

*Review*

## Re-interpreting Ibsen and Echegaray: A Comparative Study

Amir Hossain

Senior Lecturer, Department of English, IBAIS University, Dhaka-1230, BD. E-mail: [amir.ju09@yahoo.com](mailto:amir.ju09@yahoo.com),  
[amir.hossain.16578@gmail.com](mailto:amir.hossain.16578@gmail.com). Mobile: +8801915908306

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The central aim of this paper is to examine the bitter experiences of Ibsen's and Echegaray's childhood, parental professions, economic hurdles and crises. Both Ibsen and Echegaray suffered initial setbacks and disappointment during their artistic career. Here, the focus is on literary criticism and its impact on their dramatic arts with a view to fostering out their traumatic experiences, feministic message, symbolism, romanticism, social realism, destiny, obsolete thoughts, and dogmatic faith through the art of characterizations. The study will also demonstrate that while Echegaray was known as Spanish politician, writer, and mathematician, the leading dramatist of the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Echegaray was, by temperament, a romantic that was embedded in Ibsen's dramatic arts, the romantic at heart, an opening of new and wide horizons. Ibsen, a seeker of knowledge, always meditated himself to develop his dramatic psychology. In this paper, hereditary disease also plays an important role in Ibsen's *Ghosts*, and *Hedda Gabler* and Echegaray's *Las Malas Herencias* and *El hijo de Don Juan*. This study showcases that Echegaray was renewed by the reading of Ibsen, since his social and realistic problems took a different breadth and scope; his dramatic career attained great success when his mighty river bed was deepened with the dark waters of the North by his acquaintance with Ibsen.

**Key Words:** Destiny, dogmatic faith, Echegaray, feminism, hereditary disease, Ibsen, obsolete thoughts, realism and trauma.

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### INTRODUCTION

Writers of two different countries, Norway and Spain, with a very short gap of four years, one has written in Norwegian and the other in Spanish. Henrik Ibsen (20 March 1828- 23 May 1906) and Jose Echegaray (19 April 1832-14 September 1916), the most influential Norwegian playwright and one of the most important

Spanish playwrights respectively, are familiar names in the history of literature. Ibsen wrote a total number of twenty seven verse and prose plays, and a good number of poems, and Echegaray too, sixty four plays, scientific writings, and novels. The purpose of this paper is to compare and contrast some important aspects of both

playwrights and their dramatic arts.

By analyzing their biography and works, we may determine a similarity between Ibsen and Echegaray. Both of the authors experienced economic barriers and crises after their affluent childhood period because the profession of their fathers ran collapsed; and they became bankrupt. So, both of them had to take odd jobs to earn money for their survival and materialize their future intention of education. At sixteen, Ibsen became an apprentice pharmacist despite aspiring to study medicine. After the failure of the university entrance examination, he turned all his attention to dramatic arts and poetry. On the other hand, José Echegaray was born in Madrid to parents of Basque descent. The family moved to Murcia, where his father held a professorship in Greek at the Institute of Murcia. At the age of fourteen, Echegaray returned to Madrid. In 1853, he graduated from the *Escuela de Caminos* and became a professor of mathematics of the same institute in 1858. At the beginning of his dramatic career, Echegaray's first drama, *El libro talonario* was produced in 1874 at the theater Espanol under the pseudonym Jorge Hayaseca Eizaguirre. Echegaray wrote it to show his brother, a notable playwright.

Both Ibsen and Echegaray suffered initial depressions and melancholic moods during the artistic career. Ibsen's life work indicates his mystical power: The artist is made out of his struggle with Norway; the early works of the exile, mostly poetry and satire; the great series of the plays where the poet and the Norwegian worked together. His immature years earned nothing but failure for which Ibsen enabled to accept the challenge in playwrighting. Ibsen had to face adverse circumstances for his father and a sense of duty towards him. His Oedipus complex and financial turbulence compelled him into determination and meditative psychology in finding out a new horizon of dramatic arts. Echegaray was known as Spanish politician, writer, and mathematician, the leading dramatist of the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Along with poet Frederic Mistral, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1904. Echegaray began to write plays at the age of forty-two. His writing style changed little during his artistic career. His works are noted for their high degree of technical skill and their ability to keep audiences engaged despite simple and melodramatic plot-construction.

The fact that Echegaray started writing for economic factors was an incentive and not an obstacle, since economic hardship had been known to produce works of art among writers like Shakespeare, Lope de Vega and Ibsen. When he and his family had found themselves in difficulties and complexities, he had turned in playwrighting for the theatre as a familial solution. But previously, all his efforts had ended in failure, and Echegaray in desperation had either destroyed his plays, or put them aside. He was a man whose devotion to a task had to be

completed. On his success as a dramatist, he retired from politics to write for the theatre, and his voracious mind produced sixty-four plays within thirty years. He was admitted to the *Real Academia Espanola* in 1882, and in a national homage the king himself, Alfonso XIII, pinned on him the medal of the Nobel Prize.<sup>1</sup>

Henrik Ibsen was compelled to go into voluntary exile in Italy for twenty seven years due to violent and turbulent politics. But, returning to Norway in taking with bitterness experiences of exile in 1891, the kings and political parties welcomed and showed him a due respect. The maturity of dramatic arts was grown in Ibsen's psychology, especially on the bourgeois hurdles and complexities in most of his prose plays, where the notable heroines were centralized with a view to focusing on the 19<sup>th</sup> century Scandinavian feminism. Though Ibsen was not a feminist author, but his dramatic arts prove that he was a strong supporter of feminism. Ibsen could see a substitutive and mutual understanding between art and life like Thomas De Mann.<sup>2</sup> Like many great artists; Ibsen was called "the great individualist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century."<sup>3</sup> Social realism and naturalism have occupied a prominent place in his arts, where aesthetic art was no less. If we want to realize this aesthetic art apparently in Ibsen's *oeuvre*, we must have a profound erudition as well as inner psychology for finding out his dramatic art and aesthetics. In this regards, some arguments may be claimed: Ibsen, in his depth of knowledge, has observed the natural landscapes, the image of the mysterious sea, stream, ice, church, familial matters, prostitution, the chamber of the captains, a gallery of paintings, the statue, mill-race, a decorative art of a branch of flowers, the Christmas gifts, the sun, the duck, white horse, the ship and sailors, and so forth. In most of his prose plays, Ibsen has tried to foster out the hidden and imaginative faculty of human knowledge through creating the natural and real issues between art, life and aesthetics. Ibsen, a seeker of knowledge, always meditated himself to develop his dramatic psychology. Ibsen would believe that the more familiar the situation, the more interesting the play would be, as there is a complete involvement of the audience. Ibsen's own thesis exposes, "the real slavery of today is the slavery to ideals of goodness."<sup>4</sup> So, Ibsen wanted to protect Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House*, Regina and Johanna in *Ghosts*, Rebecca West in *Rosmersholm* from the bondage of traditional authority. In such plays, Ibsen has marked the predominant social issues, where he emphasized on women's problems to seek out a new horizon.

It is true that Ibsen's plays have an immoral propensity when immortality does not imply mischievous conduct: "it implies conduct, mischievous or not, which does not conform to current ideals."<sup>5</sup> Ibsen sees that our ideals constantly demand human sacrifices explained on one occasion: "Let none of them be placed above the obligation to prove itself worth the sacrifices it demands."

<sup>6</sup> It is true that those who are not ridden by current ideals, will have no question as to the ethical soundness of Ibsen's plays. It is only those who will probably denounce the plays as immoral as Shaw puts it. Ibsen also believes firmly that in the rights and power of the emancipated individual: "The only thing he really believes in and respects is personality."<sup>7</sup> When he exiles himself, he helps his visionary objects, or of the self; his "long-sightedness": "We see clearly at a distance; the details confuse...Man is spiritually a long sighted creature."<sup>8</sup> His life work has the great attraction of unity and the deeper meaning of his plays is mostly noticed in the relation from play to play.

### Symbolism, Romanticism and Realism

The existence of forms of literature of international scope 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. Tendencies existed in Echegaray, which makes him susceptible of being influenced by Ibsen. Lukacs<sup>9</sup> says: "True influence is the liberation of latent forces," and in Spain, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, certain social and historical forces were at work that rendered the absorption of foreign literature possible.

Both Ibsen and Echegaray have validated Molloy's thesis *Je prends mon bien ou je le trouve* in their assimilation and rejection of other literature. Lukacs (1964) comments that: ". . . such organic and healthy assimilation of foreign literatures is a part of the development of all true writers" (p. 244). In the case of the Nordic writer, Hebbel<sup>10</sup> prepared the path that Ibsen was going to follow the development of social drama. They did have many ideas in common. Some outstanding French critics - Lemaitre and Sarcey had seen in some of the works of this playwright a likeness to those of Dumas and Sand, 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 his arrival was belated. In spite of all, Ibsen became the outstanding figure of his age in dramatic art. As a Spanish writer, Echegaray had been called a "last romantic", a reincarnation of Zorrilla and a "sort of Spanish Ibsen" (Alvarez, 1968, p.21); one must remember that Echegaray was influenced by his perennial reading, especially for 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" by his own admission. Certainly, Echegaray was, by temperament, a romantic that was embedded in Ibsenian dramatic arts, the romantic at heart, an opening of new and wide horizons.

In their youth, romanticism was fresh and flourishing both in Scandinavia and in the Iberian Peninsula, for Norway and Spain are like suburbs of Europe; and there was a gap between the mode in Paris, the mode in Oslo and Madrid. Actually, romanticism was a movement of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to mark a reaction from neo-classicism. 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", (McFarlane, 1960, p. 60) mainly: realism, with 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 and to reform society; one had first to reform the individual. Like Nietzschean philosophy, he was 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 (Brandes, 1961, p. 27).

Therefore, it is Ibsen's dramatic form which constitutes his great contribution to the theatre. 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; the playwright can make use of a wider variety of "languages." 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 his plays. It is important to remember that both authors had followed the norms of Scribe, a French playwright, the maker of model plays. He had proposed: "To make a play, find a situation, and once found all else is an accessory" (Bradbrook, 1966, p.149). In the first part of the dramatic career of Echegaray, one can see unexpected situations emerging from chance, extraordinary and violent passions of characters. Later on, his works deal with the idea of conflict between society and man, a definite turn from his earlier plays. *O locura o santidad* (1877) is the prototype of this new genre: 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 *piece bien faite* modeled 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 interplay and implication".

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:

Shakespeare had put us on the stage but not our situations... Ibsen supplies the want left by Shakespeare. He gives us not only ourselves, but our situations .

Realism, controlled by fantasy, is the key-note of these magnificent writers in the unfolding of their development. Realism is regarded as a permanent striving on the part of a man to reduce the impassable gap which separates art from life. It is an effort to see, feel and think straight about life. People become important and therefore, the approach to character becomes psychological: "find the motive" is now the goal of the author. And, drama is suited for the task of revealing how a character has become what he is. Shakespeare, Dostoyevski, Chekhov, Strindberg and Ibsen have been singled out as the sources of the psychological approach. The element of fate, inherited in part from the romantic tradition, plays a major role in the actions of characters. But Ibsen had the unique quality of "becoming a realist outside, while remaining a fantasist inside" (Bentley, 1957, p. 77). This gave him the supple strength, fine irony and richness of *The Wild Duck* and *John Gabriel Borkman*. The author of *Ghosts* is 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" (Tennant, 1965, p. 65).

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 he has written for all" (Alvarez, 1968, p.28) and psychological drama was the most appropriate to realize this purpose. There are two ways by which the illusion of reality can be created: by the construction of a purely imaginary world; 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, while he commented: "Everything that I have written has the closest possible connection with what I have lived through, even if it had not been my own personal experience". 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". 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. Since Echegaray is a man of knowledge, he has thoughtful life, instead of living it. A man like him must have had infinite experiences not available to an ordinary human being.

There is a 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", as Bentley (1957) declared. Ibsen did not abandon poetry when he rejected verse. On the contrary, poetry and realism got created the characteristic and personal of Ibsen's construction. Echegaray changed radically after 1881 to write not only an entirely different type of play but to express himself in prose.

Ibsen's use of realism was closely tied to a romantic symbolism in his plays. 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 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 romanticism is given extraordinary powers of evocation through the conscious craft of the playwright. In fact, symbolism was brought 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 plays are permeated seems to be 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, not clear to an outsider without a key.

In his theatre, a great deal of the thought of the action is left behind the scenes and must be understood by the spectators: "His dramas are in an interrogative mood" (McFarlane, 1960, p.61). The public of the North did 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. 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 plays of effect to attract their interest. From this study, it seems to be evident that Echegaray was renewed by the reading of Ibsen since his social and realistic problems took a different breadth and scope. His dramatic career had attained great success when, by his acquaintance with Ibsen, his mighty river bed was deepened with the dark waters of the North.

Both Ibsen and Echegaray were very much aware of social problems of their contemporary age, and, as a result, it is observed in our research that a similarity of themes can be realized with a very subtle manner.

### **Destiny**

According to Hebbel (1843), "tragedy arises from the

operation of the will", especially from the struggle between the individual will and the world-will. As we have indicated, Ibsen followed the path traveled by Hebbel, in which destiny always has a moral significance, because it is conceived as a power which finds an inexorable punishment for sin. Ibsen's conception of sin is exaggerated to the point that it includes not only sinful actions but also sinful thoughts. His development as a dramatist is marked by the way in which the chance factor is eliminated by the fate factor in the action. This fate factor is also artificial, but it creates an illusion of realism in the moralistic atmosphere of his plays. If there are any deaths in Ibsen's last acts, they are the deaths of dramatically finished people: Oswald in *Ghosts*, Hedvig in *The Wild Duck*, Hedda in *Hedda Gabler*, Solness in *The Master Builder*, and Rosmer and Rebecca West in *Rosmersholm* for instance.

As early as 1849, when Ibsen wrote his first play, *Catiline*, the protagonist is a toy for the gods; he cannot escape the destiny predicted to him by the specter of Silla. In *Brand* (1866), man is doomed again because "he is man and not God" (Clark, 1966, p.48), in spite of his noble mission to make mankind whole. 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 *Como empieza y como acaba*, in which the element of fate plays an important role in the last scene of the play, when Magdalena wants to kill her 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's *La duda*. *Ghosts* follow 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, focuses on the stage only the end of this quest. Oswald, like Oedipus, is the hidden reality in the whole situation, the reincarnation of his father. The sins of the fathers are re-visited on the children in the most irrational manner, because Regina, the daughter of Oswald's father, Captain Alving escapes the disease. 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 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 responsible because she is only the hand of destiny.

## Hereditary Disease

The influence of heredity and environment as portrayed by Hebbel, Ibsen and Echegaray, is a variation of the dramatic idea, the idea of fate controlling the destiny of man in a rational age of scientific and philosophical determinism. For Ibsen, hereditary disease is the symbol of all the determinist forces that crush humanity. On the other hand, positive forces are represented by the sun, as in *Ghosts*: "[...] the symbol of all that was divine within a dark and malignant world" (Bradbrook, 1966, p.151). In Echegaray, the sun is also a symbol of the divine, an idea born in him from personal experiences. 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. With this drama, he initiates a renovation of the Spanish stage at the end of the century. When Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House* (1879), he did not let us forget the somber disease theme, which does not have to be of a physical nature. In this play, disease appears as a 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-dance is a vain last effort to expel the poison, and an appropriate symbol of the theme of disease and death. 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."<sup>11</sup> 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.

In *Hedda Gabler* (1880), Mrs. Alving is another sick person. She is a woman with no ideals, and Ibsen believed that a person with no ideals is a floating derelict. She perverts the lives of everyone, including her own, with her absolute disregard for the truth in her personal relations: She is spiritually sterile, and there are many symbols of this sterility exhibited. The fact is that all she touches becomes mean and valueless. The pistols, which stand for the dignity and grandeur of the family, are only pretensions that bring destruction in her hands. It is as if Ibsen were telling us that the hereditary disease has shrunk in stature 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 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 numbers of the plays as the real disease of society.

### Trauma

Let us now consider some of the plays in which trauma is the prevalent subject, both in Ibsen and Echegaray. Already Ibsen's *Brand* (1886) shows the main character suffering from hallucinations at the top of the mountain. This work that pretends to express what the Norwegian people should redeem itself, there is also a young demented girl, by the name of Gerda. *Brand* was followed by *Peer Gynt* (1867). Peer Gynt is a character who has many adventures, one of which lands him in a lunatic asylum in Cairo, the inmates of which proclaim him emperor of them all. Like Ibsen, Echegaray shows the evils of society. He proves that, according to the contemporary creed of the middle class, strict fulfillment of duty can be considered to be trauma. Of course, his concept of honor bound to duty is deeply rooted in the principles of the theatre of the Spanish Golden Age. Calderon's *Patrimonio Del Alma* is also Echegaray's kind of honor. 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 German and of the Norwegian. Honor will lie 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 seem to be natural due to Echegaray's desire to sublimate the qualms of conscience of Lorenzo whom he dehumanizes.

The protagonist is beginning to doubt the limits of sanity. Echegaray may be following Ibsen's steps in blurring the frontier between sanity and lunacy. How well Echegaray succeeds is seen in the fact that the audience is left with doubts about the actual sanity of Lorenzo. Echegaray's next production is dealt with the theme of lunacy *Correr en pos de un ideal*, (1878), developing the idea 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" (Alvarez 1968, p.54). There is death for people who live continually in dreams. In *Los dos curiosos impertinentes*(1882), Echegaray presents the traumatic theme once more, in the plight of Gabriel, who kills his wife when he becomes mad. 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. Lazaro, the son, is haunted by the fear that his fainting spells may be due to impending lunacy:

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 (Act II, p. 82).

The scene in which Lazaro 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 comments on "Ghosts". The germ of actual insanity of Solness in *The Master Builder* (1892) lies in his fear of being considered to be mad. As his morbidity increases, he comes to believe that he has a mysterious power of wishing. 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" (Act I, p.121). This is a symbolic and lyrical play which deals with human soul and its struggle to rise above its own desires. It is a great dramatic poem, about an artist that is demonic, possessed by mysterious thoughts that are realized:

You 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? (Act I, p. 117).

Solness realizes that Hilda, like himself, has the "troll in her, There must be - a little of the troll in you too" (Act II, p.137). She prods him 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" (Brandes, 1964, p.150). 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 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 (*Doha Leocadia*) revelations which make Amparo's mother her rival. *La duda* (1898) written by Echegaray, was staged in Paris and London. Dona Leocadia is the mysterious power, the personified spirit of slander and the devil himself, and as such, Amparo is justified in killing her. The actress Marfa 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 loc Dios* (1900) is the next outstanding drama with the theme of madness as all important.

Gabriel of *El loco Dios* is shown as a madman. His ideas on man and society are very noble, but utopia. Whether he is a saint or a madman is a matter for

debate. Gabriel is a romantic character in his consciousness of superiority upon the common man, a superiority that leads him to identification with God. He is confronted by ambitious and stupid people in situations typical of the *Comedie de mœurs* 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 escaping through death in both authors. The last scene in 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.

*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. 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.

### Obsolete Thought and Dogmatic Faith

Like Ibsen, Echegaray is very much conscious of the general law of the evolution of ideas. His plays also show that obsolete thoughts and dogmatic faith by following the conventional can be as damaging to one's soul and as destructive as the worst evil. In most of his plays, he accuses societal faults, hindrance and above all, its sins. The sin of Lazaro's mother in *El hijo de Don Juan* is exactly the sin of Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts*. Echegaray and Ibsen express their opinion that 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 destruction and annihilation. Duty is to blame for Lazaro'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. 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 (Brandes, 1964, p. 99).

*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 and to the idea of majority rule. In this play, he tries to show the stupidity of man. 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?" (Act II, p. 162). Ibsen's purpose is to talk indirectly to society, "the man that is closest to the future is the man that is right." 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, 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. *Dos fanatismos*, named in the beginning *Un neo y un ateo* is not a sectarian drama like those of *Tamayo y Baus* or *Perez Galdos*, on the same theme. It was written by Echegaray in 1877 and offers an underlying meaning. Religious prejudices lead to fanaticism and misunderstanding; innocent people are made to suffer. Both Ibsen and Echegaray have focused on the obsolete thoughts, ideas and dogmatic faith of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Norway and Spain through portraying some powerful figures with a view to unveiling social realism.

### Feminism

The two playwrights like Echegaray and Ibsen had identical views on the subject of women. The fight for individuality was carried on to feminism not just for the sake of feminism itself. 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 beloved whom they love. To mention some, we find that this is the case in Agnes (*Brand*), Solveig (*Peer Gynt*), Matilde (*La mancha que limpia*), Nora Helmer (*A Doll's House*), Maria (*El libro talonario*), Mrs. Alving (*Ghosts*), Little Hedvig (*The Wild Duck*) and Fuensanta (*El loco Dios*). The pessimism of the authors falls on their masculine characters. It is quite obvious that male characters in Ibsen's plays are, as a rule, "Imbeciles whose mission is to serve as the contrast to the superiority of women" (Alvarez, 1968, p.67). Some male figures are the aristocrats of the soul whom, he portrays as revolutionary figure, is an open fight against society.

Some critics, like Lemaltre, 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. A critic, 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 observes women's 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 (Stuart, 1960, p. 572).

The last scene presents the basic idea of the whole play, which is the dramatization of his notes, when Nora explains her position, her ideals, and her whole 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 (Act III, p. 64).

When Helmer tries to explain his position: "No man would sacrifice his honor or the one he loves", Nora replies: "It is a thing hundreds of thousands of women have done" (Act III, p. 66). Torvald Helmer is a mediocre man; deception and fraud become a problem for him when his honor and position are at stake. Nora tries to find out an answer in a serious dilemma and is willing to assume the fullest responsibility for it. The contrast between 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.

*Mariana* and *La Mancha que limpia* are both studies of female characters, Mariana and Matilde of undeniable dramatic forces. *Mariana* has been considered to be the best drama of Echegaray 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 him for love, without fear of consequences: the loss of her own life. She could bear death better than the dishonor of the man who once loved her. We have referred above to the heroic man, Torvald Helmer in Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House* who acts within the reach of his individual world. Equally, Echegaray's men behave in defense of their egotism, or their own honor. His women sacrifice themselves for their men or, in general, for their beloved ones.

## CONCLUSION

As reformer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian and Spanish Bourgeois culture, community and society, both Ibsen and Echegaray have tried utmost to find out unnoticed social, economic, political, moral issues of everyday occurrences and complexities of the neglected male and female throughout their life-time bitterness experiences in the above mentioned dramatic arts. With their subtle knowledge and acute psychology, both dramatists have unveiled the complex problem of human being from different perspectives. What they have observed and experienced and then, have applied them in their literary field is mostly acceptable to the generation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 21<sup>st</sup> century as well. If we consider their biography and literary background, then it will make us ensure that the by the gone tales and literary works prove that both of them are the same passengers of the same path. Actually, Ibsen and Echegaray have created male and female dramatic personae in their plays, which, undoubtedly, bear the testimony of universal truth of our post-modern literature as well.

## Notes

1. In 1908, it was actually awarded by the Oslo Academy.
2. Tennant, 36.
3. Bentley, *Ibsen: A Personal Statement*, 8.
4. Shaw, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*, 37.
5. *Ibid.*, 40.
6. *Ibid.*, 44.
7. Brandes, *Henrik Ibsen: A Critical Study*, 6.
8. Bradbrook, 148.
9. Lukacs, *Studies in European Realism*, 242.
10. Hebbel, Christian Friedrich, (1813-1863), German lyric poet and playwright.
11. The original name given to *A Doll's House* in Ibsen's notes for the play.

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