- many of them -- who will be in sympathy with Frutos' viewpoint, and will sense the fact that he has come into the camp of the enemy and put them on the defensive. They will enjoy seeing a real man, refreshing in his virility, remain himself, in spite of the combined efforts of others to change him.

There is La Batelera de pasajes with its nat-

ural, consistent treatment of the loves, friendships, hates, and jealousies of soldiers, with their picturesque standard of honor and loyalty, that probably never would have been written, had Bretón not spent his youth as a soldier, and certainly would have been less surely and familiarly treated.

Then there is, here and there throughout his "comedias", a cleverly portrayed contempt for the effeminate in man, particularly where it is combined with ridiculous egotism, as for example, in the case of Agapito, in Marcela o Cuál de los tres, with his ecstatic appreciation of new born kittens, his inclination for cosmetics, and finally, his inane and foundationless pride in his mental superiority and grace of body -- the latter depending largely on a discriminating choice of corsets -- that lead him to assume that Marcela must of necessity choose to marry him. The ability thoroughly to ridicule such a type, in a gentle and innocent spirit of satire, that is inoffensive, but none the less effectively evident on account of its innocence, and; more, the ability to remain gracious throughout, all demands the critical outlook of a man charged with virility, and in whose life there is too much strength of purpose to allow room for anything but contempt for such insipid vanity. This, of course, does not entail the necessity of serving in an army, but

for one endowed at the start with the true spirit of a man to have the frill-cutting experiences of a soldier is one of the many ways of coming by a true courage of convictions in such matters.

Bretón's political career, if considered as a separate phase of his early life, is not so far-reaching in importance. His position, first in the administrative offices of Játiva, later at Carthage (with the dying stand of the liberal government at this place) was the modest one of an invalided soldier, and was certainly too far removed from the top to permit of anything like the same extensive critical observation of administrative life about him, that characterised his earlier contact with middle class society. He still was much nearer to the people than to the governing class. If this had not been true, and if his political tenure had lasted ten years, instead of eight months (March, 1822 to November of the same year), the element of political criticism and light ridicule in such of his earlier plays as Me Voy de Madrid (1835); La Redacción de un Periódico (1836); El hombre pacífico (1838); and others, wherein he gives us a picture of life on the outer fringe of a political atmosphere, would probably have been less indirect and incidental; less from the off-hand point of view of one who sees the results of the vain ambitions of others in their oft-times ridiculous

efforts to change their courses in keeping with the varying winds of unsettled politics without himself experiencing them. And in a comedy of the type of Flaquezas Ministeriales, where he has the setting itself within the atmosphere of the ministry, he would have been less amateurish in his portrayal of the higher powers of the political circles. But more will be said of this later, when I come to a more extended treatment of the various elements of social philosophy and criticism found in his works.

He seems never to have been really interested in politics as a career, and not to have ceased his determined efforts to exercise his literary talent. During his stay in Játiva he wrote various poems and hymnals -- some of them quite stirring in their appeal to the ideals of liberty, and more or less eloquent of the spirit of liberality in government, but these few emotional outbursts were surely based more on the spirit of the poet in Brotón than on the spirit of revolution. They were enthusiastically received by the people for whom they were intended, which caused the young poet to further consecrate himself to writing as a career; and the fact that they were paid for only with applause was all the more reason for his looking at things squarely in the face, and considering his shortcomings, with a view to overcoming them

by systematic study, when he found himself with no means of support but his pen.

Without doubt he was aware of the possibilities of his genius, but -- fortunately for the Spanish theater -- he also realized the important truth that his natural poetic talent, his wit and humor, his precious gift of in-offensive satire, and his unstinted acquaintance with life must all be augmented by a thorough foundational training in the art of writing plays, if those same gifts of nature and experience were not to be largely wasted; and if he was to be of real worth to the theater, to which he was determined to consecrate his life, instead of a harmful liability of which, the influence of such men as Moratín had made him plainly see, there were already far too many in Spain.

A propos of the influence of Moratín the Son on our author, it is my opinion that its effects have been more or less generally exaggerated. Knowing that Bretón read this author assiduously, and that, for him, he had "an affection that bordered on the superstitious"⁶, it is only reasonable to suppose that it was in a large measure due to Moratín's influence that he was willing to forego the possibilities of quick results in order to cultivate

⁶Bretón's own statement.

carefully a sound knowledge of language, style, and content of the worthwhile drama. In his patient study of Latin and French after reaching maturity; in his serious study of the modified classic comedies of the French school, and of such models of the Spanish school as Calderón and Lope de Vega, "a quien se parece no poco",⁷ Bretón was taking heed, perhaps consciously, of the advice to the aspiring playwright, given by D. Pedro in Moratín's La Comedia nueva. After scathingly ridiculing the impossible belief of some men that all that one needs, to write a successful play, is to feel the urge and start writing it, D. Pedro has this to say about "comedias" good and bad: "Si han de ser como la de vd., o como las demás que se la parecen, poco talento, poco estudio, y poco tiempo son necesarios; pero si han de ser buenas (créame vd.), se necesita toda la vida de un hombre, un ingenio muy sobresaliente, un estudio infatigable, observación continua, sensibilidad, juicio exquisito; y todavía no hay seguridad de llegar a la perfección."⁸

In addition, it is reasonable to maintain that a realization of the seriousness of play writing as a life's work, and of the elusive essentials of success, are

⁷Cejador: op. cit., pg. 408.

⁸Act II, Scene VIII.

not the only Moratinian suggestions to Bretón. Moratín held that a "comedia" should be an "imitación en diálogo (escrita en prosa o en verso) de un suceso ocurrido en un lugar y en pocas horas entre personas particulares, por medio del cual y de la oportuna expresión de afectos y caracteres, resultan puestos en ridículo los vicios y errores comunes en la sociedad, y recomendadas por consiguiente la verdad y la virtud."⁹ It can well be maintained, on a basis of the style and content of selected Bretonian comedies, particularly A la Vejez Viruelas; A Madrid Me Vuelvo; Los dos Sobrinos, and others of his earlier comedies, that he accepted a liberal interpretation of this definition of a true comedy as his own ideal, with a little more freedom with respect to the unities, and more particular emphasis on the element of entertainment, and with the "consequent recommendation of truth and virtue" to be more by way of example -- with the listeners to draw their own conclusions -- and a trifle less by didactic dialogue.

There are to be found in many of Bretón's comedies of manners indications that he drew from Moratín's plays (especially El Sí de las niñas and La escuela de los Maridos) for ideas, but these indications are potential

⁹Cejador: op. cit., pg. 204.

rather than absolute. As examples of such a relationship: In El sí de las niñas Dona Irene believes that, since Francisca is her daughter, her wish should be her daughter's, even to include such a matter as the choosing of a husband. Don Diego believes that the honorable and natural love of a young woman for a young man is a thing too real, and of a too vital importance in the lives of all concerned to be unduly stifled. He finally delivers a well pointed, and fairly well tempered tirade against the narrowness of parents in effecting the training and disciplining of their daughters, and points out the deplorable absence of sincerity in the lives of the latter, due to the fact that the principle of obedience to the wishes of their parents is so deeply instilled in their minds, that they feel compelled to subdue their own thoughts, desires, and emotions, no matter how beautiful and natural they may be.

In La escuela de los Maridos we have, in Don Gregorio, Dona Irene's counterpart, with a generous addition of ridiculous egocentricity, to go with his exasperating selfishness. In Don Imanuel of the same play we have their opposite -- a man who believes, as do Moratín and Bretón (and any liberal minded person for that matter) -- that to rear a girl out of social contact with youth is to limit her existence; and that to curtail her freedom of thought and action is to deaden her appreciation of life.

Also that it is an unassailable prerogative of the woman to direct the course of her own emotions, under sane guidance perhaps, but not under stifling control.

In a great many of Bretón's plays we have this same misguided conception of the duties of parenthood held up to ridicule. But it is not necessary to suppose that he realized the possibilities of this question as a theme of universal interest and a basis for needed propaganda only on Moratín's suggestion. The fact that he treats of the question from much the same point of view as does his predecessor is an indication of some moral influence, but Bretón's manner of treatment is different from Moratín's. He is seldom so serious in recognizing the danger to society. Usually the social narrowness and blind selfishness of the parent or guardian is shown by example to be not only ridiculous, but also futile, for the girl in Bretón's plays usually has more of a mind of her own than is true in the case of Francisca in El sí de las niñas.

That Bretón appreciated Moratín as a model for humorous sarcasm in character portrayal is evidenced by such examples of similarity as is found between Doña Irene and Doña Leoncia in El amigo Mártir, where there is some indication that Bretón may have copied isolated ideas from Moratín. Doña Irene says:

"No sabe vd. lo asustado que estoy....

Cualquiera cosa, así, repentina, me remueve toda y me...
Desde el último mal parto que tuve quedé tan sumamente del-
icada de los nervios...."¹⁰ Doña Leoncia says, under rath-
er similar circumstances:

"Pues como decía a usted,
soy tan sensible de nervios
.....
.....así quedé
desde el último mal parto."¹¹

But finally, as apparent is the possibility that Bretón drew from Moratín in such matters as style of pre-
sentation, of theatrical ideals, and even of subject mat-
ter, we are to remember that Bretón was a close student of
the French theater. He studied and translated for Spanish
production, one after another, selected comedies from
French authors, in general of the same school on which
Moratín laid such great store. And as I see it, the in-
fluence on Bretón of the French theater was distinct from
its influence on Moratín. While the latter was "afrance-
sado, no por ideas filosóficas y sociales, como otros, sino
por puro literatismo"¹², and so far influenced by the French

¹⁰Moratín: El sí de las niñas, Act III, Scene II.

¹¹El Amigo Mártir, Act II, Scene IV.

¹²Cejador: op. cit., pg. 202.

as to cause a lack of appreciation of his own race¹³, Bretón, on the other hand, influenced as he was by French literature, remained thoroughly Spanish, not only in spirit but in fact, and in his use of a greater number of pure Spanish words he came to be the "verdadera antítesis de Moratín, al que le tuvo una afición casi supersticiosa, como dice él mismo".¹⁴

It is probably fair to say that Moratín the man and dramatic critic had a far greater influence on Bretón than did Moratín the writer of comedies.

Bretón believed in the theater of Lope Tirso, and Calderón and seems to have dedicated himself to the task of preserving the virtue of the Spanish theater of these later classicists, and it was the presentation, October 14, 1824, of his first comedy, A la vejez viruelas -- (a play that "por sus diálogos en prosa y por su corte escénico, y hasta por su tendencia moral, recuerda el Sí de las niñas"¹⁵, and one that he had written seven years earlier, while in the home of some relatives, on leave of absence from the

¹³Cejador: op. cit., pg. 203, where this statement is made in substance, but support for it can be found, among other places, in La Comedia Nueva, where Moratín shows a lack of patience with the Spaniard as compared with others.

¹⁴Idem., pg. 408.

¹⁵Molins: op. cit., pg. 33.

army) that proved to such men as D. Juan de Grimaldi, who were interested in the preservation, to the Spanish theater of the future, of the classic virtue of the past, that Bretón de los Herreros was the man who could be trusted to "no dejar olvidar nuestro antiguo repertorio y sin embargo, enderezar el progreso del arte por las nuevas vías que Moratín habia comenzado, y por el campo que le abrían nuestras costumbres, vicios y virtudes contemporáneas."¹⁶

During the four years following the presentation of this first play, written in prose, and after the manner of Moratín, instead of in the rich, graceful verse that was so peculiarly his own, and of which he later came to make use almost exclusively, Bretón was chiefly occupied with the translation, for presentation in Spanish, of French plays, chiefly from such solid authors as Racine, and Moliere, and in recasting plays by such of his own great predecessors as Lope and Calderón.

In these four years he translated or recast twenty-three plays, which enabled him not only to earn a living, "sino que contribuían a enseñarle los resortes dramáticos y a acreditar su nombre con los actores y con el público",¹⁷ thus making possible a free association with

¹⁶Molins: op. cit., pg. 51.

¹⁷Idem., pg. 34 ff.

men interested in the theater and in literature in general, such as Ventura de la Vega, Larra, Lista, Espronceda, Felipe Fardo, and others.¹⁸ Of this association Reca de Tógores says: "Debió, pues, nuestro poeta a aquella alegre compañía los mejores años de su vida y la reforma de su gusto, y el estímulo y guía en su inspiración. ¿A quién no había de aprovechar, en efecto, el elegante y correcto ejemplo de Vega, y la punzante crítica de Larra, y el arranque independiente de Espronceda, y la práctica sesuda de Gil y Zarate?..... a aquel período pertenecen sus mejores poesías líricas, cantos tan dulces, elegantes y sentidos como los mejores del Parnaso español."¹⁹

In addition to the direct literary influence of his companionship with these men, the acceptance of Bretón as a poet, a journalist, and an author of plays that were well received by people of good taste, won for him a welcome into the society of the class of people whose lives were to be the basis of so many of his comedies -- of a necessity for the first ten or fifteen years, since the political situation was such that a play representing the lives of the ruling class, especially in a political atmosphere, in any other way than a flattering one, was bound

¹⁸Molíns: op. cit., pg. 40.

¹⁹He was writing for *El correo literario y mercantil*.

to be censored and ruled out. Bretón being so much more of a mocker than a flatterer, the only field for his genius was the middle class. So there would seem to be something akin to the hand of destiny in directing his social progress among this people, giving him an opportunity of further observing their habits and customs, of acquainting himself with their characteristics, and of learning more of the language they used in their ordinary intercourse.

So long as the translating of French comedies was so much more remunerative than the writing of original ones; so long as the theater of Spain was conducted on the basis of a resigned acceptance, as true, of the vicious and unsound belief that the Spaniard's only chance for glory in literary originality was in the past -- that his creative ability was lost with the passing of the "golden century", and that no matter how amusing his original work might be it must necessarily be of little worth in comparison with the imported variety²⁰ -- so long did Bretón continue to translate; occasionally recasting a comedy from one of the earlier Spanish masters of the classic period, whose ideals were being revived by these very Frenchmen

²⁰It is said that, although Bretón's A la voz de viruelas held the boards for about one month, it paid him no more than 1300 pesetas.

now so popular in Spain.

During these four years following the presentation of A la vejez viruelas he wrote only two original comedies,²¹ Los dos Sobrinos, and A Madrid me vuelvo, the former a five act comedy in verse, played the first time in El teatro del Principe, May 30, 1825. Although written in verse, its spirit and style of presentation is quite Moratinian. Based on the interesting situation of an unwelcome nephew in the home of his relatives, it contains the varied elements of humor, satire, and pathos. It is consistent in its portrayal of Marcelo as the dissatisfied and selfish uncle, poignant in its manner of showing the shallowness and weaknesses of Joaquín, the egotistic captain and favored nephew, sympathetic in its handling of Cándido as the persecuted victim of the social narrowness of those whose insults he must bear until such time as he could escape without facing starvation, and all in all it is a play full of interesting reality, if a trifle commonplace, and of social criticism and ridicule, that is entered in such a way that every man, while realizing its truth, might easily accept it all as applying to this and that "Don Fulano" and not to himself.

This last characteristic, added to the fact that

²¹Said to have written Achaques a los vicios in this time but it was not presented until July 24, 1830.

it is written in the pleasing, spontaneous verse of a natural poet, must have been enough to cause the discerning critic to foresee that the author was sooner or later to become the true representative of the class of people that is in its turn representative of national spirit and life. Such a critic must also have seen in Bretón still further indications that he would develop into the regenerator and modernizer of the national comedy of manners and characteristics of which Spain was so much in need.

And still more promise does he show in the three act comedy, A Madrid me vuelvo, first presented in Madrid, January 25, 1828, which was "su primer triunfo indudable"²² according to Piñeyro and surely it is the best of his own comedies coming between A la voz de las viruelas and Marcela o Guál de los tres (December 30, 1831).

When he wrote A Madrid me vuelvo he was still young as an author of comedies, and still very close to the first flush of his admiration for Moratín, so in this play he still is quite Moratinian. It is truly "an imitation in dialogue of a series of incidents, represented as happening in one place and within the space of a few hours, and as being experienced by particular persons." Further, in accordance with this critic's ideal, we are shown by

²²Piñeyro. op. cit., pg. 204.

example, the narrowness of society in an out-of-the-way place, and by example he ridicules the anti-social precept that the parent owns the daughter body and soul. Don Bernardo is an advocate of truth and social liberality, while the happy culmination of the affair between Carmen and Felipe illustrates, in a way, the reward of virtue.

However, it seems to me that already we have not a little of Breton's individuality entering into the general composition of the play. He seems a bit hindered by a too close observance of set rules of technique²³, and there is not the richness of humor and amused satire that comes later, nor are there the linguistic gems that come to be quite "bretonian", but we can see the effective way he has of taking a certain character type, embodying the type in one individual and making it appear with almost every absurdity imaginable.

There is D. Baltazar, the narrow, bigoted, selfishly tyrannical father, but really affectionate in his blustering way. Then we have D. Estéban, and his ignorant, talkative, and absurdly proud mother who alone sees in him the wonderful personage that he sees in himself. The girl in the play, Doña Carmen, is lacking in spirit.

²³In addition to closely following Moratin's limiting outline, his verse is standardised throughout the three acts, being all in eight syllable romance with the same assonance in each act.

being cowed by her father, and in this she is rather moratinian than bretonian. She needs the generous and open minded Don Bernardo as a substitute for the spirit that should be hers as a gift of nature. Although placed in an entirely different situation this uncle reminds us of Don Diego in El Sí de las niñas²⁴, in his liberal attitude toward the duty of a daughter in the matter of marriage. In considering his brother's stubbornness in insisting on his daughter marrying the man of his choice, instead of following the dictates of her own heart, Don Bernardo has this to say:

"No puedo aprobar que un padre
por su capricho, o tal voz
por el interés infame,
a sus hijos tiranice.
Tu eres la que ha de casarse,
y no mi hermano. Formar
delante de los altares
un nudo que solo puede
en la tumba desatarse,
es negocio muy fermal."²⁵

We have here a theme of social philosophy that

²⁴See pg. 17.

²⁵Act I, Scene VIII.

is, as has been stated above, common to so many of Bretón's comedies -- in any number of them we have the same absurd idea of marriage as a family matter to be initiated and carried through only by those responsible for the girl's existence, with those who hold to such an idea always being made to appear ridiculous, not so much as a menace to society, as is rather the case in *Meratín*, but more as a social relic that is too much in the way, but is still harmless so long as no more serious attention is paid to them than they deserve.

Just as *A Madrid me vuelvo* plainly showed that Bretón could write a comedy of manners and customs and bring into full play his "singular don de descubrir y pintar caracteres,"²⁶ ridiculing certain types, and showing the absurdities of particularly vicious or wasteful phases of life in a splendidly blended spirit of innocent humor and pointed sarcasm, giving an interesting and enjoyable picture of life that would carry with it a light, but instructive moral, and without allowing the people the benefit of "aquella incomparable riqueza y gracia en la versificación,"²⁷ -- just as this comedy showed all this, his mythological-allegorical melodrama that was given in honor of the royal

²⁶Molíns: op. cit., pg. 35.

²⁷Idem., Pg. 69.

wedding of Fernando VII, under the title of El templo de himenseo, and which was one of several plays that the author himself omitted from the edition of his works, proved that he could not possibly be at his best, when dealing with a life that was not his, in a spirit that was not natural to him -- "no había nacido ni para la adulación cortesana, ni para los raptos patrióticos y encomiásticos."²⁸

And this truth, along with his own reaction to the innovation of exaggerated liberty in the composition of plays, with little show of purposeful ideals, and less regard for worthy traditions of the theater -- all of which seems rather a vanguard of the romantic movement -- firmly convinced Breton that it was time "to cast aside the prose and the long drawn out romances, and return to the elegant, ingenious and sprightly versification of our fathers."²⁹ In his enthusiasm for this ideal, and in deference to his own versatile and spirited talent, that must have been straining at the leash, he promised himself to "put all the Castilian rythm in my next work, which I am about to begin, whatever the results."³⁰

²⁸Molíns: op. cit., pg. 69.

²⁹Breton's own statement -- Vide Molíns: op. cit., pgs. 84-85.

³⁰Ibid.

So then it was with a very definite purpose and ideal in mind that he wrote Marcela, o cuál de los tres.

CHAPTER II

LANGUAGE AND METHOD

In writing Marcela, o cuál de los tres Bretón was materializing his own ideal of what a comedy should be; a conception slowly and carefully, but none the less definitely formed, as a result of some ten years of enthusiastic study of the master writers of the seventeenth century; of translating the many comedies from the French, and seeing his people's reaction to their presentation; of a long series of close-up views of the Spanish people in their intimate life, observing their shortcomings and seeing where, and often why, their thoughts and actions were warped by false ideas about the relative importance of various phases of life; and finally, as a result of his philosophical appreciation of the worthy aspirations of such a man as Moratín, coupled with his own admiration for the Spanish theater of the past, and his determination to do what he could to help it regain its former high level.

This comedy was first presented on December 30, 1831, and marks the turning point in Bretón's career as a playwright. From this time on he is not primarily a re-producer of plays that have been previously tested. Nor is he the pupil of Moratín or of any other man. He is a creator of comedies that are full of originality, and that

are written in an individual style.

It may well be said that in Marcela are to be found, to a greater or less extent, all the distinctively bretonian elements of innocent satire and ridicule; of humorous social intrigue and pleasing coquetry that is always clean; and his excellent mastery of the language that enables him to make full use of such diversified versification without sacrificing verisimilitude and power of expression in the portrayal of character types and the suggestion of subjective criticism.

In it he has lived up to his ideal of a comedy; an ideal that is borne out and further developed in his subsequent plays, and is centered around the propositions that the true comedy should be a realistic picture of the life of a representative group of people; that this picture should contain characterized examples of such social vices as selfishness and bigotry, narrowness of social outlook in general; the subjection of women, and effeminacy in men; and the many shortcomings of society that are apt not to receive proper consideration, because of their lack of individual magnitude, and because their evil effects on society are not sufficiently general, and are not always immediate.

He believed that the purpose of the comedy was to furnish wholesome entertainment and incidentally to

further the appreciation of the national life and the native language. He wanted his pictures of life to be exemplary, but not didactic; instructive but not dogmatic.

His comedy is an outlet for imagination and genius, but not for romantic elaboration and artistic extravagance. To him the plot is incidental, and extended complications, far from being essential to the attainment of his purpose in writing, would be a hindrance. Natural selfishness and social ambition, with intrigue and rivalry, love and jealousy, almost always centered around the problem of an acceptable marriage, form a nucleus around which he creates an endless series of richly humorous domestic situations, that are often absurd, but always realistic and usually treated with genuine sympathy, even if in a spirit of laughing mockery.

Knowing that great importance must be attached to the form and style of presentment, and to the language used, he accepted "the elegant, ingenious and sprightly versification of his fathers,"⁵¹ enriched by his own extraordinary vigor and originality as a poet, as the most graceful and effective way of affording free play to the astounding possibilities of the Spanish language -- a language that he handled with the jealous care of a true and

⁵¹Vide Supra. pg. 29.

worthy champion.

"Marcela is notable mainly because it offers an abundant variety of rythm, introduced by the poet with the deliberate intention of imitating Lope, Tirso, Moreto, and Calderón in their happy freedom, and exquisite fecundity. The assonance changes to suit the effect, wherever he employs it, and elsewhere are found quatrains of octosyllabic verse, some quintillas, a rondeau, one sonet, miscellaneous compositions and decasyllables, all of them perfect, written by the fine hand of an excellent poet and genuine artist."⁸²

One of the most pleasing things about Bretón is his singular ability to go swiftly and smoothly from one form of versification to another, and adapt the assonance and rythm to the ever changing spirit of the dialogue; and the swing and rythm of the verses seem almost always to be perfectly suited to the character and need of the person to whom they are assigned. This last is true even in situations where, on the face of things, it would seem impossible. His character portrayal is strengthened to an astounding degree by the manner in which an individual is made to say certain things, and the language he is made to use, as well as by the content of the dialogue. Where

⁸²Piñeyre: op. cit., pg. 206 ff.

consistency would seem out of the question -- without sacrificing freedom and grace of poetry, he gives us verisimilitude in a true sense of the word, and makes out of the most difficult circumstance just another opportunity of giving a delightful example of the surprising possibilities of his language in verse.

Often the conversation is so natural that one is apt not to notice the technical excellence. The boisterous captain of artillery, Don Martín, who is one of the three suitors of the spirited young widow in Cuál de los tres, is developed as a man who would be said, off-hand, to be totally unsuited to the purposes of poetic dialogue -- but he fits perfectly. Everything he says is felt to be exactly what a man of his type would naturally say; and he seems to have said it in just the way best suited to his own nature, even to the words and the language he uses, and this in spite of the fact that he may have spoken in perfect romance or quatrains. His words are as if they had been carefully chosen without being at all artificial as is often the case where there is undue deliberation.

In La Redacción de un periódico, Paula has escaped from the room in which her father imprisoned her to keep her away from Don Agustín, whom she is determined to marry, in spite of Don Tadeo's selfish wishes to the contrary. Don Fabricio is an ally of the young couple, and,

although his is the guilt of a clear conscience, he has been dreading the moment of Tadeo's entrance and discovery of the escape. When the latter enters the pressroom, where Fabricio is working, it is plain that he has already become aware of the failure of his high-handed methods.

Fabricio says:

"Vamos, según la apariencia
se descubrió lo del rapto.
Bien, ahora sí que me capto
su grata benevolencia!"

and Tadeo:

"Nada! En vano he registrado
hasta la última rendija.
¿Sabe usted qué es de mi hija?"

For Fabricio to have become excited and worried would have been natural under the circumstances, but he does not because that would not be consistent with his nature. He is patient, long-suffering, matter-of-fact, and imperturbable. Knowing the circumstances this would be evident, had this been Fabricio's only entrance into the dialogue. Tadeo's speech suits the irate father, who has been willing to go to any length to prohibit his daughter from a logical marriage, in order to force her into one that would mean material betterment for the family. His three lines seem to show that he is dazed to find he has

failed -- for he is strong in his own selfish purposes, and he is clearly abashed, not at his own unreasonable stubbornness, but at seeing the complete frustration of his well laid plans.

In Act IV, Scene XIV, of El Amigo Mártir there is an example of the striking and expressive force that is a part of Bretón's verse. When Carlota is giving Ramón to understand, in no gentle terms, that she now realizes what a deceitful, selfish prig he is, she finishes with:

"Ya te he conocido, sí,
y el mal que llorando estoy
por bien venido lo doy....
porque me libra de ti."

Here it would seem that no prose could be so fitting -- so effective; and that the meter and rythm have just the correct cadence to add force to the final summing up of her new found opinion.

Bretón does not ordinarily allow his dialogue to border on tiresomeness. Now and then one of his characters, who is meant to be the agent for ridiculing the type he represents, will be permitted to run on in egotistic loquaciousness, after he has uttered enough absurdities to stamp him as the object of ridicule that he is. But usually such a character will be relentlessly interrupted in the midst of his meaningless prattle, in such a way as to make him the

object of derision that he rightfully should be in real life. Taken as a whole the style of dialogue is short and lively -- often racy, and holds many enjoyable surprises that are fairly gripping in their suddenness. For example, in Act II, Scene V, of Quién es ella, Quevedo, the famous satirist, congratulates the king on having, in the palace, such a beautiful girl as Doña Isabel. The king observes that there must be strict virtue with such beauty, to which Quevedo answers sharply, and in a realistic fashion:

".....¡Ba! es mujer.

Dádivas quebrantan peñas."

And a little later, in explanation of his wonderment at Doña Mencía's great interest in the welfare of Isabel, he says:

"De lo que el alma presiente

aun no puedo darme cuenta;

pero mujer que por otra

más hermosa se interesa,

preciso es que la ame mucho....

o que mucho la aborresca."

Of course the question of women's jealousy of each other -- especially of physical attainments -- is age-old. Examples of it abound in literature and in life; and any observation on this point cannot be really original with any certain individual, but here there is a pleasing

originality in the form that it takes. Besides, there is something more than originality: it is surprise -- brilliant and sudden, even when coming from the character, Quevedo, and, far from seeming trite, it is extremely astute. Such clever satire on human frailties is truly enjoyable, as are so many of Bretón's human nature observations, often suggested only by examples, that produce richness of content, and make less noticeable his sameness and simplicity, which would otherwise be somewhat tiresome.

A little further on, in the same dialogue, there is the following instance of gratifying smoothness and rapidity of rhythm in conversation:

El Rey: "Siempre siniestro y fatídico!

¿Sois Quevedo, o seís cornesja?

Quevedo: Soy, Señor, un pobre viejo.

El Rey: Que algunas veces chochea."

Although it is true that Bretón is rather limited in the formation and development of plots, the "sameness" that has been unfavorably criticized cannot be rightfully considered as a defect in view of his extraordinary fecundity in the creation of inner-situations, and of his originality in style of presentation, and as the action unfolds, the fact that we almost inevitably foresee what is going to happen (because things happen just as they naturally would under similar circumstances) doesn't de-

tract from our interest in knowing how the outcome is to be applied; and the fact that we may know what is going to be said, doesn't lessen our enjoyment of the surprising exactness with which it is brought out.

The exuberance and individuality of Bretón's style of applied versification, and his sureness in choosing words and expressions that are at once meaningful and pleasing of sound, as well as perfectly suited to the various poetic constructions, and the wealth of appreciable humor, and of inoffensive, but none the less pungent, satire is what makes it possible to say of him, that he "is and will continue to be a true classic in the comic, and the popular, in language and in versification."

³³Cejador: op. cit., pg. 407.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND MORAL PHILOSOPHY

While Bretón is noted principally for his rich humor, and for his innocent and piquant satire -- aside from the pleasing originality of his style and language, there are also excellent qualities of substance as well as of form, to which he owes a share of his popularity and worthiness as a poet. For this humor and satire carries with it a great deal of assimilable and well directed social and moral criticism, that rings true with its clever thrusts at the surface of things instead of losing its effect in an unappreciated attempt to probe deeply, and to analyze.

Domestic and social economy, politics and nationalism, love and flirtation, marriage and marital problems, all come within the scope of his pen. Almost every conceivable social characteristic is subject to his treatment, and is either held up to ridicule or approbation, or, if neither is called for, then to a contempt that is often unsparing, but never distempered. The action nearly always takes place in the home, and, as has been stated, is usually centered around the problem of selecting, and obtaining, an acceptable husband for a daughter of the family, or better, around the personal problem of the girl in question,

and of the man whom she has selected independently. It is by introducing the different characters, drawing them true to type, and letting them more or less unconsciously unfurl their own colors, that he lays bare, in their own flimsiness, so many of the misguided concepts of society.

Bretón is constructive in his social criticism, not by showing people how they ought to think, and act, and live socially, but by showing them how ridiculous they are if they do not live and act sensibly. He is constructive, too, by showing people how interesting and amusing the life about them really is, and in treating selfishness, vanity, misapplied ambition, and all the other petty vices, as they deserve to be treated -- with generous derision and humorous contempt.

In his earlier comedies the element of sarcasm, though not distasteful, is often put in the form of a joking statement made at the expense of a certain class of individuals, and may be said to be meaningless, except for its humor, but his implied criticism becomes more and more applicable. For example: Marcela remarks that, because man, in general, is not good, she prefers a small man to a large one, since "a small glass cannot contain so much poison." But the object of this remark is not to belittle men; it is to make the effeminate Agapito appear all the more a victim of his own vanity, as he takes it all as a

direct compliment to himself. Marcela is his master in every way.

Then in Me Voy de Madrid, written four years later, along with such inconsequential sarcastic wit as that of Joaquín, when he flippantly replies to Fructuoso's request for news, to the effect that in his whole neighborhood doctor Morata has killed no one for more than a month,³⁴ there are more mature suggestions that hold possibilities of a sort of poignant irony, as, for example, Fructuoso's remark that whoever puts his trust in the people, is due to learn that while today they may adore a certain citizen, tomorrow they may stone him³⁵; and in the same conversation he observes that, to get along at court, one must learn the art of flattery.

The irony of society's lack of appreciation of unpractical culture, and the indefiniteness of its aim in its educational system is forcefully brought out, if in a humorously exaggerated manner, in Un Novio para la niña, by Don Donato's reading of a newspaper advertisement. A young man, who describes himself as a youth of distinction, with a university education, well versed in French, Italian, English, Turkish, and German; with some knowledge of

³⁴Act I, Scene II.

³⁵Act I, Scene III.

pharmacy; of a military mien, trained in fencing, numismatics, etc., desires an opportunity of earning a small daily wage, and is willing to do clerical work, accompany some child to and from school; or he will care for a horse, and has some ability as a cook. He names a certain boot-cleaner as a reference.

The great gusto with which a man like Donato would read this sort of thing must necessarily lend strength to the humorous effect of such social inconsistency. He is an extremely vulgar and self important man, who has in some way come by a great deal of wealth, and figures that the possession of money is quite the most important thing in life. He is so ignorant that the only thing of moment that he has gotten out of his shallow existence, with all his wealth, is the gout, but even the suffering he must bear with is rather welcome to him, since, in his ignorant complacency, he looks upon the permanency of his ailments as being incidental to the possession of riches, and doesn't even seem to have the mental capacity to understand the reason that, while a poor man is quick to recover from an illness, drugs, baths, and all else fail to cure the rich. He is ridiculous in his affected liberal mindedness, when he says: "After all, the possession of wealth is not in keeping with the enjoyment of health; so let us not be

avaricious; be patient, and let life go smoothly on."⁸⁶

In this play the willingness of Doña Liboria to see her daughter, Concha, marry such an ignoble wretch, merely because he has money, and her insistence that she at least choose between Donato and Don Fulgencio, who is an insipid fop with no standing at all, and with no qualification except the ability to dupe the gullible Liboria into believing that his association is limited to the smaller circle of rank and nobility, is an ironical example of the pitiful extent to which parents will follow false leads, in order to see the branches of their family tree grafted on to one that stands a little nearer to the main road, even if its trunk is all twisted and marred.

These few examples have been given because they are fairly representative of the form taken by the element of irony and satire that is found in Bretón -- aside from the ridicule of one character by another, within the dialogue. Direct causticity is not a part of Bretón. Whenever there is any suggestion of bitterness, it is suggested only by his drawing a certain character type, that is representative of the element of society against which the bitterness is directed, in such a way that there is nothing for us to do but to become thoroughly disgusted with such

⁸⁷Act I, Scene IV.

a character, and with all that he stands for. But, for the most part, he is satisfied to show people how ridiculously funny some of them are.

Often he gives the impression of one who sits back, as it were, and laughs at the absurdities and idiosyncracies of a people that is very foolish in many respects. He seems to be laughing, not in a spirit of scornful derisiveness, but in one of amused mockery, and not so much with an air of superiority, as of happy detachment.

Then there is something akin to, and further-reaching than, ordinary satire in the consummate smoothness, with which he so orders his events, as to show conclusively how utterly futile it is for people not to be themselves, and for them to waste their energies in vain attempts to change their natural station in life; and in doing this he unconsciously suggests, by the usually happy outcome, that it is quite possible to improve one's station in life and to broaden one's outlook, without being illogical. Along this line there is a really striking example of the effect of environment, where there are natural capabilities to be acted upon, in his masterly molding of the gentle, but still virile and spirited, Don Frutos, of his Don Frutos en Belchite, out of the rough-hewn Frutos of El pelo de la dehesa. The former comedy

was written some five years later than the latter, and we are left to suppose that during this five year interval Don Frutos had spent most of the time in travel. In El pelo de la duquesa we are made to see the impossibility of a marriage between him and Elisa. She is a flower of the court, and he is an oak of the hill country, and we are quite disgusted with the girl's widowed mother for her insistence upon such a marriage in order to replenish the family coffers and to be thus enabled to live as they must live, if they are not to be social nonentities in the court society. Her hypocritical obsequiousness to Frutos, and her readiness to belittle the importance of his lack of polish, because, as a son-in-law, he means more material comfort for her, is an appalling example of the mental sacrifice a luxury loving woman will undergo, so long as she is aided in keeping up an extravagant show.

It is a great compliment to Bretón's ultimate moderation in the drawing of his characters -- his ability to put into them everything that is needed, in order to have them veritably personify the example he wishes to show, without going to any unnecessary extremes -- that nothing but the natural changes of character and personality, which one would expect to be the result of a few years of travel and varied social contact, is necessary, to make it seem the most natural thing in the world that Elisa and Frutos

should finally come to love each other, with no remaining evidence of incompatibility. Even in El pelo de la doña this admirable son of joyous freedom gives the impression of possessing capabilities of being molded into a "social lion", without becoming, in the least, a slave to superficial conventions. Even Elisa wonders, at the last, if she is not making a serious mistake in not insisting on going through with the marriage, while her mother is quite satisfied, after he cancels the debt of her family to his. But Don Frutos en Belchite is a surprise. We rather expect a satire on court life, with Frutos back in his own element, for which he had longed, when he was in Madrid. His outlook on life has been broadened, however, and he is disgusted with the smallness and uncouthness of the people to whom he has returned.

In his pictures of family life, with its domestic peculiarities and the incessant struggle to keep abreast of the rest of society, and its view of an unmarried daughter as a dangerous liability, until the finding of likely prospects makes of her a quite dependable asset, the parent or guardian is not always although usually, the one who is blind to realities. Sometimes it is the older person who is the more liberal minded and quick to perceive things in their true light, and we are now and then treated with such a person who follows a natural and interesting course in

his struggle against the misleading emotions, in order to arrive at the ultimate happiness of his charge.

Take, for example, the wise unselfishness of Don Antonio, of Un día de campo, in his struggle against the romantic love-making of the fortune-seeking Agustín. In love with the girl himself, he fulfills the difficult assignment of saving her from a blind marriage with one who he well knew was unworthy, by making this one show his true colors, and by winning the girl's love and respect for himself, without taking any undue advantage of his authority as guardian. And then Bretón adds to the comedy effect by having Antonio decide that he won't marry after all, owing to the fact that he has seen the life of one man made miserable by a fickle wife and that of another made unbearable by the incessant nagging of a disgustingly jealous one.

This brings us to a consideration of a rather interesting sidelight on Bretón's social outlook, particularly with respect to his earlier consideration of marriage as an institution, and his conception of women.

The comedy just mentioned was written only a couple of years before his own marriage, and it is quite possible that the picture he gives us of the marital unhappiness of two men, with the women the objects of ridicule and blame in both cases, and the final decision of

Antonio that the dangers of marrying are too many and varied to be courted by a man who cares for peace in life, are the result of the humorous aspect of his own mental struggle with the question of marriage. Or they may be a part of his answer to friends who have urged upon him the desirability of having a family.

The chances are, however, that in no single comedy, do we have anything that approaches a symposium of his ideas concerning marriage, or of his reaction to the characteristics of women. It is seldom that he goes beyond the pre-nuptial contracts, as far as the principal characters, and the main argument of his plays, are concerned, and those characters that have experienced married life are often widowed. Besides, the possibilities of the humorous and comical, where there is an incidental picture of the relationship between man and wife, are apt to be made use of, to the exclusion of any idealism, and to wish that it were otherwise, would demand a willingness to accept an extremely costly sacrifice of his sureness of flight in the atmosphere of wholesome fun. Here and there we have brought to our minds, by a mere line or two, an extended picture of incessant argument between man and wife, over some impossible question, the rich humor of which is immediately sensed by anyone with a quick appreciation. Such is the case in Cuál de los tres, when Timoteo is in-

sisting that his niece marry and have children, since he, unfortunately, had not been blessed with any, and he pauses to emphasize the fact that it was not his fault but his wife's -- this after he had been a widower for many years.⁵⁸

But his niece chooses not to marry; to her marriage holds none of the glamor of an unknown experience; she is a young widow who hesitates to give up the freedom of being her own mistress, and of not having to observe the strict conduct of a maiden. She intends to profit by her former disillusionment; this is her answer to her suitors:

"Boda quiere la soltera
por gozar de libertad
y mayor cautividad
con un marido le espera.
.....
Los humanos corazones

⁵⁸"Cásate, y antes que muera, ya que no pueda en los míos
antes que llegue al confín, por culpa de mi Beatriz,
al término de mi vida, que en gloria descanse,
que ya la tengo en un tris, aunque ella
véame yo en tus hijuelos me echaba la culpa a mí."
renacer, ultravivir, Act III, Scene I.

ya a mi costa conocí;
Focos me querran por mí;
cualquiera por mis doblones."³⁹

And in another place she says that it isn't vanity that makes her spurn the amorous advances of men, but that it is because she loves liberty; and that she doesn't dislike men, even if she does judge them severely -- it is simply that "as friends, some men are splendid; as lovers, nearly all of them are; but as husbands, not for me!"⁴⁰

In La Casa de huéspedes he is picturing a family consisting of a widowed mother and her daughter. The mother has a disproportionate dread of what the world may hold in store for a young girl who is not married, and seems to believe that money and social position are the only things to be considered, when choosing a husband. But when the long lost brother finally returns, and takes things into his own hands, we have, from his mouth, what Bretón thinks is the proper system to be used by the girl and the parent. In reassuring his sister, in Act II, Scene XVIII, he has this to say:

"La elección toca a tí;
a ella solo aconsejar."

And here we have, concisely stated, the lesson that Bretón

³⁹Act III, Scene XIII.

⁴⁰Idem.

tries to teach in so many of his comedies. In some of them, such as the one just mentioned, El hombre gordo, El pelo de la dehesa, Un tercero en discordia, El qué dirán, La redacción de un periodico, Me Vuelvo a Madrid, and many others, he shows how absurdly impossible it is for the parents to play the tyrant over the daughter, if they have nothing but selfishness or stubbornness with which to support their views. Where the parents are not liberal minded in their demands, he ridicules them throughout, in such an innocent, yet sarcastic way, that even a person who should see his own characteristics represented, would appreciate the absurdity of any one's insisting on the validity of worn out prerogatives; and would even enjoy the discomfiture of the character in his futile struggle against the natural order of things, and would be glad to see the insignificance of such a person, when he is represented as coming to realize that in losing his selfish fight, he is only bowing to the inevitable.

Or again he will portray an irate but affectionate father, who appears ridiculous, but not contemptible; who is stubborn, but not selfish. And what a different picture such a man makes when he comes to see how blind he has been.

On the other hand he gives examples of the irresponsibility of some girls; of their lack of ability to

comprehend realities on their own account, and of their susceptibility to flattery and impetuous love-making of a man whose true nature they fail to perceive. In this way he shows the need of sane, but unrestrictive, guidance of some one more acquainted with the ways of the world.

This idea is prevalent in Un día de campo, that has already been mentioned, and there is Manuela, in Me voy de Madrid, who is completely deceived by the debonair young Joaquín, who is a self-styled "romanticist". She is carried away by his emotional persuasion, and is only made to see him in his true light when she is forced to sum up such evidence as his sale of a portrait she had given him, and the actual appearance of others whom he had also loved so furiously.

Although Bretón is not extravagantly emotional, he does, nevertheless, believe in giving love a fairly free rein, where it stands for a wholesome attraction between men and women. He rebels at the obstacles put in the way of nature's way of perpetuating marriage as the sort of institution that will make for happiness in life, by a society that thinks too little of the importance of the compatibility of a couple who must bear with each other through life, and attributes so great an importance to the financial status of those who are about to enter into matrimony.

There is a recurrent vein of sarcasm in his ridicule of that element of society which looks upon marriage as a means of social and economic aggrandizement, not only for those immediately concerned, but often for an entire family, and of the group acceptance of sound financial footing as a prerequisite to a successful marriage. Usually his treatment of such social inconsistencies is light and humorous; he is prone to have things work out naturally, but happily to all concerned, as is the case in Un novio para la niña, where the return home of an absent son, grown fabulously rich in foreign lands, makes possible the marriage of the daughter to the man of her choice, without having to defy the demands of her benighted mother that she direct the course of her love along the path of economic and social betterment. And in El qué dirán, where the father, who, in his blind selfishness, and jealous family pride, was willing to sacrifice the happiness of his daughter, in order to save himself from the fear of what people might say, when they beheld him slipping from the high pinnacle of his social position, by having her marry a wealthy marquis who would bolster up the family affairs, becomes suddenly gracious toward the erstwhile persecuted suitor, when the latter proves to be heir to a large fortune. There is, however, a genuine penitence, and self-abasement in his final attitude, that makes him, after all, quite human.

But there is, here and there, an element of unsoftened sarcasm, such as is found in the spirit of Gonzalo's outburst, in Act I, Scene III, of Quién es ella:

"Así el amor que a tus pies
juro, y pagas tu, alma mía,
no es una vil mercancía
de que el sordido interés
hace torpe granjería."

This seriously pessimistic insinuation that the element of idealism in love and marriage is overshadowed by mercenary considerations, comes shortly after he has Quevedo remark rather lightly, but at the same time ironically, that at the worst "marriage is not a crime; and if the learned are correct in their opinion that in marriage here on earth is passed the punishment of purgatory, it is a sort of expiation."

Bretón has given us two comedies, wherein he treats mainly of domestic life after marriage, instead of the problems of getting married. They are La escuela de las casadas, and Ella es él.

In the former he deals with the inconstancy of a husband, who is coldly unappreciative of an attractive and patiently faithful wife. He shows strongly the unfairness to a woman of forcing her to choose between loneliness and neglect and accepting the attentions of another man.

Separation comes, on the advice of an ingenious friend of the woman, but only as a cleverly worked out means of avoiding divorce. She enters into the spirit of the social life about her, causing herself to be sought after by many men, and thus the love of her husband is reawakened. The theme of the play is quite modern, and largely original.

In Ella es él he deals with the singular, but very pleasant and satisfying life of a young married couple. The plot is as usual, simple, but it is interesting. In his humorous verse he gives us an example of the strength of love in withstanding the inroads of the pernicious insinuations of a jealous woman. He shows the beauty of mutual confidence and appreciation between man and wife, that loses none of its exemplary force in being suggested by a humorous situation. There is plainly the social lesson that the test of a successful marriage is the satisfaction and happiness of the couple with each other, and cannot be judged by others. This is found in Camila's answer to the denunciation of Alejo, the husband, by Rita, the relative, who, while enjoying the hospitality of the former, feeds the hunger of her own neglected heart, by trying to destroy a happiness that has been denied her.

Rita: "Esto es una chansa, prima,
y lo digo por tu bien.
Te llana cara mitad!

Compare, for instance, Doña Liboria, of La Casa de huéspedes, with the father of the girl, in El hombre gordo. The former is a ridiculous example of the inevitable selfishness of maternal consideration, even if love is the incentive, when the outlook is narrow, and based on the disillusioning experiences of one who has come to judge the power of money and of social position only by having to live without either; and who has been so long removed from the experiences of youth and love that the importance of the latter is dwarfed by her dream of seeing her daughter firmly settled in wealth and comfort. She is disgustingly shallow, and gullible, but she has had no broadening experiences. She is a victim of circumstances, and, although an object of indirect attack on maternal shortcomings, the attack is not carried to the point of putting her out of sympathy with the logical outcome of the play -- wherein it is shown how utterly unnecessary her misconceived plans for the future of her daughter have been. There are both spiritual happiness and material comfort, without the vulgarity of an ambitious marriage.

But the mother in this play is merely proved wrong, and not outwitted in such a discomfiting manner as to make of her a laughing stock for all the other people, as is so strikingly true in the case of "The fat man", who, in El hombre gordo, is utterly routed in his blind deter-

mination to force a spirited daughter to give up the man of her own choice and marry the one whom he has chosen for her, and who is made an object of merciless ridicule, and hilarious fun-making in such a public place as a railroad station.

Bretón misses few opportunities to make fun for his audiences, at the expense of any type of character that is deserving of ridicule, whether it be a man or woman, but it is true that, on the whole, he is a champion of women in his own light-hearted, and necessarily superficial way. Marcela stands out as one of his strongest characters, with her delightfully companionable coquetry, and her frank sophistication, which, supplemented by her natural vivaciousness, and keenness of mind, enable her to hold at bay the various men by whom she is beset, outwitting them for the most part, and enjoying, in particular, the mental helplessness of the rapid Agapito.

Following Marcela, he has put into various comedies women characters, modeled more or less after her, but usually with less familiarity with life, and less unassailable independence, who all, in an average way, possess the characteristics that Bretón believes a young woman should have, looking at it both on a basis of ideal, and of necessity; of necessity to the extent that certain inherent qualities, he believes, must be brought into play

by the woman, if she is successfully to meet the situation of life as a whole.

Some of these feminine characters, that carry the bretonian stamp of approval are Luciana of Un tercero en discordia; Concha, of Un novio para la niña, Casilda, of El hombre gordo; Camila of El qué dirán; and Isabel, of Muérete y verás....! These are of his younger set, and all possess, to a varying degree, the subdued, but fairly determined, spirit of rebellion against the practice of entering into stereotyped marriages, that have been selfishly arranged for them, on an extremely materialistic basis. Each is fitted to be the companion of a man, but not a slave, to his pride, nor to his passions. And most of them are sufficiently endowed with "a little of that innocent artificiality, of that natural gift that is called coquetry; a gift that is pleasing to men and to God, so long as its use is moderated, and the intention is guiltless."⁴¹

There are, however, sarcastic suggestions to the effect that women in general have too much of a propensity to make untoward use of certain of their powers, as, for example, Celedonia's statement, after telling Sabina how easy it will be to deceive her tutor, by falsely pretending

⁴¹La escuela de las casadas, Act II, Scene VIII.

to love him:

"Más te pudiera decir,
pero basta; eres mujer,
y ninguna ha menester
que la enseñen a fingir."⁴²

On the whole, while the women in Bretón's comedies are so portrayed as to form a sort of distinct element of society, they are natural enough, and are sufficiently recognized by him as deserving an equal footing with men, that they are a simple part of the whole, in the extended embodiment of society which is to be found in a representative list of his plays. He reminds us of the fickleness of women in such isolated examples as Jacinta, in Muñete, y verás!, where she is first brought to our notice by Tupercio, in Act I, Scene I, where he says:

"Por ahora es el preferido
don Pablo. Más adelante,
no diré.... Porque en mujeres
no hay que fiar, y el carácter
de Jacinta es en mi juicio
mas valeroso que el aire."

But it is in this play that he illustrates the

⁴²Un día de campo, Act I, Scene IV.

fickleness of society in general. Get yourself accepted as being dead, and you will see who are your friends and who are merely "playing" you, is the theme of the play. And in presenting it, he has a man, who is reported killed in action, come back and attend his own funeral. Some of the discoveries he makes concerning the attitude of various ones toward him are indeed enlightening. And while Jacinta fails to observe any true semblance of mourning for him, but lightly removes her affections from the dead to the living, Isabel, a happily different type, is stricken with sincere grief. Although she had cherished no hope of marrying the man, her love for him is unselfish enough that "She doesn't want him to die even though he is to be the joy of some other woman, leaving her to die with envy."⁴³

In Una de tantas, he pictures a girl whose love is so changeable that she is almost delightfully fickle, but she is quite individual. And the point of fun for the audience is not so much in the picturization of such ephemeral affection, as in the extent to which she deceives the two men. Her recklessness is her own undoing.

Such a woman is not to be taken so seriously, and is not so taken by Breton himself, as an element of society worthy of eradication, as is Don Ramón, in El

⁴³Act II, Scene XII.

Amigo Martir, who is absolutely disgusting in his selfish imposition on the all confiding friendship of the wealthy Ángel; or as Don Evaristo, in Todo es farsa en este mundo, who is much the same type as is Ramón, only a little less brazen.

Judging from the picture he gives us, of society as a whole, the world, to Bretón, is not bad, for things usually work out naturally and happily, but there is much in it that would be harmfully cheapening in life, if it were predominant enough to have a serious effect; as it is, it is merely funny. Such is the case with such things as the foolish arrogance, jealousy, selfish ambition, and social and political scheming of men and women who have not the breadth of vision to realize even vaguely how small they are and how inconsequential are many of the inconsequential things in life, that, to them, are of such blaring importance.

He does not make light of honesty and virtue, where it soundly exists; he does not make sarcastic or skeptical suggestions of a perdid nature, but ignores licentiousness and the other material vices, that are more deeply rooted in evil passions, as being unworthy of the stage. Only here and there does he treat of such things at all, and then only when they fit into the theme in such a way that their agents may be shown in their true light,

and be ridiculed, leaving the stage unsoiled by any suggestion of unclean action, and when such entrance into the theme of the play makes for increased humor and mockery.

Take the following conversation between Agustín and Fabricio on the one hand, and, on the other, the actress, who comes in parading her grievance in a manner that plainly belies the existence of any unfairness in whatever the paper may have said about her. She first complains of the critic who called her "old", and then:

Agustín: "Es falta de educación
que de él no hubiera esperado.

Yo la hubiera a usted tratado
con mas consideración.

Actris: Yo aprecio tanta bondad.

Agustín: Hay cosas que en mi sentir
no se deben escribir,
aun cuando sean verdad.

Actris: Como.... yo....

Agustín: Una cosa es
señera, que por mi cuenta
pase usted de los cuarenta
y otra que él lo diga."

So far we have just a richly humorous situation -- it is easy to imagine the discomfiture of the woman, on being surprised by such matter-of-fact frankness. But the fol-

lowing addition to the same conversation is the part that is pertinent to the point now being considered:

Actris: "Pues!

Conque usted también me insulta?

Agustín: Señora.....

Fabricio: (Metamos paz,
que si no este hombre es capaz..)
no porque usted sea adulta.....

Actris: Adultera yo! que horror!
que infamia! que vituperio!"^{43a}

Then Fabricio explains that he had merely stated that she was an adult, and added, after being interrupted by the woman's vehement affirmation of her personal honor that he perhaps should have said: "advanced in years of knowledge and experience."

It is plain that Bretón does not believe in the necessity for the advent of honesty and virtue to be announced, and he often ironically suggests that, where purity and uprightness are most loudly proclaimed, it is apt to be something else that is merely disguised. He sarcastically suggests, now and then, that people do not go at once on the defensive, unless they are open to attack. Inés, in Medidas extraordinarias, flares up with the statement that her "honor is like crystal", and Pascual wants to know if it is on account of its purity, or because it

^{43a} La redaccion de un periodico, Act II, Scene II.

is so fragile. And in Act II, Scene XX, of La Independencia, Nicanora objects to sheltering the foundling for fear that evil tongues will say that she is the mother. When Agustín tells her such fear is groundless, on account of her advanced years, she points to Isabel who is young and beautiful. Isabel at once answers: "I care not for malicious inventions. Is not honor secure in itself?"

In Me Voy de Madrid, it is quite evident that Joaquín is trying to seduce Manuela, through his impetuous love-making, but the only time that the dialogue between them borders on plainness they are interrupted by Doña Tomasa. The latter is a strong example of the quiet and unassuming, but strong and self-evident, woman, whose clean-cut uprightness and purity of character speak for themselves. She is not fearful of her honor, for she knows that it is unassailable.

Regarding this character, there is a striking coincidence.⁴⁴ She is clearly the personification of Bretón's ideals, concerning what a wife ought to be in her social and domestic relations, and her name is Tomasa. Two years after writing the play he met, for the first time, the woman whom he was destined to marry; who was

⁴⁴See Melina: op. cit., pg. 197.

the personification of this character of fiction, and whose name was Tomasa.⁴⁵ Of course there is, in this, nothing more than a striking coincidence, but the fact that he recognized his own ideal, when he saw her, shows that what he was putting into the play was his honest beliefs and feelings.

The tendency for many men and women to look upon the possession of riches as an effective cure-all, and as an immunizer from social reproach, as well as an acceptable substitute for such qualities as grace of manner, in mind and body, is considered by Bretón as constituting an element of social vice that is particularly degrading, in an insidious way, wherever its influence is allowed to assume undue importance; and the examples he gives, in showing the appalling extent to which shallow creatures will debase themselves, and to which they are willing to subordinate their lives, in order to satisfy their desire for wealth, and craving for material independence, are apt to be more witheringly ridiculed than is his want in portraying the less base absurdities of his fellow men.

To illustrate the manner and form of this vice he uses both men and women. Some have already been mentioned, such as the "marquesa" in El pelo de la dehesa.

⁴⁵See Molíns: op. cit., pg. 197.

and Doña Liberia, in Un novio para la niña. It is probably safe to say that the idea is prevalent, to a greater or less degree, in a majority of his comedies. Sometimes it is due less to avarice, and more to a somewhat excusable determination to stave off financial and social embarrassment, as is the case in the first of the two plays just mentioned, or to a narrowly directed plan to insure the material well-being of a daughter, as is the case in La casa de huéspedes.

Whenever it is a question of untempered selfishness, it seems that the subject is more often a man. The play in which he most strikingly shows how absurd, and how shamefully mercenary, it is possible for a man to be, who has no interest in life, in which money is not overshadowing importance, is Una vieja. And in this play it is Don Alberto, who is the embodiment of ignominy, in his unseemly desire for wealth and ease, even though it be at the cost of all semblance of self-respect.

In the first of the play is represented the silly struggle between Doña Luisa, whose principal possession is a sort of comparative youth, which enables her to pass as an attractive young widow, and Doña Damiana, a widow who has long since lost the charm of youth, and frankly recognizes this fact; but who is rich in property and rentals. The enmity that exists between the two women is

solely a matter of petty spite and jealousy, and a ridiculous struggle for cheap supremacy. Doña Luisa is bent on humiliating the older woman, and plans to use Don Alberto, who is, for the time being, playing the role of an ardent lover, as an aid. The plan of attack, at first, is for him to write poetry that will cause embarrassment and mental anguish for Doña Damiana. But when he learns of the great wealth of the elderly widow he slyly changes his tactics, telling Luisa that it would be a huge triumph for her if he were to dupe Damiana into accepting him as a prospective husband.

At the same time, Doña Damiana starts on her campaign of reprisal. She buys the resort inn outright, and refuses to sell any food to her enemy. She guesses the true nature of the insipid Alberto, and sends for him.

As soon as Alberto comes into her presence there begins the most ridiculous courtship imaginable. The man cannot but see the unsavorness of such a marriage. He is young, while she is sixty years old, and none too well preserved. The picture he makes in his ingratiating flattery, and in his protestation of love and respect for the woman before him, would be nauseating, if it were not funny.

Damiana is relentless, and draws him on and on, finally arranging to have him kneeling at her feet, as Doña Luisa enters, following which she compels him to make

an open statement to the effect that he hopes to marry the elder widow. In the end, she lets him down with the information that she has made over all her wealth to her niece and nephew.

The picture of this miserable piece of humanity, suffocating the dictates of his esthetic taste (he has no conscience) in a forced deluge of prospective paradises of opulence, is a striking example of a man palpably cringing before the power of wealth, that is saved from deplorability only by the element of the comic and ridiculous, with which the dialogue and action are so well seasoned.

Among those petty vices, that are individual in nature, personal vanity is one that Bretón quite consistently ridicules with particular zeal and enjoyment. Los dos sobrinos; A Madrid me vuelvo; Marcela; Un tercero en discordia; Un novio para la niña; Toda es farsa en este mundo; El amigo mártir; El poeta y la beneficiada; El pro y el contra, Flaquezas ministeriales; El qué dirán; El novio y el concierto, No ganamos para sustos, Una vieja, Vellido Dolfos; Lo vivo y lo pintado; Frenología y magnetismo; and Quién es ella are some of the more representative plays, which he wrote during the period under consideration, and in all of which may be found more or less of the various types and degrees of vanity, ranging from rapid complacency to extravagant arrogance, and from the mere suggestion

of foolish pride to extreme presumptuousness.

Bretón's social lesson, with respect to this vice, as well as all the others, is brought forth as it would be in the long run, in real life. It is in the development of the character and his disposition toward the rest of life about him. There is something about the way in which he draws his characters -- call it innocence, naturalness, correct proportion, or what not -- that enables him to go to extremes in his characterization, in order to carry his point of ridicule by as radical an example as could be asked for, without going beyond the bounds of consistent reality. We have all known some one in this world who would be quite capable of acting, thinking, and talking up to the measure of any type of character, or individual, that is characterized in any of these comedies.

No matter how exasperatingly inane a character may be, in his vanity, or other form of emptiness, he does not sermonize, nor argue at length; he merely ridicules. He is willing to let his characters go to the end of their rope, and often gives them free range, to wander about, in their own mental and spiritual blindness, until the direct score against them is sufficiently large, when he sets the stage for the revelation to them of their insignificance, and seems to sit back to watch the effect with keen enjoyment.

The largest element of suspense in the average bretonian comedy, in many of them almost the only one, that carries with it a concerned expectancy is centered around the natural desire, that would sometimes reach a state of impatience, on the part of the audience, to see common sense and real merit vindicated as against the overbearing encroachments of arrogance, bigotry, general over-estimation of self-importance and attractiveness, or it may be simply selfishness and narrowness, arising from a warped sense of logic and justice.

In Los dos sobrinos we enjoy seeing poor Cándido triumph over the self-constituted superiority of Joaquín, through his own challenge of the latter's "right of way", and over the selfish, scheming, uncle Marcelo, as a result of the true perception of the wealthy Don Bruno. In Marcela, we anxiously await the moment in which the effeminate Agapito is, in an unmistakable way, given to understand that he has taken entirely too much for granted, and that what he imagines is a sort of synthetic perfection, is nothing but simplicity. We would not be at all satisfied with Todo es farsa en este mundo, if Evaristo had not been finally trapped into baring his shrunken soul, and had it brought home to him that everyone realized how loathsome he was in his true light. Through duplicity he is about to win the fortune that goes with the girl he is deceiving

into accepting his protestation of unselfish love, when through the much more clever trickery of an older woman he is baited into overplaying his hand, by swerving his ever ready affections from the former, on being told that her fortune is hopelessly hypothecated, to the latter, who is known to be wealthy.

In much the same way are Alberto, of Una Vieja; Agustín, of Un día de campo; Don Ramón, of El amigo mártir; and others -- including Doña Simona, of Don Frutos en Belchite -- quite satisfactorily let down, with nothing but embarrassment and ridicule for their final desserts, after having clung tenaciously to the purpose of lifting themselves into the seventh heaven of wordly pleasure and comfort, by marrying a person who is well endowed with earthly goods.

In Una Vieja, although vanity and prigishness are what cause the final embarrassment and discomfiture of Doña Luisa, at the hands of a woman who is, herself, ridiculous, -- but only humorously so, and therefore not disgusting -- the theme, aside from Alberto's part in it, is a bit different. The lesson that is taught to Luisa is the truth that, as Doña Damiana says:

"Más vale, -- y Carabanchel
dirá a Madrid que no miento,
una vieja con talento,

que una coqueta sin él."

Aside from his irrepressively mocking ridicule of the many human characteristics that cheapen life, there are not a few wholesome suggestions of a more positive moral philosophy, concerning everyday standards. For example, there is, in Scene VI of Por no decir la verdad, the following observation on the logical advantage of telling the truth:

".....! Y luego dirán
que la verdad es amarga!
Su amargor dura un momento;
que es la verdad una y sola;
pero detrás de una bola
el demonio enreda ciento."

And in Act IV, Scene VI, of Quién es ella, answering the king's plea for her love, which would make her the most envied woman of the land, Isabel says:

"Even if this soul of mine
had never known true love, as it has,
still would I die a thousand times;
and in dying with honor, be truly glad
that I had not fallen a wretched prey
to insane ambition, or vile gold;
since the price that I then must

expect to pay
would be loss of purity -- my honor sold.
As it is, I am happy, I am not forlorn,
for I'm clean and honest, and Spanish
born."

In Act III, Scene VIII, he gives us the philosophy of a
brave Christian on his way to a horrible death:

"¿Qué es el dolor de un instante
si se llega a comparar
con la celeste ventura
de toda una eternidad?"

Against the injustice in the matter-of-fact ac-
ceptance of the theory that "woman pays", there is, in Act
II, Scene IV, of La Batalera de pasajes, an eloquent,
though simple, rebellion, in Pablo's answer to Faustina's
forced insistence that he cast her from him as a thing be-
trayed by another man, and therefore unclean:

"Yo no entiendo así el honor.
Si te abandano cruel
quien te engano con malicia,
o en el mundo no hay justicia
o la infamia es para él."

Bretón hardly defines his political philosophy.
Flaquezas Ministeriales is the only play that is at all

exclusively centered in a given phase of political life, and in it he has shorn the high political office of much of its dignity, and shows a deplorable lack of true realization of serious responsibility, on the part of ministerial offices. The ridiculously petty jealousies of a vain woman is the real motivating force that brings about the dismissal of one of the few worthy ministers in the service of the government, and the ultimate downfall of the ministry.

But in this play, and various others (particularly Me voy de Madrid, La Redacción de un periódico, and El hombre pacífico) he shows, by ridiculous examples, and sarcastic suggestions, the gnawing effects on national dignity, and governmental solidarity, of extreme haphazardness in politics and government, and the childish ease with which anyone with a modicum of influence or cleverness can clog the political machinery.

He makes a joke out of the incessant changes of political chieftans. He ridicules the ephemeral satisfaction the gullible public gets out of a change of names, that does not carry with it a change of system. "The nation is lost," he has a man say, "and it is foolish to maintain illusions. For while things themselves do not change, it is of little use to bring about a change of

names."⁴⁶

Then there is the undue influence of the French on social customs that disgusts him, although he does not appear to be so much alarmed, since the readiness of people to ape the stranger in little mannerisms that count for nothing, strikes him as being rather ridiculous, than important. He objects to it because he is peculiarly nationalistic, and he is jealous of the individuality of Spanish life and customs, as he is of the Spanish language itself.

A good example of his reaction to the social programs of the Spanish tyros in French etiquette and manners is found in Act I, Scene II, of Un tercero en discordia, where Don Rodrigo is telling Luciana of having accepted an invitation to dine in the house of a certain count, and of the bore some evening to which he was looking forward, since the count's family eat "a la francesa":

Rodrigo:; y por mi vida
que es una triste fineza
hacer esperar a un hombre
tres horas o tres y media
para comer una sopa
muchas veces no tan buena
como la suya."

⁴⁶Flaquezas Ministeriales, Act IV, Scene I.

And he goes on to observe that their conversation will be on such inconsequential topics as "whether or not the napkins are pretty," and "how it tires them to walk," etc., and then:

"Sepámoslo de una vez:

¿Qué somos en esta tierra?

¿Españoles o franceses?

¿Se come aquí, o se merienda?

¿Cuál es mejor reglamento?

No se sabe cosa cierta

.....

.....

¿ En qué cátedra se aprende

la urbanidad verdadera?

¿ Reside en la aristocracia

o bien en la clase media?

¿ Cuáles los límites son

entre esta clase y aquella? --

Ya se ve, los madrileños

se han formado tan menestros

de costumbres nacionales

y costumbres extranjeras

que aquí ya nadie se entiende

ni le conoce su abuela."

In El novio y el concierto, there is, through-

los franceses y los suecos,
¿por qué no han de hacer lo mismo
castellanos y extremeños?

Casimiro:

Confúndale usted, Remigia,
cantando dulces acentos
del país que apenin parte
e il mar circonda.

Lupercio:

Prometo

escucharla con placer,
pero ustedes no hagan gestos
si yo también, en la lengua
de mi padre y de mi abuelo,
con andaluz desenfado
doy al alma un refrigerio."

CHAPTER IV

BRETÓN AND ROMANTICISM

Bretón's first attempt at writing a play that would be in keeping with the general spirit of the movement of romanticism, which was then almost in full flower in Spain -- though still young -- was in 1834, when he wrote Elena, a five act drama that was first presented in October of that year.

In writing this play "he made use of all the liberties of the romantic school"⁴⁷, but many of the positive elements of romanticism are lacking. For instance, he is not truly subjective. He takes no phase, or phases, of life to portray, and thus to tell, through the characters and general trend of the story, what he himself feels (there is not even the seemingly unconscious idea of "see yourselves as I see you", that is found in his comedies). There is not that expression of a vague longing for freedom from restraint, that was characteristic of the romanticists of his day, nor is there that rather indefinite desire for life as it might have been, that is shown by the typical romanticist in his invocation, and revamping, of the past.

⁴⁷Piñeyro: op. cit., pg. 208.

The play's claim to romanticism seems to be based mainly on the mere fact that the writer has created a story with a plot that is romantic, but in a comparatively narrow sense of the word.

Bretón is not in his own element; he has not put himself into the writing of Elena with the spirit of one who has felt the urge, but rather as one who has a curiosity to see what he can do with the tools of those with whom he would rather go to loggerheads, and who is so far out of sympathy with their ideals, that he feels out of sympathy with himself in appearing to be one of them.

In the opening scene he gives the impression of closing his eyes and jumping, and, in the emotional scenes that follow, there is an almost stilted perfunctoriness, as if he were undecided as to how far he should carry his romanticism. In Act I, Scene II, Gerardo says, in speaking of his love for Elena:

".....
o bien el golpe mortal
de un desengaño, o la dicha
de llamarla ante el altar
esposa mía."

Here the spirit of abandon in his love affair, and his preference for death from the blow of a quickly realized failure, rather than continued uncertainty, is all

romantic, as is also the tension that is caused a little later on, by compelling Elena to stay and hear him by threatening to kill himself with a drawn dagger. But the effect of this last is neutralized, when he follows it up with a prosaic reminder of the fact that she dare not ignore him, for fear that he will disgrace her in the eyes of the world, by publishing her unhappy affair with Gabriel.

Again, in Act II, Scene IV, we have the rather automatic entrance of the idea of a sinister dagger, that seems to be written in because of its universal romantic possibilities, and not because it is really called for:

Conde (to Victorina):

"Mi amante, o nada."

Victorina: "Pues nada."

Conde: "Ah, cruel! Dame una soga,
dame un punal....."

These are typical of the emotional scenes in Elena, which are, for the most part, filled with a spirit of forced extravagance, instead of lacking restraint.

However, as the play progresses, Breton seems to find himself. Particularly is he more at home in his portrayal of the bandit scene. The setting for this scene of ambush is truly romantic and picturesque, and the actions and conversation of the bandits themselves have the penetrating power of a well drawn picture of a wild life of freedom from the

set rules of society.

Then in the scene at the cabin, far removed from civilized life, there is a delightful element of the fantastic in Elena's loss of mental balance, and her consequent wanderings into the realms of unreality.

But the ending, far from being tragic is quite happy, and, even taking the play as a whole, it is difficult to draw, from it, any conclusion to the effect that there is anything tragically wrong with life as it ordinarily is.

Following Elena, he confined his activities, as far as original compositions are concerned,⁴⁸ to the writing of comedies, which he could do better than any of his contemporaries, and better than he himself could do anything else, for the following three years, but finally, being, as he was, in the midst of a revolutionary movement that had now taken on sweeping and irresistible proportions, it was inevitable that he should, to a greater or less degree, be influenced by the general character of the movement, and that he should tend to follow the changing interests of the people. And then, too, "the constant desire of our poet to exercise his genius in all the different types of dramas, from the heroic tragedy to the musical comedy and picaresque farce, decided him to make a third attempt (Los hijos de Eduardo was his second

⁴⁸He translated, from the French, the moderately romantic drama of Los hijos de Eduardo.

one) in the field of romanticism. In the first he had continued to deal with humble and familiar affairs, nor had he introduced characters from any but the lower and middle classes: in the second, excellently translated, he is concerned with political affairs, in which princes and nobility take part; but after all the setting is in a foreign land, and the persons, and the interests, are not Spanish."

"So then, Bretón decided to go back to a historical event of his own country; to facts and legends that have become fixtures in the memory and imagination of the Spanish people."⁴⁹ As a result, comes Don Fernando el Emplazado, a historical drama of five acts, written in romance verse, and first presented on November 30, 1857.

In it we have a restrained, but nevertheless romantic, treatment of a truly romantic plot. It harks back to the reign of Fernando IV, in the early fourteenth century.

The king is pictured as an arrogant, egotistical, and tyrannical ruler, lacking in real force of character; his private life ruled by passion, and his political attitude shaped by his treacherous uncle, Don Juan, whose advice he follows largely because it is suited to his own selfish desires. He is desperately in love with Doña Sancha,

⁴⁹Molins: op. cit., pgs. 140-141.

and is willing to go to any extreme in a vain attempt to win her for himself.

The intriguing Don Juan plans to get Pedro and Juan Carvajal out of his way, and is allowed to have them convicted of treason, on false evidence, to the edification of the king, who gladly signs the death warrant because it is for him an easy way to get rid of a rival, since it is Pedro Carvajal to whom the beautiful Sancha owes the allegiance of a secretly wedded wife.

There is tragedy: the inexorable ways of subjective reality are allowed to work themselves out, relentlessly, to an inevitable and tragic end.

There is a rather fascinating element of mystic fatalism in the seemingly inevitable fall of doom on the head of the king, which was a consignment to death by God's hand, of which he was warned by Juan Carvajal as the latter is about to be executed. The king is stunned by a stroke of lightning, and Juan tells him that it is a warning from God -- that he (the king) has only thirty days to live. The horrible solemnity of the occasion lends strength to the prophecy, and it preys upon the king's mind and conscience, until he is unable to regain his health. On the thirtieth day he dies the frightful death of a man whose sins are unforgiven.

Pedro Carvajal is unreserved in his absolute

abandon to the dictates of his own emotions, when he says:

".....Adiós:
O el altar para los dos.....
O tumba para los tres."⁵⁰

And his brother, Gonzalo, places unrestrained freedom of action and life above all else -- unless it be his honor, and that of his family. In Act I, Scene IX, he says:

"..... que a torpe yugo
doblar el cuello no sé,
y donde libre respiro
mi patria está, y mi placer."

Although the play hardly measures up to the extreme romanticism of its own time, Bretón has thrown himself into the writing of it, and into the creation of the plot, and development of the characters with much more abandon, and unrestrained inventiveness, than he did in the case of Elena, where he gives the impression that he has entered into an unwholesome atmosphere, and wants to go on through with it, with the least possible affront to his ideals.

Then, too, his tendency to consider all classes of society, from a middle-class point of view -- a ten-

⁵⁰Act I, Scene I.

dency that constitutes a weakness in Elena -- is not evident here, where his conception of the characters is on a subjectively historical basis, and he is not dependent on his own social observation, which, keen and appreciative as it may be, is, after all, essentially "of the people".

As evidence of the fact that Bretón was more in accord with himself, and with the spirit of his play, in writing Don Fernando el Emplazado, than he was in writing his first romantic drama, two years before, it is quite noticeable that, in the later one, there is not the stiffness of action, the lack of mutuality between the dialogue and the situation, and the lack of enthusiasm in unfolding the narrative itself, that is apparent in the earlier play. And as further evidence that he was more interested in the telling of his story, and the effective dramatization of the past, there is, in Don Fernando, an absence of that mechanical exactness, which we may accuse Elena of showing. An example of this, insignificant to be sure, but nevertheless pertinent, is his apparent carelessness in suggesting the age of the young king, who, in Act IV, is twenty-seven years old, while in Act V, less than thirty days later, he is said to be thirty years of age.

Two more years passed, during which time Bretón wrote almost a dozen comedies that show little influence of the romantic ideals, before he made one more excursion

into this new field, when he wrote Vellido Dolfos, a historical drama in four acts, in which is dramatized the siege of Zamora by Sancho II, in 1072.

Around this historic incident he weaves a sufficiently interesting story, but in his treatment of it he is too restrained in his "breaking away from restraint."

His tragedy is not so much the result of destiny, as it is an outcome of a rather matter-of-fact premeditation of a man who is too ordinary to fill the measure of the ideal which the true romanticist would picture.

Vellido Dolfos is meant to be a romantic hero. "A heart like mine", he says, in Act I, Scene I, "never loves at all, except to be with unbridled passion. I only seek my death, you will say: and what is life, in the midst of such anguish," and he goes forth to kill the enemy king by treachery, while the object of his worshipful love, Doña Urraca, Queen of Zamora, who "prefers death to an ignominious peace", in her made to order exalted patriotism, is later willing to humble herself to the extent of allowing him to escape, when the honor of her city demands his apprehension and punishment -- and this without any more than a poor semblance of a struggle with her conscience. The only redeeming feature of the situation is that Vellido comes back and kills himself.

Lack of sincerity in the treatment of a romantic

plot, particularly when it came to following the dictates of the romantic school in his handling of it, added to the fact that the theater of the romanticists was too far removed from his own ideal, formed too great an obstacle even for the great fecundity and adaptability of his genius to surmount, and on Vellido Dolfos proving to be a comparative failure, Bretón was forced to realize that this was not his field, and that the only logical and honest thing for him to do was to confine himself to the writing of comedies of customs and manners, a branch of the art of writing plays of which he was the undisputed master. So he decided to "follow the road that was for him so flowery and familiar; to turn his back upon the catastrophes of history, and to peacefully enjoy the pleasantries as well as the delicious piquancies of his language; and hanging in one corner his romantic mandolin, which had never been of very great advantage to him, he took up, once and for all, his comic lyre."⁵¹

But while, with the completion of this drama, Bretón may rightfully be said to be through with romanticism, it would not be well to say that the movement itself was through with him, nor that the romantic element in Bretón is confined to Elena, and his three historic

⁵¹Molíns: op. cit., pg. 142.

dramas. For evidence of the influence, on him, of the mere presence in his literary, political, and, therefore, social world, of this general trend toward liberalism in all phases of life, and the general awakening of the interest of the people in the possibilities of a change in the older order of things, is more or less apparent, here and there, in any number of his comedies. This is true, not so much with respect to the style and literary character of his writing, as to the substance of his comedies, and the modernistic trend of the domestic and social life at which he aims (instance the independent spirit of freedom and equality, which he puts into many of his women characters, and his sympathetic attitude toward the people in their struggle with the chains of poverty, in so far as this struggle is unselfish).

In Un novio para la niña, Concha shows a soulful longing for unattainable happiness and freedom in her sympathetic attitude toward the imprisoned bird,⁵² that would do credit to the idealizers of the romantic school:

“¿Suspiros por la pradera
que embelesaba tu canto?
¿Es causa de ese quebranto
tu perdida compañera?
Consuélate, que en prisión

⁵²Act I, Scene II.

yo también penando vivo.
Ay! también gime cautivo
mi llagado corazón.
Tu al menos en mi piedad
puedes cifrar tu ventura,
mas ¿quién en tanta amargura
me dará a mí libertad?
Vuela a tu floresta umbría,
goza del aura serena;
que yo rompo tu cadena....
ya que no pueda la mía."

There is even some evidence of sympathy with the pessimistic fatalism of those who are prone to believe that "death is the only solution," and that destiny is an inexorably cruel helmsman. One example -- and there are others -- is found in Isabel's vain outcry against the bitterness of life in this world, in Act IV, Scene VI, of Quién es ella:

"Lloro el siniestro influjo de mi estrella,
que adonde quiera que mi frente asoma
lleva consigo azares y amarguras
y muerte y maldición."

In La Batalera de Pasajes there is the captain who is a character worthy of a full fledged romanticist.

A brave and daring soldier, and a beloved leader; weak only in comparison with his own passion. In a way, he is a modified Don Juan Tenorio.

The plot, itself, is based on the story of a poor ferry girl; young, beautiful, and with a restless longing for a fuller life than is her lot. The captain betrays her, and she follows him from one place to another, desperately searching for him among the soldiers of various military camps, spurred on by a spirit of vengeance. She finds him, but not until after she meets with Pablo, her childhood sweetheart, who still loves her passionately, and who is determined to avenge the crime against her. Then comes the irony of fate; he learns that the man who has despoiled the girl of her honor is his own captain, and he is torn between love and respect for his brave leader, and his passion for vengeance. But here the element of romanticism comes to an end. The captain is seriously wounded, and, contritely wishing to right the wrong he has done, marries Faustina, in what are thought to be his dying moments. He gets well, only to meet with death at the hands of an avenger of a wrong done another woman, and the way to ultimate happiness is nicely opened to Pablo and Faustina.

This play is a "comedia", but it is plain to see that Bretón has broken clearway from his own conception

of the extent to which the unities should be observed, in order to reach the interests of the people who are looking for the diversion of a story of romantic life. But it does not particularly belong to the romantic period; it is a human interest story of all time, and it was written in 1842, at a time when the spirit of the people was beginning to settle down to the new realism that followed the extreme restlessness of the short period of revolutionary upheaval.

In other comedies there are lesser instances of Bretón's willingness to compromise with those who desired to get away from the prosaic humdrum of ordinary life, with its usual slowness of change, as for example, in El qué dirán, where the possibility of happiness for Camila and Ignacio, in their love for each other, seems quite remote, on account of the latter's poverty, until it is learned that the ship, on which he had risked all his money, some years before, had not been wrecked, as he had long believed, but that his partner had appropriated the proceeds of the venture, and remained in Mexico. Here he became rich, and, on his death bed, consigned half of his fortune to Ignacio.

This is not romanticism, as it is used by Bretón, but neither is it "customs and manners". It is merely his recognition of the fact that it is well to have things

happen, in life on the stage, not always just as they probably would happen in real life, but more as people would like to have them happen.

In No ganamos para sustos he has apparently given in a little to the romantic tendencies of his contemporaries -- at least to the extent of choosing a historic, and potentially romantic setting; but it is difficult to tell whether he has done this for creative purposes of interest in the narrative, or whether he is purposefully making use of such atmosphere in the development of a pure comedy, in order to prove that romantic extravagance is not necessary in the successful handling of such a situation.

The plot itself is not historical, but the existence of certain historic facts is essential to it.

Patriotism and personal honor are exalted, but not in any high-flung manner that would make extraordinary heroes out of those who possess such qualities, but in the matter of fact way of a comedy, that makes them appear as characteristic of being a man and a well born Spaniard. Don Felix looks upon the danger to himself and to his household, brought on by his harboring Don Juan, who is a military fugitive from the enemy, as merely incidental to his duties of a host, and loyal subject of the king.

The secret meeting of Juan and Serafina, on the night that the former is to escape to his own army, contains possibilities consistent with a truly romantic story, but this apparent tendency toward romanticism is forgotten in the comic situation which is brought on by mistaken identity of lovers and sweethearts. Don Felix, fearful of his daughter's safety, while the sergeant is billeted so near to her room, has her exchange with a maid, whose room is more remote. This maid has been secretly married, and her yokel husband comes into the bed-room occupied by Serafina, just in time to be found there by Don Juan, when the latter finally arrives. The circumstances are explained in time to avert trouble; then Don Felix comes in and discovers first one and then the other. Don Juan dramatically hands over his sword, calling on the father to kill him, thanking God for the chance to go to his death "since with one fell swoop his misery will all cease."⁵³ But Don Felix simply, but firmly refuses to take such action, because the man is his guest. There is no extravagant struggle between soul and passion -- he has promised to help return Juan to the king's army, and he will.

There is a strong demand for freedom from re-

⁵³Act II, Scene VIII.

straint, particularly in the matter of love and marriage, but this also is turned to suit the purposes of comedy, when Don Juan, who had come through a window, into a room whose door was securely locked, says to the father --

Act II, Scene VIII:

"Yo respeto a vuestras canas;
mas, perdonad que os lo advierta,
quien cierra al amor la puerta
abre al error las ventanas."

There is a deal of incidental sarcasm, directed against the general idea of romanticism, particularly with respect to its evil tendency to create undue restlessness and dissatisfaction with life in its essential realities. This is found, either in open existence, or in the form of suggestion and implication in various of Bretón's comedies, but in none of them, perhaps, is it so evident as it is in Me Voy de Madrid, written a little more than a year after Elena.

In this play the susceptibility to the attractiveness of romantic propaganda, eloquently expounded by the young libertine, Don Joaquin, and exemplified by him in his passionate love-making, might easily have been the undoing of Manuela, in spite of the practical minded brother, Don Fructuoso, and the serious minded, and splendidly domestic, Doña Tomasa, if it had not been for

the fact that Joaquín carried his liberal antics to such ridiculous extremes, that his cards were necessarily turned face up.

Manuela is Bretón's agent for showing the absurd intangibility of romanticism. She is typical of those flighty converts to the new movement, who vaguely feel, because their emotions are aroused, but cannot see, because they really do not know what it is all about. In her argument, with her brother, who soundly objects to her relations with Joaquín, she tries to explain her new-found attitude, and shortly comes, with a floundering splash, to a depth that is entirely beyond her mental stilts:

Manuela: "..... Digo que no es justo
desairar a ese muchacho.

Me ama tanto, y es su amor
tan romántico....."

Fruct.: "Apostamos
a que ya el romanticismo
te ha trastornado los cascos."

Manuela: "Sí, que yo estoy por las grandes
pasiones y por los raptos.....
.....
.....
.....,....Sí,

de imaginación. Yo marchó
con el siglo; yo no gusto
de rutinas, ni me adapto
a sentimientos vulgares,
Metódicos, sedentarios.
Tiende a dilatarse el alma
por el anchuroso espacio
de la creación y la.....
Sí; lo demás es un caos;
es..., No se..., la inanición...,
la raquitis..., el marasmo...
Y en fin, el romanticismo,
aunque yo no sé explicarlo,
es de moda, y esto basta
para que sea el encanto
de las mujeres. Ya ves
que con franqueza yo te hablo
también."⁵⁴

Here we have the absurd situation of a person afflicted with romanticism trying to explain its effect on the human spirit by analogy with the homely diseases of rickets and consumption. And Bretón is no doubt more than half serious when he suggests, here, that the movement owes a great deal of its strength to the fact that people

⁵⁴Act I, Scene I.

-- women in particular -- are followers of fashion.

It is Bretón speaking, when Fructuoso replies to his sister's romanticized ravings, to the effect that, in order to be able to govern a household as a woman should, she does not need to be taught by Lord Byron, nor Victor Hugo.

Later on, in Act I, Scene IX, Manuela makes one more pitifully vague attempt to explain this new order of life, this time to Doña Tomasa, who answers: "For me, the jewel which, next to virtue, is most becoming to a woman, is the quality of being mistress of her own house."

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

This paper is not proposed as one containing the results of an exhaustive study of the literature of Bretón de los Herreros, since that would necessitate the reading of some three hundred and fifty plays, ranging in length from one to five acts, together with the reading of many plays by other authors, both French and Spanish, by which Bretón was largely influenced. This would be an assignment the work of which would be very enjoyable, since it is a literature that contains much of beauty and of life, but which would require more time and material than is available. The aim has been merely to give a general idea of the man's attitude toward life -- particularly his ideal of the way in which it should be portrayed on the stage -- as drawn from his more representative comedies, that were written in the prime of his literary life, and of the general nature of the language and versification that he uses, as well as of his individuality in expressing his sentiments and critical observations.

It begins with a consideration of his early life and environments, not in the form of a detailed biographical sketch, but in that of a discussion of the probable and apparent relations between his experiences as a soldier,

as a political employee, and, later, as an associate of men of letters and student of the contemporary French theater on the one hand, and his own writings in later life on the other.

Spending almost ten years of his youth in more or less active and varied service in the army, as he did, it is only natural that his peculiarly intimate association with the type of men one would expect to find in the army would have a far reaching influence on the molding of his character and general attitude toward life.

And the splendid opportunity that was his, during these years, incident to his being billeted among the people in first one place, then another, for observation of the intimate domestic life of the middle classes, went far towards broadening his range of realistic ideas, on which he was later to exercise his natural wit and humor, and the splendid genius for sprightly versification which was peculiarly his own, in a portrayal of scenes from life that are universally interesting and enjoyable. He was a poet of the people, and the most popular one of his age.

His dialogue is filled with genuine humor, and innocent satire which is pleasing to all, objectionable to none. In his richly sarcastic observations on the absurdities and petty vices of humanity he gives the welcome impression of laughing with the objects of his ridicule,

and not at them. Although the element of satire in his dialogue is often almost merciless, it is always innocent, and the irony of his examples is one of amused mockery, rather than of scorn.

In his comedies the most usual theme is love and marriage, with the domestic and social problems incident thereto, usually including a struggle against poverty and social inertia. Such pictures he draws with a familiarity that is consistent but never brash.

But he is not narrowed down to a portrayal of this one phase of social life. On the other hand there are observations and suggestions that cover a wide range of social, political, and moral philosophy, which is sure to be genuinely applicable, although usually rather superficial.

Some of his best comedies of customs and manners are: Marcela, ¿Cuál de los tres?; Un Tercero en discordia; Un novio para la niña (all more or less similar to each other as to plot and general theme, but quite different as to the portrayal and caricature of individual characters), El pelo de la dehesa; Don Frutos en Belchite (if read with the last mentioned play in mind); Me Voy de Madrid; and Una Vieja. Then, of a different type from the foregoing, and not so rich in originality and cleverness in humor and versification, but nevertheless pleasing to

read, and quite interesting in their own way, are: La Batalera de las pasajes; and ¿Quién es ella?

One may get a fair idea of the style of Bretón's versification, of his extreme cleverness in handling his language, and of his general methods and manner of portrayal and expression, by reading a few of his short plays, such as: Ella es él; Una de tantas; El hombre gordo; El hombre pacífico, and El novio y el concierto.

Bretón lived through the romantic movement without coming dangerously near to being carried away by the fantastic liberalism of its more radical tendencies.

He believed that the place of the Spanish theater should be that given to it by Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, Tirso de Molina, and others of the Golden Century, and he consistently modeled his own writing, as to form and substance, after the honest ideal that he formed on a basis of the difference between the Spanish theater of the past, and what it was coming to be as a result of foreign influence.

He wrote three dramas that are in keeping with the general spirit of romanticism. They are: Elena, Don Fernando el Emplazado, and Vellido Dolfos. But these are merely isolated and voluntary excursions into this new field, and hold forth no element of permanence in the literary development of the author.

There are a few others in which there is a noticeable element of romanticism, but, for the most part, the movement affected Bretón only in so far as he must necessarily be expected to follow the changing interests of the people.

GENERAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Asensio, José: El teatro de Don Manuel Bretón de los Herreros (España Moderna, Vol. I, 1897).
- Cejador, Julio: Historia de la lengua y literatura castellana (Vol. VI), Madrid, 1917.
- Clark, H. B.: Modern Spain, 1815-1898, Cambridge, 1906
- Ferrer del Río: Galería de la literatura española, Madrid, 1846.
- Fitzmaurice-Kelly, James: Spanish literature, New York, 1922.
- Fitzmaurice-Kelly, James: Historia de la literatura española, Madrid, 1921 (3rd. edition).
- Hurtado, Juan: Historia de la literatura española, Madrid, 1921.
- Le Gentil, Georges: Le poète Manuel Bretón de los Herreros et la société espagnole de 1850 a 1860, Paris, 1909.
- Herrinsee, Ernest: Précis D Histoire de la Littérature Espagnole, Paris, 1908.
- Piñeyro, Enrique: El romanticismo en España, Paris, n.d.
- Roca de Togores, Mariano (Marqués de Molíns): Bretón de los Herreros, recuerdos de su vida y de sus obras, Madrid, 1883.
- Ticknor, George: History of Spanish literature (3 volumes), Vol. II, Boston, 1891.

Bretón de los Herreros, Obras, 6 volumes, Madrid, 1883.

Galería Dramática (Volumes 7-8, 51-52, 59-60), Madrid, n.d.

PLAYS OF BRETON STUDIED

- A lo hecho, pecho (1844), Obras Vol. III.
- A Madrid me vuelvo (1828), Obras Vol. I.
- ¡Cuidado con las amigas! (1844), Galería Dramática, V. 59.
- Dios los cría y ellos se juntan (1841), Obras Vol. II.
- Don Fernando el emplazado (1837), Obras Vol. II.
- Don Frutos en Belchite (1845), Obras Vol. II.
- El amigo mártir (1836), Obras Vol. I.
- Elena (1835), Obras Vol. I.
- El hombre gordo (1835), Obras Vol. I.
- El hombre pacífico (1838), Obras Vol. II.
- Ella es el (1838), Obras Vol. II.
- El novio y el concierto (1839), Obras Vol. II.
- El pelo de la dehesa (1840), Obras Vol. II.
- El poeta y la beneficiada (1838), Obras Vol. II.
- El pro y el contra (1838), Obras Vol. II.
- El qué dirán y el qué se me da a mí (1838), Obras Vol. II.
- Flaquezas Ministeriales (1838), Obras Vol. II.
- Frenología y magnetismo (1845), Obras Vol. III.
- La Batelera de pasajes (1842), Obras Vol. III.
- La escuela de las casadas (1842), Obras Vol. III.
- La Independencia (1844), Obras Vol. III.
- Lances de carnaval (1840), Obras Vol. II.
- La redacción de un periódico (1836), Obras Vol. I.

Los dos sobrinos, o la escuela de los parientes (1825),

Obras Vol. I.

Los hijos de Eduardo (1836), Obras Vol. I.

Lo vivo y lo pintado (1841), Obras Vol. III.

Marcela, o ¿Cuál de los tres? (1831), Obras Vol. I.

Medidas extraordinarias (1837), Obras Vol. II.

Me voy de Madrid (1835), Obras Vol. I.

Muñete, y veras....! (1837), Obras Vol. I.

No ganamos para sustos (1839), Obras Vol. II.

Pascual y Carranza (1843), Obras Vol. III.

Por no decir la verdad (1843), Obras Vol. III.

Pruebas de amor conyugal (1840), Obras Vol. III.

Todo es farsa en este mundo (1835), Obras Vol. I.

Una de tantas (1837), Obras Vol. I.

Una noche en Burgos (1843), Obras Vol. III.

Una vieja (1839), Obras Vol. II.

Un día de campo (1839), Obras Vol. II.

Un Francés en Cartagena (1843), Obras Vol. III.

Un novio a pedir de boca (1843), Obras Vol. III.

Un novio para la niña (1834), Obras Vol. I.

Un tercero en discordia (1835), Obras Vol. I.

Vellido Dolfos (1839), Obras Vol. II.

INDEX

Achaques a los vicios, 24.

A la vejez viruelas, 16, 20, 23n., 24, 25.

A Madrid me vuelvo, 4, 16, 24, 25, 28, 53, 71.

Biographical

Early life, 1.

Early literary compositions, 7.

Enlistment in the army, 2.

Influence of early associations, 3-8, 11, 21, 22, 31.

Political career, 12, 13.

Calderón de la Barca, 15, 20, 21, 34.

Cejader, 7, 15, 16, 19, 20, 40.

Characters -- types and treatment of, -- 24, 26, 28, 32,
34-37, 42, 44, 46ff., 55, 63, 65 ff., 72, 74, 104.

Comedies:

Bretón's ideal, 31, 32.

General nature of, 24.

Purpose of, 32 ff.

Subject matter, 24, 33, 41, 103.

Dialogue -- consistency, expressiveness, etc., 37, 38, 103.

Domestic life -- portrayal and treatment of, (See Marriage
and Social Philosophy.)

Don Fernando el Emplazado, 86, 89, 105.

Don Frutos en Belchite, 74, 104.

- El amigo mártir, 18, 37, 63ff., 71, 74.
- Elena, 82ff., 88, 89, 91, 98, 105.
- El hombre gordo, 53, 59, 61, 105.
- El hombre pacífico, 12, 77, 105.
- Ella es él, 56ff., 105.
- El novio y el concierto, 71, 79ff., 105.
- El pelo de la dehesa, 4, 5, 8-10, 53, 68, 104.
- El poeta y la beneficiada, 71.
- El pro y el contra, 71.
- El qué dirán, 53, 55, 61, 71, 95.
- Emotional scenes -- handling of, 84.
- Flaquezas Ministeriales, 13, 71, 76, 78.
- French influence on Bretón, 19-21.
- French influence on Spanish people, 78ff.
- Frenología y magnetismo, 71.
- Grimaldi, D. Juan de, 21.
- Humor and satire (See also Ridicule), 11, 24, 26, 28, 39,
40-44, 50, 65, 103.
- Individuality (See also Originality), 26, 31.
- Irony and Sarcasm (See also Humor and Satire), 42, 56, 69.
- Journalism, 22.
- La Batelera de pasajes, 10, 76, 93, 105.
- La escuela de las casadas, 56, 61.
- La Independencia, 67.
- Language -- handling and mastery of (See Chapter II), 26,
33-34, 36, 37, 40.

- La redacción de un periódico, 12, 36, 53, 66, 77.
- Literary scope and limitations, 29, 32, 39, 89.
- Literary style and characteristics, 4n., 10, 21, 28, 29, 33.
- Lope de Vega, 21, 34.
- Los dos sobrinos, 16, 24, 71, 73.
- Los hijos de Eduardo, 85.
- Lo vivo y lo pintado, 71.
- Marcela, 11, 25, 30-32, 34ff., 50, 60, 71, 73, 104.
- Marriage (See also Social philosophy and Tomasa), 56, 67,
98.
- Medidas extraordinarias, 66.
- Me voy de Madrid, 12, 43, 54, 67, 77, 98, 104.
- Morality and moral philosophy (See also Social philosophy),
41ff., 54, 64, 67, 75.
- Moratin -- his influence on Breton, 14-16, 18ff., 24, 26.
- Moratin -- contrasted with Breton, 20, 21.
- Molière, 21.
- Molins (Rosa de Togores), 4ff., 8, 20, 22, 28, 67, 86, 91.
- Muérete y verás...!, 61, 62.
- Nationalism of Breton, 33ff., 60.
- No ganamos para sustos, 71, 96ff.
- Originality (See also Versification, and Individuality),
39, 41, 57, 104.
- Piñeyro, 4n., 25, 34, 82.
- Plot (See also Literary scope, etc.), 39, 104.

Politics (See also Social philosophy), 76ff.

Por no decir la verdad, 75.

Predecessors of Bretón -- their influence, etc., 29, 31,
33.

Quién es ella, 33, 56, 71, 75, 93, 105.

Racine, 21.

Ridicule (See also Humor and Satire; Irony and Sarcasm;
and Character portrayal), 55, 59ff., 65, 70, 74,
77, 79.

Romantic dramas of Bretón:

First attempt, 82.

Second attempt, 86.

Third attempt, 86ff.

Fourth attempt, 90.

Romantic movement -- Bretón influenced by it, and his at-
titude toward it (See Chapter IV), 90ff., 94, 98,
99ff., 105, 106.

Sarcasm (See also Irony, etc.), 56, 61, 80, 103.

Social philosophy (See Chapter III):

Marriage and Domestic life, -- treatment of, and
attitude toward, 17ff., 26ff., 41, 45, 47, 49ff.,
55, 57, 61.

Social attitude, 26, 43, 45ff., 53, 63ff., 67.

Social criticism and teachings (See also Humor,
etc.), 32ff., 39, 41ff., 45ff., 53, 54ff., 56ff.,

59, 68, 71ff., 74, 98, 101.

Social life and problems -- treatment of, 55,

Social vices -- jealousy, pride, ambition, selfishness, etc. (See Vices and Virtues).

Subject matter. (See Comedies).

Theater of Bretón -- his ideals and aspirations, etc.,
16, 20, 25, 105.

Tirso de Molina, 20, 34.

Todo es farsa en este mundo, 64, 71, 75.

Tomasa, 67ff., 98, 101.

Tragedy -- elements of (See also Romanticism), 87, 90.

Una de tantas, 63, 105.

Una vieja, 69, 71, 74, 104.

Un día de campo, 54, 62, 74.

Un novio para la niña, 43, 52, 56, 59, 61, 69, 71, 92, 104.

Un tercero en discordia, 53, 61, 71, 78, 104.

Vellido Dolfos, 71, 90, 91, 105.

Versatility. (See also Versification), 58.

Versification (See also Literary style, etc.), 34, 40, 104,
105.

Vices and virtues -- treatment of, 26, 32, 38, 42, 55, 57,
64, 66ff., 71, 75.

Women (See also Marriage and Tomasa), 38, 56, 58ff., 60ff.,
63, 67, 76.