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Identity, Remembrance and the Question of Queer Becoming: Juana de la Cruz's Sermon on the Legend of St Bartholomew*

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St Bartholomew and the Infant Juana

Preserved uniquely in Escorial MS K–III–13, the earliest extant version of the life of Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534) offers a compelling insight into her deep-seated and longstanding devotion to St Bartholomew.¹ Following on directly from the account of her miraculous *in utero* metamorphosis and state of divinely determined androgyny—an experience that transformed a male foetus into that of a female, albeit one with a conspicuously prominent Adam's apple—the text relates how at the age of two Juana fell ill and became unable to ingest food or nurse at the breast.² Her mother,

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1 See 'Vida y fin de la bien aventurada virgen Sancta Juana de la [Cruz]', n.d., Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de el Escorial, MS K–III–13; a digitized version of this archival source is available at <<https://rbme.patrimoniocultural.es/s/rbme/item/13805#c=&m=&s=&cv=&xywh=-464%2C-92%2C3265%2C1837>> (accessed 30 May 2023).

2 'Y como su Divina Magestad otorgó a su sancta madre la virtud que le mandava, y la bienaventurada Juana de la Cruz estava entonces en el vientre de su madre enpezada a fazer

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Catalina, distraught at her deterioration, resolved to travel from their home in Azaña (now Numancia de la Sagra) to the Church of St Bartholomew in Añover de Tajo, a journey of some eight or so miles.³ With Juana now at the point of yielding up her soul, Catalina encouraged her to reach outwards with her hands and direct her gaze upwards towards a statue of St Bartholomew in the hope that he might restore her to health. The youngster then began unexpectedly to laugh and request food, but on being asked why she had done so or what she had seen, she remained conspicuously silent. Juana thereafter spent her infancy and childhood in a state of reasonable health, only revealing in later years that she had come face to face with St Bartholomew, who had hugged her and kissed her before returning the colour to her cheeks by liberating her from her pains and curing her ills. She even affirms that he took the opportunity to address her directly, imploring her—in an act of reciprocal solidarity—to remember him just as he would forever remember her: ‘Niña, acuérdate de mí, que yo me acordaré de ti’.⁴

Despite its brevity, the encounter with St Bartholomew introduces a number of key themes that are explored in greater detail in the sermon that Juana later devoted to the saint.⁵ A point of particular interest

varón, tornola muger, como pudo y puede haçer como todopoderoso. Y no quiso su Divina Magestad deshazerle una nuez que tenía en la garganta, porque fuese testigo del milagro’. See ‘Juana de la Cruz’, in *Catálogo de santas vivas*, transcripción de María Luengo Balbás & Fructuoso Atencia Requena, fol. 2^v, <http://catalogodesantasmvivas.visionarias.es/index.php/Juana_de_la_Cruz> (accessed 24 June 2022). For Juana’s androgyny and the complexity of gender, see Ronald E. Surtz, *The Guitar of God: Gender, Power, and Authority in the Visionary World of Mother Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534)* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); Jessica A. Boon, ‘At the Limits of (Trans) Gender: Jesus, Mary, and the Angels in the Visionary Sermons of Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534)’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 48:2 (2018), 261–300; Kevin Elphick, ‘Mother Juana de la Cruz: Faithful Daughter of St. Francis and Patron Saint of Gender Inclusivity’, in *Franciscan Women: Female Identities and Religious Culture Medieval and Beyond*, ed. Lezlie Knox & David B. Couturier (St Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2020), 175–85, as well as his ‘Juana de la Cruz: Gender-Transcendent Prophetess’, in *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. Alicia Spencer-Hall & Blake Gutt (Amsterdam: Amsterdam U. P., 2021), 87–107; and Pablo Acosta-García, ‘Radical Succession: Hagiography, Reform, and Franciscan Identity in the Convent of the Abbess Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534)’, *Religions*, 12:3 (2021), 1–23, <<https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/3/223>> (accessed 30 May 2023).

3 Constructed over a sacred wellspring and surrounded by an orchard, the Ermita de San Bartolomé (as it is known today) reputedly houses one of the saint’s fingers as well as a hair from the head of the Virgin. In his capacity as patron, Bartholomew is still widely celebrated, notably in the form of the annual procession in which his image is paraded through the Parroquia de Santa Ana.

4 ‘Juana de la Cruz’, transcripción de Luengo Balbás & Atencia Requena, fol. 3^v.

5 See Inocente García de Andrés, *‘El Conhorte’: sermones de una mujer, la Santa Juana (1481–1534)*, 2 vols (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1999), II, 1105–24. See also Inocente García de Andrés, *Teología y espiritualidad de la Santa Juana: una mujer*

concerns the relationship between the statue, which is only hazily evoked, and the celestial archetype that it putatively represents. Having exorcized the demonically afflicted, destroyed pagan artefacts and converted a king and his family to Christianity, Bartholomew is commonly believed to have been rewarded for his endeavours by being flayed alive and then decapitated, a misunderstanding based almost certainly on the misspelling of *decollari* (decapitated) as *decoriari* (flayed). His iconography, which remains relatively stable throughout the Middle Ages, figures him as a commanding and imposing presence, a bearded prince, often bedecked in purple, replete with three key accoutrements.⁶ The first, a flaying knife, offers a reminder of the gruesome manner of his martyrdom, while the chained devil at his feet recalls an episode in which he shattered a pagan idol and exposed the creature that dwelled within. The third object, the book in his hand, references his proselytizing ability and the transformation of skin into materials such as leather and parchment, from which books are made. He stands thus not just as a martyr but as a textualization of his own identity, a writing of the word of God, the *logos*, in the human subject. The saint's clothing, which remains miraculously unbesmirched even after his twenty-six-year ministry, alerts the attentions of the observer both to the function of skin as a surrogate garment and to the broader conceptual relationship between container and contained. This is a factor that becomes crucial to an understanding both of the correlation between the chained devil and the idol from which it was expelled, and of the parallel association between Bartholomew and the statue to which Juana was encouraged to reach out. It also, as we shall see, sheds light on the unique and distinctive complexity of Juana's understanding of the relationship between Christ and the Virgin, the topic to which she turns in the final portion of her sermon.

A common denominator, counterpointed in each instance by the need to ingest sustenance and the function of the mouth as a *locus* of ingress/egress, concerns the relationship between internal and external and, by extension, the broader abstract notion of organic regeneration and renewal.⁷ Celebrated on 24 August, and therefore associated with the bounty of the harvest and the regenerative rhythms of nature,

predicadora (Madrid: Edibesa, 2012). The present article offers a revised and expanded version of the reading given in Andrew M. Beresford, *Sacred Skin: The Legend of St Bartholomew in Spanish Art and Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 24–26.

⁶ Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 190–97.

⁷ See Miguel Salas Parrilla, 'San Bartolomé Apóstol y los *dichos* de las danzantas de La Almarcha (Cuenca)', *Culturas Populares*, 5:2 (2007), 1–14, <<https://ebuah.uah.es/dspace/handle/10017/19732>> (accessed 30 May 2023); José Luis Hernando Garrido, 'Sobre arte bajomedieval en la Ribera del Duero: zarragones, obispillos, santos toneleros y endemoniados', in *El Duero Oriental en la transición de la Edad Media a la Moderna: Historia, arte y patrimonio* [Special Issue], *Biblioteca. Estudio e Investigación*, 25 (2010),

Bartholomew, like Juana, who was herself almost completely refashioned within the womb, serves as an image of queer becoming—a force of ontological destabilization capable of questioning the validity of conventional approaches towards questions of structure and classification, particularly perceptions of gender and identity.⁸ Just as Juana's Adam's apple blurs the distinction between male and female, categorizing her as a manifestation of the liminal, the hybrid and the in-between, Bartholomew's identity lies queerly, both on the surface of his flayed epidermis (often depicted as a garment draped over his shoulder), and in the monstrous, body-length wound for which it once served as an external integument. He is even figured at times as the birthing mother to his own inner self. The process extends outwards thereafter towards Christ and the Virgin, who, as figures beyond human comprehension, are appraised from a series of strikingly non-normative perspectives. In contrast to the devil that fled from the idol and was tethered thereafter like a dog on a chain, the *Vida* provides almost no information on the relationship between the statue and the figure that hugged and kissed Juana before curing her ills. In so doing, it blurs the distinction between observance and heresy, figuring the saint both as an immaterial presence—a manifestation of celestial certainty located temporarily on earth—and, as is the case of statues of Christ and the Virgin, as a type of Christianized idol, a living material entity to which the devout should bow down in obeisance. It may be for this reason that the episode, which pushes at the very boundaries of orthodoxy, was excised—along with the accompanying reference to androgyny—from the various later manuscript and printed versions of her life.

Accordingly, it becomes important to reappraise the relationship between Juana and Bartholomew and to consider how audiences are offered an insight into the queerness of her approach towards questions of ontology and the concomitant fluidity of identity. Formulated primarily as an act of remembrance, a mechanism for solemnizing the feast of the saint while responding at a more personal level to the words that he (or the statue) addressed to her as an infant, Juana's sermon offers an arrestingly imaginative reflection on the relationship between surface appearance and inner reality, progressing from an account of Bartholomew's calling and mission through to a description of the flaying and an appraisal of his posthumous engagements with Christ, Mary and the Apostles. The content of each section, structured by a series of carefully interlinked leitmotifs, sheds light not just on the distinctiveness of Juana's sermonizing technique

227–67, <<https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=3798172>> (accessed 30 May 2023); and Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 39–42.

8 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 4 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2020–2021 [1st French ed. 1976–2018]); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London/New York: Routledge, 1990).

but on the duration and durability of her bond with the saint. A curious feature is how the skin—the most widely distributed of the sense organs and the mechanism through which it becomes possible to mediate engagements with the outside world—is reimagined in her work as a barrier, an impediment, a garment-like property that can (and, indeed, should) be removed in the interests of developing a free and uninhibited bond with both God and the world beyond.⁹ Bartholomew in this sense serves partly as a representation of idealized Christian service, a figure who, divested of unnecessary exterior trappings, becomes able to ascend to a state of naked prelapsarian grace, and partly as a mechanism for gaining insights into the imagination and creative talents of Juana herself.

Juana's Bartholomew: Calling, Ministry, Martyrdom

The opening section of Juana's sermon addresses a lacuna in sacred history. In contrast to the Bible, wherein Bartholomew is appraised as a shadowy presence—a figure often conflated or confused with Nathanael—or traditional hagiographic narratives, which prioritize the events of his ministry and martyrdom, her sermon devotes attention to his lineage, calling and decision to renounce his princely birthright.¹⁰ The technique, which, as Ronald E. Surtz recognizes, is typical not just of Juana, but of Franciscan spirituality more broadly, envisions the saint as a human and accessible figure whose individual aspirations and desires do not always sit well with the obligations of his calling.¹¹ Juana relates that, having rejected the wealth and possessions of the world, a topic that would have held a particular resonance in Franciscan circles, Bartholomew presents himself before Christ and is received as an apostle.¹² Recognizing that while his fellows are barefoot and poorly dressed, he is still bedecked in the purple robes and precious jewels that symbolize his princely station, he implores his master to allow him to adopt more humble attire. A key apprehension, echoed throughout the sermon, concerns the distinction between appearance and reality, with the assembled masses potentially

9 For skin and the sense of touch, see Claudia Benthien, *Skin: On the Cultural Border between Self and the World*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (New York: Columbia U. P., 2002 [1st German ed. 1999]); Tiffany Field, *Touch* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014); and *Touch*, ed. Caterina Nirta et al. (London: Univ. of Westminster Press, 2020).

10 Bartholomew is named in Matthew 10:1–4, Mark 3:13–19, Luke 6:12–16 and Acts 1:12–14; while in John 1:43–51 and John 21:1–3 his position is occupied by his *alter ego*, Nathanael.

11 Surtz, *The Guitar of God*, 110–11.

12 Given the position of Franciscans as mendicants devoted to pursuing lives of absolute apostolic poverty, the question of wealth often proved problematic, notably in the distinction between *usus rerum* (use without possession) and *usus facti* (use as possession). See Michael Robson, *The Franciscans in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006).

embracing Bartholomew rather than Christ as their leader—the terrestrial monarch elevated above his celestial equivalent: ‘Señor y maestro mío, cuando vamos por las ciudades y lugares, como yo traigo esta vestidura rica, piensan, los que a vos no conocen, que soy yo el señor de todos nosotros. Si vos pluguiese, querría la dejar’.¹³

Yet Christ affirms that Bartholomew should remain exactly as he is. The logic of his command, which could be interpreted in the light of Juana’s distinctively bi-gendered status, is that the devout should never rely on surface impressions or conceal the fact of who they are. It could also potentially be read in relation to her decision as a teenager to don male attire so as to escape from an unwelcomed marriage and become a nun in the Convent of Santa María de la Cruz, an episode that relates her to figures such as Margaret, Marina and Pelagia, who have traditionally been appraised as ‘transvestite saints’—a term that, as critics have suggested, is manifestly problematic.¹⁴ As a result of these words, Bartholomew’s garments remain pristinely unbesmirched for the duration of his twenty-six-year ministry, a detail that although traditional, is not specifically linked to a divine mandate in any other early Iberian treatment.¹⁵ Bartholomew, in an act of pious disobedience, attempts to exchange his garments with those of pilgrims, a point that relates him to saints such as Alexis, or to have them sealed in chests, which reiterates the relationship between container and contained.¹⁶ Yet in each instance an act of divine intervention restores them to their rightful position. The crucial point is that the permanence of the saint’s princely apparel anticipates the impermanence of his soon-to-be-flayed hide. Despite attempting to divest himself of his wealthy trappings so as to stand more honestly before the eyes of the devout, he will only be allowed to do so by ridding himself of the protective barrier of the epidermis, an action that, by stripping him down to bare flesh, will transform a purple-clad prince into a purple, body-length wound.

The discussion of Bartholomew’s ministry marks a typically Juanaesque distinction between narrative and chronological time. After the ascension of Christ, the Apostles disseminate the Christian message throughout the

13 García de Andrés, *‘El Conhorte’*, II, 1108.

14 ‘[A]cordó con ayuda suya de tomar una mañana de madrugada unos bestidos de un primo suyo que ella tenía en guarda, e calzas, y borçeguies y çinto, y vistiese de hombre para salir sin ser vista e yrse al monasterio llamado Sancta María de la Cruz’ (‘Juana de la Cruz’, transcripción de Luengo Balbás & Atencia Requena, fol. 10^v). For differing critical perspectives, see Surtz, *The Guitar of God*, 3; M. M. Bychowski, *‘Imago Dei and imitatio Christi in the Life of St Marinos the Monk’*, in *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. Spencer-Hall & Gutt, 245–65; and Elphick, ‘Juana de la Cruz: Gender-Transcendent Prophetess’.

15 Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 24.

16 *La ‘Vida de San Alejo’: versiones castellanas*, ed. Carlos Alberto Vega (Salamanca: Univ. de Salamanca, 1991), 70–71.

world. In contrast to the majority of sources, which explore the tripartite progression from the exorcism of the demonically afflicted through to the destruction of idols and the concomitant conversion and baptism of pagans, Juana's approach is arrestingly reductive, focusing exclusively on the problem of idolatry:

Y después que él subió a los cielos, siempre andaba san Bartolomé cercado de muchos ángeles para espantar y atar a los demonios que estaban metidos en los ídolos, y para defenderle a él de las muchas grandes tentaciones que los demonios le traían, en especial de la santa fe católica, las cuáles tentaciones venció él muy fuertemente y nunca jamás, ni aun por un breve pensamiento, le pudieron vencer.¹⁷

Bartholomew, operating in the company of angels, is appraised in a militant evangelical capacity as a figure who destroys idols so as to release and thereby pacify the devils that dwell within them. His actions, which reiterate the complexity of the relationship between inside/outside and container/contained, establish a conceptual bridge between the discussion of his garments and the subsequent account of the flaying. They also reflect on the infant Juana's engagement with the statue, which, by counterpointing the opposition between the material and the ineffable, reiterates the extent to which accusations of idolatry are often unavoidably double-edged. The crux of the problem is that despite repeated attempts to condemn the reification of the divine in sacred objects, Christianity has frequently become embroiled in controversies concerning the relationship between adoration and veneration, and by extension, the distinction between image-as-icon and image-as-idol.¹⁸ In his capacity as a destroyer of idols, Bartholomew desecrates objects that were believed (mistakenly, as his actions reveal) to be possessed of the power and presence of the divine. Conversely, by appearing to Juana through the medium of the statue, he becomes absorbed in a more orthodox fashion into a hermeneutic of transcendence, spanning the distance between the immediate physical artefact and its invisible spiritual archetype, which, by definition, remains securely located in heaven.

Yet the distinction between the episodes is by no means as lucid or straightforward as it might at first appear. Just as the idol functions as an oscillating expression of absence and presence—its exterior shell serving as a concretization of the ineffable—so too the statue of Bartholomew stands,

17 García de Andrés, 'El Conhorte', II, 1109. See also Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 91–141.

18 Carlos M. N. Eire, *The War against the Idols: The Reformation of Worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1986); Willem Frijhoff, 'Witnesses to the Other. Incarnate Longings: Saints and Heroes, Idols and Models', *Studia Liturgica*, 34:1 (2004), 1–25.

particularly in the eyes of Juana's audience, as an image of liminal mediation, an artefact capable of counterpointing the relationship between the physical and the immaterial and ultimately, between this world and the next. Although Bartholomew is a sign rather than a signified, the description in the *Vida* blurs the distinction between the two and so opens up the potential for levelling accusations of heresy. Rather than looking beyond the image towards a higher, transfigured quality of being, where the invisible becomes visible and the image is rendered flesh, it risks inviting its audience to approach it as a product of divine certainty rather than creative imagination. The problem, Gerard Loughlin explains, is one in which the Christian imagination becomes trapped in the oscillating tension between the command not to picture God and the imperative to display God's image everywhere, since God became visible in Christ and the Church is to bear him witness throughout the world.¹⁹ This, Loughlin avers, is the double bind that has plagued Christianity since its earliest years. On the one hand, the invisible God cannot be made visible, and so all attempts to do so must be idolatrous. Conversely, on the other, the invisible God has become visible in Christ, and so materiality, which normally only reflects light, has become the light by which to see the world. It is almost certainly for this reason that the encounter between Juana and Bartholomew was excluded from subsequent versions of her life.²⁰

The account of Bartholomew's martyrdom is equally selective. In place of a discussion of his arrest and trial, the sermon reports that he was subjected to torments in the expectation that he would renounce his faith and embrace the cult of idols—a topic that reflects on his status as an iconoclast as well as the infant Juana's experience in Añover de Tajo. In a departure from tradition, Bartholomew is initially stoned rather than whipped, a torment that, in addition to pounding his flesh to a pulp, can be related at a more conceptual level to the traditional Christian reading of idols as mere blocks of stone.²¹ He is thereafter subjected to flaying, which, in a second significant twist, is envisioned as a product of frustration and sadistic vindictiveness, with his skin removed iteratively in sections rather than as a single, complete pelt. Juana reports that Bartholomew, suspended upside down, has a piece of skin torn from his leg, but is then left alone so that he can be convinced of the need to renounce his faith and worship the pagan

19 Gerard Loughlin, 'Idol Bodies', in *Idolatry: False Worship in the Bible, Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. Stephen C. Barton (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 267–86 (p. 268).

20 For the role of the visual in Juana's writings, see Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, 'Performing Authority through Iconography: On Iberian Visionary Women and Images', in *The Routledge Hispanic Studies Companion to Medieval Iberia: Unity in Diversity*, ed. E. Michael Gerli & Ryan D. Giles (London/New York: Routledge, 2021), 600–20.

21 Isaiah 40:18–20.

gods—the separation of the devil from the idol anticipating the severing of the saint from his epidermis. When he fails to do so, figuring himself in traditionally hagiographic terms as the only appropriate and worthy sacrifice, the torture is resumed and an additional patch of skin is torn away:

Y dijo el Señor que, después de haber dado al bienaventurado san Bartolomé muchos tormentos y después que le hubieron apedreado y hecho muchos vituperios e injurias porque dejase la fe católica y adorase los ídolos, y que, viendo que por ninguna cosa le podían vencer mas que antes estaba más fuerte y constante, le mandaron desollar con muy grande crueldad. Y no le desollaron todo junto, mas, poco a poco, por le dar mayor tormento. Y como le tenían colgado de los pies y la cabeza abajo, le empezaban a desollar el un pie y luego le dejaban un poco. Y le decían:

—Adora a nuestro dios y deja a Jesús nazareno.

Y él les respondía:

—Adoro yo Jesucristo crucificado, y en él creo.

Y luego le tornaban a desollar otro pedazo, y le decían que sacrificase los ídolos.

Y él les respondía:

—Sacrifico yo y adoro a mi Señor Dios todopoderoso, al cual me ofrezco y me encomiendo.²²

The emphasis of the narrative falls thus on scrambling and subdivision rather than the binary splitting of identity, with the saint's assailants transforming his epidermis into a patchwork rather than a designated *alter ego*, complete in its ontological totality.²³

Bartholomew's suffering would have been increased by the fact that he is suspended upside down. In contrast to the veins in the legs, those in the upper part of the body lack the valves to prevent refluxes of blood, and so as the torture progressed, it would have ensured that the contents of his stomach and saliva would become trapped in the respiratory tract, causing him to choke on fluids seeping out of his mouth and nostrils. An additional complication is the build-up of downward pressure, which would have had a uniquely painful effect on the circulation of intraocular fluids, causing him to feel that his eyeballs were on the verge of exploding. It may also be that since inversion functions as a negation of the essential anatomical consequences of human evolution, positioning the waste organs directly

22 García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1109.

23 Paul Binski, *Medieval Death: Ritual and Representation* (London: British Museum Press, 1996); Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 157.

above the mouth, his suffering could have produced a danger of deliberate scatological humiliation.²⁴

The fact that Bartholomew survives the torture offers evidence of divine intervention. Skin, as dermatologists recognize, is essential for life. As the most widely distributed of the sense organs, it is impossible to live without it. Victims of torture, divested of the faculties of sight, sound, hearing or taste, would be anatomically mutilated but able to lead lives only partially diminished in range or quality. Yet the same is not true of the skin. Deprived of the protective covering of the epidermis, victims would be transformed into monstrous, body-length wounds, figures unable to mediate contact with people or objects without experiencing excruciating levels of torment. In addition to the potentially fatal effects of psychological trauma, nerves, arteries and veins, constrained no longer by the dermal barrier, would spill out over the borders of the body, producing streams of blood and gore. This would lead to low blood pressure and a rapid heart rate, triggering hypoxemia (a lack of oxygen in arterial blood) and ultimately, cardiac or respiratory arrest. Even if death did not result from symptoms such as circulatory shock, the fact that skin is responsible for maintaining body temperature would ensure that victims would die from hypothermia, with the body dissipating a greater level of heat than it can absorb.²⁵

Yet Bartholomew survives the torture, and despite being presented with evidence of divine intervention, his assailants opt to inflict further degradations upon him. The fact that they remain unnamed while operating in a decontextualized environment ensures that they serve as generic manifestations of the monstrous and malevolent other, figures motivated by an implacable and deep-seated hatred of all that Christianity—and, indeed, Christian Spain—represents. The account of the torture functions in this light as a malleable and mobile metaphor capable of affixing itself to almost any type of alterity. Having first rubbed Bartholomew's freshly excoriated body with salt and vinegar, his assailants subsequently have him dressed in animal skins:

Y dijo el Señor que, después que hubieron desollado al glorioso san Bartolomé muy cruelmente, le restregaban con vinagre y sal todo el cuerpo por se vengar más de él. Y le ponían otros pellejos de animales y de bestias por denuesto y por injuria.²⁶

24 Andrew M. Beresford, 'Crucifixion in the Legend of Saint Bartholomew', in *Death, Sanctity, and the Cross: Crucified Saints in Image and Text*, ed. Barbara Crostini & Anthony John Lappin (Roma: Viella, 2022), 227–60.

25 Benthien, *Skin*; Field, *Touch*; Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 163–64.

26 García de Andrés, 'El Conhorte', II, 1109.

The first of the torments would have increased Bartholomew's suffering, but since salt and vinegar are both natural antiseptics, they would also have prevented infection. An additional implication concerns the status of salt and vinegar as common kitchen seasonings, suggesting that the saint's body, skinned like that of animal, is now somehow being prepared for an act of cannibalistic consumption.²⁷ It becomes possible as a result to compare Bartholomew to Lawrence, who, on being roasted on a gridiron, is reputed to have implored his executioners to turn him over so that they could add seasoning to his flesh.²⁸ The common denominator concerns the ontology of the human body and the imputation of anthropophagy (or the consumption of human flesh), which functions, as is the case of idolatry, as a boundary sign, a mechanism for reinforcing perceptions of alterity. It may also be that since Bartholomew is male, the literalization of traditional notions such as woman-as-article-for-consumption and tooth-as-phallus imbues the sermon with an additional sense of queer becoming, figuring his assailants, by implication, as symbolic sodomites.

Conversely, in relation to the second torture, Bartholomew's flesh, sticky and oozing with blood and bodily fluids, would have provided a glue-like surface, enabling animal hides to stick fast. The crucial point is that since the epidermis is the integument that projects identity outwards into the world beyond, its removal functions as a force of dehumanization while the addition of animal skins—which are themselves the products of flaying—serves as an equal and corresponding force of animalization. Having been transformed from a human being into an oozing, body-length wound, Bartholomew is reconfigured as a type of queer liminal hybrid, a creature that although human on the inside, is no longer recognizable as anything other than a wild beast. He can be compared accordingly to St Julitta, who, having been flayed alive, is coated from head to foot in pitch, an action that transforms her into a black-skinned manifestation of alterity.²⁹ The irony

27 An obvious analogue is the *Libro de miseria d'omne*, which discusses how Bartholomew is skinned, suspended on a pole, and displayed for three days like a rabbit: 'A Santo Bartolomeo, porque dava buen consejo, / aquéllos a quien lo dava feziéronle mal trobejo, / ca ante que lo matasen toliéronle el pellejo, / colgáron l bivo tres días d'un palo como conejo' (*Translation and Poetization in the 'Quaderna vía': Study and Edition of the 'Libro de miseria d'omne'*, ed. Jane E. Connolly [Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1987], stanza 166, p. 140).

28 As Gonzalo de Berceo's *Martirio de San Lorenzo* affirms: "Pensaz", dize Laurencio, "tornar del otro cabo, / buscat buena pevrada ca assaz so assado, / pensat de almorzar ca avedes lazdrado; / fijos, Dios vos perdone, ca feches grand pecado" (*Martirio de San Lorenzo*, ed. Pompilio Tesauro, in Gonzalo de Berceo, *Obras completas*, coord. Isabel Uría Maqua [Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1992], 455–89 [stanza 104, p. 489]).

29 Andrew M. Beresford, 'Martyrdom, Motherhood, and the Aetiology of Infanticide: The Legend of Saints Quiricus and Julitta in Early Iberian Art and Literature', *Magnificat Cultura i Literatura Medievales* (forthcoming).

is obvious: having been flayed like an animal, Bartholomew becomes an animal to be flayed, with the skins on his excoriated hide serving as a form of assimilation rather than loss—a type of flaying in reverse. The transformation, which plays on the opposing dichotomies of inside/outside, self/other and container/contained, succeeds not just in humiliating the victim, but in dehumanizing the perpetrator, who becomes characterized as a force of animal savagery.

Yet the attempt to transform Bartholomew into an animal ends in failure. Recalling the discussion of the miraculously fixed and unchanging nature of his apparel, his body gives birth to a second skin that renders him human once more: ‘Y que permitió él que no muriese de aquel tan cruel martirio hasta que después le nació otro cuero, y se vistió su vestidura de púrpura y anduvo a predicar, algunos días, antes que le degollasen’.³⁰ The transformation, which plays in part on the notion of rebirth and regeneration that is central to his legend, and in part on Juana’s transformations as foetus, infant and putative bride, enables him to don his purple vestments and continue to go about his business. The specific formulation of Juana’s description, which brings to mind the notion of childbirth, destabilizes the relationship between male and female, envisioning him as the birthing mother to his own future self. He can be compared in this respect to Christ, who, as Surtz affirms, is figured as being pregnant with the Father when he appears in his humanity or in the form of the Eucharist.³¹ The result, inevitably, is an element of queer superimposition, with the gendered hybridity of the saint (and, by implication, that of Christ), mapped onto that of the author, whose androgyny and decision to don male attire collapse the clarity of conventionally demarcated taxonomies. Skin, visualized as an infinite series of layers, is appraised as a force of perpetual renewal, with the peeling of the outermost integument leading merely to the birth of a fresh layer beneath—a point to which the sermon will return. The most tangible result is that it becomes necessary for Bartholomew’s adversaries to dispatch him by other means, cleaving his head from his body so as to bring an end to the confrontation. The description of his ministry and martyrdom in this way comes full circle, progressing from the notion of skin-as-garment and the question of royal status through to a discussion of devils concealed in pagan idols and the process of dermal rejuvenation—a tripartite sequence that in each instance achieves structural unity by counterpointing the complexity of the relationship between container and contained.

30 García de Andrés, *‘El Conhorte’*, II, 1109.

31 Ronald E. Surtz, ‘The Privileging of the Feminine in the Trinity Sermon of Mother Juana de la Cruz’, in *Women’s Voices and the Politics of the Spanish Empire: From Convent Cell to Imperial Court*, ed. Jennifer L. Eich, Jeanne Gillespie & Lucia G. Harrison (New Orleans: Univ. Press of the South, 2008), 87–107 (p. 90).

The Pageant of the Flayed

In the second section of the sermon, Juana explores the symbolic connotations of flaying, envisioning it not as a torture but as an experience capable of producing a more sophisticated understanding of the self. Bartholomew, in heaven along with the Apostles, prays for those who entreat his intercession but expresses concern that despite the uniquely complex and disturbing nature of his fate, his feast is not as widely celebrated as it should be:

Y dijo el Señor que, como en la tierra hacían fiesta y memoria del bienaventurado san Bartolomé que fue delante de él a le ofrecer su martirio y a le hacer adoración latría. Y que después que hubo rogado por todos sus devotos y ganándoles gracias y mercedes, le dijo:

—Señor, muchos martirios pasé yo en la tierra, ¿por qué me hacen tan poco oficio? ³²

Bartholomew's words, which recall the incident in Añover de Tajo, shed light not just on the importance of remembrance, but on the reciprocal and mutually reinforcing bond between the devout and their celestial advocates. Now located securely in heaven, the saint is able to cast a glance downwards towards the world below, remembering those—just as he had promised to do so in relation to Juana—who had vowed to remember him. The section, in this sense, serves as a mechanism for the dissemination of dogma, advancing a vividly evocative portrait of the serene fixity of the afterlife and the concern of its inhabitants for those who have not yet negotiated the liminal threshold that death represents.³³ Its most important function, however, is to offer a more personalized articulation of devotion, with the act of remembrance characterized both as an expression of faith and as the fulfilment of a solemn childhood promise. The implication is that those who celebrate Bartholomew, just as Juana celebrates him in the context of the sermon, will be able to call on his thaumaturgic powers, just as she once did as a child.

In response to Bartholomew's question, Christ urges him to revel in his position in the afterlife. He adds that although the saint is barely mentioned in the Bible, he occupies a prominent position in the hearts of

32 García de Andrés, 'El Conhorte', II, 1109–10. Crucially, the sermon marks a distinction between *latría*, which references sacrificial internal worship of Christ, and, by extension, *hyperdulia* and *dulia*, which describe forms of reverence directed towards the Virgin and the saints respectively. For further information, see Kathleen Kamerick, *Popular Piety and Art in the Late Middle Ages: Image Worship and Idolatry in England 1350–1500* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); and *Iconoclasm and Iconoclasm: Struggle for Religious Identity. Second Conference of Church Historians, Utrecht*, ed. Willem van Asselt *et al.* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

33 Binski, *Medieval Death*.

the devout, who solemnize his feast by undertaking good works and abstaining from sin.³⁴ Christ then, by way of recompense, formulates a *figura* or pageant for the sinners of the world, compelling them to celebrate Bartholomew's feast by corralling them together like sheep in a field, which, in true allegorical fashion, appears greater from heaven to earth:

Y declaró el Señor una figura que fue hecha, en este día de san Bartolomé, que figuró todos los pecadores en la gente de un campo. El cual campo, dijo, que había aparecido mayor que desde el cielo a la tierra. Y la gente, no porque los hiciesen ni les hiciesen algún mal, mas como que los amenazaban. A significación que, cuando los apóstoles andaban predicando y enseñando, no hacían fuerza a ninguno que creyesen, mas amonestábanlos y denunciaban la gloria del cielo y las penas del infierno.³⁵

The significance of the *figura* is that it serves as a mechanism for direct intervention in the eradication of sin, enabling the Apostles to admonish those gathered to consider the glory of heaven and the concomitant pains of hell. To that end, they arrive at the gathering, and, like shepherds before the slaughter, purposefully unsheathe their knives. Bartholomew then urges them to flay the assembled sinners so that they can be divested of iniquity and thereby rendered perfect. He adds by way of explanation that this is precisely what happened to him inasmuch as his hide was stripped away because of his love of God.³⁶ The saint in this light becomes subject to a process of conceptual metamorphosis in which his association with the flaying knife produces an element of essentialization in which he effectively becomes the instrument of his own passion. The process, which is common in the legends of the martyrs, ensures that the victim assumes the characteristics of the aggressor, changing places with his executioners as he is transformed into a force of knife-wielding menace—a figure who, like a freshly flayed body, catalyses outpourings of faith and devotion while at the same time eliciting reactions of fear and consternation.³⁷

34 'No se te dé nada, amigo mío, que tú bien gozoso y triunfante estás en mi reino. Y pues que la Escritura te hace tan poca memoria, en los corazones querría siquiera que te solemnizasen la fiesta, guardándose de pecar y haciendo algunas buenas obras a ejemplo tuyo' (García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1110).

35 García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1110.

36 'Dad acá, señores, desollemos esta gente y quitémosle estos cueros, si no nunca será perfecta. Que así me hicieron a mí, que me desollaron y me quitaron el cuero por amor de Dios' (García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1110).

37 The process reaches its natural conclusion in the portrait of *St Bartholomew* attributed to José (or Jusepe) de Ribera (c.1612) in the Fondazione di Studi di Storia dell'Arte Roberto Longhi in Florence where he is presented as a bald old man with a

The underlying assumption, which is partly a product of the traditional notion of *imitatio Christi*, is that the pursuit of perfection can only be solemnized by a process of active emulation; and so, to be like Bartholomew, believers must become him, subjecting themselves to comparable levels of suffering.

A key detail, which sheds light on the manipulation of sources, is that the Apostles carry flaying knives in their mouths.³⁸ In the various written versions of Bartholomew's martyrdom the emphasis of the narrative falls on the position the body as a sealed container and the mouth as a concomitant *locus* of ingress/egress.³⁹ Having exorcized a demoniac, purging him of devils that fly out of his mouth, Bartholomew is summoned by King Polimius to cure his daughter, who, having become demonically afflicted, has taken to biting all those who draw near—an action that reiterates the position of the mouth as a corporeal gateway and the tooth as a queerly surrogate phallus. The saint then performs a second exorcism, again ensuring that devils are expelled from her mouth, before casting out a devil from an idol, which appears thereafter in the guise of a pitch-black *Æthiops* (or sub-Saharan African) replete with a sharp face, body-length hair and sulphurous flames that shoot outwards from its eyes and mouth. A comparable relationship is evident in the legend of the saint's abduction as an infant, where, having been wrenched from the arms of his mother, he is abandoned to die on a mountainside but is instead protected by a hind that squats over his mouth and nourishes him with her milk.⁴⁰

Although Juana could potentially have exploited the thematic and conceptual potential of the written legend, it seems more likely that she was influenced by an engagement with visual artefacts such as altarpieces, wherein Bartholomew's assailants commonly grip flaying knives between their teeth. A notable example is the *Retaule de Pertegàs* (Figure 1), in which the executioner on the right—his leather belt and boots themselves fashioned from animal skin—peels the saint's epidermis while gripping a blood-stained blade in his mouth.⁴¹ This curious detail, which is repeated

bloodstained flaying knife in one hand and a pelt of human skin in the other. For a discussion of the ambiguous suggestiveness of the image, see Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 213–18.

38 'Y dijo el Señor que luego empezaron todos los apóstoles, con aquellos cuchillos que traían en las bocas, de tomarlos en las manos y desollar toda aquella gente' (García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1110).

39 Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 257–90.

40 Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 45–90.

41 Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 154–56. Comparable examples are by no means difficult to find, but it is perhaps worth noting that the motif persists in Spanish art until the time of Ribera, whose 1624 etching *The Martyrdom of St Bartholomew*—arguably the most iconic and evocative of all of the various extant Hispanic treatments—is closely modelled on medieval antecedents. For further information, see Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 231–39.

in later representations, suggests that he—like Bartholomew and the Apostles—is impervious to the mood of contamination that we instinctively experience as viewers. Rather than recoiling from the taste of blood or of gobbets of flesh and cartilage, he displays no fear of ingesting the essence of Bartholomew’s identity or of the lingering presence of death. Although it could be argued that the saint’s sacrifice exudes a eucharistic quality, and is thus a positive form of corporeal ingestion—a rite of inclusion that stands in contradistinction to imputations of cannibalism—his executioners are visualized in this respect as implacably detached professionals removing the skin from a carcass with no greater ceremony than if it were that of a recently butchered (and, therefore, edible) animal. A further parallel, which seems most pertinent in view of the medieval understanding of milk as transmuted blood, is with the saint’s intervention in Añover de Tajo, which made it possible for Catalina to nurse her child.

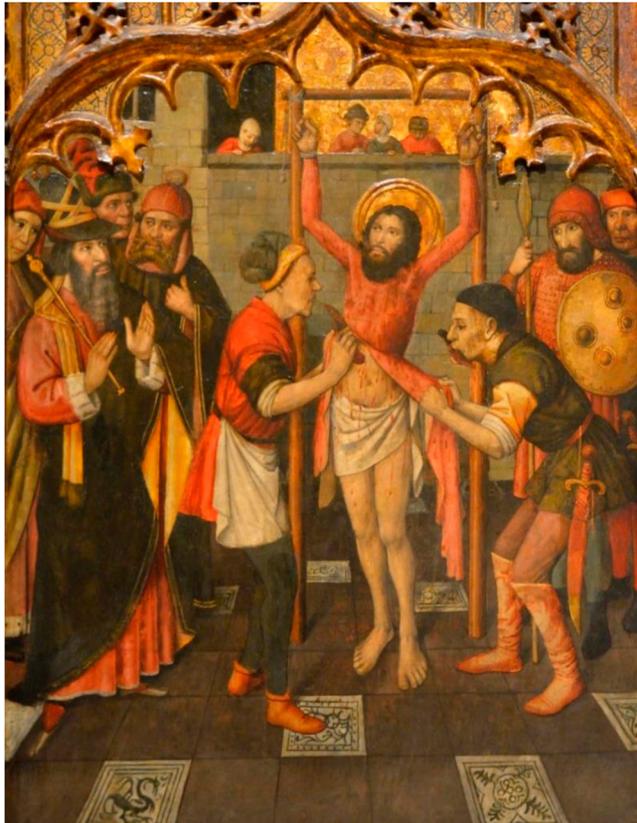


Figure 1

Jaume Huguet, *The Flaying of St Bartholomew*, from the *Retaule de Pertegàs*, c.1465–1480.
 Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

Reproduced by permission of the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

The process of essentialization that marks Bartholomew's association with the flaying knife is thus extended reciprocally outwards to condition the reception of his fellows. Just as he becomes subject to a process of evolution, changing places with those who torment him, they are transformed, likewise, from victims into knife-wielding aggressors, embarking on their task with implacable evangelical zeal.

Bartholomew's instruction is that the Apostles should flay the sinners in the pageant on seven occasions because in each instance they will encounter an additional impediment to the pursuit of perfection. Having flayed the skin that represents pride, the Apostles must excoriate the skins of envy, gluttony, wrath, avarice, sloth and lechery. Only when the process has ended, and their victims are able to stand naked and uncorrupted before the eyes of God, will their mission be complete. The boldness of Juana's analogy is breathtaking: representing a seven-layered skin in terms of the Seven Deadly Sins, she characterizes flaying as an experience capable of effecting a return to a state of prelapsarian grace. The ephemeral exterior, corrupted by contact with the polluting forces of the world, conceals a core that remains untainted, pristine in its innocence. Skin is no longer in this sense an essential barrier, but a negative and unnecessary integument that should be stripped away like a garment and cast aside—an action that recalls the saint's desire to spurn his princely apparel as well as that of the teenage Juana in casting off her attire and donning that of a man. The Apostles, correspondingly, are envisioned in a militant evangelical capacity, pursuing an actively interventionist approach rather than simply hoping, as is the case of the Parable of the Sower, that the seed of their wisdom falls on fertile ground.⁴² Given that other aspects of Bartholomew's life are either abbreviated or eliminated in their entirety, the sermon succeeds in transforming the emphasis of his cult, characterizing him not simply as the saint who was flayed, but as a symbol of the sacrifice to which the devout should aggressively and assiduously aspire.

The corollary is that flaying, a process traditionally enacted on animals, is envisioned as a force of purification and ennoblement suitable for human beings. Characterized as mere beasts, albeit with faces cast in the image and likeness of God, the sinners of the pageant are progressively rendered more human—an inversion of established legal precedent as well as contemporary historical practice.⁴³ Rather than be transformed into oozing abject creatures, body-length wounds unable to mediate contact with

42 See Matthew 13:1–23, Mark 4:1–20 and Luke 8:4–15.

43 'Y tenían todos figuras como de bestias, salvo las caras que las tenían a imagen y semejanza de Dios, hasta que fueron todos desollados por los apóstoles, así como san Bartolomé' (García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1110).

people or objects, they are rendered more wholesome and pure as the grotesquely disfiguring potential of sin is stripped away. Just as Bartholomew once cast out a devil from an idol, flaying divests the individual of the sin of idolatry, opening up the potential for a series of additional, soteriologically axiomatic forms of excoriation. The message is one that raises implications for confessors, preachers and prelates, who are advised—in a fleeting but authoritative aside—to persist in their endeavours until they have removed the skins of sin in which the iniquitous are clothed:

A significación que así han de hacer los confesores y predicadores y prelados, que, aunque una vez amonesten y castiguen a sus súbditos y no se enmendaren, por eso no han de dejar de les tornar a corregir y castigar, a veces con amor y a veces con rigurosidad y penitencia, hasta que les quiten y desuellen todos los cueros de los pecados y vicios en que ahora están envueltas las gentes así como bestias y animálias sin razón.⁴⁴

The crucial point concerns the broader political and ideological appropriation of Bartholomew's legacy, with Juana's text serving as a message not just for her fellows, but for the male-dominated church hierarchy, which could potentially have included her in its decision-making process if she had not herself become the subject of a spectacular (albeit incomplete) metamorphosis of her own in the womb.

It is perhaps unsurprising in this respect that the transformation from bestial to human should be underpinned at a broader conceptual level by references to parturition—an event that, as a nun, Juana could never personally experience. The newly flayed, divested of their bestial exteriors, are reborn as human subjects, and while their wailing recalls that of infants, the blood on their bodies, evoking suggestions of amniotic fluid and placental expulsion, casts the Apostles as the birthing mothers to a series of more highly evolved celestial selves:

Y dijo el Señor que, cuando los apóstoles hubieron acabado de quitar los siete cueros, permitió él que aquella gente que primero aparecían como bestias, que tuviesen ya semejanza de personas, y, como les habían quitado los cueros, aparecieron todas llagadas y cubiertas de sangre y muy llorosas.⁴⁵

The correlation is reinforced not just by Bartholomew's traditional association with the regenerative rhythms and bounty of the harvest, but

44 García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1111.

45 García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1111.

by the extent to which Iberian artworks—which could potentially have been mined as sources—play on the relationship between flaying and rebirth, often visualizing the saint as an infant emerging queerly from the protective confines of the womb. A notable example is the *Retablo de San Bartolomé* in Burgos (Figure 2), where one of the executioners, lifting a large flap of skin, produces a distinctively labia-like wound in the saint's leg.⁴⁶ The culmination of the process becomes evident in the following panel (Figure 3), where the excoriated saint kneels to receive the executioner's sword with his garment-like epidermis draped over his shoulder.⁴⁷ The mottled red appearance of his exposed flesh intimates its status as a leaky container (a characteristic associated in misogynist thought with the feminine), but most striking is the bulge over his stomach and genital area, which figures him as a creature in the process of parturition. In addition to a play on the phallogocentric nature of male authority, the image succeeds in reiterating the creative, life-affirming connotations of flaying, visualizing the freshly skinned body as a purer and more authentic incarnation of the self.

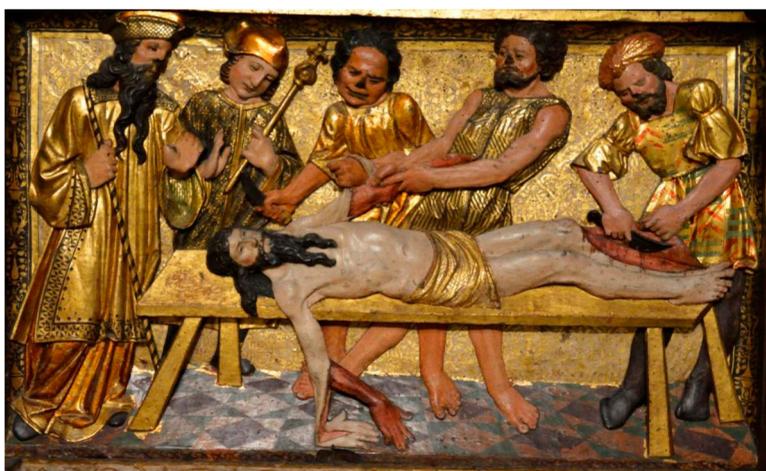


Figure 2

Felipe Bigarny, *The Flaying of St Bartholomew*, from the *Retablo de San Bartolomé* (early sixteenth century).

Burgos, Capilla de Ruiz de Camargo, Iglesia Parroquial de San Lesmes Abad.
Author's photograph.

46 Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 159–60.

47 Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 183–84.



Figure 3

Felipe Bigarny, *The Decapitation of St Bartholomew*, from the *Retablo de San Bartolomé* (early sixteenth century).

Burgos, Capilla de Ruiz de Camargo, Iglesia Parroquial de San Lesmes.
Author's photograph.

The suggestiveness of the childbirth analogy is reinforced by the fact that the newly flayed are visited by angels who serve as midwives to their celestial ascent. Having cleansed the blood from their bodies, the angels array the newborns in four differently coloured garments. In addition to replacing one skin by another, this action doubles up inevitably in the mind of the audience as a reference to swaddling clothes and, by extension, baptismal albs, which are in themselves symbols of rebirth.⁴⁸ A cognate implication concerns the hybrid nature of the angels which, as Jessica A. Boon has observed, defies simplistic attempts at classification.⁴⁹ Designated as male

48 'Y que, estando así aquellas gentes todas llagadas y desnudas, descendían los ángeles del cielo con unas vestiduras blancas, y llegaban a cada una de aquellas personas y limpiabanlas con sus manos y con las mismas vestiduras, y sanábanles todas aquellas llagas' (García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1111). Juana explains the significance of the colours as green (faith), white (purity), red (suffering) and yellow (charity and piety). For the imagery of baptism in Antiquity and the Middle Ages, see Robin M. Jensen, *Living Water: Images, Symbols, and Settings of Early Christian Baptism* (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

49 Boon, 'At the Limits of (Trans) Gender', 272–78. See also Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, 'La puesta en escena de la historia sagrada a comienzos del siglo XVI: la batalla de los ángeles en la dramaturgia visionaria de Juana de la Cruz', in *Staging History: Renaissance Dramatic*

by their names, although traditionally represented as slenderly feminized youths, their ontology reflects not solely on Bartholomew and the protagonists of the pageant, but on the distinctively bi-gendered status of Juana herself. As the angels, like the Apostles, mediate the distance between heaven and earth, they draw attention to the ineluctable porosity of human/divine interactions. The process is further emphasized at the end of their mission, as they rain down the regalia of kingship (including richly ornamented crowns) on those gathered. Since Bartholomew is himself a prince, their actions in so doing counterpoint the function of flaying as a mechanism not just for humanizing, but for ennobling or even royalizing those who are affected. They are able as a result to ascend in grace to the kingdom of heaven, joining the Apostles and the angels in negotiating the distance between this world and the next.

From Bartholomew to Christ and Mary

In the concluding stages of the sermon, the focus of attention moves from Bartholomew to Christ and the Virgin. In his role as celestial intercessor, Bartholomew takes pity on the sinners of the world, offering prayers and favours on their behalf, just as he once did for the infant Juana. Yet Christ, adopting a less benevolent perspective, enquires if a single soul is genuinely worthy of his pity. Responding in place of Bartholomew, Mary affirms that she is worthy of his succour, and so Christ proposes a mechanism for putting her views to the test, extracting a mirror from the wound in his side so that she can engage in a detailed physical examination.⁵⁰ She then offers an extended *descriptio puellae*, advancing an account of her appearance so that Christ will recognize her perfection and grant Bartholomew's request. The emphasis of the section, which reiterates several key leitmotifs, falls on the fluidity of identity, the question of virtue and the role of the celestial elect in ministering to those on earth. Just as Christ destabilizes the construction of gendered paradigms by wresting the mirror from his side—an action that recalls the birth of Eve from Adam's rib and, by extension, that of the Christian Church, which is often depicted as emerging in foetus-like fashion from the queerly vagina-like wound in Christ's side—Mary envisions herself in analogous terms as the container from which Christ was born.⁵¹ The

Historiography, ed. Sofie Kluge, Ulla Kallenbach & David Hasberg Zirak-Schmidt, *Renaissanceforum: Tidsskrift for Renaissanceforskning*, 13 (2018), 185–210.

50 'Y diciendo él estas palabras, metió la mano a su costado sagrado, donde fue herido con lanza, y sacó un espejo muy claro y grande y hermoso, y diólo a Nuestra Señora' (García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1113).

51 Michael Camille, 'The Image and the Self: Unwriting Late Medieval Bodies', in *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. Sarah Kay & Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester U. P.,

resulting impression, which problematizes the relationship between the genders, relates Christ and Mary to Bartholomew, figuring each in terms of the opposition between the external façade and the birthing of a hidden interior. The assumption in each instance is that their external beauty serves as a reflection of the perfection concealed within.

In addition to the focus on physicality, the mirror episode offers insights into the complexity of the celestial hierarchy and the tension between authority and obedience. Mary, in her dual role as mother and subject, addresses Christ as *hijo* but at the same time prostrates herself at his feet in an act of ritualized feudal deference. Christ, in turn, speaks from his throne with the authority of masculine hegemony while demonstrating a childlike willingness to learn from his mother, whom he invites in effect to engage in a process of conscious scopophilic objectification, encouraging those gathered to scan her physical form, just as the opening section of the sermon scanned that of Bartholomew.⁵² In contrast to traditional versions of the *descriptio puellae*, where the focus of attention moves downwards from head to foot, the Virgin—wielding the mirror at Christ’s request—introduces an element of inversion by moving upwards from her feet to consider her womb (a part of the body that seldom appears in such lists) along with more conventional properties such as her breasts, throat, hands, arms, mouth, teeth, nose, eyes, hair and face. She in this way sheds light on the birthing potential of the female body, the function of the senses and the relationship between interior and exterior. She also counterpoints the position of Christ, who, as is the case elsewhere, revels in his mother’s charms, as well as that of Bartholomew, who, as we have seen, was flayed while suspended upside down.⁵³ A point of particular interest concerns the transition from the foot, which commonly serves as a metaphor for the sexual organ, to the womb in which Christ was carried and the breasts at which he nursed.⁵⁴ The mirror functions thus as a mechanism for challenging how individuals look at themselves or others, and how identity

1994), 62–99; Sophie Sexon, ‘Gender-Querying Christ’s Wounds: A Non-Binary Interpretation of Christ’s Body in Late Medieval Imagery’, in *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. Spencer-Hall & Gutt, 133–53.

52 Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, *Screen*, 16:3 (1975), 6–18; Andrew M. Beresford, ‘From Scopophilia to Abjection: Vision and Blindness in the *Monja que se arrancó los ojos*’, in *Medieval Iberia in Contemporary Culture*, ed. Nancy F. Marino, *Miríada Hispánica*, 12 (2016), 111–27.

53 Jessica A. Boon, ‘The Marian Apocalyptic of a Visionary Preacher: The *Conorte* of Juana de la Cruz, 1481–1534’, in *The End of the World in Medieval Thought and Spirituality*, ed. Eric Knibbs, Jessica A. Boon & Erica Gelser (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 41–67.

54 A notable example is given in Berceo’s *Abadesa preñada*, where the main protagonist becomes pregnant by stepping on ‘yerva fuert enconada’, Gonzalo de Berceo, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, ed., con prólogo & notas de Fernando Baños Vallejo, con estudio preliminar de Isabel Uría Maqua (Madrid: Crítica, 1997), stanza 507cd, p. 118.

is related to the question of physical appearance, a correlation that reflects not just on Bartholomew, but on the account of Juana's miraculous *in utero* metamorphosis and decision to don male attire.

As the discussion between Christ and Mary develops, the genderqueer angle and its impact on the mother/son relationship become more pronounced. Seeking to counter Christ's desire to inflict plagues on the iniquitous, Mary announces that she gave birth to the souls of the world and suffered because of their pain. The specific formulation of her words, which recalls Luke 2:35, conflates her grief for Christ with a broader sense of suffering at the fall of humankind. Christ, in turn, reiterates his role as putative mother, asserting that he gave birth to the sinners of the world and suffered torments in their name, a rhetorical posture typical of Franciscan theology.⁵⁵ The process of inversion, which counterpoints the relationship between suffering and identity, is reiterated thereafter by Mary, who affirms that while her son's birth was no more painful than the passage of sunlight through glass (a metaphor that recalls the mirror episode), she suffered because of his anguish, which constituted a sacrifice undertaken for the broader soteriological benefit of humankind.⁵⁶ Christ, in response, characterizes Mary's predicament as a tug of love in which her compassion for sinners drags her downwards towards the suffering of the world while his devotion seeks to anchor her permanently in heaven. He adds that rather than see her directly, which would result either in the death or the effective sanctification of the viewer, she can only appear to sinners by occupying statues fashioned in her image—a point that adds further significance to the incident in Añover de Tajo:

Y que, entonces descende el un lado de Nuestra Señora a la tierra, cuando su espíritu de ella descende en alguna imagen suya y habla a algunas personas, o cuando ven algún resplandor o claridad suya, por cuanto su precioso cuerpo no es ninguna persona digna de verle en la tierra; porque él está ya tan glorificado y resplandeciente, que si alguna persona, estando en la tierra, le viese, luego caería muerta, o, si no muriese, quedaría tan santificada que ya no pudiese más pecar si no

55 'Que yo los parí con muchos dolores, y a mí costaron muchos tormentos y azotes y llagas, que por cada una de ellas paría a cada uno de los pecadores' (García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1116). See also Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus As Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1982); Surtz, *The Guitar of God*, 100–01; María del Mar Graña Cid, 'La feminidad de Jesucristo y sus implicaciones eclesiales en la predicación mística de Juana de la Cruz (sobre la Prerreforma y la Querrela de las Mujeres en Castilla)', *Estudios Eclesiásticos*, 84:330 (2009), 477–513; and Elphick, 'Mother Juana de la Cruz'.

56 'Que, cuando a Vos os parí, más linda y hermosa quedé que la rosa, y no me hicisteis más dolor ni quebrantamiento que hace el sol a la vidriera cuando entra y sale por ella' (García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1116).

quisiese. Empero, que hablar su espíritu en las imágenes y parecer algún resplandor suyo, pocas veces acaece, porque aún de esto no somos dignos los que estamos en la tierra.⁵⁷

Given that Christ's words are positioned as the mid-point of the sermon, it becomes crucial to consider their significance. Reflecting in part on Bartholomew's concern for the celebration of his feast and his empathy for those who call upon him, the statement functions simultaneously as a reference to the notion of sacred embodiment, the relationship between interior and exterior and ultimately the distinction between image-as-icon and image-as-idol. In contrast to the statues that Bartholomew desecrated as part of his ministry, that of Mary serves as a hermeneutic of transcendence, mediating the interval between the material and the ineffable and, thus, between this world and the next. While Mary in heaven engages in a process of protracted physical scrutiny, granting those gathered a view of her incomparable corporeal charms, her perfection is such that she can only be seen on earth through a material object such as a statue. It becomes possible as a result to mark a distinction between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and to read Mary, as is the case with Bartholomew, as a celestial mediator, a figure capable of transforming the lives of the devout. Conversely, the imputation of idolatry, the belief that the physical artefacts of the other represent false gods rather than embodiments of an invisible spiritual prototype, is one that is held up implicitly for contempt. In contrast to Mary's efficacy, the devils within them—as Bartholomew's actions demonstrate—seek merely to deceive and inflict harm, maliciously duping those who address them into believing that they work in their favour.⁵⁸

In an extension of the container/contained metaphor, Mary characterizes herself as a bird that is able, because she has a nest in heaven, to make nests in the hearts of the devout.⁵⁹ In contrast to her time on earth, when she viewed herself as a worm burrowing through the soil (an image that plays on the same leitmotif), her ascent to heaven enabled her to become a source of indefatigable compassion, making decisive interventions in the affairs of the world. Yet since the bird, Christ notes, can be hunted, and thereafter subjected, like Bartholomew on the flaying post, to extreme forms of

57 García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1117.

58 Beresford, *Sacred Skin*, 272.

59 'Y llamo me yo pajarita, Hijo mío, porque las pajaritas muy poco posan en volar, que siempre andan volando por el aire, y sus nidos y habitaciones son en los árboles y en las cosas altas. Y porque yo estoy ya en la altura de los cielos, y Vos, mi amado hijo, me habéis dado el nido y habitación sobre todos los bienaventurados, por eso me llamo pajarita, que cuando estaba en la tierra no me llamaba sino el más chiquito gusanito que estaba debajo de la tierra' (García de Andrés, *El Conhorte*, II, 1117).

suffering, it becomes important to remain detached. The text in this way marks a distinction between Christ and Mary and, by extension, male/female and human/divine, setting a belief in free will and the consequences of individual actions against an approach defined by empathy, compassion and the need for intervention. It plays equally on the underpinning conflation of human and animal, visualizing Bartholomew and Mary as entities that can be pursued, trapped and thereafter, consumed. Undaunted by Christ's recommendations, Mary resorts to the rhetoric of sublimation by imploring him to invite those who desire to hunt to fire their crossbow bolts at her. She adds that since it is in her nature to pray for sinners, she hopes that they will follow her example by constructing nests in heaven—a remark that sheds light both on the position of the soul in the body and the relationship between the epidermis and the individual that dwells within. She succeeds thus in reimagining the relationship between container and contained, characterizing herself, like Bartholomew and Christ, as a martyr, a figure who submits to suffering so as to disseminate her example outwards towards those who follow in her footsteps.

After a discussion of the four faces of Mary, a section that envisions her identity as being as queerly fluid and polymorphous as that of Bartholomew, who, as we have seen, is both a living wound and a pelt of flayed human skin, the final portion of the sermon is given over to a pageant focusing on the ultimate soteriological destiny of all human souls. As a reward for his sacrifice in renouncing his birthright, Christ elevates Bartholomew to the position of lord of seven kingdoms, solemnizing his feast by making him responsible for the subjects under his dominion. The text in this way comes full circle, formulating a link between the account of the saint's calling and his apprehensions concerning the observance of his feast. It also reflects on the incident in Añover de Tajo, where he admonished the infant Juana to remember him, just as he would forever remember her. The Apostles thereafter descend to Bartholomew's kingdoms, and while Mary takes her place on a nuptial bed—an image that counterpoints her status as immaculate virgin—a host of saints and angels plays music and engages in festivities all around them. The repetition of the leitmotif *morada* returns the focus of the narrative to the relationship between container and contained, but most striking is how the impression of pomp and ceremony characterizes heaven as a feast of colour and sound in which the dead appear to be considerably more alive than the living. The cessation of life is appraised thus not just as an aspirational event—a mechanism for transitioning from the suffering and uncertainty of the world to the security and serenity of the afterlife—but one that affords access to the colour and excitement to which believers, notably Franciscans such as Juana, would have been denied.

Delighted at her reception, the Virgin resolves to summon her son so that he can honour Bartholomew's feast. Christ is initially reluctant, but when she

appears before him, he finds himself persuaded to assume his rightful place, mandating the Apostles to stage a tribunal by setting up thrones of judgment for himself, his mother, the prophets of the Old Testament and another twelve for the Apostles themselves. Commencing with those of the kingdoms allocated to St Bartholomew, the souls of the world are then summarily brought to judgment, with the Virgin and the Apostles serving as advocates on their behalf. The crucial issue is that those who had been most loyal to Bartholomew are the first to receive the crown of salvation—a point that, by overlaying the rhetoric of kingship onto that of salvation, inverts the process of princely renunciation described at the start of the sermon. In all, Juana identifies four categories, singling out those who had been converted by the saint's proselytizing ability, those who had embraced him as a baptismal advocate, those who had abstained from sin and undertaken good works because of his example and those who had celebrated his feast or adopted him as patron. She in this way counterpoints other uses of the number, bringing to mind traditional connotations of natural justice, harmony and divine order.

The text as a result sheds light not just on Bartholomew, but on the infant Juana's promise to celebrate and perpetuate his legacy. Having been on the point of death, Juana, as we have seen, was taken by her mother to a church, where she came face to face with the saint, who hugged her and kissed her before liberating her from her pains and encouraging her to engage in a process of reciprocal remembrance. The sermon, which represents the fulfilment of her promise, advances a series of penetrating insights into Bartholomew's life and legacy. Commencing with an account of his calling and decision to serve Christ, it adopts an unusual and unorthodox perspective, probing further back into his life than the overwhelming majority of early Iberian treatments. Particular attention is paid to the symbolism and significance of his garments and how they anticipate the act of flaying by serving as a surrogate skin. The sermon then progresses to a consideration of Bartholomew's ministry, which, rather than discuss his work as an exorcist or a baptizer of pagan souls, focuses exclusively on acts of iconoclastic desecration. It becomes possible in this light to mark a distinction between the orthodoxy of Juana's observance, which is predicated on the opposition between the material and the ineffable, and its idolatrous equivalent, where the object itself becomes the subject of veneration. The discussion of Bartholomew's torture and martyrdom is equally innovative, describing how he was flayed iteratively rather than in his complete ontological totality. His body is even rubbed with salt and vinegar—a torture not attested elsewhere—before being dressed in animal skins, which would have transformed a flayed subject into a subject to be flayed.

The focus falls thereafter on Bartholomew's posthumous legacy and his engagements with Christ, Mary and the Apostles. In a bold and audacious

inversion of sacred history, Juana reimagines her patron as a force of knife-wielding menace, a figure who, in the context of a pageant, orders his fellows to flay the sinners of the world so that they can be divested of iniquity and thereby made perfect. He adds that since there are Seven Deadly Sins, they should repeat the action on seven occasions, treating each new layer of skin as an impediment to perfection rather than a mechanism for mediating contact with the world beyond. The boldness of Juana's imagery becomes more evident in the following sections, when, in response to Bartholomew's concerns over the celebration of his feast, Christ extracts a mirror from the wound in his side and implores Mary to consider her perfection, inviting her to engage in a process of conscious scopophilic objectification. She then, having offered those gathered an insight into her incomparable physical charms, persuades Christ to take part in a second pageant, where those who are most loyal to Bartholomew are identified as those who are most ripe for salvation—a detail that reflects on Juana's lifelong devotion to the saint.

In contrast to traditional hagiographic narratives, which are predicated on patterns of cause and effect, Juana's sermon is as selective as it is idiosyncratic, achieving unity through the deployment of a series of carefully interlinked leitmotifs that reveal as much about questions of structural and intellectual cohesion as they do about her and Bartholomew. Intimating that identity is a matter of inner belief rather than external perception, the sermon advances from a discussion of the transformative potential of garments through to parallel relationships between the idol and the devil and thereafter, the skin and the flesh. In each instance, the contrast between container and contained is exploited as a mechanism for probing the location of the true and authentic self. Just as the soul emerges from the body and the body from under the skin, the mirror from Christ's side (echoed in turn by the reference to sunlight passing through glass) encourages believers to engage in a process of specular reflection, inviting them to consider questions of selfhood and their ultimate soteriological destiny. The Virgin, whose incomparable corporeal perfection echoes that of Bartholomew, stands both as the vessel from which Christ was born, and like Christ and the Apostles, as the mother of humankind. Her four faces, which represent different readings of identity, map onto the four categories of devotion and the four colours in which the newly flayed are dressed, returning audiences to the initial discussion of garments and the teenage Juana's decision to don male attire. Although Mary can only be seen on earth—like Bartholomew—in the form of the statues in which she is contained, she extends the frame of reference by characterizing herself as a worm in the soil and a bird in a nest. This free association of ideas, in which Juana's signifiers twist and mutate as they affix themselves to new signifieds, enables the sermon to make inspired connections between the various facets of Bartholomew's life and legacy. It becomes able as a result

to transcend its immediate subject matter, advancing a detailed reflection on the nature of identity and of salvation itself.

The sermon in this respect offers a lucid and compelling insight into the paradoxes of the creative process. Delivered in a state of enraptured trance, Juana's words, which purportedly represent those of Christ, were transcribed by her fellow nuns as they listened patiently to her musings. The most important of these is María Evangelista, who was reputedly rewarded with the gift of literacy so that she could transcribe them. By fleshing out the Christian message and affording audiences access to materials to which they would not otherwise have been exposed, Juana characterizes herself as a proxy hagiographer—or, as Surtz contends, an evangelist—addressing and thereby correcting a series of omissions from sacred history.⁶⁰ A pertinent point, as Pablo Acosta-García recognizes, is that the chosen name of her chief scribe points inevitably to the appropriation of male authority.⁶¹ The resultant tension, which sets Juana's position as author against that of ventriloquistic mouthpiece, makes it possible to question whether she should be classified as the architect of the sermon or as the initial recipient of it—a figure who creates as she speaks or who has been struck dumb so that God can speak through her.⁶² Although it may be, as Surtz adds, that Juana's modesty should be classified merely as a strategy for self-aggrandizement, underscoring the fact that she alone has been adjudged worthy of becoming the mechanism through which Christ reveals himself, the extent to which the sermon assimilates and synthesizes an unusually extensive range of sources suggests that her endeavours should be classified as the product of a sustained and fecund engagement with the intricacies of Bartholomew's life and legacy rather than a purely *ex nihilo* phenomenon.⁶³ Capturing the hypnagogic vagaries of a mind on the fringes of consciousness, her insights—structured and conditioned by a range of free associations that are often as eccentric as they are excessive—offer insights into the distinctiveness of the saint as well as the particularities of female visionary experience and the concomitant appropriation of male power and authority. It is probably for this reason that despite receiving support during her own lifetime, notably from figures as eminent as Emperor Charles V and Cardinal Cisneros, Minister Provincial of the Friars Minor, Juana's writings were subsequently subjected to acts of censorship predicated on the assumption that while members of the female religious community may be able to

60 Surtz, *The Guitar of God*, 111–12.

61 Acosta-García, 'Radical Succession', 4.

62 Cordelia Warr, 'Proving Stigmata: Antonio Daza, Saint Francis of Assisi and Juana de la Cruz', in *Doubting Christianity: The Church and Doubt*, ed. Frances Andrews, Charlotte Methuen & Andrew Spicer, *Studies in Church History*, 52 (2016), 283–97 (p. 290).

63 Surtz, *The Guitar of God*, 133.

experience visions, they should respect mandates such as 1 Timothy 2:12–13 by refraining from explicating their content.⁶⁴

The most telling insights of the sermon, however, concern the status of the queer body. As Mathilde van Dijk has recently observed, the fantasy of an ethnically unified Europe, where men were men and women knew their place, is one that has frequently been bandied about by white supremacists eager to seek historical support for their sexist, racist or transphobic views.⁶⁵ St Joan of Arc, scrubbed of queerness and essentialized as the Maid of Orléans, has been transformed into a left-wing working-class hero or a right-wing nationalist while Christ has been figured as the very archetype of masculinity and, thus, a reiteration of the supposed primacy of Adam over Eve and, therefore, of man over woman. Juana's sermon, which offers a series of penetrating insights into the overarching queerness of early Iberian devotional praxis, reveals that nothing could be further from the truth. Fascinated by questions of fluidity and inversion, her writings—and, indeed, her actions—reveal how identified gender is not necessarily synonymous with the sex or the gender assigned at birth, but is part of a considerably more complex equation in which audiences are invited, as Kevin C. A. Elphick affirms, to move beyond the remit of conventionally demarcated approaches to categorization as they discover God through their own gendered experiences.⁶⁶ She becomes able in this way to advance a series of arresting and provocative considerations that are not just significant in themselves, but of relevance to a range of broader interdisciplinary debates.

Assigned as a female subject at birth, albeit one with a miraculously prominent Adam's apple, Juana opted to don male attire and identify herself, albeit temporarily, as male—a detail that, as we have seen, maps the coordinates of her trajectory onto the conventions of the grouping traditionally known as transvestite saints—before re-identifying thereafter as female and conveying the words of Christ in the form of a series of admonitory messages suitable for consumption by confessors, preachers and prelates. Her actions, as Surtz points out, reveal an awareness of the arbitrary nature of God's assignment of sexual identities and, by extension, of the arbitrary nature of gender roles in the eyes of God.⁶⁷ Although there is no way of knowing whether the account of her miraculous *in utero*

64 Surtz, *The Guitar of God*, 24; Sanmartín Bastida, 'La puesta en escena de la historia sagrada a comienzos del siglo XVI', 186; Elphick, 'Juana de la Cruz: Gender-Transcendent Prophetess', 88.

65 Mathilde van Dijk, 'Epilogue. Beyond Binaries: A Reflection on the (Trans) Gender(s) of Saints', in *Trans and Genderqueer Subjects in Medieval Hagiography*, ed. Spencer-Hall & Gutt, 267–79.

66 Elphick, 'Juana de la Cruz: Gender-Transcendent Prophetess', 87.

67 Surtz, *The Guitar of God*, 7.

metamorphosis was revealed to her in a vision or invented by her biographer, it stands to reason that if she displayed such a typically masculine physical characteristic—‘a visible attribute’ that for Acosta-García ‘proves her supernatural ability’—she might well have felt that she had the divinely given right to exercise powers that had traditionally been thought of as pertaining exclusively unto the male priestly elite.⁶⁸ The important point is that if sexual identity is arbitrary, and can be transformed as the result of an act of divine intervention, then the powers and responsibilities assigned to the genders must be equally arbitrary. Two crucial considerations in this respect are Galatians 3:26–28, which affirms that there is neither male nor female, and the grammatical genders of *espíritu* and *ánima*, which characterize the spirits and souls of believers—irrespective of assigned or identified gender—as both masculine and feminine.⁶⁹

Bartholomew, likewise, slips queerly between categories. Commencing the narrative as a prince who conceals his identity, he is subjected thereafter to flaying, which blurs the distinction between the opposing dichotomies of inside/outside, subject/object and self/other. If identity, as postcolonial theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha have argued, can be located on—or in the colour of—one’s skin, then as Bartholomew’s former self is subdivided and split into a body-length wound and a severed epidermis, it becomes impossible to maintain conventional approaches towards questions of categorization.⁷⁰ Like Juana, who, as Boon recognizes, is both monstrously incomplete (neither male nor female) and a symbol of absolute plenitude (both male and female), Bartholomew can be appraised simultaneously in terms of horrifying loss (a monster without skin) as well as superlative gain (a saintly exemplar with an additional, sacred skin).⁷¹ The sequence of contradictions is further compounded by the imposition of animal hides, which collapses the distinction between the human and the bestial, and by salt and vinegar, which bring to mind suggestions of anthropophagy and attendant notions of (wo)man-as-article-for-consumption. Yet the most spectacular instance of queer becoming concerns how Bartholomew is envisioned as the birthing mother to a more highly evolved celestial self—a role that is subsequently reimagined as an act of purification suitable for the Apostles to inflict on the sinners of the world.

This sequence of instabilities maps itself onto the relationship between Christ and the Virgin, who are represented not just as mother/son, but also as father/daughter and husband/wife. Their characterization adheres in

68 Acosta-García, ‘Radical Succession’, 8.

69 Surtz, *The Guitar of God*, 25; Elphick, ‘Mother Juana de la Cruz’; Elphick ‘Juana de la Cruz: Gender-Transcendent Prophetess’, 90.

70 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

71 See Boon, ‘At the Limits of (Trans) Gender’, 262. See also Beresford, *Sacred Skin*.

this respect to the queerly trinitarian assumption that Mary is simultaneously the mother, daughter and bride of God—a form of divinely created matter, inseminated by the Holy Spirit, who subsequently gives birth to the infant Christ. She serves thus, as Boon observes, as a mechanism for alerting the attentions of the audience both to the unfathomable complexity of Christ's identity and to the inextricable links between Mariology and Christology.⁷² The endeavours of Christ and Mary, which represent the triumph of order, system and effective governance, render them open and accessible, but at the same time elusive and unfathomable, products of a logic beyond simplistic human comprehension. Juana's vision, in this sense, is of protagonists that transcend traditional boundaries and categories, setting cataphatic insights into the majestic vibrancy and colour of the afterlife against the ultimate apophysis of celestial salvation. She becomes able in this way to pay a worthy and lasting tribute to the figure who saved her life as an infant, reappraising his legacy by rejecting suggestions of fixity and instead focusing on the overarchingly gender-fluid dynamism of devotional identification.*

72 'Christ at Heavenly Play: Christology through Mary's Eyes in the Sermons of Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534)', *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, 102:1 (2011), 243–66.

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