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THE PROPHEMIC VISION OF EGON WOLFF

by

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To my family, especially Jo Ann and Shari Anne.

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J.D.C.

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Introduction

From its post-colonial origins to the 1920's, Latin American theater generally confined itself to presenting strongly nationalistic themes or else was used as a showcase for cuadros de costumbres in the traditional European mode. However, the new considerations of liberty, responsibility, and justice that resulted from global involvement in two wars led naturally to new expressions among artists and thinkers everywhere.¹ Just as the literature of Europe reflected the political and social upheavals that resulted from one world war and contributed to the next, so all genres of Latin American letters began to express these new realities. In America, as in Europe, drama began to be less purely diversionary as playwrights joined with other socially committed artists to propose solutions to the dilemmas of the new age.

In Chile, in the first half of the twentieth century notes Julio Durán-Cerda, the most common dramatic leitmotiv was the possibility of personal liberation through education and culture.² But the emerging Chilean middle class was beginning to encounter new problems brought on by the increase of technology. As Durán-Cerda goes on to say, World War II resulted, in Chile as in other nations, in the emergence of "vicios y debilidades que han afectado los fundamentos de la clase media, el sector de más precaria estabilidad."³ The exposure of these "vicios y debilidades" has continued to the present, but dramatic treat-