The Impossibility of Freedom in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*

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The Impossibility of Freedom in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*

Matthew John Di Giordano

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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Critics generally read the matter of diagetic subjectivity as existential in Carlos Solórzano’s works *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*. This study, however, seeks to explore the possibility of non-existential modes of subjectivity in these dramas. It posits an Althusserian mode of subjectivity due to the central conflict of the plays revolving around the oppressive rituals of a controlling church institution. Although the author expresses existential ideals, a reading that takes into account the issue of the church as an ideology producing mechanism, as well as its modes of operation, shows that on the diagetic level the experience of the characters is one in which they find themselves in a world where individuals operate as non-autonomous subjects.

Keywords: Carlos Solórzano, *Las manos de Dios*, *El sueño del ángel*, subjectivity, Althusser, ideology, rituals
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Introduction

Carlos Solórzano and the Ever so Problematic Issue of Subjectivity

Whether for his body of critical studies or for his dramatic work, Carlos Solórzano has played a key role in Mexican and Latin American Theater during the 20th century while working at the UNAM as Director Artístico del Teatro Universitario Profesional as well as Catedrático de Composición Dramática y Teatro Hispanoamericano. The universal themes in the playwright’s work perhaps reflect his varied and dynamic personal formation. Born in San Marcos, Guatemala in 1922, Solórzano moved to Mexico at the age of 16. Although desiring a career as a classical pianist, his family pushed him toward receiving his licenciatura in architecture at the UNAM (1945). He went on, afterwards, to obtain a Doctor en Letras, studying the works of Miguel de Unamuno. As recipient of a Rockefeller Foundation Scholarship, Solórzano then traveled to France, which would become a defining period of his life in which he was exposed to a world of contemporary European thought and was able to enter into elite intellectual and artistic circles and become friends with influential figures and dramatists such as Camus and Ghelderode.

Solórzano’s contact with Parisian circles heightened his interest in existential philosophy, which would come to be a main influence in his theatrical production when he returned to México as a member of the faculty at the UNAM. Upon addressing existential issues, Solórzano always maintains an ethical edge, frequently exploiting organized religion as his favored target because of its frequent role as oppressor. One of his principal questions is how man can reconcile himself to the world which he has created (Méndez-Faith 106). If the anxiety and anguish that man feels derives from the illogical nature of the universe, as he suggests in the interview with Méndez-Faith, then man deals with this by creating meaning for himself, historically through religion. Solórzano’s works attack the problem of doing so without precipitating to his own
destruction. His critique goes directly to the heart of the nature of the mechanics of institutions:

Creo que la religión católica y la moral burguesa nos han hecho creer que es malo lo que es bueno. . . . Nos han hecho creer que pertenece al demonio lo que toda religión atribuye a Dios: el amor a la vida, el amor a la libertad, el amor a sí mismos, el deseo de disfrutar los bienes de la vida, el horror a la miseria.

(Feliciano, “Myth and Theatricality in Three Plays by Carlos Solórzano” 131)

His plays, thus, present the horror that is man’s life in confrontation with the very institutions he has created precisely because of the way in which they have made men complacent to their self-inflicted oppression. This issue is central to Las manos de Dios and El sueño del ángel where we see the dominance of the church as an institution which controls and oppresses, stifling man’s progress rather than helping him transcend himself.

Interestingly, Solórzano chooses to employ both the imagery and form of his targets in order to be subversive toward them. He himself admits that as a child he was always attracted to the theatricality of the church, both in its rites as well as in its explicit theatrical form: the auto (Feliciano, El teatro mítico de Carlos Solórzano 25-6). Critical studies have heavily emphasized his inversion of Christian symbols, values, and theatrical roles as a means to criticize the dogma of the church\(^1\) which he feels results in creating deep guilt and fear in the lives of human beings rather than helping them realize themselves. The playwright’s choice to employ Christian imagery may simply be an artistic decision, the philosophy that the sting of blasphemy is more effective than the outright denial of God (Feliciano, El teatro mítico 52); or it may be, as Schoenbach states, that Solórzano “no puede dejar de plantear su punto de vista en términos

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\(^1\) See Feliciano, El teatro mítico and “Myth and Theatricality,” Quackenbush, Devotas irreverencias and “El antirradicalismo religioso,” Rosenberg, and Reed.
cristianos,” showing “un conflicto interior entre una atracción vital hacia el mito de la crucifixión y una desilusión para con el catolicismo” (21). Regardless of why he uses this particular method to criticize institutions, it is clear that Solórzano has an ethical goal in mind: freedom and progress for mankind.

Our present thesis will discuss the following two works by Carlos Solórzano: Las manos de Dios and El sueño del ángel. In these two plays we note a very fatalistic approach to the topic of freedom and progress; things never pan out quite perfectly, in fact, they end tragically. In order to understand the author’s sense of fatalism, it will be helpful to more carefully consider the cause of the struggle within these dramas. The central conflict revolves around the church that enslaves; however, in Las manos de Dios there also exists a more hidden, but equally important, antagonist: the Amo. Solórzano’s mention of the bourgeoisie alongside the church in his interview with Feliciano² highlights this tyrannical collaboration of those in power. Ostergaard, in her work “Semiología de la destrucción y de la autodestrucción en el teatro de Carlos Solórzano,” maps this collaboration between the Amo and the church and dissects the victory of the institution by studying the presence of corporal destruction in the plays. Her study traces the connections between the agents and recipients of corporal destruction which oftentimes results in a kind of reflexive destructive action; the church and the state, although sometimes directly punishing its subjects, more significantly, causes the victims to inflict physical castigation on their own bodies in Las manos de Dios and El sueño del ángel.

It is fascinating to note that, although Ostergaard wishes to connect her work with the existential studies of the plays, upon discussing the way in which institutions induce subjects to perform rites and rituals, she cannot help but slip into notions which seem Althusserian in nature.

² See Feliciano, “Myth and Theatricality.”
(which we will explicitly discuss toward the end of the second chapter of this work). An interesting problem arises: the matter of existential and Althusserian subjectivities. Existential ontology grounds itself in a mode of subjectivity which posits the subject as rational and autonomous, existing in its environment in which it is condemned to be free to act. On the other hand, the Althusserian critique of ideology works through Marxist materialism in such a way as to disregard any notion of an existential subjectivity; the subject is always already constructed by ideological means; it does not govern itself, it does not exhibit volition. The two philosophical approaches are, therefore, mutually exclusive based on their stance regarding subjectivity.

The fatalistic approach that we see in Solórzano’s critique of institutions seems to reflect the impossibility of freedom from ideology that we would expect from the Althusserian subject, as opposed to the potential for existential authenticity. However, Méndez-Faith connects the brutal outcomes of Solórzano’s work with trends in existentialism; she asks the author if “ese pesimismo—casi fatalismo [. . .]—que permea gran parte de su obra” stems from this philosophy or if there is some real life experience that runs deep beneath the fatalism found in his plays. In his response, Solórzano resists an explicit categorization with the existentialists. When we consider the playwright’s evasion of a direct link with existentialism in connection with Ostergaard’s emphasis on the process by which institutions dominate individuals through rituals in these plays, the question arises as to how exclusively must we treat the matter of existentialism in the works of Carlos Solórzano? Clearly, many aspects of the philosophy maintain a strong presence throughout his works. Nevertheless, we see Ostergaard’s work taking steps toward what appears to be other possibilities of subjectivization despite her accounting for existential themes.

Perhaps an exploration of non-existential modes of subjectivization would be helpful in
providing alternative readings that would more deeply reveal the process by which the institutions (that Solórzano is attacking) are able to subjugate the characters in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*. Taking into account the fatalistic outcomes of these two works, as well as the mechanisms and processes which lead to such results (institutions and ideological practices), can we determine that the possibility for existential freedom exists for the characters in these plays? Is there evidence in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel* that would allow us to take into account other types of subjectivity which are non-existential? Would such an approach to the works even be helpful? In order to address these issues we will primarily base our theoretical perspective on the thought of the post-Marxist French philosopher Louis Althusser, particularly those which most directly relate to his particular mode of describing the process of subjectivization; ideological interpellation. We will secondarily and occasionally look to the Slovenian postmodern Lacanian Marxist Slavoj Žižek for additional insights into the role of ideology, practice, and the possibility of subversiveness. Appendix B, at the end of this thesis, provides a brief discussion of Althusser and Žižek as far as their relevance to this study is concerned.

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3 See Appendix B for a brief detour through relevant Althusserian theory. We will mostly treat the matter of Žižek as it appears in the body of this work, although some notes on how we will use him in relation to Althusser are also available in Appendix B. Žižek’s relating the symbolic order to Althusserian ideology will be helpful in several instances. Nevertheless, we will be sure to limit our use of Žižek to topics where his views would enlighten an Althusserian reading of the text without pitting his and Althusser’s theories at odds. With regard to a fundamental difference on the two theorist’s views on subjectivity, we will use Žižek in one instance to illustrate that this difference is not fundamental in terms of Solórzano’s text; the action of the plays is such that although Žižek may provide the possibility of an escape from ideology, and open up the possibility of existential subjectivity, Solórzano’s plays, in such critical instances, do not take such a stance, but rather, divert toward Althusser, emphasizing the process of ideological subjectivization.
This critical work will unfold as follows: Chapter one of this thesis will treat the matter of subjectivity in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*. Its focus is on the way in which Solórzano portrays the institution of the church as oppressive; we will address the issue using Althusserian ideas to analyze the relationship of the church to the people, in the sense of how it carries out the project of creating subjects through rituals and practices, resulting in our claim of the impossibility of the characters’ existential freedom. Additionally, our discussion will, at times, move behind an strictly Althusserian reading in order to encounter some of Žižek’s ideas which will assist in understanding what it is that the church seeks to hide through ideology in Solórzano’s universe. In the second chapter we will take a close look at the protagonists of the two works in order to see if the details involving their actions in the plays likewise exhibit evidence for a non-existential mode of subjectivity. During this process we will confront the issue of *inversión de papeles* and the author’s purpose of being subversive toward institutions. Overall, goal will be to show how considering the exclusion of the existential subject may reveal a greater understanding of exactly what Solórzano is criticizing in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*: the oppressive methods that institutions employ which render one’s ability to act autonomously impossible.

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4 For the reader’s benefit, Appendix A provides a quick sketch of the action of the plays being discussed in this work.
Chapter 1
Freedom for the Pueblo?: Subjectivity, the Role of the Church, Ideology, and Rituals

Since *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel* are littered with sequences of action and dialogue which strongly correspond to the examples of ideological subjectivization that Louis Althusser presents in his works (the emphasis on prayer, kneeling, the role of the church as an ideological apparatus, etc.), a space opens up to explore the matter of subjectivity in the plays from an Althusserian standpoint. Our present focus is to contemplate the following possibility: that the world which Solórzano builds for his characters is literally one in which the very idea of the autonomous-subject is impossible. Upon arriving at the final scenes of these two plays, which both depict man as a robotic creature rather than a being with the freedom to act, we realize that such a reading make sense. Given that we can easily view the central conflict of the church’s ideological rule as Althusserian, we will propose an approach to the text which claims that the Pueblo in *Las manos de Dios* and the Mujer in *El sueño del ángel* face the impossibility of freedom as ideological subjects. Additionally, it will be helpful to play with some Žižekian ideas revolving around ideology. Although Žižek is not strictly an Althusserian critic, his frequent discussion of Althusser concerning the topic of ideology often goes beyond Althusser in such a way as to reveal insightful psychoanalytic themes which provide a deeper look at the traumatic element that ideology seeks to mask, as well as its relevance to ritual practice; both of these ideas will be helpful in exploring the brutal reality which the ideology of the church in Solórzano’s plays seeks to cover up.

The Role of the Church as Ideological Apparatus:

In order to consider and justify a possible reading of Solórzano that takes into account an
Althusserian view of subjectivity, we must begin by displaying the prominence of certain elements which are Althusserian in nature. Our first matter at hand is to explore the way in which the dramatist has the church enter into conflict with the characters in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*; that is to say, what role does the church play as antagonist in these works? Given that the religious institution executes the role of the central ideological apparatus in both works, we will discuss the ways in which it produces and maintains ideology among its subjects.

In Althusser’s seminal essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” he speaks of the ideological apparatus which is characteristic of the Western World during the preindustrial age: the church. This is precisely the dominating and oppressive organization that is in question in *El sueño del ángel* and *Las manos de Dios*. Practically mirroring Althusser’s list of materialized ideological practices that the church commands, the main actions at hand in these plays are kneeling, prayer, confession, church attendance, and self-mutilation/flagellation (as a rite of penance). Having mentioned a preliminary list of ritualistic practices that relate to the ideological apparatus of the church, it will be helpful to establish and discuss the material presence of the apparatus (the church) in the works and, following that, the manifestation of rituals and practices that it uses in order to create subjects (i.e. kneeling, prayer, etc.).

In *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*, ideology is materialized in the ideological apparatus of the church. From one work to the other, however, the form in which Solórzano represents the church is always unique, even though its role remains consistent throughout the various works: to propagate ideology and thereby create subjects of ideology. Obviously,

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5 Here we are talking about “creating subjects” rather than “subjecting people” to ideology because the idea has to do with the creation of a certain kind of being. This is a notion of the subject which runs counter to the existential subject which thinks and acts autonomously according to its free will. Althusser speaks of ideology reaching individuals and transforming them into subjects through a very distinctive process which he calls
Solórzano’s goal is to criticize the entire ideological process, in the sense that he sees it as a means of oppression which blinds people;⁶ our goal is to suggest that because of how the author chooses to display the way in which ideology brutally controls man, his attack on institutions becomes extremely harsh since the shape it takes can be read as implying that the characters (or we) cannot actually do anything about their (or our) state of being due to processes of ideological subjectivization.

At the very heart of this matter in _Las manos de Dios_ and _El sueño del ángel_ is the role that the church assumes as ideological apparatus. The opening scene of _Las manos de Dios_ gives a clear indication of its place within the operation of ideology and establishes the Cura’s function as the embodiment of the ideological apparatus. The play begins with the Campanero, running

“interpellation.” Through interpellation we misrecognize ourselves as “free, ethical” subjects; to be free seems like an obvious given (Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” 171-2). The trick is that ideology that makes this seem obvious, but it is merely an “ideological effect,” as he would term it (172). Ideology hails or interpellates individuals, that is to say, it calls out to individuals and they (mis)recognize themselves in its call, similar to when you hear a police officer shout out “Hey you!” in the street and you turn and look, assuming he is talking to you (174). With ideology you not only assume that you are the intended recipient of said hailing, but your misrecognition of yourself in the call in such that it guarantees that your relationship with it is real (174, 178). Such instances are moments of (mis)recognition because an effect is produced in which the images and discourse around you make you feel as if you belong; the illusion is that society was created for you and that you have place in it.

⁶ In an interview, Solórzano states, “Creo que la religión católica y la moral burguesa nos han hecho creer que es malo lo que es bueno. . . . Nos han hecho creer que pertenece al demonio lo que toda religión atribuye a Dios: el amor a la vida, el amor a la libertad, el amor a sí mismos, el deseo de disfrutar los bienes de la vida, el horror a la miseria” (Feliciano, _Myth and Theatricality_ 131). His mention of the church is obvious, but his reference to “la moral burguesa” implies that bourgeois ideology is also a factor in making people neglect concepts such as liberty, love, etc.
into town with an apparently very urgent situation. He charges in, shouting, “¡Señor Cura! ¡Señor Cura!” and when the Sacristán approaches him in order to resolve his conflict, the Campanero first ignores him and then tolerates his intervention; however, two times during their conversation he insists, “Quiero ver al Señor Cura” (Solórzano, Teatro 151-53). His refusal of the Sacristán in favor of the Cura is very interesting in terms of the propagation of ideology; he needs the Cura because the person of the Cura embodies the ideological apparatus of the church and thus provides for certain needs which he has. As the Campanero speaks to the Sacristán, he experiences constant criticism. The latter finds it unimportant that a man dressed in black has appeared to the former out of nowhere. Therefore, he disregards the importance of the Campanero’s conversation with the Forastero and, furthermore, criticizes him of dreaming, imagining, being drunk, and lying.

What is important to note here is that the Campanero’s reaction to and rejection of the Sacristán in this situation is, at least in part, due to the latter’s inability to fulfill the role which both the Campanero and society in general require in order to operate in a stable manner; in other words, he rejects the Sacristán because the Sacristán does not fulfill his ideological needs. The Campanero is already an ideological creature, but the Sacristán’s complaints and insults toward him essentially are subversive to the established order. He basically tells the Campanero that what he believes (that he is seeing supernatural apparitions) is stupid and foolish, that he must be drunk in order to think he saw the devil. Due to the Sacristán’s incredulous attitude toward the Campanero in this particular scene, he is actually a subversive figure with regard to ideology.

The Cura, on the other hand, is a stark contrast to the Sacristán; he enters and is able to deliver exactly what the Campanero needs in order to feel stable; he is the embodied image of ideology, a materialized, mobilized form of thought and instruction. In this sense, Solórzano
takes the matter a step beyond Althusser’s claim that ideology becomes materialized in the concrete apparatus of the church. That is to say, Althusser’s claim is not entirely specific. How is the church concrete? Do we mean the building itself? Or are we referring to a body of leadership, committees, actual practitioners, or perhaps a book containing creeds?

*Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel* offer an interesting approach to the issue of materializing ideology by embodying it in a single character in each play. In *El sueño del ángel* this allows the dramatist to comment on and condemn ideology as an internal parasite through the character of the Ángel. He likewise analyzes and criticizes it through the Cura (in *Las manos de Dios*), but this time as an external organism which propagates and mediates ideological practice as an apparatus. Before moving on to a discussion of the role of ideology and the church in *El sueño del ángel*, we will first continue with *Las manos de Dios*, where Solórzano chooses to embody the entire ideological apparatus in a person external to the protagonist.

Since the Cura, as the representative of the “Amo-Dios” (Schoenbach 22), is the ideological apparatus of the church incarnate, the Campanero, when spooked by the Diablo’s appearance and flustered by the Sacristán’s critical remarks, does not turn directly to prayer nor to the mass, but immediately toward the Cura. It is he alone who can supply him with a more adequate interpretation of the world around him: “Era el Demonio, hijos míos. El mismo Demonio” (Solórzano, *Teatro* 155). Nevertheless, this type of information or thought is not quite enough to sustain the Campanero as an ideological subject; this must be accomplished through concrete practices. Even though the Campanero seeks the Cura for verbal answers or confirmation, the Cura does not merely give sermons; in fact, if that were all he were to do, then the Campanero would not remain very long within the arms of the church.

Solórzano is not taking his greatest stabs at how the church takes subjects and turns them
into deep thinking theological machines, for this is not how he portrays the ideological workings of the church. His plays explore much more vicious territory: the issue of how ideology reaches individuals and creates subjects without having to make them think at all; it simply turns their bodies into ideological sites. The Cura’s strongest and ultimate goal is always to direct subjects toward concrete practices and rituals in order to maintain the individuals of the Pueblo as thoroughly ideological beings. Therefore, when the Campanero approaches him for security, the Cura authoritatively commands both the Campanero and the townspeople to enter the church (including a command to increase frequency of church attendance) and to pray immediately to la imagen del Padre Eterno.

One may think that his command to go to church has everything to do with reinforcing ideology through thought rather than action; however, this idea is one that we will refute as we move to an analysis of specific ideological practices found in the plays. For the present time, suffice it to say, that we have no reason to believe that any cognitive processes occur while the subjects are within the walls of the cathedral; it is their moving their arms and legs, doing actions, their physically entering the church and praying, that sustains them and their bodies as sites of ideology and their persons as ideological subjects. Solórzano’s description of the Pueblo as becoming robotic as they practice these exact rituals at the end of the play assures us that the church is not a place of thought. Therefore, the Cura is merely the embodiment of ideology when he is functioning as one who does not focus on doctrinal instruction; rather, he produces results in which the pueblo practices rituals, performs ideology. He makes this absolutely clear in a scene in which he converses with Beatriz and confronts her desire for the church to help her brother.

The scene plays out in the following manner: Beatriz, extremely frustrated by the
situation of her brother being in jail, seeks assistance from the Cura. His response is to let her know that “Dios quiere el orden [ . . . ]” (177). This is obviously meant to be a comment on her brother’s state as a subversive, that he cannot go around stirring up the people, fighting against the established order. However, it is interesting to think of this comment in terms of Girard’s discussion on violence and the sacred which claims that order is created through the practice of rituals. Let us move from this idea to Althusserian terminology: if God, the ideological Subject, desires order, then the people, in turn, must create a stable relationship with Him through rituals. The Cura’s comment on order and stability at this point is very appropriate precisely because his actions in the play; he introduces order into the community through ritual practices of prayer, sacrifice and flagellation, showing his focus is on inducing the Pueblo toward practice rather than indoctrination.

This is further exemplified as the scene continues. After scolding Beatriz for her rebellious thoughts, she confesses to him the motive of her visit: the desire to petition the financial help she needs in order to get her brother out of jail. During the process of their conversation Beatriz vents her frustration, seeking answers as to why God punishes her brother in such a manner. After providing her with a brief answer that is not really meant to convey any degree of certainty, she throws herself to his knees, “besándole la mano con pasión” and begs for his help (178). He simply replies, “Es mi misión, hija, darte ayuda espiritual” (178). Of course, at this point we return to the question of what kind of ideology does Solórzano present and attack in these plays. Our claim is that he attacks ideology which materializes in enslaving concrete rituals and practices rather than in doctrine and teaching. As the Cura explains that he is supposed to provide spiritual assistance, Beatriz’s reaction gives us the answer to precisely what this so called

7 In Chapter 2 we will treat the matter of Beatriz’s rebellious nature in this scene, which is of utmost importance.
“help” entails: “[. . . ] le aseguro que ahora será más importante que me dé dinero y no que me llame a rezar” (179). In other words, the Cura’s method of “lending spiritual aid” (aka, of creating ideological subjects), once again, is through practices, such as that of prayer, which we see in this example.

Furthermore, the rest of the Cura’s answer to her plea gives us an additional clue which indicates that his role is to get people to practice ideology through ritual. We understand that this is his role because he tells us just what his job does not entail: indoctrination. He says, “Mi misión no es la de hacer comprender. No es necesario comprenderlo todo. Yo sólo soy el guardián. El que guía las ovejas del Señor” (179). How does he guide “las ovejas del Señor?” As Beatriz previously implied, all he does is call people to pray. As a shepherd feeds his flock, a subject of ideology must be fed, and the green pastures of ideology are precisely the performance of concrete rituals and practices by concrete individuals; this is the maintenance of the subjected subject.

It is for this reason that the ultimate act which the Cura performs has nothing to do with an end result of indoctrination and everything to do with practice (the Pueblo is seen as a mass of brainless robots in their final scene). The priest enables them to act as subjects through ritual practice. I refer to the aftermath of the long and heated struggle between the Cura and the Diablo in which the Diablo’s presence is a threat to order, to the social stability of the townspeople; the Cura reinstates order through his ability to triumph over the Diablo by inducing the Pueblo to three ritual practices: prayer, self-mutilation, and scapegoat sacrifice, the effects of which we will discuss on their own merits later on.

As the work reaches its climax, the Diablo uses the capture of and injustice toward Beatriz as a means of directing popular opinion away from the Cura. The result is a kind of battle
between the Cura and the Diablo for the favor of the Pueblo. As each of them exclaims his case to the Pueblo, the Pueblo becomes impassioned and speaks and moves in succession toward one and then toward the other, agreeing with one and then agreeing with the other. Solórzano makes use of the vacillating nature of the Pueblo, which sides with the Cura and then with the Diablo, in a most interesting way in order to break their cycle of leaping between sides and to affirm their nature as subjects of ideology. The Cura says, “No es posible rebelarse ante todo lo que Dios ha querido que sea.” The Diablo proclaims, “¡Sí, es posible!.” The Pueblo’s response to the Cura and the Diablo, “(Interrogante.) ¿Sí?” (202), comes at a crucial time, the precise moment that the Campanero appears in the doors of the church, calling out to the Cura. Apparently, the Campanero enters as an interruption, as a break in the Pueblo’s concentration, which diverts the Pueblo’s attention from a response (in favor of the Diablo) to a question directed toward the Campanero.

It is important to note that although at first glance it appears that the Pueblo decides against the words of the Diablo as a result of the message which the Campanero brings about the crops being lost and the north wind beginning to blow (202), we can view the Pueblo’s turning point as elsewhere. Things may not always be as they appear at first glance; the text of the play and the director’s vision of the scene may present us with other possibilities. In this scene the Diablo and the Cura each make a call to the Pueblo, and the Pueblo, in turn, responds positively first to the Diablo and then to the Cura. As this happens several times, in a back-and-forth kind of nature, the playwright takes advantage of the entrance of the Campanero to create a single response which is double in nature: it is a response to both the Diablo and the Campanero.

Rosenberg sees the argumentative structure of this scene as deriving from the medieval tradition where the dramatic ritual was presented in the form of a polarized verbal debate, leading to the climax of the play (43).
simultaneously. Although on the surface it appears that their question “¿Sí?” is simply a result of their attention being momentarily directed away from the Diablo and the Cura and toward the Campanero at the doors of the church, their question non-coincidentally crops up in a spot of extreme ambiguity in the text: it appears exactly where their response would be to the Diablo, since it is their turn to answer him. Their statement, “¿Sí?,” because of its highly skilled placement, becomes not merely an inquiry toward the Campanero, but a reply both to the Diablo and the Campanero simultaneously. While acknowledging the appearance of the Campanero and requesting an explanation of his visit, at the same time they are readily showing their doubt toward the Diablo’s final comment, “¡Sí, es posible!” They know that it is not!

The question is, why do they show doubt at this precise moment whereas they do not previously hesitate, but instead respond mechanically and unbiasedly to the petitions of both the Cura and the Diablo? Their response of “¿Sí?” in order to question the legitimacy of the Diablo’s claim, that man can in fact rebel against all that God has desired (202), is precisely a product of the Cura’s reminding them of their relationship to the ideological Subject when he says, “No es posible rebelarse ante todo lo que Dios ha querido que sea” (202). According to Althusser’s theory of ideology and subjectivity, ideology recruits subjects through a form of hailing which he terms interpellation. Lacan’s influence on Althusser is evident in this process; Elliot states that “Althusser is suggesting that human subjects are constituted in ideology, endowed with self-identity and the illusion of autonomy via (mis)recognition of themselves in the idealized images it offers for their inspection” (175).

The relation to the image here is evident; the people of the Pueblo recognize themselves, for a moment, in the person of the Diablo as well as the captive Beatriz (although even this recognition is an ideological misrecognition). They then re-recognize themselves in relation to
the image of God when the Cura tells them that it is not possible to rebel against God. In essence, ideology shouts out to them, “Hey you! That’s right, you! Your rebellion against God isn’t working!” The individuals of the Pueblo think, “Hey, they must be talking to me since I’m rebelling against God.” They (mis)recognize themselves in ideology’s call as subjects to God, the Subject.

Even when they see themselves in the image of the Diablo and Beatriz, *they are only viewing themselves in relation to the image of God.* All this time, the Diablo has been talking to them about rising up, but since they were already subjects of ideology since before they were born, to them, his talk about rising up, that this “tierra será de los hombres” (Solórzano, *Teatro* 202), does not simply mean that the land will belong to man, but that it will be man’s because man will take it from God. The Diablo does not only teach them that they are becoming free, but that they are becoming free *from God.* It is always in relation to Subject. This interpellation causes a misrecognition in which they think, “That’s right, *I am* rebelling against God.

As this process forces them to comprehend that their rebellion is against deity, each one of them has a realization of the following: “God just called out to me, therefore I exist, and I exist in relationship to Him.” As ideology and the subject thus mutually recognize each other, a guarantee is established that everything is as it should be, that they are subjects to God and that if they “behave accordingly, everything will be alright” (Althusser, *Lenin* 181). Therefore, the members of the Pueblo act accordingly. They allow themselves to be guided by the Cura who leads them to perform concrete rituals: they sacrifice Beatriz and then flagellate themselves in order for “everything to be alright.”9 It is at this moment that the Cura climactically solidifies his relationship to the Pueblo as the embodiment of the ideological apparatus.

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9 For Althusser’s description of this process, see “Ideology” 181.
Before moving on to the role that the Ángel plays as an ideology producing and sustaining mechanism in *El sueño del ángel*, similar to the Cura in *Las manos de Dios*, a brief detour to highlight the events of *El sueño del ángel* is due. In one act, the play portrays a fifty-year-old woman who is laden with torment from her years of dealing with the lack of reconciliation between her actions and the teachings of the church that she has internalized. The description of the setting that the playwright gives us reflects such a state of anxiety and disequilibrium. Her dwelling is the very reflection of abandonment and decrepitude: faded flowers, old musty furniture, the grinding of the gears of an old clock uncannily breaking the silence, and the Mujer herself, dressed in black, spewing out a sickly cough. In the shadows behind her stalks the Ángel, with the terrible contrast between baroque beauty and the dry death-like crunching of ancient wings (Solórzano, *Teatro breve* 41). The work plays out what is assumed to be a daily ritual of the Ángel conducting a torturous interrogation of the Mujer with questions about what he considers a crucial destructive event for her soul: her adulterous act with the husband of her sister many years before. At the time of the supposed event, the Ángel remained fast asleep, and thus he claims that “¡El sueño de un ángel puede ser la destrucción de un hombre!” (43). As the play proceeds we see that his questioning of her is simply a gateway to a violent display of brutality which the Ángel pleasurably wreaks down upon her, using the Mujer as her own vehicle of corporal destruction.

The characters in this play, as in many of Solórzano’s works, display his trademark inversion of roles and values;¹⁰ the Mujer, despite her sins, of which she affirms mightily that “el amor por malo que sea, es siempre algo bueno” (47), is the noble tragic hero who lacks the strength to do anything but bend and break under the weight of the church, which is once again

the oppressive institution that condemns rather than saves. The Ángel, who is charged with the duty to save, represents the murderous imposition of the brutally terrifying and destructive institution of the church. In the end, not at all unlike Las manos de Dios, the annihilative ritual of flagellation creates a robot, an ideological subject, leaving the Mujer stripped of her individuality and subjected to the will of the Ángel.

While in Las manos de Dios we saw that ideology and the church are embodied in the Cura, a character which is external to the protagonist and which is the main conflicting party to her desires and the Pueblo’s freedom, in El sueño del ángel we notice that the game changes. In this play Solórzano gives us a view into what happens on the inside when one is an ideological subject, that is, how ideology manipulates one from within. In order to create such a scenario, Solórzano creates a double\(^{11}\) for the protagonist: the Ángel, a character who can represent the ideological consciousness of the Mujer while simultaneously representing the church, the ideological apparatus.

At this juncture, it would be well to clarify the manner in which we are treating the analysis of the embodiment of the ideological apparatus in this section. The topic at hand is the role that the Ángel plays in the drama. Regardless of the fact that the Ángel represents part of the consciousness of the Mujer (symbolic function), he performs a second role, his literal function; as the antagonist he represents the ideological apparatus of the church and its values,\(^{12}\) whose duty is to force her to perform actions which are ideological rituals: confession and penance.

\(^{11}\) See Rivas 144-6.

\(^{12}\) “Creo que la religión católica y la moral burguesa nos han hecho creer que es malo lo que es bueno. . . . Nos han hecho creer que pertenece al demonio lo que toda religión atribuye a Dios: el amor a la vida, el amor a la libertad, el amor a sí mismos, el deseo de disfrutar los bienes de la vida, el horror a la miseria” (Feliciano, “Myth and Theatricality” 131).
through flagellation. Although Solórzano uses this character as a figurative representation of the Mujer’s consciousness, we are taking the liberty to play with Althusser’s ideas because in the literal “staged” representation of the drama Solórzano provides a material character to regulate ideological action. We previously discussed the question of exactly what it means for ideology to be material in a concrete institution, and we proposed that Solórzano makes ideology material in his plays by embodying it in one of the characters. In *Las manos de Dios* we saw this through the Cura, and in *El sueño del ángel* we turn to the Ángel as the one who Solórzano designates as the walking-talking embodiment of ideology. In this sense ideology becomes concrete and we can discuss what an Althusserian perspective reveals within the play: that, as the embodiment of the destructive institution, the Ángel’s primary role is to enslave the Mujer by making her an ideological subject through the practice of the institution’s rituals. Since Solórzano *also* uses this physical creature to symbolically represent the Mujer’s mind, this opens up an interesting space in which we can bring other important issues to light. When we view the Ángel’s symbolic role (part of the Mujer’s consciousness) alongside his literal role (the ideological apparatus of the church), new matters of importance are synthesized such as how ideology functions when it is transferred to the subject between the moment in which the ideological apparatus induces the subject to practice and when the subject actually finalizes her performance of those rituals. That is to say, between when the Mujer first receives instruction from the Ángel to confess and the moment in which that ideology is materialized through her robotic rite of corporal mutilation. These processes lead us to be able to posit an alternative view of subjectivity from that which is essential to existentialism; like the Cura in *Las manos de Dios*, the Ángel maintains the creation of the subject through ritual and practice rather than through thought, rendering the Mujer a kind of non-autonomous, physical-ideological space.
So as to not lose the vision of Solórzano’s intent given the nature of the play, we first note that the description reflects Solórzano’s vision of the dominating ideology of the church which the Ángel represents. The description of his physical appearance sets up his literal function as the incarnation of the ideological apparatus, an antagonizing force which maintains power over the Mujer as subject. There is something very troubling about the way he stalks in the shadows, how his motions seem to lead those of the Mujer, the way he constantly walks behind the Mujer’s back, how she never sees him. These actions remind us that ideology is something that always exists and which cannot be detected while forcing a degree of misrecognition; the ideological stance par excellence is to assure ourselves that we are not dominated by ideology since we cannot see it while we are within it.¹³ In this scene, the picture that Solórzano paints for the theater going public is one in which the Ángel is a kind of puppeteer: “Sus movimientos se verán repetidos a menudo por ésta, dando la impresión de que ambos están unidos por un hilo invisible semejante al de un títere” (Solórzano, Teatro breve 41). The description of him hiding in the shadows combined with his ability to manipulate her actions implies that she is not a free autonomous subject as the existential subject would be. While the Mujer believes that she can do what she wants, that she has free-will to live “authentically,” to escape from “God” even for just a minute, the shadows imply that she cannot know the extent of ideology’s control over her. By the end of the play, as the Ángel subjectivizes her through flagellation, the previous visual of his marionette-like control makes sense; she has always been firmly within the grasp of the church, even in her moments of “sin” it is the Ángel who violently controls her life through ritual

¹³ See Žižek, “The Spectre of Ideology” 10, 17. We will amplify the importance of this matter in the discussion of El sueño del ángel in Chapter 2 when the Mujer claims that she has been free and the Ángel mockingly replies, “¿Libre? ¿Libre de Dios? ¿Libre del bien y del mal?” (Solórzano, Teatro breve 47).
practice.

Equally disturbing is the stark juxtaposition of majesty and horror that we perceive in the Ángel. Literally, what we see is something that looks like it was carved out of cathedrals and galleries in Florence: a baroque image, strong, confident, and beautiful. In stark contrast, something about the appearance of Solórzano’s Ángel simultaneously screams out “terrible,” “authoritative” and “cruel.” We note the uncanny way in which his wings crunch as he moves them, which he does frequently, producing a sound that Solórzano describes as “seco y muerto” (41). In the description all the “beautiful” aspects are seen explicitly: “[...] a la manera de un San Miguel barroco; túnica corta, alas doradas y manto rojo” (41); but it is his terrible aspect which is most evident, even though it is not explicit, be it the crunching of the wings or that he is “demasiado sonrosado y fanfarrón, con un gesto firme en la cara en la que se adivina la crueldad” (41). In this play Solórzano presents the ideological apparatus of the church as something that has been symbolized (in the Lacanian sense) in such a way as to give it a deceptively noble quality; as is the case with symbolization, there always exists a terrible element that it cannot cover up completely. The Ángel, is unable to hide the brutal and shocking emptiness that ideology hides; a universe devoid of meaning lies behind the Mujer’s practice of ritual and rite, of prayer and devotion. This traumatic element leaks out through the very physical presence of the Ángel’s person in the form of the death-like crunching of wings and his look of perfection which is just a little too good to be true; the audience immediately perceives that darkness lies beneath his glorious image.

Literally, what we see in the play is a scenario in which the Ángel is pushing the Mujer to practice two rituals: confession and atonement. Timothy Reed treats the matter of confession in a number of Solórzano plays with the goal of expanding the topic of liberty in his works. His
criticism examines the rite of confession as a tool which the institution of the church uses to gain power and which seeks to show how the church uses confession as a means of limiting the individuality of the human being and inflicting suffering and death upon him (93). A discussion of several of his comments on the play will help us further determine the Ángel’s role as an ideological apparatus in the work. By inventing the details of the Mujer’s confession for her, the Ángel shows that it is the apparatus that determines the subjectivity of man rather than the man being capable of acting autonomously and determining itself; his intervention leaves her as a subject which cannot think but which displays the ideology of the church through her actions.

Here we are not arguing with the motive of Solórzano’s play which Reed points out, that the church uses confession as a kind of repressive discourse, that is, that the Ángel “inventa hasta cierto punto, dando los datos específicos del pecado según lo que él cree que ocurrió, antes de que ella tuviera la oportunidad de confirmarlos. De esa manera la confesión se convierte en [ . . . ] casi una ficción creada por el ángel porque sabe controlarla” (96). We affirm that this is the author’s goal. Our claim, simply put, is that the Ángel’s role in relation to such an institution is that he is effective at enacting this discourse, repressive to the extreme, which creates and maintains ideological subjects.

In the first place, the Ángel is very effective because he knows how to make the Mujer participate in a ritual even though she does not believe she has committed any wrong; this is the first step in affirming her as an ideological subject. As the rite of confession begins and the Ángel starts digging into the details of her actions, there is a certain amount of struggle on the Mujer’s part to confess something that she does not necessarily see as sin, or that may not have

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14 As a note, earlier we spoke of how the Cura’s role as ideological apparatus in Las manos de Dios was also to introduce action rather than thought and doctrine.
even happened. As she painfully recalls the scene, at a certain point in her story, precisely at the point in which the Ángel was not present, she cannot go on any longer. The Ángel takes over at this moment:

ÁNGEL: Continúa.

MUJER: No quiero.

ÁNGEL: Vas a hacerlo de todos modos. Nunca hemos llegado tan cerca de ese momento desconocido para mí . . .

MUJER: Eres cruel. No me tortures más. Déjame.

ÁNGEL: El entró, te besó de nuevo en la nuca en el lugar donde comenzaban a crecer tus cabellos, luego te besó los senos . . .

MUJER: ¡Oh, por Dios!

ÁNGEL: Y luego te poseyó sobre esta misma mesa. ¿No es verdad?

MUJER, llorando: No. No es verdad. (Solórzano, Teatro breve 48-9)

In this selection the Ángel is able to do something of utmost importance: force the Mujer to participate in the confession ritual, even though he is not able to convince her of her sin. As Reed says, the Ángel is making up the details, playing “bad cop,” so to speak. As he goes through with this process, he is able to do two things. First, he “creates” the sin by so naming it\textsuperscript{15} and, second, he puts her in a position in which he forces her to feel pain in relation to a certain act or situation, be it sin or not. The Ángel’s control of this oppressive discourse ensures his control over her as a subject and, therefore, her relationship to ideology. Even if she has not “sinned,” even if her

\textsuperscript{15} “For Foucault [. . .] the very prohibitive measures that categorize and regulate illicit desires effectively generate them.” (Žižek, The Ticklish Subject 251). By extension, the process of confession, in which sexual deviation is categorized, is part of a process which generates or “creates” sin.
actions have been good, the violent confession ritual that he puts her through creates a symbolic relationship between her and certain acts which the church categorizes as “sin.”

In the case of the Cura in *Las manos de Dios*, we stated earlier that the duty of the ideological apparatus is not to convert someone mentally to ideology, but to transform them into an ideological space by making them practice a ritual. In this scene we see that, likewise, the Ángel leads the Mujer into practicing a ritual even though he does absolutely nothing to change her mental position on the matter. We understand that his goal is not to mentally subject, because we see in him an absolute lack of an attempt at being convincing in the sense of persuading her to believe the details which he has provided for her (as seen in the previous selection). Earlier in the play, she almost apologetically says that she thought that for a moment she could be free but that she did not mean to deceive him (47); however, his turning her into an emotional wreck through the brutal confession process that he imposes upon her makes her, on a mental basis, become even more distant from his words, less convinced by his story. Even so, Reed is correct when he says that as the Ángel makes this all up he knows *exactly what he is doing*, that through *confession* he can control her. He understands that his job is not to get her to think a certain way, but rather, just to participate in the ritual process. Due to the fact that he knows that he will be able to turn her into an ideological subject through these means, he extends the rite of confession and heightens her emotional distress by playing the game to the point of an outburst on her part. This is his goal all along because putting an abrupt end to the first part of the ideological ritual prepares her to move on to the second part:

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16 “In ideology men do indeed express, not the relation between them and their conditions of existence, but the way they live the relation between them and their conditions of existence: this presupposes both a real relation and an ‘imaginary,’ ‘lived’ relation” (*Althusser, For Marx* 233).
ÁNGEL: Te disculpabas ante ti misma diciéndote que él te había violado. Pero aquel acto constituyó para ti al mismo tiempo un placer [. . .]. ¿No es verdad? Dilo de una vez [. . .].


ÁNGEL: Ahora sé la verdad.

MUJER, desafiante: Sí. . . Y ahora que lo sabes, ¿qué piensas hacer?

(Pausa)

ÁNGEL: Llevamos recorrido apenas la mitad del camino. La mitad que nos conduce al conocimiento de la verdad. . . Debemos recorrer juntos aún la otra mitad.

MUJER: ¿La otra mitad?

ÁNGEL: Sí. . . La del arrepentimiento. . . (49-50)

Not for one minute does the Ángel convince the Mujer. Even leading up to the very end of the play her thoughts never change on the matter: “No podrás convencerme[,] [. . .] sé que quiero ser libre de ti y de todo lo que ensombrece la vida [. . .]” (50-1). Reed backs this up by stating that “Al final de la obra, la mujer todavía quiere rebelarse contra el ángel, pero no puede, y se queda azotándose para arrepentirse de una acción que no entiende como pecado” (97). However, that the goal of the church is to control and manipulate human thought as Reed claims (103) is not so clear in this play; the Ángel does not control or manipulate her into thinking that what she did was wrong; nevertheless, he is successful in producing his desired results by the end of the

17 We will discuss the matter of the Mujer’s lack of freedom in the third chapter of this work.
play. Reed’s statements are contradictory. He says that the Ángel knows exactly what he is doing but also states that his goal is to control human thought. If, as Reed says, the woman still wants to rebel against the Ángel up to the very end of the work, then the Ángel has failed in controlling her thoughts. But, how would the Ángel fail if he knows exactly what he is doing? There must be some other answer.

I propose that the Ángel’s goal is to create a subject devoid of thought through practice; essentially, he creates a robot (according to Solórzano’s description of the Mujer). Robots don’t think, they don’t believe, they just do action as instructed. The Ángel finds himself completely unhindered from having her go through the rituals of confession and atonement. Putting her through the process of confession renders her far from autonomous even though it doesn’t convince her of her “sin.” The result is that she still mutilates her body anyway. In the end, he simply begins to say the words and tells her to repeat, just as he had told her to confess: “Soy culpable y expiaré mi culpa…” (Solórzano, Teatro breve 52), and she does. Since his duty is for her to be non-thinking, he does not have to convince her of anything, just get her through the ritual and the rest is taken care of; her body becomes an ideological space and her person a subject. This is evident at the end of the play as we see the outcome unfold before our eyes: the Mujer, “como una autómata,” repeats his words slowly and carefully as she beats herself

18 Also, we do not consider that she is convinced in the end just because she begins reciting the words of the atonement. The play has a circular nature. Previous to the day in which the play takes place, she has recited the same words on a daily basis over the course of many years. As the first act of the drama begins, she is not convinced of her “sins” in the least. As we expect the same process to begin again in the day following the final scene of the work, we have reason to believe that the process will repeat itself and that she will not be any more convinced of her sins after beating herself than she was before. The Ángel’s purpose of confession and atonement, therefore, is not to turn her into a believing subject.
mercilessly with a whip to the tune of the Ángel’s orgasmic laughter (53-4).

When we consider now that the Ángel does not only have a literal role as ideological apparatus with the duty to create her as a subject, but that he also has a symbolic role as part of the Mujer’s consciousness, we get a very precise picture of Solórzano’s criticism of the ideological process and how it becomes internalized. If the Ángel is symbolically within her, then he is literally a re-creation of the image of the exterior ideological apparatus (the Cura) within her body. She has already been instructed by the church to practice prayer, confession, and self-inflicted punishment for sins. As she internalizes ideology, the apparatus is rebuilt within her in the form of the Ángel, and at this point she herself becomes the embodiment of ideology and is thereby enabled to carry out these practices that she has been instructed to perform previously. Seen from this angle, the materialization of the ideological apparatus is not only in the buildings of the church or in the individuals who constitute the leadership of the church, it is also in the practicing members of the church.

The battle between the Ángel and the Mujer, his insistence on controlling her and her obsession over maintaining sovereignty, is just a natural part of what occurs within the subject as it struggles to create and re-create itself in the image of the ideological apparatus. This creates a symbolic existence; that is, the Mujer lives the relationship to her conditions of existence on a day to day basis through repeated acts and rituals. In terms of freeing herself from the Ángel, his role as internalized ideology prohibits it; he is the part within her that compels her to practice a certain kind of relationship to the world around her through the rituals of the church. The result is the impossibility of her freedom.
In this section of our discussion we move on from speaking of what the Cura and the Ángel’s role is as apparatuses of ideology, to a more detailed discussion of several instances in which they perform their roles within the dramas by inducing the other characters present to indulge in rites, rituals, and practices which will serve to sustain them as non-autonomous/non-rational beings. The actions which they perform are the key to their subjectivization. Luke Ferretter explains this in his commentary on Luis Althusser:

It is not the case that, because of a certain system of ideas in which I believe (for example, the Christian faith), I participate in certain regular practices (like praying, going to church, taking communion, and so on), act in certain ways (Christian ethics), and even become a member of an institution (the church). Rather, [ . . . ] the institution, the practices and rituals precede and govern my system of ideas. This is what Althusser means when he writes that “an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices”. (87)

In *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*, ideology operates in the way in which Ferretter describes above. The Pueblo and the Mujer do not practice ideological rituals because of a certain set of beliefs. In fact, we do not really get a look at exactly what it is that the church teaches them in terms of doctrine. There is in these plays, however, an extremely strong emphasis on their performing certain rituals: going to church, kneeling, praying, confessing, flagellating, etc. Their practices and rituals come first and foremost, they “precede and govern” the system of ideas within the town. Even before a child is old enough to understand teachings, he/she is capable of participating in rituals such as going to church, kneeling down to pray, etc.

As we previously discussed, in the opening scene of *Las manos de Dios* the Campanero
rejects the Sacristán and embraces the Cura as representative of the ideological apparatus of the church. From the moment in which the Cura enters the play, ideology materializes into practice as the Coro kneels down in response to his entrance. This is an act of devotion, one of submission to ideology. In effect, it is the participants’ affirming and reaffirming the fact that they are subjects, that they are committed to the church and that they give deference to its representative, the Cura. This is made clear when the Cura signals for them to stand up because they actually do so (Solórzano, Teatro 153). The practice itself forms their subjectivity in the sense that the act of kneeling forces them to place themselves in a position in which they will be submissive to the rule of the church. By committing this act before hearing the Cura, they are already determining how they are to receive any word that he speaks; his instructions are law. But more important, by performing the act they realize and re-affirm their relationship to ideology, giving them confidence that everything is as it should be. Conversely, were they to meet the Cura on their feet as his equals, standing as a practice would produce a variation on the subject: one in opposition to or defiant of the ideological apparatus.

The Coro’s kneeling, however, does not simply reflect its own subjectivity; it also represents the Campanero’s. As Quackenbush (Devotas irreverencias 88-91) and Rosenberg (41-7) point out, the Pueblo’s actions perform a function which is similar to that of the classical Greek chorus with regard to the interpassivity of the public (although with some inversion, as Rosenberg explains); however, apart from representing the theater-going public, the Pueblo also represents all other figures within the play who can be included with them as members of the town, such as the Campanero. While the Coro is silent and performs very limited actions, often of symbolic nature, these actions are usually in relation to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of other people in the play, and generally do represent them directly, as a sort of pantomime for the
other characters. For example, in this first scene in which the Coro kneels as the Cura enters, they serve as a direct reflection of the Campanero who is anxiously seeking the Cura’s ideological support due to his encounter with the Diablo which has destabilized the order of the universe in which he finds himself. When the people of the Coro arise from their knees according to the Cura’s permission, the Campanero becomes ready to present his story and to receive guidance. The act of kneeling which is previous to his explaining his account thus serves to subjects the Campanero to ideology while the Pueblo’s rising from the kneeling position reaffirms and solidifies the Campanero’s relationship to the Cura as a subject. Only at this point may he present his case.

Furthermore, after narrating the frightful minutes in which he stood face to face with the Diablo, the Cura declares the omnipotence of the church, that “Nosotros los servidores del Señor [. . . ] sabemos distinguir al Enemigo.” With this declaration the Coro once again “cae de rodillas, las cabezas en el suelo” (Solórzano, Teatro 156). Their continuous practice of kneeling materializes their relationship to the ideological order and prepares them to receive further instruction in order to perpetuate the vicious cycle. Since the Campanero is simply a more embodied representative of the Pueblo, we can assume that the Pueblo’s kneeling is an inner shadow of the Campanero’s simultaneous submission to ideology.

The connection between him and the people is further established when the Cura then turns to him and tells him to enter into the cathedral and pray, just as the rest of the townspeople are doing. He receives no special instructions nor any individual attention; for all intents and purposes he is the equivalent of the Pueblo. One might say that he stands out from among them because he sees the Diablo and because of his thoughts of rebellion, leading to the assumption that he is an individual. We must take into account, however, the entire action of the play across
all acts. In the final act of *Las manos de Dios* Solórzano pulls an exact reversal of the role of the Campanero and that of the Pueblo. It is the Pueblo who has rebellious thoughts, in act three, as the Cura tries to convince them of Beatriz’s sins. It is the Pueblo who sees the Diablo. It is the Campanero who is absent and who upon appearing is the very first to submit to the ideological apparatus. In essence, the two scenes parallel each other in all aspects with the unique feature of a simple swap between the Campanero and the Pueblo. This parallel structure of scenes with the Campanero and the Pueblo performing the exact same roles, but reversed in each scene, strongly suggests the unity of their beings.

That being the case, the act of kneeling, for all parties, is an essential ideological practice which, by the end of the play, ensures their subjection to ideology. Although its importance is somewhat overshadowed by their act of flagellation, in the final scene of the play the Pueblo and the Campanero all come together and perform the practice of kneeling together. This act synthesizes and gives closure to their switching of roles between the first and third acts while giving circular form to the play; on their knees, they perform the grotesque march back into the church just as they had done in the first act when the Cura told them to enter in and pray. Their return is, of course, a return to the empty *imagen del Padre Eterno*, a kind of reaffirmation of their relationship with the empty ideological Subject as well as a confirmation of their state as subjects to ideology.

In *El sueño del ángel* kneeling performs a similar role and is also coupled with the act of flagellation. It likewise is an act of submission through which the Mujer becomes both subjected to ideology and enabled to perform subsequent rituals, further confirming such subjection.

Arriving at the final stage of confession, the already present ideology within her\(^\text{19}\) barks out the

\[^{19}\text{The Ángel, as we have previously discussed his symbolic role as part of her consciousness.}\]
command “Ponte de rodillas,” and then orders her to recite out loud the words of her atonement, the closure to her confession (Solórzano, Teatro breve 52). Although we know that the Ángel has not convinced her that she has done anything wrong, the act of kneeling forces her to recognize her relationship to her existence as a subject, bending her into indulgence in the remainder of her ritual. Having come to such a re-realization she proceeds to “despoja[rse] de toda soberbia” (53), take out her rosary, and whip herself as penance.

In addition to other forms of ideological practice which we have presented, Solórzano provides in his plays the constant bombardment of prayer and church attendance.20 This is present in the initial scene of Las manos de Dios when the Cura commands everyone to come to church more often and “rezar [. . .] a nuestra venerada imagen del Padre Eterno que está aquí dentro” (Solórzano, Teatro 156). This pressure for everyone to perform concrete ideological actions comes directly after the Campanero has finished telling of his encounter with the Diablo and is also reactionary to his account; the Campanero states how he told the Forastero that “el Señor Cura nos ha ordenado rezar mucho” and that praying was the very first thing that he tried to do in order to liberate himself (152), and directly after that the Cura orders them to be more diligent in prayer.

What is interesting is that the Campanero was in fact praying as a form of resistance to the Diablo, and the Cura tells him to do it even more. It would seem that the main conflict between the Forastero/Diablo and the Campanero is that the Campanero should abandon the church because it subdues the people, and that the Forastero represents progress and freedom

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20 Rather than immediately discussing the matter of prayer in El sueño del ángel, a complete analysis of it will be saved for the following chapter where it is most appropriate; it is part of the key to dissolve the problematic situation of potentially subversive characters and their related actions. Since the matter of church-going is not present in El sueño del ángel, we will simply not discuss it.
A curious issue arises: why does the Cura not confront the Campanero’s dilemma with an answer that would seem to attack the very problems which the Forastero proposes to him? That is to say, why doesn’t the Cura combat him with some theological or historical explanations which support his case of the church being more powerful and bettering man’s life in ways which would be foreign or impossible for the Diablo?

It is because ideology is first and foremost a matter of practice. The Cura’s command for them to pray and go to church more is a sure way of creating ideological subjects. One does not believe first and then practice as a result of belief. One practices first and then as a result, one may believe. This is akin to the words of Pascal when he says, “Habit provides the strongest proofs [. . .] [i]t inclines the automaton, which leads the mind unconsciously along with it” (Pascal 247). Pascal’s words, however, may not even line up exactly with the matter at hand. The Cura’s task is not to instruct the mind but to instruct the body, and the robotic nature of the subjects in these plays shows that one does not necessarily even have to believe; the matter of mind is, eventually, totally eliminated (as seen in the whipping scene at the end of both Las manos de Dios and El sueño del ángel). The Cura’s reinforcement of practices such as prayer and churchgoing are meant to develop habits which will then structure the lives of those who perform them. The subject’s concrete practices determine his relationship with and subjection to ideology from which there is no escape as long as there is an apparatus to sustain it. This is why all the Diablo’s logic, in the end, cannot change the Pueblo’s direction; this is why he eventually loses out. The matter of subjectivity that we literally see within the play is not that of the thinking subject, but rather, that of the embodied ideological subject. The Diablo’s notions of progress, of thought, have no chance at standing up against a Pueblo which is subjectivized since before they can decide who they are and what they think.
In both *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel* the culminating scene of this kind of subjectivity presents the viewer with acts of self-inflicted flagellation. Anne-Grethe Ostergaard heavily treats this topic with a focus which provides a schematic of what she calls “la destrucción [y la autodestrucción] corporal” (174). It will be necessary to review several aspects of her argument before presenting it in relation to this topic, for there are numerous similarities between her and my own approaches; however, the present argument provides fundamentally differing views which I hope will respect and maintain the legitimacy of her own argument while providing a space to push the matter in a different direction than her own, highlighting and connecting several points that she does not deal with while providing an alternative reading of the nature of autodestrucción in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*.

Ostergaard’s proposed scheme is the following:

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S       O
sobredet. ideol. cond. instr. parc. total
MS Amo/Igl. Iglesia pueblo pueblo Beatriz pueblo
C Iglesia pueblo/pueblo Jesús pueblo
SA Iglesia mujer mujer mujer
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Essentially what Ostergaard’s scheme shows is a relationship between the subject of autodestrucción and its object in the plays *Las manos de Dios*, *El sueño del ángel* and *El crucificado*. The subject category is divided into four parts: the instrumental, conditional, 

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21 Although it will be helpful to mention *El crucificado* briefly, in reality, it is not one of the plays with which we are concerned in this work. Even so, many of our ideas would fall in nicely with a discussion on *El crucificado*.  

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ideological, and sobredeterminante subjects. The instrumental subject is that which, on a most basic level, physically executes the destructive practice. It actually performs the flagellation or sacrifice. The conditional subject is that which shows a predisposition toward self-destruction (175) while the ideological and sobredeterminante subjects maintain a superior role in the course of destruction, the ideological subject manipulating the conditional and instrumental subjects into action, and the sujeto sobredeterminante (i.e. the Amo controlling the church in Las manos de Dios) being that which drives the ideological subject through lucrative means; it is the beneficiary of the overall system of exploitation. In terms of objects of destruction, Ostergaard presents partial and total objects, partial objects being those whose deaths represent the destruction of the whole while the total objects are those represented who also participate in acts of self-destruction.

What is important to note in Ostergaard’s argument is that it strictly maintains a perspective of existential subjectivity, stating that in all cases the subject has to do with “personajes en crisis entre uno y otro concepto existencial, y que en ciertos momentos dan muestras de su rebeldía contra la realización de la destrucción” (175), a theme which clearly goes hand in hand with Solórzano’s goals. Furthermore, she treats the theater-going public in terms of their confrontation with theater presented to them as a ritual and its effect on their own existential crisis and possible varying receptions of the plays according to their socioeconomic status (178-80). The maintenance of a strict existential compatibility in her reading provides a unique and quite beneficial amplification on the topic of existentialism in Solórzano’s works. It moves beyond the ideals that have been generally associated with the author’s plays while still incorporating them as a central theme; Ostergaard essentially creates a structure that shows what causes and maintains the existential crisis. Her argument points to economic and ideological
means of generating the crisis, that is to say, the stumbling block to the characters living in good faith has to do with the ideological structure, as well as the economic control which governs said ideological means. Her scheme, in essence, shows the relationship between the characters and their destructive actions. For example, Beatriz’s death (which the Pueblo causes) is representative of the death of the Pueblo as authentic subjects or subjects in good faith. In turn, their acts of self-destruction through flagellation are a side-effect of the death which they give to her; in other words, she is the partial object of destruction that represents them as the total object of their self-destruction (175). The conclusion of Ostergaard’s argument is that out of the works discussed, *Las manos de Dios* is Solórzano’s play with the greatest potential of producing a liberating effect on the spectator (180).

While her study presents an excellent view on corporal destruction and its relationship to ideological/dominating mechanisms and existential freedom, our thesis differs in that it posits a subjectivity of subjectedness through ideological action which does not simply hinder existential progress but instead makes it impossible. Even with her differing perspective, Ostergaard provides several points which support and strengthen our idea of Althusserian subjectivity within the works. With this in mind, we first note her description of the ideological subject. Here, the term subject should not be confused with the philosophical idea of subjectivity. Ostergaard’s use of the word “subject” is strictly limited to meaning “that which performs an action” in opposition to “that which receives the action;” that is to say, the subject is that which inflicts corporal destruction while the object is that which receives said physical castigation. In her description the church does not act directly, but rather, indirectly, through ideological means.

Interestingly however, her description of the “ideological subject” poses a striking similarity to the Althusser’s ideological apparatus. From her standpoint, ideology is a term which
simply describes a mechanism (in these plays, the church) whose purpose is to “hacer creer al objeto total mediante el espectáculo” (177). We must note *what kind* of spectacle, according to her argument, leads the instrumental subject to believing: the festival of Holy Week which Solórzano presents in *El crucificado*. In this case the spectacle is not something that one merely watches. Religious festivals are essentially rituals, they are practices in which people participate either through their actions as actors and procession members or through their physical presence as viewers and partyers; the festival is not just the parade that goes by; it is the conglomerate of the bodies and objects of the parade as well as all those in the streets who are experiencing it. A parade without the public is not a parade. In this sense, processions are similar to the “ritual” of theater; the actors make the ritual possible but the public is who participates in the ritual. In all cases ideology is materialized through such rituals; it is not simply *seeing* the ritual which causes belief, but rather, participation in it. Even though the Cura in *El crucificado* states that the people must see in order to believe, Ostergaard points out his insistence on participation in the festival (176).

Furthermore, the Cura in *Las manos de Dios* and the Ángel in *El sueño del ángel* make us understand the ritual nature of such practices. On the previous page of her article and still in connection with the same topic of ideology, she explains that the function of ideology is that same function which provides that the Cura direct the pueblo to sacrifice Beatriz and that the Ángel instigate the Mujer to flagellate herself. This idea is further instated when she speaks of everything being “un juego que tiene una clara función de rito” (177) and then points out the various rituals of the “representación de la pasión de Cristo” as well as the death of Beatriz and the flagellation of the Mujer. In all cases we see ideology become concrete through ritual practice, which is precisely the kind of ideology of which Althusser speaks and which restricts
our view of subjectivity not to the subject which is free through volition, but the subject who is subjected to ideology through action. In other words, the subjects in these plays do not stand a chance.

While Ostergaard may or may not intend to do so, what her description of the role of the church essentially introduces is the role of the ideological apparatus and its relationship to its subjects, now not subjects in the sense in which Ostergaard wishes to use the word, but in the sense of “the being who is created in subjection and relation to ideology.” Even though she maintains a connection with existentialism by proposing its relationship with that which forces the existential crisis, her description cannot escape slipping into notions of Althusserian ideology and ideological apparatuses. This tendency in her writing opens up a space for the Althusserian perspective to speak and strengthen the purpose of other connections in the plays such as the relationship between the church, as ideological institution, and la imagen del Padre Eterno as well as the underlying motivation for the orgiastic ending of El sueño del ángel.

In order to reach said connection with la imagen del Padre Eterno we must begin by expanding Ostergaard’s reading when she says that the church, “para mantener su poder ya instituido […] necesita autoconfirmarse, manifestando su poder en un acto de destrucción, consentido y hasta ejecutado por la víctima, el objeto total” (177). It goes without saying that an ideological apparatus such as the church must do what it can to maintain power; however, the matter goes beyond the church’s creating a theatrical display of its own power in order to give legitimacy to itself, for such a display would not be enough to perpetuate dominance over the subject. The key element here is the role of the Subject. Rituals, even destructive ones such as flagellation, are necessary in order for the apparatus to establish a relationship between ideology.

22 In Las manos de Dios.
and the subjects, by introducing the Subject (God) which validates the self-destructive practice of the subject by seeking to legitimize the Subject rather than the institution itself (as Ostergaard states). We are not denying that such a totalizing act of destruction assists the church in remaining within a position of power and even strengthening it, for in Žižekian terms the Cura represents a sort of “subject supposed to know.”23 The key here is that the church has to stay close to this Subject, or big Other, to use the psychoanalytic phrase. Above all, therefore, the Cura must prevent the Subject from becoming unmasked, he must not allow the non-existence of deity to be revealed. This fact indicates the degree of danger which the Diablo poses as the Pueblo is on the fringe between not being willing to take any more from God and abandoning Him all together. If the Cura allows God’s nothingness to be revealed, he will essentially expose himself as an idiot and lose his “privileged relationship to Knowledge.”

So, when Ostergaard speaks of maintaining power, the issue expands in the sense that the “subject-supposed-to-know’s” performance of a legitimizing action, such as the Cura causing the Pueblo to flagellate itself, maintains his position of power only to the extent that the action will legitimize not the ideological apparatus itself, but the Subject, God. Let us recall Althusser’s discourse on subjectivity and how concrete ideological actions (prayer, kneeling, rituals, etc.) create the presence of a Subject which the practitioner of ideology has a relationship with. When we read Ostergaard saying that the church has to confirm its own existence (177), we can expand our view beyond “the church’s own maintenance as a position of power” because the rituals which it instigates the subject to perform do not actually serve to legitimize the ideological

23 Žižek explains that the subject supposed to know is “a subject whose activity is grounded in full knowledge. . . The moment the big Other falls, the leader can no longer claim a privileged relationship to Knowledge—he becomes an idiot like everyone else” (First as Tragedy, Then as Farce 152). In this case, this means that the Cura is the one who has supposed knowledge of and/or access to the Subject (God), the history of the church, etc.
apparatus itself, at least not directly; they confirm the position of something which, while not existing, binds the community together in order. For Solórzano, this something is a non-existent deity, the Subject (God) with which the community establishes a relationship through ritual. Consequently, it is not only the people that are made subjects through such a rite that strengthens their relationship with said deity; it makes subjects out of the Cura and the Sacristán as well.

The fact that the use of rituals is not exclusively to give the church more power is evident in *El sueño del ángel* because we bypass the entire matter of an explicit externally imposing ideological apparatus; that the church may benefit through the people’s practices is not even the point of this work, it does not enter into the discussion. Solórzano is focused elsewhere even though the church continues to perform a role which effects the shaping of subjectivity; the dramatist displays what is the toll that the subject must pay because of its subjection to ideology. In *El sueño del ángel* we come to the forefront of the discussion on subjectivity because here we go beyond the apparatus and focus on the mind of one person in discussion with itself in relation to ideology. What we are getting at here is that while the Ángel is a symbol of the ideological apparatus in the play, he is not exactly the apparatus itself and he does not exactly represent the external church’s gains; he is the Mujer’s very own consciousness of the apparatus, or her internalization of the apparatus, the part of her as subject that recognizes her relationship with the Subject and, because of such a recognition, becomes the source of self-anguish and torture.

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24 Once again, however, our main focus here is not on Solórzano’s motives, which Rivas touches upon saying that this topic in *El sueño del ángel* is a “denuncia del papel sojuzgante que desempeña la religión en una sociedad dogmática” (148). The purpose of this study is to analyze the presentation of subjectivity and to follow how the role of subjectivity comes into play in a way that makes characters’ potential winning outcome unattainable.

25 See Reed 96, Rivas 140-147, and Feliciano, *El teatro mítico* 193, for mention of the Ángel as part of the Mujer’s consciousness.
Rivas, for example, says that Solórzano presents us with the problem of “el enfrentamiento del individuo con los problemas suscitados por su propia conciencia” (140) and that the “[ . . . ] obra entera es realmente un diálogo de recriminación entre la Mujer y su conciencia, la cual ha alcanzado tal magnitud que se convierte en una obsesión, personificada en el Ángel torturador” (146).

There is a connection which Ostergaard doesn’t explicitly make, but which we would like to deal with, concerning the acts of prayer, churchgoing, kneeling, flagellation, etc. and la imagen del Padre Eterno; the ritual acts of autodestrucción that the Pueblo performs, especially the culminating brutal act of flagellation at the end of the plays, always refers back to the ideological Subject. This is precisely why the Pueblo must crawl back to the church on its knees while whipping itself: in order to symbolically greet the Subject within the cathedral, la imagen del Padre Eterno.

The scene of flagellation at the end of Las manos de Dios emphasizes what Solórzano is trying to do with the holy image of God in the play. As the people beat themselves mercilessly they confirm his existence, not merely the church’s. Furthermore, this treatment emphasizes how horrific the description of la imagen del Padre Eterno actually is while making the relationship between it and the Pueblo all the more violent. Solórzano emphasizes this through

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26 For example, Ostergaard claims that the flagellation scene at the end of Las manos de Dios is simply a secondary effect of the sacrifice of Beatriz. Here we point out that while it has a definite relationship to Beatriz, in the sense that when Beatriz shouts out to them that by killing her they are only killing part of themselves, they symbolize her words by immediately beating themselves, this act of flagellation also serves to emphasize the brutality of the imagery of la imagen del Padre Eterno.

27 In Enjoy Your Symptom!, Žižek states that these types of ritual acts psychologically affirm that there is an Other toward whom one is performing such acts (64).
the hollowness of the wooden image, the blankness of its huge eye sockets; it screams out “I am nothing, I do not exist!” while simultaneously producing the opposite effect within the minds and from the standpoint of the people, “I am beating myself, therefore you must exist!” Their acts of self-destruction force them to see themselves in the hollow statue of God and enable them to receive the ideological hailing, “Hey you! Yes, you! You are beating yourself in my name, therefore, Here I Am!” The Pueblo is thus constituted an ideological subject once again, it takes shape as a being, creates meaning for itself, and thereby exists as a social unit.

In the final scene of El sueño del ángel we see the same practice of flagellation occur with the same purpose (to confirm the existence of the ideological Subject), although here we do not have an explicit form which represents the non-existent Subject, such as la imagen del Padre Eterno does in Las manos de Dios. The ecstasy of the reaction of both the Ángel and the Mujer, nevertheless, demonstrates a similar (re)forming and solidification of the relationship between the subject and the Subject. For the Mujer, the ritual of kneeling and reciting coupled with the practice of prayer with the rosary creates this connection with God. The result is a sudden realization of this relationship in which she stares into space, “como alucinada” (Solórzano, Teatro breve 53). We could read this particular adjective in a number of ways. It could mean “stunned,” “amazed,” “hallucinating,” or “visionary.” The implication of most of these definitions on this particular scene is that she undergoes a sudden change and is now seeing something that we do not see, she is staring off into space, captivated by something that surprises her, some kind of new vision or knowledge that she suddenly perceives. The key to reading this event is the connection between her performance of ideological practice with its mini-climax when the music suddenly begins to sound: “la música de baile que se oyó antes se acerca y se acerca hasta que la hace ponerse de pie” (53). This music represents her interaction with her

Note that my use of the word exist is not in reference to existentialism.
brother-in-law for which she is undergoing confession and punishment. As she begins the process, she forms a link between the ritual which she is performing and her past actions involving her sister’s husband, and thus the sexualized masochistic nature of the ritual. Confession and atonement create a symbolic relationship to the world she lives, acts, and dreams in, the world in which she once loved and now punishes herself as a consequence of it.

As a result of having linked this rite with her “adulterous act” with her brother-in-law, the Mujer stares into space and is overcome by her vision, fascinated as she sees herself as a subject in relation to God, her actions, her life, in relation to His law. He exists through her kneeling and reciting the words of repentance, she exists as subject because He exists, and therefore she lives this relationship by proceeding to finish with the ritual of flagellation which further acknowledges and confirms His existence and cements their ideological ties. The brutal ecstasy that the Mujer experiences in this moment is sexualized as she remains “alucinada,” kneeling in front of the “gallarda figura del Ángel” (54), reflecting the way that the terrible emptiness behind the ideological relationship is masked: a frightening inversion of the Éxtasis de Santa Teresa.

Feliciano signals the irony of this moment and the hypocrisy of the ritual in that the woman confuses “la expiación y el éxtasis” (Feliciano, El teatro mítico 196). However, if we look at it in terms of solidifying the ideological relationship then there is absolutely no confusion of atonement and ecstasy, they are two essential parts of one experience. “Expiación” and “éxtasis” unite as one in a way which metaphorically presents the recognition between the Mujer (subject) and God (Subject) as a sexual relationship: two separate beings made whole in their union which establishes stability and order, exactly fulfilling the purpose of ideology.

The Ángel undergoes an orgasmic reaction for the same reason that the Mujer does; he also experiences the results of ideological self-recognition through the solidification of both his
and her relationship with God by means of ritual practice. Once again, we must take into account both his literal role (as the external embodiment of the ideological apparatus) as well as his symbolic role (as part of the Mujer’s consciousness, her internalization of ideology). In his symbolic role, since he is a part of the Mujer, the “gemidos semejantes a los del orgasmo” are a reflection of what we have just discussed as her symbolic sexual relationship with the ideological Subject. The part of her that has internalized ideology rejoices “en un delirio gozoso” (Solórzano, Teatro breve 54). In the Ángel’s literal role as the external embodiment of the ideological apparatus, Feliciano has already discussed the explicit sexual allusions of the scene, from the rhythm and repetition of the recited words of atonement, to the Ángel’s telling her to kneel and kiss the whip with which she is about to beat herself (Feliciano, El teatro mítico 196). Here, the Mujer perceives him as representative of the Subject with which she has formed a relation, but the question remains of the arousing pleasure which the Ángel experiences as he cruelly sinks into a joyful delirium (Solórzano, Teatro breve 54). His delight comes from the fact that inasmuch as he performs the literal function of ideological apparatus, and hence is the subject supposed to know, the concretization of the relationship between the Mujer and the ideological Subject ensures that the Ángel retains a privileged position. As the Mujer’s ritual practices confirm the existence of the Subject, as well as her relationship to him, the Ángel’s position as “subject supposed to know” is likewise validated. His state as a subject, just like hers, is made more sure, but he simultaneously remains in a position which is superior to hers, resulting in his orgasmic experience. The only way to maintain such a privileged position, once again, is not through theatrical displays of power, but rather, through ensuring that the Subject does not fall; the Mujer and the Ángel affirm this time and time again as they practice their rituals, every day, precisely at six o’clock (41).
Subjectivity, Ideology, and . . . freedom?:

What we see in the literal action of these plays is a situation where Solórzano takes the antagonists and transforms them into apparatuses of ideology which then are capable of determining the subjectivity of the characters in Las manos de Dios and El sueño del ángel through inducing them to rituals and practices of the church. At this point we note two levels in which ideology materializes: the level of the antagonist that embodies ideology and the level of the practice (ideology is also concrete in the action itself). Solórzano’s critique of ideology is obviously focused on what his antagonists represent: the institutions which bind individuals. His emphasis on the ideological environment of practice dives straight into the process by which the institution controls the matter of subjectivity; the Cura and the Ángel are creatures who eliminate the importance of reason through an emphasis on ritual. It does not matter whether the Mujer or the Pueblo believe in the dogma of the church or not and it is of little importance what kind of theological doctrine they receive, whether it be “true” or “false;” concrete ideological rituals ensure their ties to the institution in a way that renders thought pointless. The matter of practicing ideology creates subjects which must recognize an ideological Subject that gives some sense of legitimacy to what they are doing, the strongest and most brutal showing of such a being is the empty imagen del Padre Eterno in Las manos de Dios. What Solórzano literally displays in the interaction between the levels of ideology, embodied in the antagonist and the practices, is a world in which the individual does not determine itself but is, rather, made to be non-autonomous by the very process of socialization through ideological practice. This is evident in the outcome of both the Pueblo and the Mujer as they practice flagellation. Furthermore, we cannot suppose that this kind of outcome is a one-time event, but rather, as in the case of the Mujer who goes through the daily ritual at six o’clock, the Pueblo also requires repeated practice;
we can assume that this is not the first nor the last time they will prove themselves as ideological subjects.

Since what takes place on stage is a display of subjectivity which is very Althusserian, we can assume that there is no hope for the Pueblo, that freedom is not a real possibility due to the complete lack of autonomy of the individual who has been subjectivized through the practice of rituals. This idea goes hand in hand with the deep sense of pessimism and fatalism that Solórzano displays in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*. The work of several critics, upon dissection, suggest that there is no hope for freedom due to this kind of subjectivization. First, Rosenberg, although ending his article with an approach that claims the role of tragedy as having a kind of cathartic effect that induces the viewer into being ready to confront problems positively (47), states that what Solórzano is doing with inversions in these plays is, conversely, presenting us with a fatalistic view of the universe; the playwright creates a world where there is no hope and in which there cannot and will not be any change. He states:

Some might interpret the last lines expressed by the Diablo as a sign of hope for the future [. . .]. 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 [. . .].” 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 Diablo 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. (47)

If, in these plays, it is the concept of tragedy which gives the audience the ability to break from ideology and face life “freely,” then it is interesting that Rosenberg’s analysis shows that Solórzano even inverts the concept of tragedy. As Rosenberg shows that the play inverts what we expect in a tragedy, I would propose, by extension, that it should also then invert the effect which we expect tragedy to produce: rather than a productive way to deal with existence it deepens our sense of fatalism and just piles one more rock on top of us.

Reed, as he concludes his study of confession in Solórzano, states that the practice of confession (which we will extend to mean “all concrete rituals and practices”) questions the very “posibilidad de la libre voluntad del individuo” (104). The dark sense of fatalism in Solórzano places doubt on the matter of the possibility of man’s freedom in any existential sense, thus leaving open the possibility of considering Las manos de Dios and El sueño del ángel from other perspectives of subjectivity. Through the practices which ideology uses as a means to create subjects there is no rationality, there is no meaning, and there is no way to deal with it since man
is not free to decide his existence for himself: “Solórzano’s message is that we are all puppets waiting for death to annihilate us” (Radcliffe-Umstead 10).
Chapter 2

Rebels Without a Clue?

As we further discuss some of the most important rituals of subjectivity that we see in the plays (flagellation and ritual sacrifice), it will be necessary to consider the problem of several of Solórzano’s characters (Beatriz, the Diablo, and the Prostituta, in *Las manos de Dios*, and the Mujer, in *El sueño del ángel*) who may be seen as a threat to a reading which posits ideological subjectivity. As has been very clear up to this point, our discussion of the way in which ideology shapes and determines individuals in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel* excludes the possibility of the autonomous existential subject. The matter therefore is: do the Mujer, Diablo, Prostituta, and Beatriz exhibit the ability to act in complete freedom or are they, like the Pueblo in *Las manos de Dios*, products of ideology? Our present proposition is that although, at times, they appear to be subversive toward ideology, their rebellion is merely the crux of the ideological system itself; they are its symptom and they provide the means for balancing and sustaining it through their potential opposition.

(Non)traditional Readings and Role Inversions:

The idea that we can read the protagonists in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel* as non-autonomous subjects may seem strange to some, particularly because of the playwright’s association with the technique of role inversion/inversión de papeles. In “El antitradicionalismo religioso del teatro centroamericano actual,” Quackenbush proposes that contemporary Latin American theater is subversive toward tradition through the inversion of traditional philosophy and dramatic roles, secularizing religious drama, and radically changing religious dogma in order to modernize concepts for a contemporary audience (16). In *Las manos de Dios* this is achieved
through characters that he proposes as rejecting conformism, such as the Diablo, Beatriz, and the Prostituta (16). His study of the *auto latinoamericano* discusses how this *inversión de papeles* creates an environment in which the Diablo becomes the force of good rather than of evil, Beatriz, a woman rather than a man, is the savior figure, and the Prostituta, who holds an occupation in which she would traditionally sell herself, does not do so, eliminating society’s control over her (*Devotas* 88-9). He says that even though she claims that she’s a *vendido*, she actually never sells herself in the play; in comparison with others she is honest and genuine. Of course, this is in opposition to characters such as the Cura and the Sacristan who, while holding positions in society which are traditionally seen as noble, are the least honest characters in *Las manos de Dios*; their roles are, likewise, inverted. This reading excellently highlights the symbolic nature and function of characters within the play as well as Solórzano’s playing with the idea of labeling in the genre of the *auto* (which, after all, explicitly forms part of his personal description of the work). This strategy brings to the forefront the deceptive and often destructive nature of labels in society and reveals characters such as the Diablo and the Prostituta as bearers of the playwright’s ideals of freedom and progress.

This study, nevertheless, would like to propose an alternative reading of the text which will base itself in other factors that are present revolving the works we are discussing (while simultaneously maintaining the protagonists promotion of freedom and progress). Our first claim is based in Dauster, who indicates that, “para Solórzano, bien y mal tienen significados muy específicos: la libertad y la opresión.” (133). In relation to character inversions, Solórzano’s main goal is to invert traditional roles in order to challenge institutional dogma and criticize hypocrisy and oppression. He puts what he considers to be “good” in the hands of roles which would traditionally not be seen as ideal. Dauster indicates that the Prostituta and the Diablo are
representatives of progress; they are oppressed and seek freedom. Such characters are thus good fits for Solórzano’s use of good vs. evil as meaning freedom vs. oppression. We are proposing, therefore, an additional reading of inversions which operates outside of the idea of their character labels. Beyond names, titles, or labels, there also exists a simple inversion which is that the characters’ role becomes the opposite of what the viewer expects; the Diablo and the Prostituta, those who are often kicked at by society, become voices against oppression.

Some may ask the question as to how this is an alternative reading. Does it not still have to do with an inversion of labels, that the Diablo and the Prostituta, being victims of and tyranny and speaking out against it, come to symbolize something other than a devil and a prostitute? In terms of symbolism, yes, but for this reading our answer is, “not necessarily.” Viewing them outside of the realms of symbolism can also prove beneficial. They very well may continue to be the devil and the prostitute, literally; however the inversion, in this case, would not be in the label itself, but in how we think about the label. For example, perhaps it’s not that the Prostituta isn’t a prostitute. The point may very well be that she is a prostitute, and that we are seeing reality as it really is: the church as an oppressive institution that criticizes and deters a noble desire (freedom and progress) which legitimate human beings, such as prostitutes, have.

One thing is definite: Solórzano wants to reshape the way that we see society, he wants us to question the validity of the way we view our morals with regard to other human beings, perhaps in Nietzschean fashion, realizing that the will to power has come to dominate the formation of morals. A rearrangement of values would not necessarily claim that a prostitute is not a prostitute, but it would eliminate a stigma, causing us to change our harsh criticism against the marginalized. The crux of the matter may be that everyone is who Solórzano says they are and that we simply have not been able to see through the smokescreen of dogma which
institutions have instilled in us. Following these lines, and for the purpose of this study, role inversions will have to do, more than anything, with the characters’ actual purpose in the play in contrast to what we would expect. That is to say, a character such as a prostitute or a devil could still be a prostitute or a devil, but here they may be a hero rather than an antagonist, a carrier of ideals rather than of devastation.\textsuperscript{29}

Although Solórzano is promoting freedom over oppression through his protagonists, this does not necessarily imply that the heroes, in and of themselves, have achieved any sort of freedom already, for what would the struggle be if they have already won? Perhaps that is part of the point, similar to how the Diablo at the end says that although they’ve lost, he’ll keep on fighting. Regardless, his inversion of roles remains effective because of its ability to take stabs at oppressive institutions. However, the possibility of making these heroes not be at the mercy of their oppressors is nearly impossible; after all, they are in the heat of battle. Although an existential reading supposes that these characters are completely autonomous, we will postulate that Solórzano does not necessarily need free protagonists,\textsuperscript{30} simply ones who can represent the desire for freedom and thereby take stabs at tyrannical institutions which render their victory impossible. And why is it not possible? Because his plays show the impossibly menacing power of subject creation that institutions wield.

\textsuperscript{29} Our proposed scheme of role inversions meant to be a departure from interpreting the play strictly in terms of the auto.

\textsuperscript{30} Solórzano was influenced by existentialism but he avoids giving himself the label. Rather than claiming explicit association with any such philosophical movements, he avoids the matter by saying that he simply grew up in the same environment with all of those people and so obviously there are similarities between them (Méndez-Faith 104).
The Prostituta:

In his work *Devotas irreverencias*, Quackenbush discusses the existential *auto*, postulating the character of the Prostituta as the absolute manifestation of freedom. Speaking of the rebellion of several characters in the work and following his descriptions of Beatriz and the Diablo’s rebellious traits, his reading is that the Prostituta is “un ser totalmente existencialista: al rebelarse contra las normas hipócritas de la sociedad no se deja manipular ni explotar. Se fuga del burdel de la ciudad para no ser controlada por la alcahueta de la casa” (89). The Prostituta does not let the brothel control or manipulate her. Concerning work (if she had not priced herself out of the market), she would do so where, when, and how she pleased. In this sense, she appears to be one of the more *authentic* characters in the play, realizing her projects not as any man does, but as she chooses.

From a view which proposes that the work exhibits a kind of ideological subjectivity, we claim that even though Solórzano uses her as a tool to stage an attack on institutions, the details of her character, actions, and role inversion present several problems which end up undermining her as a free character. Although her deep desire for freedom makes her one of the characters whose role Solórzano inverts in order to further the message of progress in *Las manos de Dios*, her words, actions, and alliances show her entrapment in ideology and consequent inability to act autonomously. That is to say, we consider the Prostituta to be a problematic character; however, the very contradictory nature of her person serves to strengthen Solórzano’s attack on the church.

In order to speak of the Prostituta in this fashion we must first further confront issues

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31 Remember, her inversion consists in that the role of “prostitute” would not traditionally be used to promote the moral agenda of an *auto*. However, as she embodies the desire for freedom, we can see her as a good character. Once again, for Solórzano good = freedom, evil = oppression.
surrounding the meaning of her role inversion. As we have already seen, Quackenbush argues that the Prostituta never actually sells herself. His reading of symbolism in the play requires that she is not what her etiqueta claims that she is. As the symbolic nature of the play is not a concern of the present study, and since some of the details of the play make it plausible to think that she is continuing her prostitution, our present interpretation will work under the assumption that she has not given up her occupation even though she has left the brothel (a somewhat literal reading may prove useful from time to time). We turn to Schoenbach’s article, which claims that even though the Prostituta has left the whorehouse, she continues to sell herself, but without being forced to commit to anything; he describes her actions as relevant to what he terms the Camusian engagement: “Se prestan al acto vil y a la vez se jactan de su supuesta libertad y despreocupación” (23). His purpose in saying this is not to pass ethical judgment on the Prostituta as a prostitute, but it does point out a sense of denial that she embodies with regard to herself as a free character (although his motive in bringing this up is to condemn the hypocritical nature of the Carcelero’s accusations). Her selling herself outside of the demands of the brothel, nevertheless, gives her the illusion of liberty. Can we posit a reading in which she sells herself in denial while maintaining our earlier proposition of a role inversion that proposes her as a good protagonist (in Dauster’s sense of the word)? In the following pages we will discuss why we

32 We are working under the assumption that the following are reasonable justification to regard the fact that she is not actually seen to have sex with anyone during the events of the play as not necessarily exclusive grounds to prevent a reading such as ours (which claims that she has not abandoned the practice of prostitution): She states “me vendo como todos”(174), waltzes around sensually in an attempt to attract potential clients (174), and buys a bed with the church’s jewels (197), it being a good opportunity upon finding herself in a situation in which she has abandoned the whorehouse and therefore needs to build her own private practice. These matters, eventually and separately, will be addressed during the course of our argument.
have opted to posit her as actually selling herself (as Schoenbach does) without being destructive toward our proposed scheme of *inversión de papeles*; let us first begin by looking to other characters (particularly, the Diablo and the Cura) for clues as to how we may do so.

First, Solórzano’s choice of costume presentation may possibly have something to say about the nature of this kind of role inversion. We have a clue that the Diablo is not a devil because of his visual presentation. The dramatist chooses to present him as a good looking respectable man rather than the archetype devil. Various characters are even shocked and disbelieve at first because he doesn’t have horns, he’s definitely not ugly, and his appearance is far from frightening. He does not visually fit the description of a devil and his character is not meant to really be one.

The idea that the Diablo is not really a devil does not necessarily have to extend to the person of the Cura. Considering him to really represent a *cura* would only serve to strengthen Solórzano’s criticism against the church. Solórzano is criticizing the hypocritical actions, rituals, and dogmas of the literal church (Feliciano, “Myth and Theatricality”131). If the Cura really were not a *cura* then Solórzano’s criticism would only be metaphorical; his discussion with Feliciano indicates that it goes beyond metaphor, therefore, the Cura’s literal role as *cura* is indeed important. The Cura is, of course, a foil character to the Diablo, emphasizing that the Diablo is more “holy” and the Cura more “diabolical.” In the games that the dramatist plays with the medieval *auto* the Cura is literally the devil and the Diablo is the holy man.

But, in the context of Solórzano’s discussion with Feliciano in which the author opening criticizes the church and bourgeois ideology, the matter shifts from the symbolic realm to the literal realm in which the Diablo simply represents good (meaning progress) while the Cura portrays evil (that which impedes progress). Viewing the matter in this light, it is helpful for the
Cura to be just what he is: the cura, the church, the oppressive institution that stifles progress. Solórzano is directly and non-metaphorically attacking the institution of the church and its hierarchy, and thus the Cura does not have to be anything other than himself for a role inversion to occur. In what, then, does our inversion consist? We propose that it can be read as his simply being the antagonist, rather than the protagonist we would be expecting, since such an inversion is able to maintain the literal attack that Solórzano is making on the church.

So, how does the Prostitute fit in? Just like the Cura, her inversion could entirely consist in her being a moral representation of good rather than evil, and since a literal reading of some characters may be helpful in demonstrating Solórzano’s harsh criticism of the church, not all inverted characters need necessarily be the opposite of what their title expresses. As is the case of the Diablo and the Cura where the visual treatment of the character hints at whether or not they are what their title says, the Prostituta’s appearance may truthfully reflect her name, as does the Cura’s. In relation to Solórzano’s treatment of the church, the Prostituta actually being a prostitute can potentially form a strong part of this criticism. Solórzano may intend to make a literal contrast between the state of the church and that which society deems as very low: prostitution. The idea is that prostitutes are more genuine than the Cura and the church are. If she weren’t actually a prostitute then the following contrast would only be metaphorical or symbolic: although prostitutes sell themselves, such an act is nowhere near as consequential nor as ghastly as the way institutions sell themselves. However, reading this as what Solórzano is literally saying forces us to sympathize more with those who we would normally not sympathize with and realize that the crimes of the church are much greater than the supposed sins that they have.

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In this study we will always use the terms “good” and “evil” in the way in which Dauster chooses to employ them: good as freedom and evil as anti-oppression.
invented, such as prostitution.

Second, we may infer from the Diablo that Solórzano’s good characters tell the truth when speaking of their role inversion. The Diablo says that he is not really the devil; the Prostituta, therefore, might also be honest upon stating that she is a prostitute. This, however, is not a simple matter. The way that the Prostituta talks about herself and her relationship to freedom is the first clue to understanding that she is an ideological subject rather than an autonomous one. We first get a feeling of this when contemplating the way that she describes herself in comparison to how the Diablo describes himself. The Diablo’s role inversion presents him as a representative of good; he never claims to be a “diablo.” In fact, he says all the opposite, that titles like Mephistopheles were imposed upon him by others in order to instill fear in people’s hearts and to impede their progress. For him, more truthful names or titles would be those such as Galileo or Prometheus. He says flat-out, “El mal existe, por supuesto, pero yo no soy su representante” (Solórzano, Teatro 162). He’s a straight-shooter; he says, “I’m not the Diablo, I’m not evil, I’m progress.” Although this is not an explicit claim to autonomy, his words imply that he views himself as a free subject, since progress means going beyond the established norms and implies rationality.34

The Prostituta, similarly, says things as she means them. She does not say, “I’m not like what people claim, I don’t sell myself.” In the second act of the play when the Carcelero is pursuing her, hoping to make her his, he mocks the supposed liberty that she claims to have and she readily admits, “No soy más libre que tú, ni menos. Me vendo como todos [. . . ]. La tierra entera es una prostituta” (174). Even though she may be “more free” than other prostitutes since

34 However, as our argument progresses we will see that although the Diablo views himself as autonomous he is also subject to ideology.
the brothel no longer controls her, enabling her to work how, when, and with whomever she wishes, she knows that selling herself in some way or other continues to be necessary for survival. Having control over how she is able to work does not mean that she no longer sells herself; in this sense she is neither more nor less free than the Carcelero and the Cura, which her statement implies. Every one of them is a *vendido* and all propagate the ideological system: the Cura through bribes and destructive rituals, the Carcelero through guarding subversives, the Campanero through ringing the bell, and the Prostituta by seeking clients and providing pleasure.

One among several elements which sets the Prostituta apart from the Cura and the Carcelero is that she is honest and genuine about the matter at this moment. She admits that they all are a bunch of *vendidos* while the others do not, but her honesty in and of itself does not mean that she experiences liberty. She is, nevertheless, the embodiment of the *desire* for freedom and anti-oppression that is associated with the protagonists of the work. She takes her place, not on the side of the Cura, who literally represents the institution of the church, but rather, alongside Beatriz and the Diablo who seek freedom and progress as she does.

Nevertheless, in spite of their role inversions, all of the characters in the play fall prey to ideology. This must be so, since if they were perfect characters then they would not fail in the end; the Diablo would not have to merely hope that they will someday be victorious (206). Nevertheless, their being ideological subjects in no way invalidates their purpose as inverted characters: Solórzano is still able to take stabs at oppressive institutions and promote the struggle for freedom and individuality which he hopes will someday become a reality. In the case of the Prostituta, we see that although she desires liberty and even feels that she is free, her actions undermine her being able to achieve these ambitions. She shows through her words, practices, and final alliances that she is an ideological subject, not unlike the Pueblo and the Mujer that we
saw in the previous chapter (although in a different sort of way).

Even though she embodies the desire for freedom, she never actually shows that she is free from ideology. However, regarding this matter, her words are elusive; she cannot help but slip between the ideas of being free or not. Ideology has a way of hiding itself, and her shift in words from “No soy más libre que tú, ni menos” (174) to “Pero yo quiero seguir siendo libre,” with her subsequent reaffirmation, “Te he dicho que soy libre” (175), shows the unconscious nature of ideology and the struggle it has in shielding her lack of autonomy from her view. In a way, it just brushes her status as “un-free” under the doormat without ever really getting rid of the dust. The workings of ideological misrecognition, once again, are the cause of this. She essentially tells the Carcelero, “well, I used to work at a whorehouse and they controlled me. Now I’ve escaped and I work for myself and I can work when, where, and for whom I please” (Solórzano, *Teatro* 174-6). This gives her the impression that she is free since she thinks, as she indicates to the Carcelero, that she doesn’t have to work for fat old men if she does not want to.

Nevertheless, Solórzano is not ignorant to the situation of prostitution, nor of the abuses involved and the entrapment that is experienced because of survival needs. The ability for her to be a prostitute solely at her leisure is unreasonable, and even though the play demonstrates this through her willingness to get tangled up in the matter of the church’s jewels, we see it on a much simpler level as she parades through the streets in an attempt to attract more clientele, regardless of if she finds anyone willing to take her: “Se pasea tratando de conquistar a alguien que pasa” (174). It’s not that she’s not a *vendido*, it’s that her standards for selling herself have now apparently become considerably higher than those of other prostitutes (“No quiero tratar con hombres viejos [ . . . ]. Para que fuera a vivir contigo, se necesitaría que tuvieras diez veces más dinero del que ganas como carcelero” [173-74]).
The Prostituta has abandoned the oppressive situation of being controlled at the brothel with low pay for filthy clients, however she has not broken with her occupation in such a radical way as to not sell herself at all. She ends up being the perfect character to embody the desire for freedom from oppression (the brothel, in her situation) precisely because of the tragedy of her inability to escape the system completely. This serves to highlight Solórzano’s criticism of the overarching ideological control which exists in the pueblo. Since all must sell themselves, as she states, she is forced to enroll in the game of “if you can’t beat’em, join’em.” The result is her deciding to raise the stakes by becoming self-employed; being able to control the means of production is just her moving into a different position within the same ideological system, an abandonment of her “abused proletariat” status. Yet, this act of “moving up in the world” has allowed her to come under the illusion of freedom, since she now controls how and when she can sell herself. Her sense of self-deception is the real tragedy that makes us sympathize that much more with her desire to be free and simultaneously highlights the matter of the process of subjectivization which the church employs as being that much more violent.

Regardless of the fact that she rejects the Carcelero initially, due to her lofty ideas of freedom, by the end of the scene she shows that the prospect of making something (and a lot of something at that), rather than nothing, is too big of an opportunity for her to pass up. She finally strikes a deal with the Carcelero, agreeing to his petitions on the condition that he double the amount of money he is to bring to her (176). This concession on her part sustains her earlier statement, that she, like everyone else, has to sell herself. In addition, the fact that she continues promising herself to the Carcelero on condition that he first bring her more and more money shows that she knows how to manipulate the system to her maximum benefit; the result is that she ends up taking advantage of the Carcelero, simply one who is living unhappily within
ideology in order to survive. Rather than her becoming more free from ideology, she has become more trapped by it because of her now greater dependence on the other ideological subjects to help her live; now she has to acquire jobs on her own. Her position of “power” within the ideological universe (not having to work for the brothel) makes her misrecognition of herself as a free subject even stronger. Regardless of her desire for freedom, her actions do not actually ever show her as being subversive to ideology in a significant way; she is never able to make a clean break from the ideological world in that she continues to operate within the system in order to function and survive. Consequently, her circle of mobility within the ideological structure has simply changed, but she has not escaped the structure itself.

As we still have not arrived at the center of our argument, the doubt may arise: well, is she not subversive to ideology? Does she not actually exist outside or independent of it? My proposal is that as a practicing prostitute her perverse profession implies that her work relies on the presence of ideology.

In The Ticklish Subject, Žižek, presents the case of the pervert versus the hysteric. Playing the loyal Lacanian as always, he insists that just as for Freud, Lacan recognizes the hysterical as

35 At the end of Beatriz’s first conversation with the Carcelero toward the end of the fourth scene, we note the Carcelero’s position as one of the many oppressed of the Pueblo, no different than most. He claims that if you work hard for the Amo he takes care of you, but his words, pronounced “Con amargura,” reveal that the bed and food which he gets are not sufficient to qualify him as a non-oppressed subject. In this scene, Solórzano shows perhaps the most genuine side of the Carcelero; he is just another worker under the burdens which the system places on him; like everyone else, he receives as compensation the bare minimum that he needs in order to reproduce himself as a laborer and continue the cycle each day.

36 Here the term “perverse” means that which is in contrast to the ideological norm, in other words, the status of prostitution being deemed a sin by ideology.
being subversive toward “the predominant hegemony” (ideology) while the pervert is not (247). The hysteric is a type of paranoiac who doubts the social order, questions if things are really as they are (248, 250). On the other hand, rather than doubting ideology, the pervert fully recognizes it and finds enjoyment in embracing that which is in opposition to ideology; he is the “‘inherent transgressor’ par excellence: he brings to light, stages, practices the secret fantasies that sustain the predominant public discourse. . . [he] goes to the limit in undermining the very foundations of symbolic authority and fully endorsing the multiple productivity of pre-symbolic libidinal flux” (248, 250). In the case of the Prostituta, whether she were to fully embrace Christian ritual practice, like the Pueblo, or embrace its opposite in perverse sexual practice (i.e., practice which recognizes itself as transgressing that which is endorsed by the dominant ideology), she always functions in direct relation to the ideological structure; she is a product of it and recognizes her place in it. The very fact that she admits that she and they are all a bunch of vendidos is evidence of her acceptance of ideology and her willingness to perform a perverse role in relation to it.37

This idea very much resonates with Foucault’s notion of how power and resistance presuppose and generate each other. The church prescribes a number of ways in which sin can be committed and thus generates the deviant sexual act itself by creating a category for it. In Las manos de Dios this relationship between the church and sexual sin is evident in that the church not only creates categories of sin, but also creates the sinner through the building of a moral hierarchy of persons. We see this in the third act of the play as the Cura confronts the Prostituta and the Carcelero, and realizes that the Carcelero has given the jewels to her; he assumes a

37 Although Žižek, through the paranoiac, does provide a space for the possibility of one escaping from ideology, Solórzano’s text does not, a matter which we will confront shortly.
deviant relationship between them and exclaims: “¡Con qué seres me enfrentas Dios mío! Lo más bajo de la creación” (Solórzano, Teatro 196), thus generating a category of individuals who commit certain sins that the church has likewise taxonomized. With regard to the perverse, once again, we see that while it is deviant of the ideological norm, this is only possible because of ideology’s having already defined what is acceptable and what is not. Never once in Las manos de Dios do we see that prostitutional perversity seeks to defy ideology by attempting to institute a new subjective sexual norm; it never radical enough. In this we see that the perverse subject is branded [ . . . ] and formed” by the very discourse that it seeks to defy38 (Žižek, Ticklish 252).

Now, let us return to the matter of whether the Prostituta is perverse and non-subversive, that is to say, only operating within ideology, or whether she is a hysteric and therefore poses a threat to ideology by operating outside its bounds. Žižek’s discussion on Foucault, Butler, and Lacan is very helpful in pursuing this question. Butler accuses Lacan of not providing any means of resistance, however, Žižek claims that she is simply confusing him with Foucault; “it is Foucault who insists on the immanence of resistance to Power, while Lacan leaves open the

38 Potentially problematic in the light of our argument is that Foucault would argue that the ability for power to generate opposition allows us to bypass the matter of subjectivization, that “disciplinary power mechanisms can constitute individuals directly” (Žižek, Ticklish 253). If individuals can be constituted directly through power discourse then our argument of non-existential subjectivity totally shifts grounds; it would still imply a lack of liberty, that all action is generated by a powerful discourse; however, the means to the end would be totally different from what we are talking about here and would invalidate the lengthy previous discussion on ideology transformed into concrete ritual practice. However, Žižek argues that despite Foucault’s denial of the notion of subjectivity, he does come back to it and sustains it: “[Foucault] is compelled to return to this very ostracized topic of subjectivization: how individuals subjectivize their condition, how they relate to it – or, to put it in Althusserian terms, how they are not only individuals caught in disciplinary state apparatuses, but also interpellated subjects” (253).
possibility of a radical re-articulation of the entire symbolic field by means of an *act* proper, a passage through ‘symbolic death’” (262). This poses an additional issue: Lacan’s inclusion of the paranoiac or of “a radical re-articulation of the entire symbolic field” is a possibility which assumes that the subject is capable of acting autonomously. Therefore, our current proposition of the Prostituta’s status as non-existential ideological subject must be approached from a new angle and with a new hurdle to leap over: what is this “act proper” that would allow her to escape ideology and is the Prostituta capable of committing such an act? For Žižek, Lacan has “reconfigured” the Freudian death drive in terms of the *symbolic order* in such a way as to posit the true *ethical act* as an act of *symbolic suicide* (263). That is to say, reject completely your relationship to the symbolic order by acting outside of it, risk a complete abandonment of the big Other in such a way as to suspend your identity within the symbolic.

The Prostituta risks no such act. She is content with being the Prostituta and claiming that she is free (Solórzano, *Teatro* 174-75) while continuing to operate in the same way as everyone else: playing the *vendido*. She essentially converts herself from the (un)free prostitute into the (un)free capitalist. Just like the Amo, the Cura, and every other *vendido*, she milks her situation for more and more, asks for more and more money from the Carcelero, and when she finally gets her payment, the first thing she does is pass off the cash to one of the Amo’s personal whores and raises the status of her own personal business by buying herself a “cama reluciente” with “cuatro grandes esféras doradas” on the posts (197). Having worked within ideology in order to, for the first time, fully acquire control of the means of production, she in no way escapes from ideology. This move sustains her place within the symbolic order all the more. While she may become seemingly more independent, she has not risked symbolic suicide, she has not sought to reconfigure the symbolic order in such a way as to deny her identity (as a prostitute) in relation
to the big Other (the ideological Subject), but in contrast she has worked within ideological means in order to reaffirm her identity and gain more power as a prostitute and thereby strengthen her ties to the symbolic. The result is that she has all the more opportunity to carry on being a perverse subject, enjoying a lifestyle in which she simultaneously recognizes ideology’s rule while defiantly practicing in opposition to it. Her new and stronger position to practice in opposition to ideology with an identity which is still based in and created by ideology, demonstrates all the more her subjection to it.

In short, Solórzano does not allow the Prostituta to abandon ideology, thus, even while Žižek provides a space for escape, Solórzano does not. While she maintains the façade of being one of the freest characters in Las manos de Dios, her actions, conversely, demonstrate that she is unable to liberate herself from ideology’s grasp; the Prostituta is, in fact, one which is among the very most subjected to ideology, little different than the Cura and the Carcelero. Her status alongside the Cura and the Carcelero is evident in the final verdict which the Cura gives of her and which shows that her ideological alliances lie in a non-subversive position. During the third act of the play, the Cura confronts the Carcelero, Beatriz, and the Prostituta on the matter of the jewels which were stolen from the hands of la imagen del Padre Eterno. His goal is to find out who was involved, their level of involvement, and whether or not they pose a threat to ideology. He thus questions all of them, and after his questioning he determines that the Carcelero, firstly, is not a guilty party. Why? Because the Carcelero lays into the Cura showing him that he is no different from him, that the priest is just as much a prisoner as he is, saying that churches are not any different than jailhouses and they are guardians of each (197). The priest simply cannot blame him, for in so-doing he would be accusing himself and thereby lose his privileged position as “subject supposed to know.”
He then turns to theProstituta and threatens her. As we have already discussed, the Prostituta has used the jewels in order to buy a bed, the means of making money in her occupation. The important thing here, however, is not merely a purchase which allows her to acquire the means of production within the realm of ideology; what saves her is her cover up for the church. The Cura asks her, “¿Dijiste de dónde provenían las joyas?” and she responds, “No. No soy tonta.” Seeing that she is not a threat, he is, at last, relieved and says, “¡Mejor! Sería un ejemplo espantoso” (197). Interestingly enough, not only does he accept her admission to sustain ideology, but the Sacristán and the Carcelero (who are present) form a small jury and accept her into their “club.” To the Cura’s declaration they respond, “Sería un ejemplo espantoso” and “Por mi parte no se sabrá nada” (197). That is to say, they concede to her being one of them; the Sacristán admits that she made the right choice in not saying anything, that otherwise it would have been disastrous while the Carcelero vows to keep things hush hush. The verdict is declared: the finger of guilt moves from her to Beatriz. The Prostituta has finally entered into an alliance with the Cura and the Carcelero, she has completed her initiation as a vendido, showing her willingness to operate within the bounds of ideology.

The Mujer:

The Mujer, protagonist fromEl sueño del ángel, ends up being similar to the Prostituta inLas manos de Dios because of the fact that although she desires freedom she is also never able to break from ideology; her actions and words, rebellious or otherwise, continue to address themselves to ideology rather than “canceling the presupposition” of ideology (Žižek,Enjoy Your Symptom 68). For example, as the Ángel begins the ritual of confession and accuses her of her lascivious deeds, she says, “. . . bueno. . . Sé que Dios puso dentro de nosotros cosas buenas y
malas pero aquello era bueno. [ . . . ] Sé que el amor por malo que sea, es siempre algo bueno” (Solórzano, *Teatro breve* 47). Moments later, when she claims that she wanted to be free and the Ángel responds, “¿Libre? ¿Libre de Dios?,” she does not reply that she wanted to be free from God. Furthermore, she states that she did not want to deceive the Ángel; she only wanted to be free of her own thoughts. Later on, as the Ángel reaches the climax of the interrogation, the Mujer arrives at a breaking point and screams at him that she did free herself of him and by doing so she *avenged herself of him* and all the pain that he caused her (49).

In all of the above cases, the Mujer is never able to break completely from the ideological universe. Her subjectivity ensures that any action she performs, whether in accordance with or against the norm, is an action always done in relation to God or the church and its dogma that the Ángel represents. Rather than denying God, her claims attempt to line up her actions with his image by saying that it is He that puts good and bad in us and that love is always good. Her account of not intending to deceive the Ángel as she “rebelled” indicates that even while trying to be “free” or “authentic” she could not do anything without keeping one foot in ideology; her wish is to not offend the Subject. Even at her most potentially subversive moment, when in a violent rage she shouts that she liberated herself from the Ángel, her “freedom” cannot escape his grasp since her “sin” was only to take revenge on him rather than break from him altogether, in the same way that oftentimes lovers who are displeased with their partners commit acts of infidelity, not with the purpose to forget about their partners, but in order to enrage them, to get attention; in short, to lengthen the painful relationship. The Mujer wants God and the Ángel’s attention. In this sense and in all these cases we see that no matter how rebellious the Mujer seems to be, her matter of subjectivity is clear; she remains a non-autonomous ideological subject.
The only matter of potential subversiveness that, at first glance, could possibly be seen as problematic is that she prays all day and keeps all the church’s commandments and somehow this does not shape her into a perfect one-hundred-percent obedient subject. Such a matter, however, shows absolutely nothing in terms of subjectivization not working for at least two reasons. The first is that, in our previous discussion, we already saw that whether or not one rebels, if the rebellion does not cancel the presupposition of ideology or the ideological Subject, then such actions result merely as a condition of ideology’s existence. In the Mujer’s case we saw that she never rejects ideology; she simply rejects the pain and torture she feels. Second, the action of the play shows that the main tragedy of the work itself is that even though she thinks that ideology is not working despite her constant prayers and rituals, we see that in the end it is! By the final scene of the play, she finishes a ritual of subjection which is a daily process. As the work begins and the Ángel and the Mujer begin their conversation she exclaims, “Hace veinte años que me sometes todas las tardes a este mismo interrogatorio” (42). The idea is that, no matter how rebellious she may consider herself to be, no matter how much she tries to resist, the story of her life is one of subjection through ritual; the ideological practice of prayer, confession, and punishment which she performs on a daily basis shapes her as a subject. Of course her actions and thoughts will not always line up with ideology’s norm, of course she will even scream at it “You’re killing me!,” but in the end, her continued practice shows that she is not authentic and that even as she tries to escape into “freedom” her entire existence continues to be in relation to ideology, just like the Prostituta’s.

Even if the Prostituta’s and the Mujer’s actions confirm an Althusserian notion of subjectivity, is such a subjectivity universal throughout the two works, or is there the chance for an abandonment of the symbolic order like that which Žižek makes room for? Can Beatriz in Las
manos de Dios possibly be Solórzano’s Antigone as Feliciano claims (“Myth and Theatricality” 130)? At this point the focus of the problem shifts from the Prostituta to Beatriz and the Diablo since they truly are the only ones who may have posed any kind of threat to order (through the desecration of la imagen del Padre Eterno). However, this does not automatically imply that they have achieved any kind of freedom and are autonomous existential subjects, regardless of if they have become a disturbance to ideology in varying degrees. As earlier discussed, rebellion which does not completely break from ideology is merely a condition of ideology’s existence.

The Diablo and Beatriz:

Before moving on to the matter of Beatriz, we should treat the character of the Diablo, who is her alter ego in a sense. The Diablo is a very problematic character in that he represents the message that Solórzano is trying to get across in Las manos de Dios (freedom and progress against oppression); nevertheless, there are times when the Diablo appears sinister, and, well... diabolical, controlling Beatriz’s actions rather than enabling her to act freely. In addition, his reasoning about what is freedom and how to make man free is often contradictory of and undermining toward his personal goals. The Diablo shows that he cannot operate outside of the bounds of the Amo’s system; he is no more free and has no better ideas on how to promote freedom than anyone else. The end result is that his methods lead to the propagation of ideology through the channeling of funds back into the system, resulting in the ideologically necessary sacrifice of Beatriz.

The character of the Forastero (the Diablo’s disguise) initially presents himself as a light to the world, a sort of savior figure with high ideals of the liberty and progress of which man is capable when unhindered; his flowery yet powerful humanist rhetoric is such that it not only
maintains Beatriz firmly in his grasp, but also creates a scenario in which the reader cannot break from this image of him even as he evolves and deconstructs throughout the play. His main powerful discourse is contained in two moments of the first act: his encounters with the Campanero and Beatriz. The parallel structure of his two speeches is what solidifies for the reader a certain stability of the Diablo’s character. That is to say, because of the repetition that we get from his message on various occasions, it is nearly impossible to separate him from that message later on, especially since we feel a connection with him as one of the main protagonists. Solórzano sets him up as the character we have to like and provides us with a speech that he repeats on two occasions that forces us to sympathize with him, whether or not his actions later prove beneficial for the ideals he presents or not.

We more or less have the proceedings of the Diablo’s speech to the Campanero because the Campanero relays it to the Cura and the Sacristán:

[Campanero paraphrasing the Diablo:] Es Dios quien nos envía la miseria y la muerte [. . .]. No reces, ni vaya a la iglesia. Son formas de aniquilarte, de dejar de confiar en ti mismo [. . .]. Yo soy el Jefe de los rebeldes de todo el mundo [. . .]. [M]uchas veces han dicho que yo soy el espíritu del mal cuando lo único que he querido ser es [. . .] el espíritu del progreso. (Solórzano, Teatro 154-5)

Note how this compares on almost all points to the Diablo’ speech upon meeting Beatriz:

Debo advertirte que tengo dos clases de nombres. Unos han sido inventados para asustar a los hombres y hacerlos creer que no deben seguir mi ejemplo: (Teatral.) Mefistófeles, Luzbel, Satanás. (Otra vez natural.) Como si yo fuera el mal absoluto. El mal existe, por supuesto, pero yo no soy su representante. Yo sólo soy un rebelde, y la rebeldía para mí, es el mayor bien. Quise enseñar a los hombres el por qué y el para qué de todo lo que les
rodea; de lo que acontece, de lo que es y no es [. . .]. [Y]o prefiero otros nombres [. . .]: para los griegos fui Prometeo, Galileo en el Renacimiento. . . he tenido tantos nombres más. . . pero yo fui siempre el mismo: calumniado, temido, despreciado y lo único que he querido siempre, a través de los tiempos es acercarme al Hombre, ayudarle a vencer el miedo a la vida y a la muerte, la angustia del ser y del no ser. (Torturado.) Quise hallar para la vida otra respuesta que no estrellara siempre con las puertas cerradas de la muerte, de la nada. (162-63)

Touching most basic points, the two versions of the speech are identical. In both presentations the Diablo’s main point is to make the distinction between how he regards himself and the hostile way in which the world views him. It fears him: in the first speech “el espíritu del mal” and in the second “Mefistófeles [. . .] el mal absoluto.” On each occasion his goal is to annihilate such thinking by saying that he is the “espíritu del progreso,” “Prometeo, Galileo,” etc. So why repeat what is essentially the same speech twice? In order to gain sympathy and trust from the theater-going public: the Diablo is, of course, Beatriz’s complimentary protagonist.

When the frightened Campanero relays the speech to the Cura, Solórzano takes advantage of the situation in order to create a strong sense of curiosity within the viewer. At this point, we are still not wholly sure that we trust the Diablo’s claims to being the spirit of progress nor his negation of the label of the spirit of evil, but we find this unique presentation of the Diablo to be a novel concept. It is obvious that the Diablo has an agenda that is subversive to the church. At the same time, Solórzano displays the presence of the embodiment of the ideological apparatus of the church (the Cura to whom the Campanero explains his terrifying encounter) in a way that makes the reader wholly distrust the Cura’s motives; that is to say, we curiously lean toward the Diablo’s words simply because of the way Solórzano paints the church in the opening scene, an
image which is far from conveying trust or security in any sense. All the same, since the Diablo does actually perform an inverted role, he is what he claims: the spirit of progress against oppression, the carrier of the didactic message of the evening.

The genius of Solórzano in getting us to trust the Diablo is that he plants the hook in our mouth through the opposing images of the hypocritical tone of the Cura’s dialogue and the Campanero’s rendering of the Diablo’s first speech and then sets the hook with the his second discourse (the first viewing of the Diablo of which we are actually present). Once again, the second scene is parallel to the first, but not only because of the speech; even the setting of the scene is parallel to the first in the sense that Solórzano also designs this second situation to be one which creates an extreme amount of distrust in authority, displayed through the confrontation of Beatriz and the Carcelero, through whom we infer the remaining antagonists: the Amo and all other cohorts.

Following the struggle in which Beatriz is unable to free her brother from prison, the Diablo appears and delivers this second discourse. Since this time we hear the words directly from the Diablo himself rather than a third party, we are able to take a much more profound look into his motives which are pronounced both clearly and elegantly. His true purpose is to help man understand the world around him and to spread the message of the danger inherent in such a quest: authority always tries to subdue this noble mission by labeling him in ways which are bound to instill fear into the hearts of men and thereby prevent their progress. He declares himself a rebel, in fact the leader of all rebels, but we finally understand what this means; the viewer, being familiar with the nobility of figures such as Galileo and Prometheus, and comprehending their great deeds in the face of harsh and unjust opposition, immediately sees the Diablo in a new light: he is just a guy trying to help us out, a humanist to the extreme who
believes men have the power to achieve limitless greatness if only they were not inhibited by
dogma. Such rhetoric is extremely effective, especially after the audience has just witnessed two
scenes in which the dogma is one of oppression in which authority appears to be cruel and
tyrannical. At this point it is nearly impossible for the modern viewer to criticize or doubt any
aspect of the motives or methods that the Diablo employs throughout the play in order to help
man rebel against oppression and transcend to a higher level on his own merits.

While we are led, right from the start, to have firm faith in the Diablo as the savior of the
community, in reality the Diablo is little more effective at achieving freedom from oppression
than the Cura;\textsuperscript{39} they both share the same existential anguish about the meaning(lessness) of life
and death as well as the ability to enact an ideological role and use it to manipulate others. The
crucial difference between them is that while the Cura has decided how he will deal with this
plight (oppressing the Pueblo), as well as how he will help others deal with it (subjectivization
through rituals), the Diablo is still in the experimentation stage and has not yet put his finger on
exactly what it means for man to be free nor has he found the precise means of making him free.

Let us begin with how the Diablo is not quite sure what man’s freedom means nor how to
achieve it. In this discussion one term comes to mind which appears a number of times
throughout the play and is key to the Diablo’s mission: \textit{El Hombre}. The phrase first comes up in
a somewhat inconspicuous way as one reads the \textit{decorado} just prior to the first act. In the corner
of what appears to be a typical \textit{plaza} in a Latin American \textit{pueblo} we note, tucked away in the
shadow the monumental cathedral, the local jailhouse: “\textit{un edificio sucio y pequeño con un
letrero torcido que dice: \textless\textgreater Cárceles de Hombres\textless\textgreater}” (149).

Although anyone who has previously read Solórzano may very well guess the

\textsuperscript{39} This is, of course, an exaggeration only to make a point.
significance of “Cárce de Hombres” from the first moment it appears, the letrero’s relationship to the plot is not clear until the Diablo is attempting to comfort the weeping Beatriz who has just learned that she does not have power to free her brother from prison. As the Diablo appears and makes a grand speech as to his person and mission, the term “Hombre” returns and is firmly linked to the letrero on the jail walls. The Diablo states, “[ . . . ] lo único que he querido siempre, a través de los tiempos, es acercarme al Hombre, ayudarle a vencer el miedo a la vida y a la muerte [ . . . ]” (163). As the audience watches this scene they hear the Diablo reference “El Hombre” precisely as they see it written on the letrero of the prison. Even though Beatriz has no idea what the Diablo is talking about, we understand that there is a relationship between his and the letrero’s use of the term “El Hombre”; He speaks of helping man overcome the fear of life and death, and earlier he spoke of freedom and progress. The prison we see in the Pueblo is representative of the terror which imposing institutions instill in man and which stunts his progress. It is also the metaphysical imprisonment of man, that institutions bind his freedom, represented by the incarceration of Beatriz’s brother.

From the existential standpoint it is useful to employ the imprisoned brother as representative of “El Hombre,” of mankind. The brother, in a sense, is one of the most authentic characters in the play; the Amo has imprisoned him because he is the only one who has been brave enough to follow his heart, to stand up to the Amo against all odds, to “gritar contra un Señor” (159). The brother becomes representative of the possibility for

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40 Although one of the least developed, in that we never really see him do anything during the action of the play and we do not know entirely specific details of his past actions.

41 As Schoenbach points out, the capitalization of Señor in reference to the Amo suggests that he is God and connects to the Cura’s saying that everything belongs to “Dios el Señor” (22). I would add that the brother’s rejection of the Amo (“gritar contra un Señor tan poderoso”) is the result of Solórzano playing with the idea of
authenticity which lies imprisoned within the corporal prison of each individual ideological subject within the Pueblo. Just as the Amo has physically incarcerated he who stood up to act rather than to be acted upon, ideology has entrapped such a possibility within each and every subject. The Diablo’s mission to help Beatriz free her brother therefore is parallel to the Diablo’s mission of freeing the authentic self from within each individual in the Pueblo.⁴²

If the main theme or goal of Solórzano in this play is freedom and authenticity, as an existential reading would propose, the Diablo’s explicit connection of Beatriz’s brother with the term “El Hombre” presents several problems to such a goal. Having already spoken at length on the various ways in which individuals are constituted in the work, the Diablo’s idea that “los hombres nacen libres” (164) simply does not fit with how the play shows that subjects are constituted. These people were never free from ideology to start with; they were always already subjected to the dominant power and, by extension, its accompanying discourse. This is evident in the case of Beatriz’s family. Her father had land, but also had debts to the Amo; he was already subjected to the Amo even though he had the appearance of having property. His children were born into this situation. Upon death, the Amo took back what was always already his through the debts that the father owed him. There was never proper ownership of land on the father’s part. The children, although they did not consciously know it, were already born into subjection; they would never own that land and they would never truly work for themselves; it would always be for, and in relation to, the Amo. Now, Beatriz’s brother did not understand this

⁴² God and his rejection in Nietzschean fashion.

A further problem here is the problem of subjectivity, for if the way in which the church creates ideological subjects is indicative of the status of subjectivity within the play, the inherent flaw is firstly that no subject was at one time authentic to later have that authenticity trapped within them; they were always already constituted subjects to ideology.
and was therefore locked up, because in a Žižekian sense, he is a lunatic, he cannot cope with what is understood to be symbolically normal.

Secondly, if the brother is representative of “El Hombre” in a general sense, as well as in relation to the Pueblo, the Diablo’s methods for freeing him are wholly unjustifiable; his plan for getting the brother out of prison are methods which appeal to and/or perpetuate the workings of the current ideological system (money, bribery, etc.). The result is a situation which, in the first place, does not serve as a good mirror for the plan to help the rest of the Pueblo reach a state of individual authenticity, and in the second place, shows that the Diablo is still working through the process of figuring out how to free mankind; he frantically tries anything he can think of and in the end fails to save the Pueblo. Debating with Beatriz on how he can get her brother out of jail, the Diablo says:

Creo que no has empleado con el carcelero el método adecuado para obtener la libertad del Hombre. El ruego nunca ha sido eficaz. Veamos. (Medita.) A un servidor del amo ¿qué podría interesarle? (Pausa.) Creo que no hay más que una cosa, una sola para él: El dinero. [ . . . ] En otros tiempos quizás te habría aconsejado un método distinto, pero ahora, es el único recurso. [ . . . ] Háblale y ofrécele dinero. Es la única manera.” (163-65)

What we note here is a process of meditation that shows that he is still trying to find exactly what he is looking for, that he still has not figured it out completely.

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43 In terms of Beatriz and saving, if one were to argue anything at all, it would be that Beatriz saves the Diablo (although not necessarily from ideology) through her love and affection toward him in such a way as Schoenbach presents: “La muerte por sacrificio es el símbolo de la liberación que se logra por el amor. ¿No es esto la pasión de Cristo? Así se explican las figuras de Beatriz en Las manos de Dios, Jesús en El crucificado y Merlin en El hechicero” (28).

44 The Diablo further demonstrates his lack of certainty on what to do to achieve the freedom of man in his
When he finally chooses his method of liberating Beatriz’s brother, his solution seems interesting at best and non-threatening at most. Instead of rejecting the all-powerful feudal lord, the Diablo submits to the Amo’s game of bribery, working through the normative established channels through which the other corrupt individuals in the system already work. He asks himself, “A un servidor del Amo, ¿qué podría interesarme?” (163). His train of thought always presupposes the existence of the Amo, and his methods seek to work through the ideological system in order to achieve the results that he is looking for; just like the Prostituta, the Diablo is a kind of tragic hero; he is never radical enough, he cannot make a clean break from ideology.

Now, it is obvious that the Diablo has his own goals in mind, a direct assault on the church which he intends Beatriz to carry out (which we will discuss further on); however, it is futile to attempt to inflict damage on an ideological apparatus such as a church, expecting to bring down an entire ideological system in general, while supporting the overarchings system by helping it to grow in other areas. That is exactly what the Diablo (which works through the bribing of the Carcelero) attempts to do. This is precisely why the Diablo’s plan to free the Pueblo fails: rather than seeking to abandon ideology he stays within it. His getting Beatriz involved in their game is what leads to a contest she cannot win; as Beatriz bribes the Carcelero, the Prostituta gets involved and the bribes need to become larger and larger in order to satisfy the Carcelero because the payment needs to be more and more in order to satisfy the Prostituta. Beatriz just becomes another link in the chain of the hopeless game of “manipulate and be dialogue with Beatriz. His frustration and anguish shows that he has tried and failed time and time again and that he’s still hoping to get it right someday: “[…] lo único que he querido siempre, a través de los tiempos, es acercarme al Hombre, ayudarle a vencer el miedo a la vida y a la muerte, la angustia del ser y del no ser. (Torturado.) Quise hallar para la vida otra respuesta que no se estrellara siempre con las puertas cerradas de la muerte, de la nada” (163).
 manipulated.” Because of the Diablo’s pushing her into this, she ends up being made a public example, a scapegoat for the Pueblo which in the end only reinforces the Pueblo’s status as subjects of the dominant ideology.

The Diablo’s participation in this ideological game of manipulation is quite evident in his treatment of Beatriz, and in this way, he shows himself to be not much different than the Cura, except for the fact that the Cura knows what means he must employ to stay in power while the Diablo continues a process of failure and experimentation. The Diablo is much more subtly manipulative than the Cura, so much so, that as readers we hardly recognize it. For example, when Beatriz whines and complains about the futility of her mission, the Diablo charismatically says to her, “Pero si tú quieres realmente que él sea libre…” (164). His words here are cunning in that the implication is a challenge (“I don’t really think you care about your brother or his freedom, you’d better prove it if you do”), although obviously his wording makes his tone much more subtle (“well, if you really want him to be free. . .”). This is the hook that catches Beatriz and forces her into a deal with him. He says, “Háblale, veremos si acepta. Haz un trato con él y yo luego haré otro trato contigo” (165). She accepts the challenge to go talk with the Carcelero, to negotiate the money, and the Diablo seals the pact without making it seem like he’s making a deal with her just yet; in this lies the ideological deception: she’s already made a deal with the devil before even agreeing to it. The problem is, her speaking with the Carcelero leaves her in a situation where she has no choice but to fulfill her would-be part of the agreement. The act of speaking with the Carcelero maintains Beatriz in a position where she is subjected to the Diablo; she must do his bidding because she eventually realizes that there is no way possible

For now we must consider the Diablo a sort of parallel ideological apparatus to the Cura which chooses to employ similar oppressive means. Their relationship will become more defined fairly soon.
for her to get the money she needs except through stealing it from the church.

In order to get Beatriz to steal the jewels from the church, the Diablo, just like the Cura, uses methods of emotional manipulation and guilt. Note the scene which follows Beatriz’s conversation with the Carcelero:

DIABLO: No es un robo. Es un acto de justicia. ¿O no quieres que tu hermano vuelva a ver la luz del sol? Irte lejos con él a ese Paraíso de que hablas. ¿No quieres eso? (La toma de los hombros, ella vacila, luego se aleja.)

BEATRIZ: Sí, pero no así, no así. (El diablo la sigue.)

DIABLO: (Sujetándole del brazo.) En este momento tienes que escoger entre la libertad de tu hermano y el respeto por esa imagen que ha permanecido sorda ante tus ruegos. [ . . . ] Si tú no traes lo que has prometido, tu hermano se consumirá en la cárcel para siempre. (La suelta.) (170)

Here we see anything but a desire to let her decide things for herself, to act autonomously. In fact, we see oppressive methods which seem to mirror those of the Cura. This entire speech is made to instill both guilt and fear in Beatriz; guilt for not being willing to save her brother at all costs, and fear of the Diablo if she does not complete this task. Apart from his words, his very gestures, the way he follows her closely and grabs her arm violently, all seem very familiar to methods employed by the church. This includes his showing Beatriz a future vision of the execution of her brother, of his condemnation, much as the church tells man of his future judgment and condemnation if he does not submit to its ideology. It is not an act of authenticity that pushes Beatriz into the church to steal the jewels; it is fear and coercion. Beatriz, at the point of tears, agrees to execute the Diablo’s plan.

Although the Diablo employs some methods of doctrine, guilt, and persuasion, these do
not serve to create ideological subjects, just as they do not in the case of the Cura. Both of them must get individuals to act in order for them to become subjects. This is true in the case of Beatriz. Even by the time the Diablo “shows her the future” and thereby convinces her to steal from the church, Beatriz’s reason for doing so still isn’t that she has begun to believe as the Diablo does; after seeing a vision of her brother’s death, she agrees to do his will purely out of desperation, “¡No! ¡Yo haré todo, menos dejarlo morir! ¡Él ha tenido siempre tanto miedo a la muerte!” (186). It is not until after she has stolen the jewels that her words and ideas begin to sound similar to those of the Diablo. In her first appearance after stealing the jewels (in Act 3) she says, “Me parece que la muerte después de haber sido libres en esta tierra, debe ser una forma más de libertad, pero si hemos estado aquí prisioneros, la muerte ha de ser la cárcel definitiva” (193). In addition, her first words with the Cura, following her deed, are spoken with “(absoluta rebeldía.) Desde que nací he oído esas palabras. ¿Podría ignorarlas ahora?” (195).

We understand by this that it is not until after she has actually acted that she becomes a subject of the ideology of the Diablo and thereby comes to think like him. She simply transfers from one state of subjectivization to another. This likewise shows that the matter of subjectivity follows Althusserian tendencies, which simultaneously would deny that she has become more free by deciding to act on the side of the Diablo. That is to say, we do not see Beatriz as one who actually has achieved freedom. This is not to say that she and the Diablo do not execute their task as symbols of progress against oppression (as Solórzano intends), indeed, they do much to reveal the tyrannical nature of the church and the injustices which it heaps upon the Pueblo. However, the way in which the Diablo turns Beatriz into a subject shows that the matter of existential subjectivity is a sticky issue within the play. We do not really see the possibility of an autonomous subject. Through performing acts of ideology, Beatriz undergoes the process of a
sort of sub-ideological interpellation in which, after having practiced ideology, she
(mis)recognizes herself in its call, and assumes that everything must be as her new-found
ideological subgroup makes it seem.

In the first place, we are talking about a type of interpellation, just as we spoke of before:
the process by which ideology creates subjects by having them misrecognize themselves in the
images of ideology. We use the term “sub-ideological interpellation” in relation to our previous
argument which demonstrated that the Diablo works within ideology rather than outside of it.
His methods which have him operate within the ideological system through bribery, etc., show
that he still recognizes himself as a subject since his scheme is always dependent on the
existence of the Amo (and God, if we can distinguish them). His getting Beatriz to take the
jewels from the church is but her induction into his ideological world, which by extension means
that she is subject to his ideology which is always in relation to the larger ideology. Thus, in
saying “sub-ideological interpellation” we recognize that there is a kind of game of meta-
ideology going on here: the ideology of the Diablo existing within the overarching ideology of
which the church is apparatus. Therefore Beatriz’s interpellation, her call to exist as a subject
through ideological practice, simply transfers her out of the outer level of ideology and moves
her to an ideology which depends on the former: the Diablo’s realm. In the end, since the Diablo
is also an ideological subject, Beatriz’s ties to him shows that she always remains within the
same structure of ideology that he is subjected to; as a result, Beatriz’s ideological status just lies
at a deeper and more hidden level.

Since she is forced to do the Diablo’s bidding, Beatriz’s realization of his will stems from
a kind of ideological act of puppeteering (which he conducts); the Diablo controls her actions
even before she comes to believe, and through her first motions as she begins to practice
ideology (stepping into the church to fulfill his plan) her body transforms into a material ideological site. Beatriz’s being becomes devoid of volition through her initial steps to act; ideology becomes her body, her hands, her eyes. In the following example from the text, note the absence of Beatriz’s point of view; it is not she who thinks, it is ideology which thinks her while her body acts as its vessel. Even though, as of yet, she does not believe, what she sees and does while doing the Diablo’s bidding becomes entwined with her material self, which, by the beginning of the following act, will lead her to believe; it will eventually direct her views.

The resulting scene has striking similarities to the opening description of El sueño del ángel, but in this case, it is the Diablo who, as puppeteer, pulls Beatriz’s strings:

DIABLO: (Dando una fuerte palmada en señal de satisfacción. En una pantomima que debe expresar todos los movimientos de Beatriz dentro de la iglesia dice el monólogo).

¡Beatriz! Ahora debes caminar firmemente. Camina, camina. Qué largo es el camino que la separa de esa imagen. Se acerca al altar [. . .]. Lo ve [. . .]. Está erguida frente a él, desafiante [. . .]. Ahora sube al altar, alarga la mano, ahora está sacando las joyas de esas manos inmensas [. . .]. Una, dos, tres [. . .]. Ve a la cara de la imagen. ¡No tiene ojos! Desde abajo parecían dos ojos inmensos que lo veían todo y no son más que dos cuencas vacías, ciegas, sin luz [. . .]. El corazón palpita fuertemente. Señal de que estamos vivos. ¡Es fácil! Más fácil de lo que creía. ¡Qué bueno es cobrarse de una vez por todo lo que sabemos que es nuestro! ¿Un vértigo? No. ¡Hay que ser fuertes! (Las joyas ahora están en sus manos y no en las de la imagen.) Esas joyas valen mucho. Valen la libertad. Valen la vida entera. ¡Ya está! ¡Ahora vamos fuera! ¡Los pasos resuenan en la oscuridad! ¡Vamos! ¡Vamos! ¡La puerta está tan lejos todavía! ¡Camina Beatriz, camina! Uno, dos, uno, dos. La puerta se ve ya más cerca. ¡Ahora está cerca! ¡Ahí está la luz, la libertad! ¡La
The “fuerte palmada” that the Diablo gives represents the beginning of his control over Beatriz. His pantomiming of her actions are just as the Ángel’s in El sueño del ángel, in which the Ángel stalks mysteriously behind the Mujer “dando la impresión de que ambos están unidos por un hilo invisible semejante al de un títere” (Solórzano, Teatro breve 41). In addition to controlling her actions, ideological subjectivity controls the subject’s gaze. It is the Diablo that says “Ve a la cara de la imagen. ¡No tiene ojos! [. . .] No son más que dos cuencas vacías, ciegas, sin luz [. . .]” (Solórzano, Teatro 187). We can read this in a number of ways: ve can simply mean “she sees,” in a third person narrative, but it can also be read as “look,” a command directed toward her in the second person to perform an action, especially since we note that he employs the tú form in the preceding selection. When we take into account what follows the phrase “Ve a la cara de la imagen. ¡No tiene ojos! [. . .] No son más que dos cuencas vacías, ciegas, sin luz [. . .],” we realize that he is not simply narrating actions which are of her will, but rather, he is commanding her in both action and thought. As the Diablo forces her to gaze into la imagen del Padre Eterno, he directs her interpretation of it, points out its emptiness, its nothingness and impotency. These words clearly reflect the Diablo’s thoughts being instilled into Beatriz’s mind and are merely a repetition of his previous words, “[Dios e]s [. . .] un trozo de materia inanimada a la que ellos mismos han dado vida. Quítale todos los adornos. (Con ira) Déjala desnuda, totalmente desnuda” (171).

Having just noted the Diablo’s emergence as an ideological apparatus which is capable of creating subjects, it will be useful to draw our attention back to the fact that his methods in freeing El Hombre (through money and bribes) are non-subversive toward the greater ideology of the Amo since it funnels power back through his system and thus in no way attempts to
operate in such a way as to deny or break from the ideological Subject. Through this process the Diablo becomes a sort of sub-division of the ideological apparatus of the Cura, which puts into question his claim that the jewels’ value is the liberty of man: eternal life. In other words, his ideas on how to free *El Hombre* through money show that the Diablo still struggles to find a remedy to the problem. All along the way there exists a sense of denial concerning money; for the Prostituta, it is a direct denial of the need for money, believing that she can maintain herself as an autonomous agent without it: “No te he dicho que quiero ese dinero. Ni me importa” (174). What she wants most is her freedom. However, just as the Diablo claims that money is the key to freedom, she begins by denying monetary advances but ends up demanding more and more.\(^{46}\)

The Diablo, of course, is blinded by connecting money with liberty, which proves to be fruitless since the seizure of the jewels only leads to the money being re-directed back into the system through the Amo’s cohort, the Carcelero, who pays the increasingly high demands of the prostitute who, in order to acquire a bed for her business, gives the jewels to the Amo’s mistress. Through the Amo’s relationship with her this money will necessarily get back to the his ideological apparatus: the church to which he “donates” funds”(Solórzano, *Teatro* 159). No matter how subversive the Diablo tries to be toward the church he cannot be successful. In the meantime, as the church waits for the money to circulate back through the system, the Cura cannot help but become an investigator in such a degree of mischief because of the money’s redirection back into the Amo’s system through the Carcelero (with whom the Cura has close interactions).

In turn, the Cura, upon capturing Beatriz, is able to lead an investigation which is by no

\(^{46}\) Supportive of this idea is the fact that Schoenbach states that the Carcelero and the Prostituta “se entienden porque sus valores son puramente monetarios” (23)
means impartial. His possibilities for scapegoats (after quickly writing off the Sacristán) become the following: the Carcelero, the Prostituta, and Beatriz. Since the money was funneled back through the Amo’s underlings, and because they agree not to speak of the matter (197), the obvious choice in order to perpetuate ideology is Beatriz. The Cura’s verdict: “Entonces lleva a esta mujer a la cárcel. Yo hablaré con el Amo para que la castigue con todo rigor. Ella sola es la culpable y nadie más” (197).

The Diablo, however, is oblivious to the gears he has set in motion; moments after the Cura condemns Beatriz, the Diablo basks in a false sense of glory, erroneously assuming that his actions will lead to the salvation of the Pueblo. He exclaims, “¡Ha llegado el momento decisivo! Estos hombres sabrán lo que has hecho y te justificarán [. . . ]. Vencerán el miedo. Se sentirán unidos. Podrán entonces verme y oírme y podré encaminarlos a su salvación” (198). In essence, the Diablo’s tactic/belief that money is key to liberty is what prepares the Pueblo for its ultimate enslavement because it leads to the use of Beatriz as a scapegoat. Even when “dissenters” exist, ideology has a way of appropriating their subversive actions in order not only to stabilize, but to strengthen the system. At the end of *Las manos de Dios* the Pueblo ties Beatriz to a tree and punishes her to death by fire. This sacrifice of Beatriz is a ritual, it is the materialization of ideology which through its practice will reaffirm the subjects’ submission to ideology. Beatriz essentially becomes a scapegoat for the Pueblo.

Let us turn to the question of the scapegoat being used in this ritual: is Beatriz an optimal or even acceptable scapegoat which will satisfy ideology by preventing the Pueblo’s escape from it? Of course the Cura has formally convicted Beatriz as a subversive who should be punished in

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47 For details of why the Prostituta was ruled out from being a potential subversive to ideology, see the end of the section on the Prostituta in this chapter.
order to serve as an example to maintain order and keep the rest of the Pueblo under rein. But what exactly makes it so that her sacrifice accomplishes that goal and actually does have a real effect on the subjectivity of the Pueblo? Žižek enlightens us as to this situation by taking a step beyond Althusser:

Althusser speaks only of the process of ideological interpellation through which the symbolic machine of ideology is ‘internalized’ into the ideological experience of Meaning and Truth: but we can learn from Pascal that this “internalization”, by structural necessity, never fully succeeds, that there is always a residue, a leftover, a stain of traumatic irrationality and senselessness sticking to it, and that this leftover, far from hindering the full submission of the subject to the ideological command, is the very condition of it. [ . . . It] confers on the Law its unconditional authority.

(Sublime Object of Ideology 43, emphasis in original)

We return once again to the element of the role of the rebel as a figure which strengthens, rather than weakens, ideology. As Žižek points out through Pascal, it is impossible for ideology to be fully internalized. It is very evident that even the individuals of the Pueblo have an element which resists ideology; we see this in their hesitancy to follow the Cura as he argues with the Diablo. Beatriz, as their sacrifice, represents and embodies this “leftover, [this] stain of traumatic irrationality” which is in the Pueblo. The ideological disruption, which she represents, throws the entire Pueblo into ensuing chaos. However, her disturbance is of fundamental necessity. As Žižek states, “far from hindering the full submission of the subject to the ideological command,

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48 Even though we have shown that she is simply made subject of the Diablo’s ideology, her stealing of the jewels, accompanied by the lie of the angel capturing her, severely shakes up the ideological stability of the Pueblo in the sense that it reveals the fragility of the power of the dominating ideology and its representation of the Subject in la imagen del Padre Eterno, which has essentially been raped.
[it] is the very condition of it. [...] [It] confers on the Law its unconditional authority” (43). Subjection to ideology in the pueblo does not lose out in the least bit due to Beatriz’s presence; they need a subversive presence, such as she, to solidify their relationship to ideology.

The next question is, how is the scapegoat used in order to strengthen the subjects’ relationship to ideology in Las manos de Dios? This matter leads us back to the notion of subjectivization through practice and should be obvious at this point: concrete rituals ensure the subjects’ continued subjection. In this case of ritual sacrifice, Beatriz as the scapegoat acts as a cover-up for the nothingness or emptiness of the Subject that ideology masks.  

By keeping this emptiness out of view, Beatriz, as a sacrifice, is able to impede the vision of the Pueblo, to shield it from experiencing the traumatic realization that there is indeed nothing rational behind the structure of their existence. For the Pueblo, the ideological apparatus of the church can attempt to cover up this irrational kernel, but it always emerges as a condition of ideology’s existence.

However, the presence of the stain in the symbolic, such as Beatriz, far from weakening ideology’s hold, reaffirms and strengthens its dominance through her sacrifice. In short, the sacrifice of the scapegoat creates the existence of the Subject and strengthens the relationship between it and the ideological subjects. In Althusserian terms, there must be a Subject, which is

49 For a more complete discussion on the concretizing of the relationship between the subject and the Subject through scapegoating, see Slavoj Žižek in Appendix B.

50 The inherent meaninglessness of existence is a point which is emphasized in Méndez-Faith’s interview with Carlos Solórzano. She asks him about his pessimistic, “casi fatalista” tendency that “permea gran parte de su obra” (105). He responds that he has always had a hard time reconciling man with the world that he has created, and that because of the death of his twenty-two-year-old son in a hunting accident, it was confirmed for him that it is “el azar el que gobierna nuestra existencia. No hay leyes ni lógica para vivir ni mucho menos para morir” (106).
nonexistent, with which subjects can have a relationship. By doing so they are able to see themselves in the call of ideology and recognize that everything is how it should be. Even though this Subject is empty, it exists through the life/(mis)recognition that the subjects give it, and thus, for Žižek, sacrifice precisely serves the purpose of hiding the nonexistence of the Other/Subject. The whole crux of the matter is that, through sacrifice, the Pueblo will misunderstand its relationship to the Subject in the sense that the Subject does not really exist. Girard’s notion of sacrifice contains a similar element: “the sacrificial process requires a certain degree of misunderstanding. The celebrants do not and must not comprehend the true role of the sacrificial act. The theological basis of sacrifice has a crucial role in fostering this misunderstanding” (7). That is to say, it is the duty of the Cura, of theology, to assist in creating this misunderstanding by inducing the Pueblo to sacrifice Beatriz and thus (mis)recognize themselves in the empty image contained within the cathedral: *la imagen del Padre Eterno*.

Solórzano uses *la imagen del Padre Eterno* as a representation of the Subject. The Diablo describes it as an empty and hollow wooden image with deep pits for eyes. The hollowness represents the emptiness behind the church’s ideology as well as the nonexistence of the god which they deem as ruler over earth. The large pits for eyes represent blindness, the inability to see on the part of both ideology and its subjects. The empty god behind the mask is a black hole which only exists because of the symbolic relations of the actions which the Pueblo performs under the direction of the Cura. Its reality as Subject is created and affirmed through what he

51 The idea here is that there must be something, such as God, to give legitimacy to the people’s actions and beliefs. This Other is what Žižek calls a “Master Signifier, which serves as symbolic authority and is the foundation for the entire discursive structure” (*Symptom!* 119). The Pueblo’s performing of rituals is always in relationship to the Subject and the practice itself indicates to them that this “something” does exist because they direct their ritual toward it.
tells them to do, especially the sacrifice of Beatriz. As Žižek states, “Sacrifice is a guarantee that [ . . . ] there is an Other who can be appeased by means of the sacrifice” (Symptom! 64, emphasis in original). Beatriz’s sacrifice guarantees the continuing ideological imprisonment of the Pueblo. Practice, what they do, is their reality, and in a sense, their tying her to a tree and killing her is the very incarnation of their god. He exists insomuch as they can tie her to a tree and kill her for Him. Thus, Beatriz serves as a means to close or at least hide the fissures of the real for a time; through their sacrifice of her they are able to perpetuate the symbolic universe in which they exist.

As a side note and supplement to the Pueblo’s use of Beatriz as a scapegoat, the people’s self-inflicted flagellation acts as a means of further covering up the emptiness of ideology. As they finish their sacrifice of Beatriz in order to appease the Subject, they then proceed to flagellate themselves mechanically. Why is killing Beatriz not enough to protect themselves from the real? Is the subsequent flagellation really necessary? Yes it is, because it is a way in which they themselves can assume guilt and thereby protect themselves from trauma; Žižek states:

[W]e don’t only escape from guilt but also escape into guilt, take refuge in it. To grasp this paradox, we must relate the subjective experience of guilt to the inconsistency of the big Other (the symbolic order), i.e., to the fact that the big Other is “always already dead.” It is in this sense that we should interpret the famous Freudian dream about the father who doesn’t know he is dead: his figure persists, retains its consistency, till he is told the truth. [ . . . ] In short, the subject takes the guilt upon himself: insofar as he sacrifices himself by assuming the guilt, the Other is saved from the devastating knowledge of its inconsistency, impotence, inexistence. (Symptom! 44)

They sacrifice Beatriz to save themselves from the devastating effects of a meaningless
universe by ensuring that there is an Other/Subject who their sacrifice is directed to; but, their self-flagellation is also meant to save the Other/Subject itself from realizing that it does not really exist. That is to say, la imagen del Padre Eterno itself must not come to the knowledge of its own inexistence. Why do they beat themselves and then enter into the church at the end of the play? Because they must assure la imagen del Padre Eterno that he still exists, that he still dominates, and that they continue to be subjected to him. Similarly, the Mujer at the end of El sueño del ángel flagellates herself in order to remind the Other that he exists. The result is the orgasmic laughter of the Ángel, who aside from forming part of her consciousness, represents the ideological apparatus of the church and, by extension, the very mind of the ideological Subject.

Returning to the matter of ideology’s appropriation of rebellious figures for its own benefit, Beatriz further qualifies as an exemplary scapegoat because her death is a death which can occur without incurring the risk of vengeance. Girard first establishes that “[t]he purpose of the sacrifice is to restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric” (8), an idea which is consistent with the task of ideology or the symbolic order. The Cura affirms the need for social stability by saying, “Dios quiere el orden [. . . ]” (Solórzano, Teatro 177). Sacrifice as a means of re-instituting social order stems from the process of an offense (Beatriz’s robbing of the jewels), from which occurs the emergence of violence, and the need for retribution. Violence itself is self-perpetuating, it is sacred, it has no end. At the disturbance to the order of society which Beatriz and the Diablo are creating, there must exist a way to put an end to the eruption of violence. Sacrifice serves this purpose. It rings true when the Cura himself declares to the Pueblo, “Esta iglesia es la seguridad hijos míos. Lo sabemos bien” (201). Whether or not the iglesia represents truth or deceit, and whether its tyrannical means to an end are justified, it does prove itself as an entity of stability and order, permitting little change in the lives of the
community. In Las manos de Dios, the emergence of violence to the system has upset the Pueblo and it is the ideological apparatus of the church’s duty to restore it.\footnote{Some would perhaps question whether restoring order through the public execution of Beatriz would qualify the church as an ideological apparatus rather than an oppressive apparatus. Althusser makes this matter clear when he states the following: “[I]t is essential to say that for their part the Ideological State Apparatuses function massively and predominantly by ideology, but they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic. There is no such thing as a purely ideological apparatus (“Ideology” 145). Althusser shows that it is impossible for any apparatus to rely solely on one principle. What differentiates the ideological apparatus from the oppressive apparatus is simply the degree in which each employs its preferred method. The ideological apparatus functions mainly by ideology while the oppressive apparatus functions primarily on principles of oppression. In our discussion, the point regarding “concealed” or “symbolic” oppression is most interesting. When an ideological apparatus uses oppressive means, it will be symbolic of some ideological principle. In Las manos de Dios, Solórzano is very revealing where perhaps Althusser is somewhat vague. The dramatist shows that oppression from the ideological apparatus isn’t merely symbolic and is not always in opposition to the term “ideological,” even if the terms “ideological apparatus” and “oppressive apparatus” seem to be in opposition to each other; they are not necessarily exclusive terms because oppression can be ideological. The ideological apparatus of the church relies on a ritual, an ideological practice, to execute a member of the community. The materialization of said practice in the sacrifice of Beatriz generates the same effect of any ideology; interpellation, hailing, call it what you may, it solidifies the relationship between the subject and the Subject, making the people (mis)recognize themselves as subjects and act accordingly. In this sense, the sacrifice of Beatriz is no doubt an ideological act, whether it is oppressive or not.} The Pueblo’s moving and finally speaking during the Cura/Diablo debate, after having remained silent for the entire play, is a sign of the eruption and spread of violence which causes a weakening effect on society’s stability. The stage directions say that the Pueblo has become “agitado” and that it has filled the plaza (198), waiting to see what will happen next. Their action becomes more
aggressive because of the disorder that Beatriz has brought to the community: “El pueblo se mueve amenazador contra Beatriz. [. . . ] hace un movimiento como si arrojara algo a la cara de Beatriz” (200). The Cura steps in and calms them down a bit, but when the Diablo then speaks to them they become “menos tímido,” then move toward him “con entusiasmo” (201), and finally “enardecido” (202). As the people open their mouths for the first time we notice the destabilizing effect that these events have had on them; they experience frantic shifts of opinion and emotion, each going through constant flux as the Pueblo jumps back and forth between agreeing with the Diablo and the Cura as the battle between the two progresses.

However, collectively, the citizens of the Pueblo can funnel this emerging violence into the scapegoat Beatriz without the ensuing risk of infinite conflict and retaliation. Girard states, All our sacrificial victims [. . . ] are invariably distinguishable from the nonsacrificeable beings by one essential characteristic: between these victims and the community a crucial social link is missing, so they can be exposed to violence without fear of reprisal. Their death does not automatically entail an act of vengeance [. . . ]. [S]acrifice is primarily an act of violence without risk of vengeance. (13)

The fact that sacrificing Beatriz carries no further risk of violence relies on two things: Beatriz still exists at the margins of society because of her social status (she has no existing family members that could embody the threat of vengeance [her brother is in jail]) and she is not a contributor to society in the sense that she does not work.

First, Beatriz is a single girl, described as a “muchacha de veinte años” (Solórzano, Teatro 158). She has no marital obligations, preventing society from seeing or acknowledging her as full contributing member. The presence of a man and his family to give her power and authority is absent, as well as the obligation of such a man and family to provide physical
protection to both her and the family’s reputation through her as a lady. In terms of her own family, her father and mother are both dead, while her brother is a political prisoner of the Amo. She is literally alone as far as socio-familial ties are concerned.

In addition to her lack of any family, Beatriz’s extreme poverty, her presence as a non-economic contributor to society, makes her a marginalized member of society. The general impression is that those of the Pueblo all work the fields, however, the matter of Beatriz is fairly ambiguous. It is difficult to say whether she does any kind of work at all, whether she is employed in someone’s household or as a field-hand. Nevertheless, the text of the play tends to direct us toward the thought that she is a vagabond; since the capture of her brother and the Amo’s confiscation of “her family’s land,” she probably has no home to return to. Beatriz seems to spend her days idly wandering around the town and contemplating the tragic event which is her life.

The only thing that we can conclude as far as her profession goes, from the details of the play, is that she is a beggar. This is evident from the scene in which Beatriz rejects the Diablo’s methods of freeing her brother and she decides to beg in the street in order to make money. The play seems to be clear on this point as Beatriz wanders around “de un lado al otro [. . .] pidiendo a los hombre y mujeres,” saying “¡Necesito ayuda! ¡Una limosna por favor!” (180). If Beatriz had some kind of employer, some means of living, it seems that she would first go to them to seek help for herself and her brother; however, this does not occur, leaving us with the impression that she is without work (unless of course, she has already made such an attempt during events that would occur before the first act of the play, of which we are entirely unaware). Her marginal situation is affirmed through the actions of the Pueblo, which is by no means wealthy or even middle class; at large, the people ignore her: “los transeúntes pasan en todos
sentidos indiferentes, en una marcha mecánica” (180).

Without marriage, family, or work, Beatriz is the perfect candidate for sacrifice. She is close enough in appearance to the other members of society (i.e. she is a healthy girl who is from the same place as everyone else), however her marginalized state distinguishes her from the rest. She is among them, but essentially she is not one of them, she is invisible in a sense. Any ties that might make Beatriz an equal member of society, that would instigate someone to seek justice on her behalf and thereby perpetuate a cycle of vengeful violence, are nonexistent. She is the perfect candidate for the scapegoat position: a dispensable being that is different than those around her, yet similar enough to where she can be their representative in a sacrifice which can stifle the violent disruption which has emerged in their ideological order.

No Escape:

In the end we see that the nature of the universe which Solórzano displays is one that does not permit even the protagonists and heroes of his works to withstand ideological pressures. Even though Žižek would provide room for re-shaping or re-arranging symbolic relationships, these plays display ideology as having such a tight grip on its subjects so as to prevent the occurrence of such events. For a character such as Beatriz, “subversive” action is merely appropriated by ideology in a manner which allows the stabilization of the current order and the reaffirming of the already present nature of ideological subjects. Her rebellion only serves to strengthen ideology. Similarly, as in the case of the Diablo, the means of going against ideology are always in relation to or within the system and, due to his ability to radically break from ideology, they fail. Just as Beatriz’s rebellion is necessary for the process of subjectivity, he and his plan are not able to abandon the established channels which exist; his actions to “free El
*Hombre*” are always in relation to the current system; he relies on the system’s processes regarding transfer of money in such a way that the circulation of funds always ends up strengthening the ideological system. Likewise, the Prostituta adheres to such a fetishistic disavowal, “I know I don’t need money or customers, but. . .” Neither she nor the Mujer from *El sueño del ángel* are able to live an existence which is not in relation to the system regardless of their denial; there is always a sense of non-knowledge on their part with regard to the workings of the ideology which prevents their escape. They desire to be free, and even “feel free” at times, but all along the way the Ángel of ideology lurks in the shadows, writing their actions. Even Beatriz, who may have saved the Diablo through her love, in the end has only rescued ideology by saving its necessary oppositional symptom which controls her; even the Diablo is a fundamental part of ideology’s existence: “far from hindering the full submission of the subject to the ideological command, [he] confers on the Law its unconditional authority.”
Conclusion

The Impossibility of Freedom

Concerning *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*, a shift on the matter of subjectivity, from viewing the characters as autonomous subjects who can create themselves to ideological subjects who are helplessly formed by their environment and the demands of institutions, provides a radically different way to view Carlos Solórzano’s work. Although Solórzano may not have intended to portray subjectivity in this way, an Althusserian reading of the topic is very revealing in terms of what Solórzano’s characters actually face: a brutal world full of oppression which shapes individuals in its own image as these individuals struggle to survive and hope to find themselves. We see that in these works it is the institution which exhibits ideological control over the subject; it makes the subject who and what it is. This kind of reading brings Solórzano’s heavy emphasis of the oppressive and destructive ritual to our attention. Whether in the case of the Mujer in *El sueño del ángel* or the Pueblo in *Las manos de Dios*, what we see is a brutal critique of the malevolent mass production of robots: individuals who come to embody ideology through practice, leaving them without heart or soul.

The impossibility of freedom which is present in these works is so powerful that even those who seem to offer the most hope for humanity, when read closely and carefully, fizzle under the pressure of ideology. Even behind the most glorious moments of “subversive action” on the part of the Diablo, the Prostitutas, and Beatriz, ideology maintains a hidden hook buried deep within these individuals. They can never be radical enough, they can never fully sustain themselves independent of its grasp. No matter how much they seek to go beyond the demands of society, there exists, perhaps subconsciously within the author’s work, an underlying current of dark pessimism which prevents the characters from being able to truly operate autonomously.
Therefore, *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel*, in their own right, reveal an incredibly fierce critique of institutions and the practices which they use to shape what they show as the bleak destiny of man. The demands which they place on man are absolute. There is no escape, no possibility in life to go beyond their mode of thought, their use of symbols, or their rules of interaction. Even while some characters may seem to exhibit existential tendencies, the massive power over society that institutions wield is capable of exploiting even the boldest of individuals in order to bind society as a whole, through ritual and practice. Thus, there is ultimately, for humanity, only doubtful hope in bettering its existence against tyranny. If there is a small ray of light at all, it is not in the possibility of freedom or authenticity, but rather, in the ability to love, as exhibited by both Beatriz and the Mujer. Yet, in terms of breaking free from society, in regard to forging a new path, even the most passionate and subversive love, exhibited by both Beatriz and the Mujer, is not radical enough. It is never capable of breaking from the demands of institutions, and in fact, it always shows itself to be simply a necessary condition of ideology’s presence.

Yes, Solórzano was friends with Camus and, yes, his works exhibit many absurdist and existential tendencies; however, the justification which we see for a positive or hopeful reading of the absurd in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del ángel* is slim. Because of this, it is difficult to place Solórzano in a box. Perhaps we see that the dramatist’s resistance of an explicit categorization with the existentialists is a move rightfully executed. There is a complexity to his work that weaves a variety of thought, exhibiting both his hope for justice for humanity and for the individual to fulfill himself, while simultaneously concealing what this desire seems be dragging behind it: an immense and almost impossible burden of doubt in the world in which we live.
However bleak the impossibility of freedom in *Las manos de Dios* and *El sueño del angel* may seem, such a reading would not argue that Solórzano does not provide us with a powerful and enduring work of art. On the contrary, by not being a one-hundred-percent clean fit with ideas of existential subjectivity, these plays, to a certain extent, avoid criticizing the individual by placing a greater responsibility on institutions for the way that they shape mankind. In *El sueño del angel* we feel pity for the woman, realizing that her torment is beyond her control. Similarly, we mourn for the Pueblo which is incapable of realizing a better way of life. Existentialism holds that man assumes the full weight of his responsibility regarding choices; however, the sticky issue of subjectivity in these works generates a space where the author is most effectively able to raise ethical questions regarding institutions and their practices.
Appendix A

Synopses of the Plays Under Consideration

Las manos de Dios:

Premiering in 1956, Las manos de Dios is one of the playwright’s most important works, providing a not so typical auto sacramental in three acts that poses the protagonists as female savior figure\textsuperscript{53} and a devil who is the force of good. Solórzano sets the play in a rural pueblo which is dominated by the Amo (in negative space), a kind of feudal lord, the Carcelero, who represents his control through “law,” and the Cura, the local ideological strong-arm of the Amo. The conflict revolves around Beatriz, a young woman who is desperate to free her brother, her only remaining family member, from his imprisonment which came as a result of his speaking out against the Amo’s confiscation of the land which he considers to be his own. She seeks help from the Carcelero, the other citizens of the town, and the church, but to no avail.

Meanwhile, a mysterious young man has been seen by the Campanero; he describes himself as being a rebel and champion of freedom and progress against oppression. As Beatriz feels sadness and anger for God’s lack of succor in her plight, he appears to her claiming that he is the Diablo. This, however, is not a typical devil, for he claims that the world misunderstands him because of the dogma of the church having falsely painted him as an evil and destructive demon—in order to stifle man’s progress—rather than what he really is: the force of good, progress, etc. His wish is to unlock man’s potential from within him and help him rise above oppressors and the subjugation which institutions have placed on him. Beatriz, seeing as how he is the only being who appears to be willing to help her, decides to listen to his advice and bribe the Carcelero in order for him to free her captive brother. Upon doing so, she realizes her

\textsuperscript{53} See Feliciano, \textit{El teatro mítico de Carlos Sólzorzano} and Quackenbush, \textit{Devotas irreverencias}. 

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dilemma: how is she to obtain sufficient funds to liberate him? The Diablo informs her that she will be stealing the jewels from the hands of the great statue resident of the local cathedral: *la imagen del Padre Eterno*. Beatriz’s hesitancy to break free from the chains of the church causes her to panic and seek help elsewhere, from the townspeople and the Cura, but with no success.

Desperate, she returns to the Diablo and with his aid steals the jewels from the hands of the image and gives them to the Carcelero, hoping to buy her brother’s freedom. Simultaneously, however, the Carcelero has been in pursuit of the Prostituta, who has demanded more money before she will satisfy him, knowing that he is expecting payment from Beatriz. Thus Beatriz must steal more and more, until finally, the Cura and the Sacristán realize that the jewels are missing, and thus decide to lie in wait in order to capture the culprit. As they catch Beatriz red-handed, the Cura tells the townspeople of a false miracle, hoping to prevent an eruption of disorder that could result from her having sought justice for her brother: he claims that an angel led him to her capture,

At this time the Diablo reappears and attempts to convince the Pueblo of the church and Amo’s abusive dominance over them; that it is time for them to fight God and take back what is rightfully theirs. Chaos ensues, and for the first time the Pueblo speaks, as the Cura and the Diablo battle back and forth for their support. In the end, the Cura proves victorious and leads the Pueblo to punish Beatriz by tying her to a tree and killing her and subsequently paying penance for their own rebellion by whipping themselves. As Beatriz is dying and the Diablo has practically given up hope of ever liberating mankind, Beatriz’s encouraging words lead him to pledge that he will once again stand in the face of oppression and seek the freedom of *El Hombre*. 
Regardless of its brevity (one act), the 1960 work *El sueño del ángel* displays an intense criticism of the church in terms of the destructive guilt that its dogma produces. The play follows a conversation between a woman, Mujer, and her guardian angel, Ángel. As the work unfolds, the Ángel sets into what appears to be his daily ritual of interrogation of the Mujer with regard to an adulterous act that he believes that she committed many years before with her brother-in-law while the Ángel was fast asleep. The dialogue begins with him trying to get the Mujer to confess, to walk step by step through the events of that day, in order to arrive at the details of what she did while he was sleeping. He accuses her, saying that her adulterous acts were sinful; however, in the Mujer’s opinion, God placed love in her, and no matter what kind of love it is, if it is love, then it must be good.

The Ángel’s accusation’s heighten to the point where he fills in all the blanks for her; rather than her confessing, he gives all the details. The result is frustration and an outburst from the Mujer, claiming that she freed herself from him but for a moment with her brother-in-law, and that in doing so she took revenge on the Ángel. The Ángel accepts this final confession and informs her that they have finished their first task and must move on to the second task: atonement. After some struggle, he is able to get the Mujer to repeat the words of atonement: a ritual which consists in her admitting that she is a sinner and cannot help it. He then instructs her to whip herself as punishment, which she does mechanically and brutally as the curtain falls.
Appendix B

Theoretical Background for the Study

Louis Althusser:

With regard to our topic, Althusser’s problem is in direct opposition to “the claim put forward most forcefully by Sartre and other members of the existential-phenomenological school that all important human behavior is the outcome of conscious human choice and deliberation” (Smith 167). Whereas the existentialists ground their idea of subjectivity in the autonomous-thinking subject, Althusser’s approach is that through ideology, society determines man rather than man determining himself. Lacan’s influence on Althusser lead to the latter positing the human subject as de-centered (Elliot 175) because ideology causes the individual to falsely recognize himself through the images and representations in society that surround him/her. The (mis)recognition of the self that is thereby produced gives the subject the false impression of self-identity and autonomy.

The anti-humanism of Louis Althusser derives from his seeking the answer to Marx’s problem of “who makes history?” His attention shifts to the problem of how does society reproduce itself, fundamentally, how does it reproduce its labor power in order to meet society’s needs and sustain the means of production? Smith says that for Althusser, it is impossible to answer this question if we continue considering the subject as one of volition and will (167): “[...] Althusserian determinism is the reverse side of Sartrean decisionism [...]”. There is no action within the Althusserian universe understood as behavior consciously directed toward the pursuit of some freely chosen end or purpose. There is only a set of reactive responses determined [...] by the needs of the production process” (198). To further the production process, the most obvious is that individuals are physically capable of reproducing their labor
power (through wages, a good night’s sleep, etc). However, the trick to history and society is that apart from physically reproducing labor, they must also reproduce the individual and the population’s subjection to the ruling ideology; this creates a stable society. One must be equipped to socially respond to the established system, and ideology adapts individuals in response to society’s needs (Callinicos 65); As Althusser explicitly states, “Ideology (as a system of mass representations) is indispensable in any society if men are to be formed, transformed, and equipped to respond to the demands of their conditions of existence” (For Marx 235).

Now, what is ideology and how does ideology work? Ideology is everything around us, a “stream of discourses, images and ideas,” as we live life from birth until death (Ferretter 77). It is the way people and the world operate that seems normal to us, appearing logical while we are unconscious to its operations; we have no need to stop and think to rationalize it, but even if we do, it seems to make perfect sense: “It comes to us primarily in the form of obviousness – common sense, popular opinion, what everybody thinks, what we take for granted” (77).

For Althusser, ideology is able to operate in this way because of the category of the subject. He says that ideology hails or interpellates one as a subject, that is to say, the images, practices, and discourse of society which surround you. Because of the way these things seem to direct themselves to you, you feel like you belong, that the world was created for you in order for you to act within it. In a sense, everything around you shouts out “Hey you!,” and you think, “it must be me” because it makes you feel as if you belong. Ideology implies that you have a place in society, that you are an individual that is able to freely operate within it. This seems logical because ideology makes man feel that either the world was created for him or that he is the creator of it.

[ . . . T]he subject is a creation of his object, in which case the object is thereby
transformed into a subject. This is true most obviously in the case of all forms of deism and theism, but also in the case of many versions of materialism, where nature becomes the omnipotent Subject in the place of God. We can say, therefore, that the category of the subject is a theological one, since it involves either the notion of God (or a God-like Nature) or the transformation of man into a God, by making him creator of the world.

(Callinicos 65)

Man’s subjection to ideology, therefore, occurs because of his (mis)recognizing himself in the images of ideology and, ultimately, the Subject. This assurance, the way in which he recognizes himself in relation to the Subject, assures him that his doing what society demands is the right thing to do.

Finally, ideology has a material nature. Althusser’s analysis of ideology proposes that ideology always exists in a material apparatus, a group or organized body which diffuses ideology by nature. The ideological apparatus inserts concrete individuals into concrete practices, and thus is always material. The concrete nature of ideology always presupposes ideas and belief, that is to say, the individual practices according to standard procedures, and as a result of operating within ideology one receives the affirmation that everything is as it should be; that is to say, the individual (mis)recognizes him/herself in ideology. In the case of religion in the Christian church, for example, one does not believe first and then practice as a result. The ideological apparatus of the church exists, one practices within it, and by so doing comes the (mis)recognition of the self through the assumption that there exists a Subject (in this case, God).

54 Examples of Ideological State Apparatuses would be all groups, collectives, or organizations in which one might exist and need to operate according to certain norms which it creates and which bring the subject into a relationship with the dominant ideology. Prime examples would be school, church, family, business, social group, etc.
who I practice in relation to, and that by continuing practice everything will be as it should be: beneficial. I do not practice because I believe, I believe because I practice, because I function, because I operate within society.

Slavoj Žižek:

Regarding the influence of Žižek in our reading, we will, at times, draw a relationship between the Lacanian idea of the symbolic order and Althusser’s notions of ideology; after all, Lacan heavily influenced both Althusser and Žižek, and Žižek often makes use of Althusserian ideas in order to talk about Lacan. Essentially our use of the symbolic order will share the Althusserian dimension of ideology since both determine the matter of subjectivity and ideology structures the meaning of images just as the Symbolic structures the Imaginary. Similarly, we will equate the idea of the Lacanian Other with the Althusserian Subject, just as Žižek does in his own writing. In Althusser, the central role of the nonexistent Subject on which ideology depends results as having characteristics which are very similar to the Other of the Lacanian symbolic order as seen in Žižek, only differing on the point of materialization where Žižek sees Althusser’s exclusiveness about the materiality of ideology as symptomatic. Žižek claims that ideology extends beyond the material in the sense that one always presupposes the Subject/Other in one’s concrete actions (Enjoy Your Symptom! 68). With this difference, however, Žižek does not deny that ideology can, and often does, have a material nature and, therefore, limiting our discussion of Žižek to where Žižek uses examples in which individuals’ concrete actions serve to create subjects to an ideological Other would not pose his and Althusser’s theories at conflict.

This difference in Žižek, nevertheless, can produce a shift in subjectivization, for the presupposition of the Other in action rather than the recognition of the Other as a result of action produces a gap in which one may decide to abandon the Symbolic altogether; that is to say,
although Žižek would say that most often people are subject to ideology, there is an escape: going crazy. An escape from ideology is an option which Althusser does not allow; for him, leaving one form of ideology is always entering into another. However, we may take advantage of this concept in Žižek because Solórzano’s not allowing his characters to escape from ideology completely (they, at best, slide from one form of the dominant ideology into one of its subcategories) shows that even though for Žižek it may be an option, for Solórzano it is not. Thus, the Althusserian version is more adequate for these plays.

Furthermore, our equation of the idea of ideology with that of the symbolic order will prove helpful on the issue of scapegoating in Las manos de Dios. We will do this because the two theories align very closely on this topic, especially in Žižek’s discussion of scapegoating in Enjoy Your Symptom! Nevertheless, Žižek’s description is more detailed and extends on some points that I believe Althusser’s theory only implies, and he even goes beyond Althusser. For Žižek, we all rely on the fantasy of the symbolic order to protect ourselves from the real, the traumatic encounter with meaninglessness, with that which we cannot symbolize. In reality, the symbolic order is full of cracks and fissures, weak points where the mask breaks, figuratively speaking; the fact that our inability to completely symbolize our world provides that through our cultures, institutions, etc., we can never completely cover up this traumatic real that exists. It will always appear in subtle and disturbing ways, leaking out and causing a disruption of reality, showing us that things do not exactly match up with the way we think we understand them.

In Enjoy Your Symptom!, Žižek says that in every language or discourse there is a signifier, called the Master Signifier, which serves as symbolic authority and is the foundation for the entire discursive structure. This signifier (the Other, or for Althusser, the Subject) is empty; the entire discourse which it structures only relies on the presupposition of the Subject’s
existence (119-120). It is impossible for the symbolic order to completely hide its lack, thus it must find ways to heal the gaps which would reveal its nonexistence; “the elementary function of the sacrifice is to *heal the fissure of the Other* [. . . ]. *Sacrifice is a guarantee that “the Other exists”*: that there is an Other who can be appeased by means of the sacrifice.” (63-4, emphasis in original).
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