

The Ritual of Solórzano's *Las manos de Dios*

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Eugene O'Neill defined the central role of the theatre when he described his concept of the ideal dramatic experience. "I mean a theatre returned to its highest and sole significant function as a Temple where the religion of a poetical interpretation and a symbolical celebration of life is communicated to human beings, starved in spirit by their soul-stifling daily struggle to exist as masks among the masks of the living."¹ Drama as a ritual of the "celebration of life" draws its formal existence as literature from the Greek theatre tied to the Dionysian festivals.² It subsequently broke from the classic forms and evolved into the eucharistic and liturgical elements of the Christian Church during the Middle Ages, thus presenting a new form for the representation of the same preoccupations that have relentlessly pursued and stimulated man from the earliest times.³ The ritual of the theatre and thus the theatre as ritual continue to the present day. As O'Neill and later J. M. Leighton in his essay of "Poetry and Ritual" indicate, art that reaches the level of ritual becomes "perceptive" as opposed to "noninfinite" and achieves a plane unobtainable by creative works that never transcend an "intelligent observation" of reality.⁴ Just as O'Neill strove to overcome the commercial nature of the theatre of his day by returning it to its function as a "temple for the celebration of life," so Carlos Solórzano, in *Las manos de Dios*, seeks to break away from what he perceives to be the dead ritual of Latin American Christianity by using the theatre to reawaken the audience to the human ritual associated with the desire for freedom. Interestingly, to demonstrate the hypocrisy and futility of conventional religious ritual, he adapts the form of the *auto*, which is derived directly from the liturgical and eucharistic tradition of the Church being criticized.⁵

Several different definitions of the term "ritual" can be extracted from the existing literature, some of which apply directly to Solórzano's play. Leighton mentions two qualities which are basic to this study. He writes, "Religious ritual is a prescribed ceremony, in which some belief of central importance to man's consciousness of the relationship existing between himself and God is dramatically symbolized, with a view to establishing or confirming belief by

repetition” (p. 5). The important characteristics here are those relating to a dramatic representation that confirms belief through repetition. Recurrent action is the very essence of the theatre. Later, Leighton indicates that ritual, at least in a literary sense, is a descendant of the Dionysian celebration and the related development of theatre, in both its tragic and comic forms, during which man “could look down on the toil and sweat of life, and laugh with the laughter of the Gods” (p. 6). Leighton’s observation is consistent with the Aristotelian concept of theatre: a ritual aimed at achieving the goals expressed above by means of a catharsis produced through pity and fear.⁶ Dramatic ritual can be summarized as a recurrent social or ensemble event that seeks to help man live in harmony with the basic rhythms and cycles of nature. It allows man to deal with the inconsistencies and mysteries he sees in his cosmos by dramatically and symbolically representing them in a fashion that elicits a cathartic experience.

Solórzano classifies his work as an “*auto en tres actos.*” Diego Marín defines the *auto* as an “obra dramática de un acto generalmente relacionada con el sacramento de la eucaristía y con personajes bíblicos alegóricos.”⁷ The *auto* form is derived from medieval missal ceremonies. Francis Edwards traces the development of dramatic ritual from pagan rites through embellishments of sermons to productions such as the Miracle and Mystery plays designed specifically for their dramatic impact (p. 31).

There are several characteristics of these early dramatic productions outlined by Edwards that relate to ritual in the work of Carlos Solórzano. He states that the very essence of the mass was both ritualistic and dramatic. The priest played the central role of each production and possibly enlisted the help of other individuals in creating an image that would help him communicate his message. His actions while performing the rites of mass were symbolic and dramatic, as evidenced by the variety of genuflections required of both the priest and the parishioners. The rites were designed so as to totally envelop the faithful, involving them in the “action” by eliciting choral repetition of certain key phrases. This technique served not only to help the audience become involved in the priest’s role-playing but also reinforced that involvement by demanding that the individual amorphously become a part of the group during the recited responses. Then, both the priest and the parishioners were joined by the fictional illusions of the mass as all participated in their own role in the symbolic dramatic event.

Another aspect of the medieval dramatic ritual that relates to our topic is the tendency to make the events being depicted consonant with the customs and cultures of the day. The anachronisms involved in portraying a first century event during the fourteenth century did not seem to bother the historical perspective of the public. Symbolic content generally superseded historical verisimilitude. Just as the writers of the medieval theatre were not concerned primarily with historical detail, they also showed little concern for chronology within the work itself. Events separated historically by years or centuries may have been represented dramatically in a different chronological sequence or as simultaneous occurrences. We will see both the tendency towards contemporary settings for traditional themes and the disregard for linear time in *Las manos de Dios*.

The conflicts of these early dramatic rituals were often presented in the form of arguments, reminiscent of both the poetic debates of the period and the dialectical nature of classical tragedy. Two allegorical figures representing the poles of good and evil were often found in verbal disputes elucidating the conflicting forces of nature. This format, as we shall see, is used to produce the moment of highest dramatic emotion in *Las manos de Dios*.

Solórzano skillfully employs characteristics of the medieval and classical rites to build a play that deals with ritual both internally and externally. The playwright uses his theatre both as a ritualistic experience, in the same sense that all great theatre is ritual, and as a criticism and reconstruction of modern-day rituals as he perceives them in Latin America. In this sense, *Las manos de Dios* is not only a ritual, but a series of rituals within a ritual.

Solórzano sets up the "internal" aspect of his study of ritual by decomposing the accepted ritualistic and ecclesiastical structure of the Church. He accomplishes this through the inversion of all the moral values that his characters hold and of the roles they represent.⁸ What was valued positively in traditional Catholicism now is seen in negative terms. But it is important to note that the reversal is complete and that the total value system of the work has remained constant. Only the roles used to symbolize those values have been altered. This inversion is basic to the work since it decomposes precisely the type of union between audience and actors that is so significant in the medieval dramatic ritual. The readers or spectators are warned that the play will be an *auto*, and are thus prepared for certain stock characters to represent familiar allegorical struggles. However, every individual involved with the play experiences the same ambivalent feelings as those felt by the Campanero as he seeks to harmonize the disparity between what his own experience has told him and that which religious convention, in the person of the priest, insists that he profess. Following the encounter with the Diablo the Campanero first tries to explain away the vision by accepting the Sacristán's charge that he had been drinking. After the priest confirms the vision, identifying the stranger as the Diablo by the residue of brimstone left on the boy's clothes, the youth can only utter a confused and rapidly interrupted, "Pero él dijo que no era el espíritu del mal, sino del progreso. . . ."⁹ As a result, he experiences increased intellectual involvement with the action.

The inversion makes another important contribution to the artistic reception of the work. Ritual tends not only to reinforce a particular belief or action as a result of its repetitive nature, but also by the very same process can obscure the meaning behind the symbol. To use Julian Jayne's terms, the metaphier is hidden by the metaphrand.¹⁰ Such seems to be the case within the basic religious symbolism of the Incas, for example. The symbol of their god, the sun, came to be worshipped as the god itself. The religiously uninitiated lost the distinction between the symbol and its meaning. Since the loss of original intent is a danger inherent in ritual, Solórzano has chosen to invert the symbols he uses in his play. Now each metaphrand is given a different and somewhat shocking metaphier. The inversion forces the reader or spectator to deal directly with the values being studied. He cannot be lulled into a mechanistic interpretation of the action.

One of the most striking cases of inversion comes not from the medieval religious plays but from classical tragedy. The multitude of townspeople overtly fills the role of the chorus, or at least their physical appearance forces us to make that association. Yet, this is a strange chorus, not at all like the foreboding voice of popular wisdom heard in the halls of Creon's palace. Rather than rhythmically guiding the work down its thematic pathways, the chorus here has no influence in any moment of the action. It is a group being acted upon, bending and contorting like an ethical Proteus in response to the external pressures exerted upon it. Its most striking characteristic is its silence. While the Greek chorus spoke forcefully but did not provide any of the action, this chorus continuously wanders indifferently about the stage, but in absolute silence. The group does not articulate a single word until the last act when all they can manage is a pathetically monosyllabic *sí* and *no*.

The prostitute is another interesting example of Solórzano's use of inversion. The sin of adultery has long been associated with a type of bondage. However, this prostitute is the only character in the play other than Beatriz who has broken out of the abulic state characteristic of the other townspeople. She has acted and as a result has freed herself from an oppressive situation in another city. She is the only secondary character free to determine her future.

The most impressive and dominating inverted figure is that of the Diablo himself. He is depicted as the Savior, the Spirit of Truth come to save Man from ignorance. He represents the personage of Satan, yet embodies in general terms some of the same principles taught by Christ. The criticism and deconstruction of the Church as the source of truth is acute and obvious as the spectator observes the conflict between the progressive theories of Satan and the mindless, hypocritical and contrived ritual propagated by the priest.

These inversions do not destroy the ceremonial nature of the play. Rather, they reconstruct ritual by changing the values of the metaphors used. *Las manos de Dios* is not the only work in which Solórzano employs similar techniques. Plays such as *El crucificado* and *El sueño del ángel* seek the same effect by casting doubt on the relationship between certain religious principles and their symbols.

The ritualistic influence of the *autos* is also seen in the internal structure and imagery of the play. The most obvious is its allegorical nature: divine beings appear and disappear and the supernatural is reduced to the natural. The Diablo takes part in the play just as he might have in any number of medieval works treating similar themes.¹¹ The supernatural Satan is real enough, although at times he seems more like a projection of Beatriz's imagination than a corporeal figure. He is a constant in the protagonist's mind, yet flits in and out of the consciousness of other participants. The chief determinant of the townspeople's ability to perceive the Diablo is their rebelliousness. They obtain their first glimpse of the spirit of Evil, really the Spirit of Progress, when they sympathize with Beatriz and lose that vision when swayed by the frantic pleading of the priest. Another example of inversion of the natural and supernatural in the play is that the people see truth clearly not through submissive obedience but by means of open defiance. The Devil's physical presence is contrasted with the priest's

invention of another supernatural being: the thief-catching angel. Supposedly the source of truth regarding the divine, the priest fabricates a comical story of heavenly intervention which results in the apprehension of the filcher of the holy jewels. This divine being, incarnated only by the devious imagination of a flustered priest, contrasts markedly with the role of the supernatural as embodied by the Demon.

The argumentative structure of the conflict also springs from medieval tradition. As already stated, the conflicts in the early dramatic ritual were presented in the form of a verbal debate where the mutual exclusivity of the poles easily could be recognized. Solórzano's use of this form of debate produces the dramatic tension that lead to the climax of the play. Beatriz has been apprehended and is about to be incarcerated by the authority of the priest. However, she delays what we now know to be the inevitable result of the action by defying openly the authority of the Church. The Diablo, who is at this point visible to all as a result of their recognition of Beatriz's open rebellion, seizes this opportunity to publicly challenge the position of the priest. The ensuing verbal scrimmage has all the elements of the medieval ritual.

In the debate the Diablo acts in the divine role as revealer of truth and advocate for the life of his only disciple (pp. 211-219). He alternates with the priest in presenting his case to the captive and, for the first time, responsive chorus. The priest preaches the philosophy of moral obligation leading to eternal reward while the Diablo pleads the case for decisive action and self-determination. The event takes place on the steps or porch of the church, reminding us of the liturgical events that for centuries have dramatized the same conflicts in such a setting. The town acts out perfectly its role of participants in the missal ritual. It sways back and forth, executes its own peculiar forms of genuflection and even responds in unison to the cues given by the protagonists on the "stage" of the church. The scene is a fascinating example of a ritual within a ritual (the structure in the form of an *auto*) within the more general ritual that is the theatre.

Further examples of ritual within the *auto* range from the most insignificant and automatic in nature to those that hold deeper symbolic or esthetic significance. Beatriz demonstrates a ritual act that at first seems trivial (if even perceived by the reader or spectator) but serves to underscore the dilemma in which she finds herself. The Diablo finally has convinced her to enter the church to steal the precious stones from the image of God in order to barter for the freedom of her imprisoned brother. As she enters the building, the playwright provides this stage direction: "Como enajenada, entra Beatriz dentro de la iglesia. Antes de entrar no puede resistir el movimiento habitual se cubre la cabeza" (pp. 179-180). The action of covering her head as she enters the church not only graphically demonstrates the fissure between the personal emancipation recommended by the Diablo and the contemporary religious tradition, but it is also highly ironic that she engage in this rite of piety while preparing to attack the object of that piety.

Edwards leads us toward an additional example of internal ritual in the play. As he indicates in his book, the efficaciousness of visual images in communicating an idea is one of the main motivations behind the develop-

ment of the dramatic ritual of the Middle Ages. Solórzano uses some of the same images we would expect to find in a medieval *auto*, as well as others which are highly original. For example, in the second act, the priest has rejected Beatriz's request for the money necessary to buy her brother's freedom. She is then rejected by her peers who understand poignantly the pains of poverty and who can commiserate with her but who are unable to contribute to the alleviation of her suffering. As the townspeople wander pointlessly about the stage, Beatriz becomes the only fixed form in a sea of motion. The author describes the next scene in his directions: "Beatriz se hinca en mitad de la escena, mientras los transeúntes pasan en todos los sentidos indiferentes, en una marcha mecánica. Ella está bajo un cono de luz" (p. 166). The image created is one of abandonment as she kneels alone in the midst of the crowd. The cone of light seems to heighten the disparity between her situation and the somber forms who move about but never enter the light that surrounds her.

A second significant visual image is the cross, whose importance in early dramatic rituals Edwards stresses (p. 37). It was usually located on the rood beam high above the chancel of the church. During an Easter-time production it would be lowered from its position and ceremoniously shrouded for use in the dramatic ritual. As a symbol the cross was central to the action of many of the medieval religious plays. We should not be surprised, then, to find it portrayed symbolically in Solórzano's modern *auto*. Because of the inversion already described, we cannot expect the symbol of sacrifice for freedom to be housed in the temple of hypocrisy. Rather, it is in the *plaza* of the town, within access of all the people, and is represented by the trunk of a tree. Here Beatriz consummates her sacrifice for personal freedom, the ultimate expression and goal of this religious ritual.

Another significant image is that of the curtain of fear, linked visually and symbolically with the theatre's curtain that appears at the end of the first act. It is this curtain that prevents the people from seeing the Diablo and recognizing his role as the spirit of progress. The Devil is ecstatic as he searches for a way to communicate with the people:

Para ellos es como si estuviera detrás de una cortina; la cortina del miedo. (Grita): Abran la cortina, ábranla de una vez por todas! (El telón comienza a cerrarse, poco a poco, mientras el pueblo busca al Diablo sin comprender). ¡Abranla, he dicho! ¡Abranla! ¡Abranla! (El Diablo sigue clamando hasta cerrarse el telón.) (p. 147)

The technique of appropriating the physical effects of the theatre itself to produce an image relates directly to the customs of the Middle Ages. Just as the curtain functions here both to give power to an image by moving from the abstract to the concrete and to heighten the dramatic awareness of the spectators, so the medieval artists made use of their theatre, the church, to present their message. The technique is not limited to religious theatre, however. For example, we see similar uses of physical elements of the theatre in Buero Vallejo's manipulation of total darkness in *En la ardiente oscuridad*.

There is one last characteristic of Solórzano's ritual related to the medieval custom that should be mentioned and that can also serve as an introduction to

consideration of Solórzano's play as part of an inherently ritualistic literary game. The diabolically produced vision that takes place during the second act is of central importance to the play. Although disconsolate, Beatriz had up to this time not committed herself to rob from the Church. However, after the fantastic vision of the past, a type of thematic *deus ex machina*, she is no longer able to resist the Diablo's offer and delivers herself to him. Her words, "Y que sea lo que tú has querido," reflect her newfound determination (p. 179). It is difficult to miss the connection between this comment and the statement attributed to Christ in Gethsemane. This vision disrupts the work's linear progression of time as Satan takes Beatriz through a fantasy world (reinforced by the stage lights) of her past and prophetically shows the future execution of her brother (which we can assume was fulfilled, in spite of Beatriz's sacrifice). This vision in time reflects the technique found in many medieval works as they showed preference for principle over history or chronology.

However, there is another aspect of this dramatic vision that lies at the heart of the ritualistic nature of the play. Northrop Frye indicates in his discussion of myth in *Anatomy of Criticism* that ritual is seen to be a dream in movement.¹² The visionary experience that comprises the fulcrum for the play deals specifically with the development of Beatriz's brother. Two key events are treated carefully. First, the Devil reveals the man as a young child who is being punished by his mother for having bought something for himself with the money found in an unclaimed wallet. The young boy sees the money as being rightfully his in partial compensation for all he has had to forego. Later we see this same spirit of rebellion fester as the brother (significantly always called *el hombre* and never by a proper name) protests the appropriation of his inherited land by the omnipresent Amo. His action ultimately carries him to face a firing squad.

Frye also indicates that ritual is related to the expression of desire or "wish thinking" (p. 104). We have established already that true ritualistic theatre deals with events that tend to be archetypally rather than historically significant. It would be easy to classify this work superficially as social-political criticism. Undoubtedly that element exists. However, Leighton warns us about the limitations of this type of "engaged literature" in an exposition on Coleridge's determination of vitality in poetry. He writes: "He would seem, accordingly to my interpretation of this, to imply that where only the known or measurable is treated; where the imagination does not elevate the heart and mind beyond the earthly, that poetry is not being created" (p. 11). If Solórzano is to achieve something that transcends social literature, he must do so by expressing concerns that are a part of human existence. It is only through this process that his work becomes ritualistic in the true sense of the term. The desire central to the play is couched within the yearning to gain freedom by overcoming fear. Only those characters who conquer their fear of independence are able to find freedom in the end. Obviously, the kind of freedom in question is not only political but psychological and spiritual. However, the Diablo leaves little doubt during his debate with the priest that freedom on a spiritual, moral or psychological plane will eventually result in physical freedom as well, although we never see this realized in the play.

In a ritualistic format there are two ways that the author can present the fundamental element of desire. It can be treated in connection with the cycle and periodicity of human existence or it can be expressed in dialectical terms. Solórzano does both in the play. Frye explains:

There is . . . a moral dialectic in desire. The conception of a garden develops the conception "weed," and building a sheepfold makes the wolf a greater enemy. Poetry in its social or archetypal aspect, therefore, not only tries to illustrate the fulfillment of desire, but to define the obstacles to it. Ritual is not only a recurrent act, but an act expressive of a dialectic of desire and repugnance: desire for fertility or victory, repugnance to drought or to enemies. We have rituals of social integration, and we have rituals of expulsion, execution, and punishment (p. 106).

The dialectic of desire pervades Solórzano's play. In fact, the inversion of roles is a form of this dialectic. The desire for freedom through overcoming fear and by gaining knowledge is traditionally represented as being a result of Satan's temptations in the Garden. Yet in this play we have the dialectic or demonic counterpart of the symbol of the Garden. Rather than a paradise, the countryside is barren and hostile. The Campanero describes the environment in which his interview with the Diabolo took place: "Yo estaba sentado sobre un tronco; veía ocultarse el sol detrás de esos montes amarillos y secos, pensaba que este año no tendremos cosechas, que sufriremos hambre . . ." (p. 99). This is no paradise. The trees are mere dead trunks, not fruitful sources of delight. The sun does not set; it hides itself behind the hills. The greenness of paradise is transformed into dry, yellow hills. Starvation is a threat to daily existence. The desire for knowledge has been taken out of its archetypal setting and placed in an inhospitable world.

The dialectic is not seen merely in the physical environment. The desire itself as expressed by the Diabolo, Beatriz and her brother has its dialectical form. As Frye says, the ritual seeks not only to define desire but to illustrate the obstacles preventing one from obtaining it. Solórzano's characters who seek liberty are opposed by those who are totally dominated by fear and are afraid of the knowledge and the responsibility intellectual freedom implies. It is the strength of the dialectical forces that turns the play into a tragedy. Satan, Beatriz and the Brother fail tragically. However, their failure, through catharsis, drives the dramatic experience into the hearts of the spectators and forces them to analyze the dialectical forces in their own life and to guess the outcome of the conflict.

The failure of the play's "ritual within a ritual" suggests its classification as a tragedy. In religious terms ritual evokes a consciousness of the powers and principles of salvation that lead the individual toward actions commensurate with that salvation. In *Las manos de Dios* no such illumination is produced. The parishioners continue in their pattern of silent civil conformity, failing to perceive the opportunities that can be theirs if they break out of the collective conscience. Beatriz fails in her primary goal of saving her brother, and the Diabolo finds himself again bound by the invisibility forced on him by the

people's blind obedience. As the curtain falls there is little reason to hope for the redemption of the world that Solórzano has created.

Some might interpret the last lines expressed by the Diabolo as a sign of hope for the future. In response to Beatriz's pleas that he not despair because of the failure of his plan, the Diabolo concludes: "Está bien . . . Seguiré luchando; libraré de nuevo la batalla, en otro lugar, en otro tiempo, y algún día, tú muerta y yo vivo, seremos vencedores" (p. 225). Christianity is not consistent theologically with the concept of tragedy. The Christian tradition of redemption and eventual renewal provides eternal hope that removes the pathos from tragedy. M. H. Abrams explains in *Natural Supernaturalism*:

. . . paganism is hopeless, but Christianity gives man hope. . . . Despite its emphasis on a lost paradise in the distant past, and however thoroughgoing the contempt for life on this world among apologists, the persistent pressure of the Christian view of history is not retrospective but strongly prospective; for always, the best is yet to be.¹³

However, we must remember that Solórzano has consistently inverted Christian values. Where we might normally expect the hope of salvation to be an undercurrent of the play, we find only hopelessness. There is not renewal. The north winds blow and desolate an already desolate environment. The townspeople, in spite of their momentary glimpse of a better world, are again entrenched in servility to the Amo. The text does not allow us to believe that "the best is yet to be." If we were to project what would take place in case the action were extended past the third act, we could only infer that the people would continue in their feudal relationship to the Amo, and that the Diabolo would renew his futile efforts to instill the spirit of progress into the minds of men. The situation would be the same; the action would be circular. Since there is no hope for the Christian within the circle, the tragic nature of the play is verified.

Tragedy is connected with autumn while we associate comedy with the springtime or Easter and its symbolism of the resurrection. Since the play is a tragedy we would expect reference to the cyclical harvest that comes during the autumn. Here again we find the demonic counterpart to the harvest. There will be no successful crop. The Campanero foreshadows that event in the first scene. The sterility of the fields parallels the sterility of the minds of the people. The superstition of the peasants causes them to blame the destruction of the crops on the north wind, and it is the same north wind that simultaneously takes the life of the crops and of the protagonist. Thus, the unwillingness to challenge is directly or indirectly responsible for the loss of both the source of their physical nourishment (the crops) and their spiritual hope (Beatriz).

Ritualistic tragedy helps men to "laugh with the gods" at their situation and thereby overcome the fear that is part of mortal existence. Carlos Solórzano, through the ritualistic dimension of this work, brings the function of ritual directly into the lap of his audience. Just as the spectator strains at the end of the first act to see the Diabolo as he disappears behind the curtain of fear, so must he continue to reflect upon the whole of the ritualistic experience that the work represents, and he must personally deal with the same questions and

decisions made by Beatriz. As he does so, the classical catharsis is complete: the medieval spectacle of the dramatization of an allegory of the dialectical forces of nature has been driven home, and the spectator is raised to a higher level of understanding by his encounter with modern-day ritual.

Leonard Chabrowe gives the following insight into the poetics of Eugene O'Neill: "Only art could turn doubt into will and despair into acceptance. Only art could release his pain of spirit and allow him to transcend himself."¹⁴ This is precisely the effect of *Las manos de Dios*. Art has turned doubt and despair into emotions that are tangible, thereby allowing the concerned spectator to deal with them in a productive way.

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Notes

1. "Memoranda on Masks," *The American Spectator Yearbook*, ed. George Jean Nathan et al. (New York: Stokes, 1934), pp. 166-67.
2. J. P. Quepin, *The Tragic Paradox* (Amsterdam: Adolph M. Hakkert, 1968), pp. 1-5.
3. Francis Edwards, *Ritual and Drama: The Medieval Theatre* (London: Lutterworth, 1976), pp. 9-19. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text.
4. *Poetry and Ritual* (Johannesburg: Rand Afrikaans University, 1970), p. 11. Subsequent references to this work are noted parenthetically in the text.
5. Several critics have commented on the theological and social implications of Solórzano's theatre. Frank Dauster described Solórzano in 1958 as one of the new playwrights contributing to the resurgence of the Latin American theatre ("Hacia el teatro nuevo: un novel autor dramático," *Hispania*, 41 [1958], 170-72). In a later essay Dauster emphasizes the Guatemalan's concern for cosmopolitan problems placed within a regional setting. He calls the play a tragedy, reasoning that the "immemorial myth of rebellion" fails to liberate either the Devil or Beatriz ("The Drama of Carlos Solórzano," *Modern Drama*, 7 [1964], 89-100). Peter J. Schoenbach points to the structure of the play that reflects the *auto*. He notes that the playwright uses character inversion as a tool to express the idea that the struggle between good and evil is decided by love, hope and rebellion ("La libertad en *Las manos de Dios*," *Latin American Theatre Review*, 3/2 [Spring 1970], 21-29). Solórzano's development as a dramatist and his technical and thematic interests are the subject of Esteban Rivas' book (*Carlos Solórzano* [Mexico: Anáhuac, 1970]). L. Howard Quackenbush, who has studied extensively the religious theatre in Latin America, points to the antitraditionalism inherent in this play as well as in other works throughout Central America (see n. 8).
6. Aristotle, *Poetics, On Style* (Demetrius), ed. T. A. Moxon (London: J. M. Dent, 1943), p. 25.
7. Diego Marín and Angel del Río, *Breve historia de la literatura española* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 372.
8. L. Howard Quackenbush, "El antitradicionalismo religioso del teatro centroamericano actual," *Chasqui*, 9, No. 2-3 (1980), 14-17.
9. Carlos Solórzano, *Las manos de Dios: Auto en tres actos*, in *Teatro de Carlos Solórzano*, (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1972), p. 109. Subsequent references to this work are noted in the text.
10. *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), p. 48.
11. Frank Calcott, *The Supernatural in Early Spanish Literature, Studied in the Work of the Court of Alfonso X, El Sabio* (New York: Instituto de las Españas de los Estados Unidos, 1923).
12. *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 107. Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text.
13. *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p. 37.
14. *Ritual and Pathos: The Theatre of O'Neill* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1976), p. xii.