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IBSEN'S INFLUENCE ON THE SPANISH
DRAMATIST JOSE ECHEGARAY

by
Isabel Alvarez, B.A.

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

Waterloo Lutheran University

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INTRODUCTION

In the history of literature there are certain writers who owe their importance not only to their creative stature, but to the fact that they give life or incorporate ideas and ideals of their times that had hardly registered in the intellectual sensibility of the elite. Such men represent new stages in the awareness of man's condition. One of them was the playwright José Echegaray y Eizaguirre, (1832-1916). This thesis records in a modest way some aspects of a renovated consciousness.

Several dramatic critics have pointed out that the Norwegian Henrik Ibsen, (1828-1906), influenced the plays of Echegaray; but an intensive search in specialized works has yielded little proof of this influence. A clear challenge to scholarship was thus established.

In the consideration of conformity between two authors, it is always legitimate to debate where coincidence finishes and influence begins. In the case under study, the difficulty of the problem is proven by the fact that after almost one hundred years, no one, to our knowledge, has undertaken the enterprise. It

would be presumptuous to hope that we can give a clear answer to the interrogations set, within the modest framework of a Master of Arts thesis. A definite solution to the problem would require a much more ambitious research.

In the present thesis we shall try to delineate the possibilities of influence on the basis of the community of dramatic situations and of the identity of some ideals in both authors. In order to appreciate the significant relationships, we shall also have to consider the biographical elements, not to mention the temper of both personalities.

Our efforts will try to show whether the lack, up to the moment, of "material" proof of an influence, does or does not allow us to believe in the existence of a change in the dramatic personality of Echegaray under the impact of Ibsen's ideas.

CHAPTER I

IBSEN

In order to get an insight into Ibsen's dramatic production, it is important that we consider very briefly his life, and how it contributed to the making of his unique personality.

His life work indicates four main stages, which seem to follow his spiritual development: The artist is made out of his struggle with Norway; the early works of the exile, mostly poetry and satire; the great series of plays where the poet and the Norwegian work together; and finally, the visionary plays, his last dramas.¹ The all important characteristic emerging out of his labours with impetuous force is his inflexible individualism.²

That he became so ferocious an individualist was helped by nurture. His early years knew nothing but persistent and repeated failure, which led him to either accept isolation, or accept defeat.²

¹ Bradbrook, Ibsen the Norwegian, 20

² Lucas, The Drama of Ibsen and Strindberg, 18.

His young life was restricted and unhappy, torn between aversion for his father and a sense of duty towards him. His Oedipus complex and economic hardships made him shy and retiring. Later on, he had love affairs of an irresponsible nature.

His literary life knew failure when, as stage manager, he presented his own plays.

Political circumstances led him to voluntary exile in Italy, where he lived in poverty. Not until the success of Brand could he reach security, at the age of thirty-eight. He returned to Norway in 1891, where he was honored by kings and welcomed by all parties after an absence of twenty-nine years.³

One can understand how Ibsen's childhood had the power to control his artistic production in later life; and how his emotional existence caused the basic situation in all his work to be the family complex.⁴ Out of the family situation developed the fixed pattern of family relationships we see in his plays, "a pattern which is repeated again and again until it no longer represents a danger to him".⁵

³Bradbrook, 41.

⁴Except in Peer Gynt and Emperor and Galilean.

⁵Tennant, Ibsen's dramatic Technique, 35.

If it is true that despair turned him away from his nationalistic hopes and that his life was built on tragic isolation, it is also true that suffering made him an artist.⁶ The external grimness of his nature was only a cloak of protection. However, a critic commented with great lucidity: ". . . he had nothing of the bear but his skin".⁷

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Ibsen has been called "the great individualist of the Nineteenth Century"⁸ because, like many great artists, he had a supreme contempt for his kind, looking upon man from the moral point of view. He could see in Art a substitute for Life, like Thomas Mann.⁹

Thus the loom of family relationships appears along with the conflict between art and life. The dramatist escapes the responsibilities of reality by projecting reality into his work and keeping it at arm's length. This aesthetic detachment is the very

⁶Bradbrook, 148.

⁷Lucas, 33.

⁸Bentley, Ibsen, A Personal Statement, 8.

⁹Tennant, 36.

quality that has enhanced the value of his work.¹⁰

"He found a refuge in art from the painful experiences of his childhood and youth",¹¹ he became primarily an illusionist and an artist, and only secondly a thinker or a psychologist. It is his power to generate new and valid imaginative experience that causes Ibsen's success.¹²

When Ibsen began to write, the art of the dramatist had shrunk into the act of contriving a situation. Ibsen believes that the more familiar the situation, the more interesting the play will be, since there is a more complete involvement of the audience. The low ebb in the art of discussion experienced by the theatre of his time, moves him to write plays in which the drama will arise through a conflict of unsettled ideals, and not between a clear right or wrong. It is Ibsen's own thesis that says "the real slavery of today is the slavery to ideals of goodness".¹³ This conclusion produced the uproar that made him famous; it created shock by his disregard of conventions; it challenged; Ibsen was even held

¹⁰Tennant, 40.

¹¹Ibid.,

¹²Bradbrook, 29.

¹³Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism, 37.

to have insulted his audience; but the achievement was complete: The spectator was engaged, not merely and coolly interested.

Bernard Shaw explains¹⁴ that the main effect of Ibsen's plays was to keep before the public the importance of being always prepared to act immorally. He maintained that it was good for society to be shocked often.

It is true that Ibsen's plays have an immoral tendency when immorality does not just imply mischievous conduct: "it implies conduct, mischievous or not, which does not conform to current ideals".¹⁵ Ibsen saw that our ideals are constantly demanding human sacrifices and explained on one occasion : "Let none of them be placed above the obligation to prove itself worth the sacrifices it demands".¹⁶ For it is true that those who are not ridden by current ideals, will have no question as to the ethical soundness of Ibsen's dramas; and that it is only those who are, who will probably denounce the plays as immoral.¹⁷

¹⁴ Shaw, 39.

¹⁵ Ibid., 40

¹⁶ Ibid., 44

¹⁷ As Shaw put it.

Ibsen believes firmly in the rights and power of the emancipated individual: "The only thing he really believes in and respects is personality".¹⁸ His letters to Laura Kieler reaffirm this feeling that "the main thing is to remain sincere and true in relation to oneself".¹⁹

When he exiled himself, he did so to help his vision of things, of the self; his "longsightedness": "We see most clearly at a distance; the details confuse. . . Man is spiritually a longsighted creature".²⁰ His life work, as a result, has the fascination of unity, and the profound meaning of his dramas is found in the relation from play to play.

Gradually, while suffering made an artist of him, Norway lost a poet and the world gained a dramatist. When he died in 1906, his dramas had been acclaimed in all European theatres and his art of playwriting had become the model for students of dramatic technique and for many dramatists of the XIXth Century.

¹⁸ Brandes, Henrik Ibsen, A critical Study, 6.

¹⁹ Lucas, 36.

²⁰ Bradbrook, 148.

CHAPTER II

ECHEGARAY

The Nobel prize in Literature was awarded in 1904 to a Spaniard, Don José Echegaray, and to a Frenchman, Frédéric Mistral. Nevertheless, the Oslo Academy took especial care to declare publicly that, in this case, both awards had the full significance of an integral Nobel Prize.

This honour was dedicated:

. . . a Don José Echegaray, en consideración a su rica e inspirada producción dramática, la cual ha reanimado de una manera independiente y original las grandes tradiciones y las glorias antiguas del drama español.¹

For thirty years he was either extolled or highly criticized, but there is no doubt that he dominated completely the Spanish stage and was one of the most outstanding personalities of the Spanish Nineteenth Century.

Born in Madrid from a middle class family, the head of which was a man of great intellectual versatility, Pepito was a first rate student from

¹ Olmet, Echegaray, 27.

the start. He finished High School at fifteen and was a full-fledged engineer at the age of twenty. His youth knew turbulent years of military uprisings, political instability and economic upheaval.

The poorly fed and poorly dressed student became a professor in the Engineering School. He married at twenty-five and, like many other Spaniards, had to have recourse to private lessons to increase his meagre salary.²

His well planned life devoted numerous hours to scientific reading, while his relaxation periods were given to immersing himself in novels, a genre that indirectly was responsible for his devotion to the theatre.³ He read French, English, Italian, German and Greek literature, ancient and modern, and in particular Homer, Goethe and Balzac; and yet there is no proof that Echegaray knew well any foreign languages.

Mérimée⁴ tells us that our dramatist's life may be divided, like a play, into three acts, that

² He earned 12,000 reales a year. The Escuela de Caminos asked him to leave his private classes, and though this was common practise among professors, he bowed to the law.

³ Echegaray visualized all the novels read as plays.

⁴ Mérimée, José Echegaray et son Oeuvre Dramatique, 247.

we see unfold one after another:

Act I; The Scientist. His work in this field opened for him the doors of the Academy of Sciences.

Act II: The Statesman. His studies in Political Science and Economics and his brilliant Oratory provided him with a meteoric, although reluctant, political career that gave him several ministries, including that of Finance.⁵ He was a liberal with advanced ideas that even dared to speak in favour of religious liberty on addressing the Chamber of Deputies, and getting a thunderous ovation for it. He was, however by nature a shy and quiet man, who tried several times to disappear from public life; but whenever he was called to duty "for Spain" he heeded the command.

Act III: The Dramatist. A new stage occurs when officially he becomes a dramatic author in 1874, with the performance of El libro talonario, under the anagram Jorge Hayeseca.⁶ This work had been the result of economic need, when he was forced to exile himself

⁵ After thirty years devoted entirely to literature, he was forced back into politics to become Finance Minister again and create the Banco de España.

⁶ He would not sign his name because he was at the time the Minister of Finance, although he could not do anything about the rumours regarding the authorship of the work.

to Paris for six months at the abdication of Amadeo I.⁷

The fact that he seriously started writing for economic reasons was an incentive and not an obstacle, since economic hardship has been known to produce works of art in writers like Shakespeare, Lope de Vega and Ibsen. Every time that he and his family had found themselves in difficulties, he had turned to writing for the theatre as a solution. But previously his efforts had ended in failure, and Echegaray in desperation had either destroyed his plays, or put them aside. Some of these saw public life many years later.

Echegaray was a man whose devotion to a task had to be complete. On his success as a dramatist, he retired from politics to write exclusively for the theatre, and his fecund mind produced sixty-four dramas in thirty years.⁸ He was admitted to the Real Academia Española in 1882, and in a national hommage the king himself, Alfonso XIII, pinned on him the medal of the Nobel Prize.⁹

⁷ Amadeo de Saboya, elected king of Spain by the Cortes, the 16th November 1870. He abdicated the 10th February, 1873.

⁸ From 1874 to 1905.

⁹ In 1906, two years after it was actually awarded by the Oslo Academy.

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Echegaray comes to the Spanish stage at a moment when the climate was favorable to the reception of his kind of drama. Allison Peers comments:

Cuando la fama de Tamayo y Baus, López de Ayala, y Luis de Eguílaz empezaba a menguar, llegó a la escena un meorromántico de tremenda fuerza, José Echegaray.¹⁰

He came into the theatre as a revolution, scorching with his fire the Spanish scene.¹¹ Some say that the fire still persists. Echegaray himself recognizes that his theatre is not one of half tones;¹² it is a sort of explosion that manages to fascinate his public and conquer its will.

One of his admirers in 1880¹³ said that he had created a new kind of drama, brilliant, full of vigor, brimmed with wonders, that would have many followers. He has been called the "Engineer of the Theatre" for his extraordinary talent; and the universality of his drama has carried the Spanish Theatre to all latitudes for the first time since the Golden Age.

From the beginning Echegaray tries to endow

¹⁰ Peers, Historia del Movimiento Romántico Espanol, 527.

¹¹ Alonso, Autores Dramáticos Contemporáneos, 535.

¹² Martínez Olmedilla, Anecdotario del Siglo XIX, 575.

¹³ Herrán, Echegaray: Su tiempo y su teatro, 261.

his dramas with new ideals, to open the way for a kind of playwrighting that is entirely original, plentious in elements and devices. His instinct seems to have followed, though not too closely, the directives of the stage of the Golden Age and of the Romantic period. But he also had other sources of inspiration, in particular Shakespeare, Hugo and Ibsen.

His work is the product of his genius, and not particularly that of meditation. Already in 1880 Herrán¹⁴ said of him:

. . . the genius of Echegaray will carry him away, perhaps to where he does not want to go, because his genius is stronger than he and more powerful than all criticism.

Unfortunately, this commentator did not live long enough to see that the imagination of the dramatist was not carried away by instinct alone, but that Echegaray actually held his own aesthetic theories in a special group of dramas that must be set apart, because they seem to have been inspired by a different conception of the theatre.

They are an attempt towards an art that is far more profound and more modern than anything then in existence. These explorations do not appear to

¹⁴ Herrán, 265.

follow a plan, they ^{are} distributed throughout his work in a haphazard way. Perhaps it was so, but one must remember that Echegaray had written plays which he had put aside before his dramatic success, (because he did not have the heart to destroy some of them, although he did tear up a few others). He was in the habit of intermingling them with later productions.

This new orientation appears after he read certain authors, "by the influence of certain foreign models", said Mérimée,¹⁵ no doubt thinking in particular of the extraordinary impact of Ibsen. Echegaray has indeed been called "a sort of Spanish Ibsen".¹⁶

A man like Don José, who embraced several aspects of the intelligence and became outstanding in all of them, was subject to many influences. Yet these mostly reinforced his inclinations in literature and did not create new forms.¹⁷ However the influence of the nordic Ibsen modified his point

¹⁵ Mérimée, 250.

¹⁶ Valbuena Prat, Historia del Teatro Español, 541.

¹⁷ Calderón, Espronceda, Hartzenbusch, Zorilla, Hugo, Dumas, Guimerá, Sue, were among the main ones.

of view in a radical way. Valbuena Prat puts it thus:

El signo de Ibsen alumbría, con resollo de angustia, la mente penetrante del "Ingeniero del Drama".¹⁸

The Spaniard does not lose his own characteristics, but the Ibsenian world opens for him wide horizons.

The basis for the ideal in Echegaray is a universal morality. In several of his dramas he proposes a moral thesis and aspires to leave the solution of the problem to the spectator. This has a familiar ring: "I merely ask the questions, I do not provide the answers", Ibsen has maintained repeatedly.

The drama of Echegaray, like that of the Norwegian, provoked a storm of applause and manifestations of discontent. He received many cruel and adverse criticisms, of which the most vitriolic sample could be that of the critic Manuel de la Revilla:

Solo haría falta una cerilla para hacer imposible el drama de Echegaray.¹⁹

Or perhaps this comment of Mérimée:

Il semble qu'Echegaray aime, comme on l'a dit, en sa qualité de mathématicien, à résoudre les problèmes par voie d'élimination.

¹⁸ Valbuena Prat, 543.

¹⁹ No doubt he was referring to the final scene in Cómo empieza y cómo acaba.

Un personage le gêne; il le tue, n'en parlons plus !²⁰

Many more and hard things were said about his dramas, but let us not forget that in Spain there had been criticisms about Lope de Vega, Calderón and other authors of the Golden Age, as hard and derogatory as those about Echegaray.²¹

Most of the defamatory blasts occur, as a rule, as a consequence of a too brief analysis of a drama, which strips it of all its beauty. In all his plays, from the best to the worst, one can always find a magnificent scene: that is Echegaray's signature.

The playwright is a great poet, not by his verses, but by his inspiration, which has achieved the miracle of having a dream come true for a whole timid generation that was a prisoner of conventional and hypocritical ideals and morals.

20 Mérimée, 252.

21 The critic Luzán wrote about Lope de Vega:

Pero drama entero no hallo ninguno medianamente arreglado y escrito con decoro, ni creo que lo haya entre todos los de Lope.

His Nobel Prize dedicatory says:

. . . Se puede decir de él que es de pura casta española. Sin embargo, su concepción del mundo es vasta. Su sentimiento del deber se ha purificado, sus conceptos fundamentales son benévolos, y su heroísmo moral, conservando un carácter peculiarmente nacional, tiene rasgos de una humanidad universal.²²

²² Echegaray, Teatro escogido, 12.

CHAPTER III

ROMANTICISM, REALISM AND SYMBOLISM: COINCIDENCE AND INFLUENCE.

The existence of forms of literature of international scope, whose influence is felt immediately and through the years across frontiers is an undisputed fact. It is also certain that a really deep and serious impression is made by foreign literature when there are latent and similar tendencies in existence in the country concerned. We shall try to show in this chapter that tendencies existed in Echegaray, which made him susceptible of being influenced by Ibsen.

"True influence is the liberation of latent forces"¹, Lukacs has said, and in Spain, during the second half of the XIXth century, certain social and historical forces were at work that rendered the absorption of foreign literatures possible.

¹ Lukács, Studies in European Realism, 242.

Both Ibsen and Echegaray validated Molière's thesis "Je prends mon bien où je le trouve" in their assimilation and rejection of other literatures. Lukacs comments that:

. . . such organic and healthy assimilation of foreign literatures is a part of the development of all [italics mine] true writers.²

In the case of the nordic writer, Hebbel³ prepared the path that Ibsen was going to follow in the development of the drama, (and especially of the social drama). They did have many ideas in common. Some outstanding French critics - Lemaître, Sarcey - had seen in some of the works of this playwright a likeness to those of Dumas and Sand, at the time already outdated , and they used this point to combat the new Ibsenian influence. Zola himself, speaking for the naturalists, declared that Ibsen belonged to the old romantic school and that his arrival was somewhat belated.⁴ In spite of it all, Ibsen became the outstanding figure of his age in dramatic art.

²Lukács, 244.

³Hebbel, Christian Friedrich, (1813-1863), German lyric poet and playwright. Author of the trilogy The Nibelungs.

⁴Ganivet, Cartas Finlandesas y Hombres del Norte, 166.

As regards the Spanish writer, he has been called a "last romantic", a reincarnation of Zorrilla, and a "sort of Spanish Ibsen".⁵ One must remember that Echegaray was influenced by his perennial reading, especially the reading of novels. He is a contrast to the Norwegian on this matter because, while Echegaray read with gusto all through his life, Ibsen left reading "to his wife and son",⁶ by his own admission. Certainly Echegaray was, by temperament, a romantic that found in Ibsen, the romantic at heart, an opening of new and wide horizons.

Allison Peers identifies the new swing of the pendulum achieved by the author of Mariana thus:

El neoclacismo de Tamayo y sus contemporáneos de los decenios sexto y séptimo del siglo quedó contrarrestado con creces por el neorromanticismo de las décadas octava y novena, inaugurado y dominado por Echegaray.⁷

It may be relevant to add this revealing description of the XIXth century genius:

. . . Echegaray. Un coloso de piedra y barro, consistente y endeble a la par, que irá dándose encontronazos con la realidad, que resucitará los viejos recursos escénicos

⁵ Valbuena, 542.

⁶ Lucas, 23.

⁷ Allison Peers, Historia del movimiento romántico español, 527.

del romanticismo, apenas cambiados, y que cerrará de una vez y para mucho tiempo el/*ciclo del drama romántico.*⁸

Emilia Pardo Bazán corroborates this view,⁹ seeing in Echegaray a lagging representative of the old romanticism.

In their youth, romanticism was still fresh and flourishing both in Scandinavia and in the Iberian peninsula, for Norway and Spain are like suburbs of Europe and there was a lag between the mode in Paris and the mode in Oslo and Madrid.

One must remember that, although romanticism was a movement of the XVIIIth and the XIXth centuries to mark a reaction from neo-classicism, it arose.. gradually and exhibited many phases. One aspect stressed by Ibsen was the psychological desire to escape from unpleasant realities; and another insisted upon by Echegaray, the predominance of imagination over reason and over fact.

As an architect of drama, "Ibsen built with the materials of his age",¹⁰ mainly: realism, with

⁸ Romero Mendoza, Siete ensayos sobre el romanticismo español, 107.

⁹ Martínez Olmedilla, 583.

¹⁰ McFarlane, Ibsen and the Temper of Norwegian Literature, 60.

a skeleton of poetic imagination. In fact, he made out of his realism a new and much less overt romanticism. He believed in the absolute right of the individual to fight against society, even to destroy it, in order to better it; because to reform society one had first to reform the individual. Like Nietzsche in philosophy, he was, in the theatre, an exalted defender of the individual against society.

However, we should bear in mind at this point that

. . . Ideas are not begotten by the poet. They reveal themselves to the thinker at his work. The true poet is impressed by them, is carried away by them; he understands without necessarily having learned.¹¹

Therefore, it is Ibsen's dramatic form and not his ideas, which constitutes his great contribution to the theatre.¹² Like Echegaray, he insisted on illusion and not reality, as a basis for his art. He chose the drama to speak of our human condition because in it the playwright can make use of a much wider variety of "languages".

¹¹ Brandes, 27.

¹² Tennant, 18.

In the same way, Echegaray rejected the press as a means of communication with man, because of its coldness; he shunned the objectivism imposed by the Real Academia de la Lengua; and found his vehicle of expression in the theatre. In the dramatic form, he could not only speak to the intellect, but also touch the heart of the public as he drew it into the play.

The secret of the Spaniard's success is to have understood that the eternal in the theatre is its character of a spectacle aimed at producing traumatic emotions. Very early in his life as an author, he composed this famous sonnet to explain his romantic productions, when he was still tied down by the verse form:

Escojo una pasión, tomo una idea,
un problema, un carácter, y lo infundo,
cual densa dinamita, en lo profundo
de un personaje que mi mente crea.

La trama al personaje le rodea
de unos cuantos muñecos, que en el mundo
o se revuelcan por el cielo inmundo,
o resplandecen a la luz febea.

La mecha enciendo. El fuego se propaga,
el cartucho revienta sin remedio
y el astro principal es quien lo paga.

Aunque a veces también en este asedio
que al Arte pongo y que el instinto halaga,
me coge la explosión de medio a medio !¹³

¹³ Martínez Olmedilla, 606.

It is important to remember that both authors had followed the norms of Scribe,¹⁴ the maker of model plays. He had proposed: "To make a play, find a situation, and once found, all else is an accessory".

In the first part of the dramatic career of Echegaray one sees mostly unexpected situations emerging from chance; extraordinary and violent passions within very special characters. Later on, his works deal frequently with the idea of conflict between society and the individual, a definite turn from his earlier dramas. O locura o santidadad, (1877) is the prototype of this new gender: The catastrophe that falls on Lorenzo is born within his conscience; and thus, modern drama is created in Spain.

The Norwegian had also written in the style of the "pièce bien faite" modelled on Scribe, but "he took those parts of the technique which made for clear, forcible presentation and subjected them to the pressure of his personal technique of

¹⁴ Augustin Eugène Scribe, (1791-1861), French Dramatist.

interplay and implication".¹⁵ The result is a new kind of drama inaugurated with the last scene of A Doll's House. Bernard Shaw defined the newness of Ibsen's theatre in these words:

Shakespear [sic] had put ourselves on the stage but not our situations . . . Ibsen supplies the want left by Shakespear [sic]. He gives us not only ourselves, but our situations.¹⁶

Realism, controlled by fantasy, is the keynote of these magnificent writers in the unfolding of their development. Realism, understood as a permanent striving on the part of a man to reduce the impassable gap which separates Art from Life.¹⁷ It is a return to common sense after an over-indulgence in imaginative literature. It is an effort to see, feel and think straight about life, more concerned with natural and everyday happenings than with the unusual and strange. People become important and therefore the approach to character becomes psychological: "find the motive" is now the goal of the author. And drama is especially

¹⁵ Bradbrook, 149.

¹⁶ Ibid.,

¹⁷ A perfect example of realism, the novel by Gustave Flaubert Madame Bovary, (1856) is a masterpiece of French realism because of a style whose aim is to do justice at once to nature and to art.

suited for the task of revealing how a character has become what he is. Shakespeare, Dostoyevski and Ibsen have been singled out as inexhaustible sources of the psychological approach.¹⁸ This does not exclude the fact that the element of fate, inherited in part from the romantic tradition, will play a major role in the actions of the characters.

But Ibsen, (and as we shall see, Echegaray), had the unique quality of "becoming a realist outside, while remaining a fantasist inside".¹⁹ This gave him the supple strength, fine irony and richness of The Wild Duck and John Gabriel Borkman. The author of Ghosts is nowhere more apparent in his detestation of "pure" realism than in this work, as well as in Rosmersholm. He used to say:

What we know as dramatic realism is only a series of conventions.²⁰

Similarly, when Echegaray decided to follow the new currents and write realistic social drama, he did so without abandoning in any way the romantic tradition. "The merit of Echegaray is that

¹⁸ Wellek y Warren, Teoría Literaria, 40.

¹⁹ Bentley, The playwright as a thinker, 77.

²⁰ Tennant, 65.

he writes for all"²¹ and psychological drama was, in this sense, the most appropriate to realize this purpose.

There are two ways by which the illusion of reality can be created: a) by the construction of a purely imaginary world or b) by the construction of the world of appearances, with man as the central figure. Ibsen used both these methods, while Echegaray had a preference for the first one.

Ibsen came closer to realism in 1880, when he commented:

Everything that I have written has the closest possible connection with what I have lived through, even if it has not been my own personal experience.²²

And he goes even further in his letter to Laura Kieler:

One must have something to create from, some life-experience. The author who has not that, does not create: he merely writes books.²³

We cannot exclude Echegaray from this fundamental necessity, even if we find critics like Don Manuel de la Revilla pointing out that the experience of life is incompatible with true knowledge,

²¹Herrán, 270.

²² Farquharson, Introduction to Peer Gynt, 8.

²³ Flaubert has said: "Madame Bovary, c'est moi".

and that since Echegaray is a man of knowledge, he has "thought" life, instead of "living" it. This is indeed far-fetched, because to say that a man like our great Spaniard has not "lived" is not conceivable. A man like him must have had infinite experiences not available to an ordinary human being.

From about 1879, there is a steady development of the realistic form of Ibsen's plays, from A Doll's House to An Enemy of the People in particular. One clear proof of Ibsen's desire to be realistic in a realistic age is the abandoning of verse for prose, "verse has been most injurious to dramatic art", he declared.²⁴ But of course Ibsen did not abandon poetry when he rejected verse. On the contrary, poetry and realism melted and created the characteristic and personal of Ibsen's wagnelian construction.

Correspondingly, Echegaray, after a first period devoted exclusively to verse, changed radically after 1881 to write not only an entirely different type of play, but to express himself in prose.

It was precisely versification that had

²⁴ Bentley, The Playwright, 91.

held him back from writing drama at an earlier date. Although he was a poet by temperament, he had shown a timid resistance to writing in verse. When the example of the Norwegian appeared, he saw his way clear for a plethoric new approach to the scene. Among his next thirty plays, all in prose, we find his very best achievements. Mérimée was fully in agreement with the change:

J'ai un double regret: le premier c'est qu'Echegaray ne se soit pas toujours servi de la prose. . . . la prose demande plus de précision. . . . elle est plus près de nous sans doute. . . . Et le second, que ses comédies ne sont plus nombreuses. . . .²⁵

Ibsen's use of realism was soon closely tied to a romantic symbolism in his dramas. This is in part a natural development and a fulfillment of the ideals set up by the earlier romantic generations everywhere in Europe. Ibsen and later Echegaray realized that a transcription of reality in inventory terms (cf. Balzac, Zola) was not the best method of reflecting what could be called "inner" reality; and for this reason they adopted symbolism, where the art of suggestion of roman-

ticism is given extraordinary powers of evocation through the more conscious craft of the playwright. In fact, symbolism was bringing back on literary terms the old controversy of nominalists versus realists, even if this explanation appears to be reducing poetry to prose.'

In its broad view, this symbolism with which the Norwegian's plays are permeated seems a part of romanticism that stands for the intuitive, for the subjective, for individuality and for liberty. Symbolism oriented his genius and made his plays acquire a poetic suggestion of mystery,²⁶ not clear to an outsider without a key. One of Ibsen's strengths is this concentrated symbolism.

In his theatre, a great deal of the thought of the action is left behind the scenes and must be understood by the spectator. "His dramas are in an interrogative mood".²⁷ He knew that much more could be achieved by implication and insinuation. Subtle suggestion takes the place of clear statement, making every line and ^{every} action of his characters significant.²⁸ The public of the North did

²⁶ Baudelaire's "frisson nouveau" in the words of Hugo.

²⁷ McFarlane, 61.

²⁸ Defined by Verlaine as: "Pas la couleur, rien que la nuance".

not find this too difficult to accept, because they were in the habit of going to the theatre to listen and to learn. But in the South, people went to the theatre for amusement mostly, and this theatre had to be scenic, not intellectual.²⁹ The magnificent intuition of Echegaray taught him to adjust this kind of drama to his Spanish public, by writing plays that were more or less dramas of effect to attract their interest. In an interview, the Spanish author outlined the problem:

. . . Hay un fondo permanente, que es el de la naturaleza humana, pero siguiendo a ésta en sus evoluciones. . . . Cada época siente a su manera, y cada público [italics mine] se interesa por aquéllo en que encuen-
tra más ecos armónicos en su manera de ser.³⁰

This is his way of adapting the Ibsenian world that the reading of Brand (which probably inspired the best in El loco Dios) had opened to him, without losing his own personality as a writer. "En Ibsen ve, de otro modo, los problemas que había intuído desde toda su producción más española", says Valbuena.³¹ When he wrote El hijo de Don Juan, Echegaray mentioned that, though the drama was his own, it had been inspired by the reading of Gengarere

²⁹ Ganivet, 170.

³⁰ Olmet, 107.

³¹ Valbuena, 552.

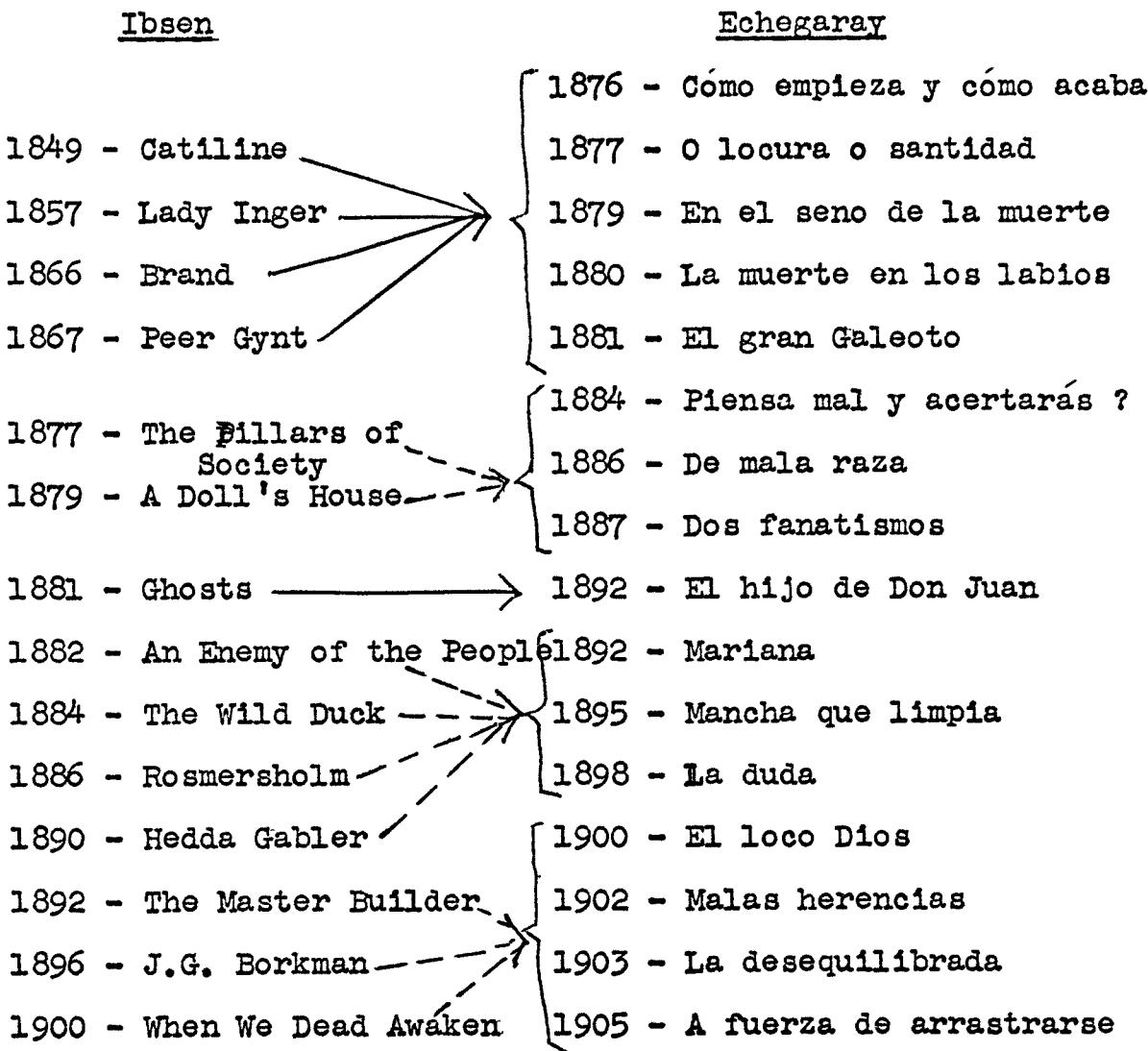
(Ghosts), a book that had obsessed him.³²

El hijo de Don Juan thus marks one of the first official signs of the Ibsenian influence in Spain.

From this study it seems to be evident that Echegaray was renewed by the reading of Ibsen, since his problems took a different breadth and scope. His dramatic career had already attained great success when, by his acquaintance with Ibsen, his mighty river bed was deepened with the dark waters of the North.

³² In the prologue to the first edition of the play, El hijo de Don Juan, (1892).

DATES OF PRODUCTION OF SOME OF IBSEN'S AND
ECHEGARAY'S PLAYS AND THEIR THEMATIC RELATIONSHIP



CHAPTER IV

THEMATIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN IBSEN AND ECHEGARAY.

The system of ideas that prevailed in the last third of the XIXth century was connected with religion, the contrast between the past and the present, the awareness of the different classes of society and the conflict between the two sexes, a subject of the deepest interest.

Ibsen and Echegaray were both very much aware of the problems of their age, and, as a result, a similarity of themes can be found giving life to their plays. It would be impossible here to deal with all the themes presented coincidentally or by influence by the two dramatists. Therefore, we have restricted our scope to those, in our opinion, of greater relevance.

It should be made clear that the themes do not appear isolated, in the confines of one play or other. This does not happen in authors who put on stage complex people with unfathomable minds,

in situations capable of subtle and varied interpretations. Thus, themes appear intertwined with one another.

Predominant themes in Ibsen and Ecnegaray

1. Fate.

The element of Fate, as well as the subject of the guilt complex and even that of disease, springs from the religious preoccupation of the times.

Hebbel pointed out in 1843 that "tragedy arises from the operation of the will",¹ especially from the struggle between the "individual will" and the "world-will". As we have indicated, Ibsen followed the path travelled by Hebbel, in which Fate always has a moral significance, because it is conceived as a power which finds an inexorable punishment for sin, (will implying morality, except in psychopaths). In other words, Fate has become a cloak for the Old Testament. Ibsen's conception of sin is exaggerated to the point that it includes not only sinful actions, but also sinful thoughts, as these of Hedda Gabler:

¹ Stuart, The development of Dramatic Art, 565.

(Clasping her hands at the back of her neck, leaning back in her chair and looking at him) Hedda - (to Brack)...My friend, you can't imagine how horribly bored I'm going to be out here.²

And in another scene:

Hedda - And what are you going to do then?
Lövborg - Nothing. Only make an end of the whole business. The sooner the better.

Hedda - (a step nearer). Ejler Lövborg, listen to me. Could you not see to it that - that it is done beautifully ?

His development as a dramatist is marked by the way in which the "chance" factor is gradually eliminated by the "fate" factor in the action.

This fate factor is also artificial, but it does create an illusion of realism in the moralistic atmosphere of his plays. One cannot help but notice that the catastrophe, even if it seems forced, is never an accident: The play never exists for its sake alone. If there are any deaths in Ibsen's last acts, they are the deaths of dramatically finished people.⁴ Oswald in Ghosts, Hedvig in The Wild Duck, Hedda in Hedda Gabler, Solness in The Master Builder, for instance.

Let us now see how this development of chance

² Hedda Gabler, Act II,
This scene implies an attempt at a form of seduction.

³ Act III,
Referring to his suicide.
⁴ Shaw, 159.

into fate also happens in the Spaniard. Echegaray has been called "the playwright of the terrible",⁵ and in his speech of acceptance in the Real Academia and in the first scene of El gran Galeoto, (1881), he makes his profession of aesthetic faith:

"Todo el Mundo" entra en el conflicto con el protagonista. Personaje viejísimo en la tragedia; se le conocía con el nombre de Fatum, el Destino, ciego, indiferente, im-
placable.⁶

For the first time, he clearly outlines the fact that his dramas are going to be run by fate, and not chance alone. The gap in time between the acceptance of this principle by both playwrights is of about twenty-seven years (Cómo empieza y cómo acaba, 1876) or thirty-two, in the more clearly defined case of El gran Galeoto, 1881.⁷

As early as 1849, when Ibsen writes his first play Catilina, the protagonist is already a toy for the gods; he cannot escape the destiny predicted to him by the spectre of Sila. In Brand, written in 1866, man is doomed again because "he is man and not God",⁸ in spite of his noble mission to make mankind whole.

⁵ Valbuena, 555.

⁶ Echegaray, 39.

⁷ See page 34.

⁸ J. Clark, lecture on "Ibsen and Strindberg", English 48, W.L.U., 1966.

Echegaray entered his full-fledged period of creativity in 1876, presenting plays in which the new ideals appeared: the struggle within a man's conscience. In that year he presented Cómo empieza y cómo acaba, the first part of a trilogy,⁹ in which the element of fate plays an all important role in the last scene of the play, when Magdalena wants to kill her now hateful platonic lover. Instead, she kills her own husband in the dark. This is a realistic drama in which truth is drawn crudely and only a few romantic elements are used.

Let us show now how this element of fate appears in Ibsen's Ghosts and Echegaray La duda.¹⁰

Ghosts follows the lines of Greek tragedy, with its simple fated action moving to an unmistakable catastrophe: Mrs. Alving, like Oedipus, is engaged in a quest for her true human condition. Ibsen, like Sophocles, shows on stage only the end of this quest. Oswald, like Oedipus, is the hidden reality in the whole situation, the reincarnation of his father.

No wonder that:

⁹ Second Part: Lo que no puede decirse, 1877.
Third Part: Los dos curiosos impertinentes, 1882.

¹⁰ However, the direct influence of Ghosts in the works of Echegaray will be shown later under the themes of disease and madness.

Maeterlink attempted to show that under the surface of the most commonplace everyday reality, great unknown and unfathomable forces were at work. He regarded Ibsen's Ghosts as proof that such contents could be presented in a contemporary form.¹¹

The sins of the fathers are visited on the children in the most irrational manner, because Regina, his father's daughter, escapes the disease. But in my opinion, critics seem to have missed the point, since while Regina does indeed escape physical disease, she is as rotten to the core as her father was. So fate, the inexorable wages of sin, punishes her too.

Amparo, the main character in Echegaray's La duda, (1898) , also becomes a heroine similar to the ancient heroes in Greek tragedy. She is of a breed, condition and stature far superior to that of other mortals, and she is also tormented by a maleficent deity. Amparo follows the decrees of Destiny, when revenge comes into her soul to blind her reason; and makes of her the fatal instrument of anger, justice and heavenly vengeance. In the same way that Orestes becomes a parricide, so Amparo commits a homicide for which she is not truly

¹¹ Lucaks, 261.

responsible because she is only the hand of fate:

'No huyas..., ¡es inútil!... yo tambié
quise huir y tu me alcanzaste!...
Tú eres la duda! Quiero matarte...
o que me mates tú!...' ¹²

Amparo recovers her reason as soon as her mission is fulfilled:

(por su madre)
'Ella quiso matar mi fe en tí!, mi amor
por tí!... (a Ricardo), y yo la maté a
ella!... la maté!... la maté!' ¹³

and the audience no doubt absolves her of her crime, in the same way as Orestes was absolved by the Areopagus. Fate, therefore, is an important theme in the plays mentioned, and intervenes, to a lesser degree, in many other dramas of Ibsen and Echegaray.

2. Disease.

"Tragedy is the spectacle of a man struggling against the unconquerable".¹⁴ The influence of heredity and environment as portrayed by Hebbel, Ibsen and Echegaray, is a variation of this dramatic idea, the idea of fate controlling the destiny of man, in a rational age of scientific and philosophical

¹² Act III, scene xiii.

¹³ Her last words, Act III, scene xiv.

¹⁴ Stuart, 566.

determinism.

For Ibsen, hereditary disease was the symbol of all the determinist forces that crush humanity.¹⁵ On the other hand, positive forces were represented by the Sun, as in *Ghosts*:

...the symbol of all that was divine within a dark and malignant world.¹⁵

In Echegaray the Sun is also a symbol of the divine, an idea born in him from personal experiences.¹⁶ The terrible ley de la herencia is united to a moral lesson as we find it in El hijo de Don Juan, where punishment falls on the son of the traditional libertine.¹⁷ Echegaray re-hispanizes depravity with the symbolic name given to the play. With this drama he initiates a renovation of the Spanish stage at the ^{end}_A of the century.

15 Bradbrook, 151.

16 Among the most vivid ones, a beautiful sunrise at the top of Sierra Nevada; an eclipse of the Sun of which he wrote a poetic-scientific report; and a catastrophe occasioned by the Spanish sun on reinforced concrete, following which he had to defend the accused engineer in Court.

17 The creator of the universal theme of *Don Juan*, Tirso de Molina, (1584-1648), gave him a religious transcendency that was changed in the century of positivism to moral, social, psychological or medical content.

When Ibsen wrote A Doll's House, (1879), he did not let us forget the somber disease theme, which does not necessarily have to be of a physical nature. In this play appears the character of Krogstad, the blackmailer, the moral incurable. Nora Helmer feels that she is a moral leper because of her contact with him, and is full of fears that her home and children might be poisoned with moral decay. The tarantula's (Tarantella)¹⁸ dance is a vain last effort to expel the poison, and an appropriate symbol of the theme of disease and death:

Helmer * My dear darling Nora, you are dancing as if your life depended on it.¹⁹

Then she discovers that the real corruption lies in the male conspiracy to debase the female. Society has brought on the disease, and her fight against it makes her the heroine of "The Modern Tragedy".²⁰

¹⁸ When the victim of a tarantula sting is poisoned, people believe that there is only one way of fighting for survival: To shake wildly so that the poison is spread all through the body and does not concentrate on vital parts like the heart or the brain.

¹⁹ Act II, p.47.

²⁰ The original name given to A Doll's House in Ibsen's notes for the play.

In Echegaray's hands, the spirit of slander, sometimes malicious, more often thoughtless, gradually takes on palpable form in El gran Galeoto, (1881). Echegaray believes firmly that idle gossip is a disease, as malignant and foul as any of the flesh. Ernesto, in the final speech of the play, challenges all with these words:

. . . Mas si alguien os pregunta quién ha sido de esta infamia el infame medianero, respondedle: "¡Tú mismo y lo ignorabas, y contigo las lenguas de los necios!"
 Ven, Teodora ! La sombra de mi madre posa en tu frente immaculada un beso.
 ¡Adiós ! ... ¡Me perteneces ! ¡Que en su día a vosotros y a mí nos juzgue el cielo !²¹

This moral disease is evident in An Enemy of the People, (1882). To show how rotten things are, one of the incidents portrays Morten Kiil,²² pretending to make a fortune. He buys while the shares of the Baths are low and prods Dr. Stockmann to "set the Baths on their feet again".²³ When Ibsen makes the doctor reveal that the waters of the famous Baths are poisonous, he makes him discover also that the pollution is only a symbol of

²¹ Act III, scene xi.

²² Mrs. Stockmann's adoptive father.

²³ Act V, p. 207.

the moral illness infesting the town. Dr. Stockmann is daring in his blunt challenge to majority rule, pointing it out as one of the factors of the illness:

Aslaksen - "This meeting declares that it considers Dr. Thomas Stockmann, Medical Officer of the Baths, to be an enemy of the people".

A formal vote is about to be taken; but out of regard for personal feelings, it shall be by ballot and not verbal...

Blue means no; white means yes...

The drunken man - I want a blue one, I do! ²⁴
And I want a white one too! [Italics mine]

Gregers of The Wild Duck, (1884) is sick too, because his motivation is neurotic. Freud has said:

The moment a man questions the meaning and value of life, he is sick, since objectively, neither has any existence.²⁵

We see Ibsen making use of this concept when Gregers tells his father: "It is thanks to you that I go around haunted and gnawed by a guilt-laden conscience".²⁶

The sense of guilt appears in Echegaray,

²⁴ Act IV, p. 207.

²⁵ Ibsen, Three Plays, Introduction, xiv.

²⁶ Act III, p. 269.

although under conditions related to the religious ideals of the Spanish people, as well as to its sense of honour. One of the most beautiful plays of Echegaray, De mala raza, (1886), shows this law of heredity at work when the protagonist, Adelina, suffers the arrows of "el gran Galeoto". "Everybody" is the poison that presupposes Adelina evil, because she is of a bad breed. Even Carlos, her beloved, becomes frenetically exalted at one point:

¡No sabes que todos tè acusan, hasta mi padre? ¡No tienes ante los ojos los "hechos" brutales, implacables, pero clarísimos, que te acusan también? ¡Ignoras que para el mundo entero eres objeto de escandalo, y yo objeto de burla, y que nuestros nombres andan ya en las listas de la deshonra y en los pregones de la infamia? Adelina, por Dios vivo, ¡que me confieses tu culpa! .²⁷

Hedda Gabler, (1880) is another sick person. She is a woman with no ideals, and Ibsen believed that "a person with no ideals is a floating derelict".²⁸ She perverts the lives of everyone, including her own, with her absolute disregard for the truth in all her personal relations: She is spiritually sterile, and there are many symbols of this sterility

²⁷ ActII, scene viii.

²⁸ J. Clark, "Ibsen and Strindberg".

exhibited.²⁹ The fact is that all she touches becomes mean and valueless. The pistols, that stand for the dignity and grandeur of the family (perhaps a Freudian symbol), are only pretensions that bring destruction in her hands. It is as if Ibsen was telling us that the hereditary leaders have shrunk in stature, maimed and paralyzed by their enslavement to the ideals of the dominant middle class.

The message seems to be that this world is sick with a disease less curable than that of Oedipus' Thebes or Hamlet's Denmark.

Did Echegaray wish to acknowledge Ibsen's influence by bringing the theme of dismaying inheritance to the title of Las malas herencias, (1902)? In this play Echegaray outlines the problem of heredity, and of how social intransigence wants the children to be responsible for the sins of the fathers.

Thus we have seen that conventional marriage, with its hereditary consequences, appears in several of the plays as the real disease of society.

²⁹(E.g.: her scanty hair, her lack of warmth, of love, etc.)

4. Madness.

While we could have included this theme in the preceding section, we have preferred to consider it apart because of the difficulty in defining the contours of sanity and lunacy.

It is almost an accepted commonplace that genius can be highly neurotic. Ibsen said:

To live is to fight with the devils that infest the head and the heart.³⁰

And the brothers Goncourt wrote:

Our work... is based on nervous malady.³¹

Let us remember that, years later, the surrealists in the field of poetry adapted the intentional simulation of states of mental abnormality, and that they were following on the steps of Ibsen's and Echegaray's contemporaries, Rimbaud and Baudelaire.

Times seem to occur when both Ibsen and Echegaray grow sick of sanity, when common sense comes to be commonplace, dull, oppressive. Behind it may lie a deeper desire to escape, perhaps from civilization itself. After all, Dionysus, father

³⁰ Bentley, Ibsen: A Personal Statement, 38.

³¹ Lucas, 41.

of both tragedy and comedy, was the god of the irrational.

We do not know the origin of Echegaray's interest in madness, but we can appreciate that it became an obsession in him. O locura o santidad, (1877) was inspired by a visit to the lunatics asylum in Valladolid.³²

Let us now consider some of the dramas in which madness is the prevalent subject, both in Ibsen and Echegaray.

Already Ibsen's Brand, in 1866, shows the main character suffering from hallucinations at the top of the mountain. In this work, that pretends to express what the Norwegian people should do to redeem itself, there is also a young demented girl, by the name of Gerda. Brand was followed by Peer Gynt, in 1867. Peer Gynt is a character who has many adventures, one of which lands him in a lunatics asylum in Cairo, the inmates of which proclaim him emperor of them all.

Echegaray declares morbidly "lo sublime del arte está en el llanto, en el dolor y en la muerte", and nowhere is this thought more evident

32 Olmet, 76.

than in O locura o santidad, (1877), a play of symbolist tendencies in which the conflict appears only in the mind of the protagonist, Don Lorenzo.³³ Madness, or the appearance of madness, is the effect of the terrible struggle in his soul between love and duty. Like Ibsen, Echegaray shows the ills of society, and that it is this society, and not the man, who is sick. He proves here that, according to the contemporary creed of the middle class, strict fulfillment of duty can even be considered as madness:

| Miserablemente vencido ! ... | Cómo se gozan en su triunfo ! | Con qué hipócrita dolor me contemplan ! | Y fingen que lloran ! | Todos lo fingen ! ³⁴

Of course his concept of honour bound to duty is deeply rooted in the principles of the theatre of the Spanish Golden Age. Calderón's patrimonio del alma is also Echegaray's kind of honour :

³³ The play has been translated to English with the title Madman or Saint. There is the possibility that Strindberg was inspired by it in his remarkably similar play, The Father, written in 1887.

³⁴ Act III, scene iv.
It should be noticed that the above quotation is a monologue.

Iremos con la honra entera, con la conciencia tranquila, alta la frente y Dios con nosotros. ¿Qué me importa que todos me abandonen si El me acompaña? 35

As has been said when we dealt with Echegaray's biography, the Swedish Academy saw in his works a renewal of the Golden Century's dramatic tradition. In it, the sentimiento del honor is a firm foundation. The adaptation made by Echegaray of it to contemporary times may have been inspired in the sociological drama of the Germans and of our Norwegian.

Honour will lie now in the legitimacy of wealth in the bosom of a bourgeois family. Society pushes Lorenzo to his inevitable fate and the outcome is brought about in a masterly way. But it is cold and horrible in its details, and does not look natural, since, because of Echegaray's desire to sublimate the qualms of conscience in Lorenzo, he dehumanizes him. His lofty feelings in the last scene of the drama are an example of this dehumanization; he becomes a semi-god:

Yo sólo...sólo, subiré a mi calvario, con la cruz de mis dolores, sin infame Cirineo que me ayude. 36

The protagonist is beginning to doubt the

35 Act III, scene iv.

36 Act III, scene xv.

limits of sanity, as we perceive in these next words:

Adiós, amigo leal. Tú que has salvado la fortuna de esta desconsolada familia de entre las manos de un loco. Adiós, Angela: ¡Mi tierna esposa! ... Veinte años hace que te di, loco de amor, el primer beso! Hoy, también loco, te envío el último! ³⁷

Echegaray may be following Ibsen's steps in blurring the frontier between sanity and lunacy.³⁸ How well Echegaray succeeds is seen in the fact that the audience is left with doubts about the actual sanity of Lorenzo.³⁹

Echegaray's next production dealt again with the theme of lunacy, Correr en pos de un ideal, (1878), developing the thesis that to weaken and give way to imagination and illusions never brings happiness, but disenchantment, or as Ibsen has said: "Illusions and self-deceptions are only useful to man if he is innocent".⁴⁰ There is death for people who live continually in dreams.

In Los dos curiosos impertinentes, (1882), Echegaray presents this theme once more, in the

³⁷ Act III, scene iv.

³⁸ As Pirandello will do with regard to the one separating reality from fantasy.

³⁹ In our day, the dramatist Calvo Sotelo has recreated this theme in his play La Muralla.

⁴⁰ J. Clark, "Ibsen and Strindberg".

plight of Gabriel, who kills his wife when he becomes mad.⁴¹

But his masterpiece is El hijo de Don Juan, (1892), a drama in which madness is due to the tragic inheritance of the vices of the father. Lázaro, the son, is haunted by the fear that his fainting spells may be due to impending lunacy. Doctor Bermúdez' diagnosis falls on him like a Nemesis:

'Who has heated his blood in the embers of all impure fires - runs the danger of transmitting to his son nothing but the germs of death or the germs of madness ! ... The Son of that Father will very soon sink into madness or into idiocy. A madman or an idiot: such is his fate !'⁴²

The scene in which Lázaro drinks with Paca, the old woman, is a reincarnation of what had happened before between his father and her, and had a remarkable similarity to the scene which makes Mrs. Alving exclaim:

Ghosts. The couple in the conservatory - over again.⁴³

The germ of actual insanity of Solness,

⁴¹ This play is related to one of the short stories included in Cervantes El Quijote, called El Curioso impertinente.

⁴² Act II, p. 82.

⁴³ Act I, p. 94, Ghosts.

in The Master Builder, (1892), lies in his fear of being considered mad. As his morbidity increases, he comes to believe that he has a mysterious power of wishing.⁴⁴ Where women are concerned, it takes the form of hypnotic influence; he attracts Kaia to himself, and through her Ragnar, whom he fears:

I must tell you - I have begun to be so afraid - so terribly afraid of the younger generation.⁴⁵

This is a highly symbolic and lyrical play which deals with the human soul and its struggle to rise above its own desires.⁴⁶ It is a great poem, about an artist that is demonic, possessed by mysterious thoughts that are realized:

I must have thought all that. I must have wished it - have willed it - have longed to do it. And then - May not that be the explanation?⁴⁷

Solness realizes that Hilda, like himself, has the "troll" in her:⁴⁸

There must be - a little of the troll in you too.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Brandes, 98.

⁴⁵ Act I, p. 121.

⁴⁶ Clark, "Ibsen and Strindberg".

⁴⁷ Act I, p. 117.

⁴⁸ Troll: Any of a race of supernatural beings, in Scandinavian folklore.

⁴⁹ Act II, p. 137.

She prods him constantly with her demonic ego because " it must not be possible to say that the poet in her life cannot rise to the height of the ideals which he proclaims"⁵⁰

Hilda - Then let me see you stand free and high up !

Solness - Oh Hilda - it is not every day that I can do that.

Hilda - I will have you do it ! I will have it ! ... Just once more Solness ! Do the impossible once again !⁵¹

Yet Solness is not a genius. He is a paradox, a mixture of brutality in crushing older men, and of fear of being crushed by the younger.

We have extended ourselves slightly in the consideration of the character of Solness, because it is possible to see in it a precedent for the type of Amparo, in La duda. Solness' fear of the younger generation corresponds to Amparo's awe confronted with Mrs. Grundy's (Doña Leocadia) revelations which make Amparo's mother her rival.

La duda, (1898), written by Echegaray, was staged in Paris and London. Of this play Valera said one day after its premiere:

50 Brandes, 150.

51 Act III, p. 172.

... el público quedó sorprendido, maravillado y suspenso al verla y oírla, lo cual jamás acontece con obras medianas. . . 52

This drama shows how the main character, Amparo, becomes frantic to escape what she believes is reality: That her beloved and her mother are lovers. Dona Leocadia is the mysterious power, the personified spirit of slander and perhaps the devil himself, and as such, Amparo is justified in killing her. Valera expressed his feelings in his review of this drama in this manner:

Existe en el día decidida inclinación a hacer en las obras literarias estudios y análisis del alma humana ... El referido análisis o estudio, despiadado y hondo, se funda en una psicología fisiológica, (donde lo espiritual y lo material aparecen combinados) . . . Y donde la pasión nace casi siempre de un determinismo pre establecido, cuyos gérmenes son el temperamento y otras condiciones orgánicas que se adquieren por herencia . . . 53

The actress María Guerrero, magnificent interpreter of Amparo, took great pains preparing her role. In order to give it life, she actually spent hours living at an asylum to study the inmates.

El loco Diód, (1900), is the next outstanding drama with the theme of madness as all important.

52 Valera, Obras Completas, Vol. II, 962.

53 Ibid., 963.

The problem of dementia that interests Echegaray, makes him present a character, Gabriel:

...que está a la altura de las creaciones de Ibsen, . . . el vendaval de locura consume la sociedad y las almas: Todo parece un enorme símbolo de "Ocaso de los dioses" frente a una sociedad mezquina que sólo se mueve por el interés y la envidia. . . .⁵⁴

Gabriel of El loco Dios is a genius of a madman. His ideas on man and society are very noble, but utopic. Whether he is a saint or a madman is a matter for debate. Gabriel is a romantic character in his consciousness of a superiority over the common man, a superiority that leads him eventually to identification with God.⁵⁵ He is confronted by ambitious and stupid people in situations typical of the Comédie de moeurs of the period. While the parallelism with Ibsen's The Master Builder may not be exact, the clash between the superior man and mediocre persons is resolved in similar manner, by escape through death, in both authors. The last scene of the Spanish play is like a purification of society by fire, and one is reminded of a similar fire scene in Ghosts, where the mysterious burning of the orphanage cleanses a guilty past.

⁵⁴ Valbuena, 554.

⁵⁵ This sense of superiority has perhaps been best illustrated by Alfred de Musset in "Moïse".

El loco Dios is full of symbolism, even to the smallest detail, such as the name of Fuensanta, (fountain of sanctity), a typical name from Murcia.⁵⁶

The problem of madness continues in several other plays of Echegaray, two of which, La realidad y el delirio, (1887) and La desequilibrada, (1903) are notable contributions to it.

The latter is the story of Teresa, whose husband wants to declare her crazy; she kills him in an effort to escape the madhouse. To punish herself for the crime, she asks her platonic lover Mauricio to go away and take her son, this separation from her two loved ones being the means of expiating her sin.

§. The twilight of old values and moral complacency.

A generation that could read Shakespeare, Molière, Dickens and Dumas without the smallest intellectual or ethical perturbation, was unable to get through a play by Ibsen, or a novel by Tolstoi "without having its intellectual and moral complacency upset, its religious faith shattered,, and its notions of right and wrong conduct thrown into con-

56 Echegaray spent his high school years in this city.

fusion or reversed",⁵⁷ perhaps because these authors made them look at themselves as in a mirror, and they were shocked by what they saw.

Bernard Shaw felt that this feeling was imperative:

It is not only good for people to be shocked occasionally, but absolutely necessary to the progress of society⁵⁸ that they should be shocked pretty often.

Shaw believed firmly that most of the ills of society occur from inherited ideals or "taboos" and felt that, instead of looking back traditionally, since our ideals, like the "gods of old"⁵⁹ are constantly demanding human sacrifices, it should be

...enormously important that we should mind our own business and let other people do as they like.⁶⁰

He even criticized Ibsen because he felt that his plays were tied to their own age and had no intrinsic values.⁶¹ However, time has proven that Ibsen's attacks on conventional morality have a

57 Shaw, 44.

58 Ibid., 45.

59 Ibid.,

60 Ibid., 130

61 "Ibsen will be quite dead by 1950", Shaw said.

value of their own that cannot be erased with the passing of time.

Like him, Echegaray is very conscious of the general law of the evolution of ideas. His dramas also show that moral complacency and a blind adherence to duty in following the conventional can be as damaging to one's soul and as destructive as the worst evil. In most of his dramas, he accuses society of its faults, its mistakes and, above all, its sins. The sin of Lázaro's mother in El hijo de Don Juan is exactly the sin of Mrs. Alving in Ghosts: The conventional marriage that produces such sons. Echegaray and Ibsen are saying that society has no right to join sacramentally two persons and have innocent people pay the consequences; that it would be far more moral that these wives had left their husbands, instead of remaining duty-bound. The wives are punished by their fear of "what people would say" and by their warped moral viewpoint.

Both these women regard duty to husband and family before duty to themselves. Their individuality is trampled upon, destroyed. Duty is to blame for Lázaro's and Oswald's fate.

One fails to understand what kind of duty

this is, that makes mothers stay and conform to the morality of the day and make their offspring sick men. Both dramatists deliver a message to us:

Ideals and rules should be examined regularly to see if, as society evolves, they still remain valid.⁶²

We must examine in this way even the truth, which, like all other ideals, is only relative.

In El hijo de Don Juan and in Ghosts, the situation of man and wife vis-à-vis each other is placed in a new light: The relation of both to the child.

In a poetic treatment of the question of heredity,

. . . it represents the general determination by the parents of the physical and mental nature of the child, and in this connection, the preservation by heredity of feelings (of dogmas) out of place with present life conditions. [Italics mine]⁶³

The pillars of society, written by Ibsen, (1877), a previous attack on pseudo-respectability, and An enemy of the people, (1882) represent another blunt challenge to the same idea, as well as to the idea of majority rule. In this last play he tries to show fully the stupidity of man. The key to the play is that "fear of conventional morality

62 Clark, "Ibsen and Strindberg".

63 Brandes, 99.

causes things to happen".⁶⁴ Doctor Stockmann, the protagonist, has to leave his house; his daughter is dismissed from her teaching post; his friend is left without command; he himself is going to be thrown out. For him, personal integrity is more important than anything else:

In God's name, what else do you suppose I should do but take my stand on right and truth ?⁶⁵

Ibsen's purpose is to talk indirectly to society, "the man that is closest to the future is the man that is right".⁶⁶ That kind of man is in the minority, always in the right, and the rest are the stupid majority."

Sensitive to difference between a Nordic moral and religious background, and a Spanish one, Echegaray adapts the theme of respect for conventionality in general, to that of respect for religious conventionality. He has to cope with the historical factor of dogmatic intransigence in Spain, and the new spirit risen in his country after the 1868 Constitution which granted freedom of religion.

⁶⁴ Clark, "Ibsen and Strindberg".

⁶⁵ Act II, p. 162.

⁶⁶ Clark, "Ibsen and Strindberg".

Dos fanatismos, named in the beginning UM neo y un ateo, is not a sectarian drama like those of Tamayo y Baus or Pérez Galdós, on the same theme. It was written by Echegaray in 1877 and offers a much deeper meaning. Religious prejudices lead to fanaticism and misunderstanding; innocent people are made to suffer. Echegaray's view is not unilateral as in the two writers mentioned above, both aspects of the ideologies being defended and attacked in turn by the Nobel Prize winner.

5. Woman.

It would be astonishing, were it not attributable to influence, that two men like Echegaray and Ibsen, leading private lives of so different a nature, would have identical views on the subject of woman, and would say so in their works.

Their thoughts have universality because they are great men. The fight for individuality was carried over to feminism not just for the sake of feminism itself, but because it was a facet of human emancipation that had been neglected,⁶⁷ a

⁶⁷ In 1879, Ibsen went as far as making proposals for women's votes.

process far from realized, as we appreciate in the apt title The Second Sex, of our contemporary Simone de Beauvoir.⁶⁸

The theme of the cause of womanhood is closely related to another favorite theme of the playwrights, the fight of nobility versus mediocrity. In both writers there are countless women sacrificed to the man they love. To mention some, we find that this is the case in Agnes (Brand), Solveig (Peer Gynt), Matilde (La mancha que limpia), Nora (A Doll's House), María (El libro talonario), Mrs. Alving (Ghosts), little Hedvig (The Wild Duck) and Fuensanta (El loco Dios).

The pessimism of the authors usually falls on their masculine characters. It is quite obvious that the men in Ibsen's plays are, as a rule,

Imbeciles whose mission is to serve as contrast to the superiority of women.⁶⁹

The few true men are the aristocrats of the soul whom he portrays as loners, in an open fight against society. Ganivet attributes it to a definite feminine influence in his life:

⁶⁸ 1908 - 1965.

⁶⁹ Ganivet, Cartas Finlandesas y hombres del Norte, 171.

Para mí, es indiscutible que en la vida de Ibsen hay una influencia femenina, pues solo así se comprende que, sin perjuicio de despreciar "en abstracto" a la mujer, la coloque de hecho muy por encima del hombre.⁷⁰

Some critics, like Lemaître, doubt the reality of these Ibsenian women because they are not very well acquainted with the Nordic society. In fact, the new ideas on emancipation have produced in those strong characters a new revolutionary woman, and in the weak ones, a cold immorality. Ganivet said that one had to be very well versed in the Nordic societies to be convinced of the fact that Ibsen's women-types are painted with softened hues.

In his notes for A Doll's House, Ibsen sees the situation clearly:

There are two kinds of spiritual law, two kinds of conscience; one in man, and another, altogether different, in woman. They do not understand each other; but in practical life the woman is judged by man's law, as though she were not a woman, but a man.⁷¹

The last scene presents the basic idea of the whole play, it is the dramatization of his notes, when Nora explains her position, her ideals, her whole

⁷⁰ Ganivet, 171.

⁷¹ Stuart, 572.

feminine psychology in plain, direct language:

I must stand quite alone, if I am to understand myself and everything about me. It is for that reason that I cannot remain with you any longer. 72

And when Helmer, her husband, tries to explain his position: "No man would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves", Nora replies:

It is a thing hundreds of thousands of women have done. 73

Torvald Helmer is a mediocre man; deception and fraud become a problem for him only when his honour and position are at stake. Nora at least tried to find an adequate answer in a serious dilemma and was willing to assume the fullest responsibility for it.

The contrasts between the two sexes is a subject of the deepest interest to Echegaray. From his first play, El libro talonario, (1874), he ironically shows that there are two consequences to the sin of adultery: A cruel and sinister one for the wife:

Y al despuntar la mañana,
por destrozo de esta lid,
de mi venganza pregon
debajo de este balcón
verá tu cuerpo Madrid ! 74

72 Act. III, p. 64.

73 Act III, p. 66.

74 Act I, scene iv.

and a happy one full of forgiveness for the husband:

| Carlos ! ...
| Ven ! ...
| Te llamo el niño !
| Y te llamo yo también !
| Silencio ! ... Yo nada sé !
| Yo te amo ... como te amé !⁷⁵

Maria is far more subtle than her beloved Carlos.

She is the stronger of the two because she has nobility of heart.

Mariana and Mancha que limpia are both studies of feminine characters, Mariana and Matilde, of undeniable dramatic force. Mariana⁷⁶ has been considered the best drama of Echegaray, mainly because of his handling of psychological devices, to show what happens when a woman debases her individuality and does not marry for love. Matilde, the protagonist in La mancha que limpia, appears as a heroine even after she kills her rival, the fickle Enriqueta, because she kills for love, without fear of the consequences: the loss of her own life.

She could bear death better than the dishonour of the man who once loved her:

⁷⁵ Act I, scene xix.

⁷⁶ Played in Paris in 1898.

| Lo que tu querías ! ...
| Ya eres libre ! 77

We have referred above to the heroic man in Ibsen who acts within the reach of his individual world. Equally, Echegaray's men behave in defense of their egotism, (El loco Dios) or their own honour (O locura o santidad). His women sacrifice themselves for their men or, in general, for their loved ones.

The feminist point of view, we said, was common to the two dramatists studied.

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In the year 1912, when Echegaray made some declarations to an interviewer, he expressed his dramatic concept in these honest words:

Yo, en materia de moldes literarios y moldes dramáticos, tengo mis ideas, buenas o malas, pero mías. Y por ser mías, serán modestas, pero natural es que las tenga carino.

Lo que sí ha variado [italics mine] es la materia que ha de llenar unos y otros moldes, y en ellos está la esencia del arte . . .

Algo importa la forma del molde ...
pero más importa el líquido que en él

se vierta. 78

This "materia", in our opinion, came to him with Nordic winds and was placed in Spanish moulds.

CONCLUSION

In this study of the influence of the Norwegian Ibsen on the Spanish Echegaray, the writer has had to face a frequent difficulty in research in the field of comparative literature : The delineation of two immeasurable quantities, that of influence and that of coincidence.

In order to define both, we have devoted two chapters to biographical considerations, that is, to the study of the men Ibsen and Echegaray.

Another chapter was given to the intellectual atmosphere in which they lived, one of confluence of Romantic, Realist and Symbolist tendencies. This allowed us to perceive how each one of them reacted to the accepted ideas of his times. Their respective national backgrounds became apparent, especially in the case of Echegaray, a fact that exposed Ibsen's long residence in foreign countries.

In chapter IV, the core of our work, we examined the possibilities of influence of Ibsen on Echegaray. We have given graphic expression to

the same by means of a table in which time and thematic relations are established.

We have then studied the treatment given by both playwrights to these themes:

Fate, in Ibsen's:

Hedda Gabler

Catilina

Brand

Ghosts

and in Echegaray's:

El gran Galeoto

Como empieza y como acaba

La duda

Disease, in Ibsen's:

A Doll's House

An Enemy of the People

The Wild Duck

Hedda Gabler

and in Echegaray's:

El hijo de Don Juan

El gran Galeoto

De mala raza

Las malas herencias

Madness, in Ibsen's:

Ghosts

The Master Builder

and in Echegaray's:

O locura o santidad

Correr en pos de un ideal

Los dos curiosos impertinentes

El hijo de Don Juan

La duda

El loco Dios

La realidad y el delirio

La desequilibrada

Twilight of old values and

Moral complacency, in Ibsen's:

Ghosts

The Pillars of Society

An Enemy of the People

and in Echegaray's:

El hijo de Don Juan

Dos fanatismos

Woman and Nobility, in Ibsen's:

A Doll's House

and in Echegaray's:

El libro talonario

Mariana

Mancha que limpia

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From the examination undertaken in this thesis we can draw the following conclusions:

Critics' assertion that Ibsen influenced Echegaray is supported by

- a) The Spaniard's own admission.
 - b) By a favourable time relationship.
 - c) By Echegaray's residence in and visits to France and England, where Ibsen's plays had met great acclaim.
 - d) By thematic coincidence that strongly suggests influence on the basis of the above stated points.
 - e) By the direction undertaken within Echegaray's dramatic personality.
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¹ Asterisk indicates work not quoted.

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