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The *Conhorte* of Juana de la Cruz: A Proposal for a Female Prophetic Theology (The Performative Voice of Women and the Transformation of Order in Sermon 8)

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Abstract

This article argues that the *Conhorte*, the visionary collection of sermons attributed to Juana de la Cruz and collectively composed by the Franciscan tertiaries of Santa María de la Cruz (Cubas de la Sagra, Castile), constitutes a distinctive form of female prophetic theology. Focusing on Sermon 8, the study examines how the authors construct and legitimize a public female theological voice through visionary discourse, liturgical and scriptural materials, and performative forms of speech. Rather than merely defending women's preaching, the sermon develops a theological argument that reconfigures central aspects of Christian doctrine, including the relationship between femininity and sin, the interpretation of the Fall, the roles of Eve and Mary, female agency and the possibilities of human and social transformation. The article argues that this prophetic theology is not only charismatic in its origin but also transformative in its purpose: rooted in women's historical experience, it seeks to intervene in reality while elaborating theological meanings of universal scope. The *Conhorte* produces theology not only through its doctrinal content but also through the construction of its discourse: voices, bodies, images, scenes, grammatical gender, and liturgical and scriptural materials participate in the production of theological meaning while seeking to transform the audience. Sermon 8 thus reveals a distinctive modality of female prophetic theology in which charismatic authority, women's historical experience, theological elaboration, and transformative purpose are closely interconnected.

Keywords: *Conhorte*; Juana de la Cruz; female prophetic theology; prophetic theology; visionary theology; women's preaching; female authorship; visionary literature; performativity; gender; Eve; Mary; spiritual motherhood; Franciscan women; early modern Castile

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1. Introduction

The case of the Castilian Franciscan woman Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534) exemplifies the complex historical processes through which women produced theology and, more specifically, the role of female preaching as an authorized *locus* for its formulation and public dissemination. She was a prominent figure in religious reform within the context of the Iberian Renaissance (Surtz 1990; García de Andrés 1999; Triviño 1999; Cortés Timoner 2004; Acosta 2025), a prophetess who inherited the medieval tradition of female prophecy (Graña 2009, p. 480; Acosta 2023, 2025), and whose trajectory also belongs within the significant phenomenon of living sainthood (Zarri 1990; Muñoz 1995, p. 95).

The chronicles have highlighted her status as a reformer and preacher. One of her major activities was the reform of the community of beatas established since the mid-fifteenth century next to the sanctuary of Santa María de la Cruz in Cubas de la Sagra

(Madrid). Her accession to the government coincided with the establishment within the community of conventual features characteristic of the Third Order Regular of Saint Francis (Salazar 1977, p. 449).

Among Juana's activities, public preaching was the most prominent. Although she formed part of the broader phenomenon of female prophecy in Western Christendom during the transition from the Middle Ages to the Early Modern period (Valerio 1995; Vauchez 1999; Zarri 2004), her preaching displayed distinctive features. She preached for thirteen years, perhaps between 1505 or 1506 and 1518 or 1519 (García de Andrés 1999, p. 64; Triviño 1999, p. 93; Graña 2023, p. 2). It took material form in the *Conhorte*[1]—"comfort" or "consolation" (Covarrubias 1611, fol. 232v)—a book written during the first third of the sixteenth century (García de Andrés 1999; Acosta 2022). The sisters of her community recorded more than seventy sermons that, in general terms, follow the cycle of a complete liturgical year. Forms of public preaching by women are documented, but such preaching was not customary (Kienzle and Walker 1998; Roest 2004; Kerby-Fulton 2005; Muessig 1998a, 2025). This lends particular significance to the pronounced public dimension of Juana's teaching almost from its beginnings. This was related to the fact that the community had been established next to a Marian sanctuary: the public dissemination of Juana's teachings was linked to social devotion. Nevertheless, it is possible that the social reach and cross-class character of her teaching expanded over time, particularly as it assumed more clearly defined homiletic forms, since this development coincides with references to the diversity of the sermons' audiences and to the regular presence of members of the clergy (Graña 2025, p. 168).

This preaching was prophetic because of its charismatic origin (Graña 2004, pp. 310–14), its divine content, and its social function. In the first biography of Juana, *Vida y fin de la bienaventurada virgen sancta Juana de la Cruz*, her preaching is presented as an extraordinary phenomenon linked to divine grace and, more specifically, to the direct participation of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Particularly significant is the fact that Juana received the Holy Spirit in a manner analogous to the apostles and preached "in the person of Christ" while in a state of ecstasy, without this effacing her individuality as a female subject (Graña 2025, p. 167).

The content of this preaching is found in the texts produced within the convent. The *Conhorte* was produced by a female interpretive community (Graña 2019a, p. 68; Acosta 2025) and, rather than being a written record of the prophetess's oral discourse, constitutes a work of collective female authorship. Alongside Juana, several religious women were involved in its production: they attended her sermons, committed them to writing, and participated in their subsequent reconstruction from memory and textual organization, activities that they themselves acknowledge in the final pages of the work. Their autonomy and sense of authorship are particularly noteworthy: between the mandate of certain prelates and divine authorization, the women writers assert a space of their own for authorial decision-making and state that they completed the composition of the book in accordance with "our purpose and intention" (Graña 2019a, p. 89).

As Surtz has pointed out (Surtz 1990, pp. 15–27), the sermons constitute an original body of thought. Surtz himself and other scholars have continued to examine them from literary, visionary, and theological perspectives (García de Andrés 1994; Surtz 1995; Muñoz 1995; De Pablo 2001; Graña 2004; Boon 2010; Sanmartín and Curto 2024; Acosta 2025). Its contents are wide-ranging. Although the sermons repeatedly engage with certain themes, they approach them from different angles. Knowledge, teaching, and women's speech are among the subjects that particularly concern the authors and on which they develop distinctive reflections. They defend their public speech (Graña 2019a), establish the foundations of their theological authorship, notably by developing their own

exegeses of Scripture (Graña 2023), and bring to light the hermeneutical keys to understanding the book (Graña 2020).

Taking these results as a starting point, this study analyzes Sermon 8 of the *Conhorte*, entitled *Que trata de algunas fiestas y solemnidades que fueron hechas en el reino de los cielos y de algunas reprehensiones contra los incredulous*. This sermon contains the first direct mention of Juana as the woman through whom Christ speaks and of the book that records the divine word transmitted through her voice. My hypothesis is that the reference to Juana and her book is connected with the explicit formulation of some of the principles underlying the authors' theological practice and reveals their purpose.[2] An analysis of the sermon as a whole thus makes it possible to characterize the proposal for female prophetic theology—that is, theology produced by women prophets—developed in the *Conhorte*, as we shall see.

"Female prophetic theology" designates a specific type of theology, rather than forms of preaching or of the sermon, and is therefore not equivalent to the category of the "female prophetic sermon" (Acosta 2023, 2025). Nor does what is specifically prophetic lie in the interrelationship between Scripture, liturgy, and visionary exegesis. Although these elements may constitute features of female prophetic speech, they are not sufficient to define its distinctiveness, since they are not exclusive to prophecy, nor do they constitute its primary basis. The characterization of female prophetic theology requires attention to its distinctive elements: above all, the charismatic—and not strictly visionary—origin of knowledge, linked to divine action; the prophetic status of the person who receives and transmits it; the inscription of women's historical experience in the production of theological meaning; the processes of elaboration through which this knowledge may pass; and the purpose of its communication, oriented toward responding to the problems of its time and intervening in reality.[3]

Sermon 8 makes it possible to identify these aspects with particular clarity and reveals the basic characteristics of this theological category as it takes shape in the book. To study the sermon, it is necessary to follow its expository order, since its meaning is progressively constructed and organized into distinct parts. An initial defense is followed by an extensive theological argument grounded in an elaborate heavenly staging, in which three female figures exercise performative forms of speech. These figures articulate a progressive development of female agency and authority: Agnes embodies the active agency of a consecrated woman in her relationship with Christ; Eve brings the question of female speech and its authority explicitly to the fore; and Mary represents the fullest articulation of female theological authority. This process culminates in the significant legitimation of the female theological voice, linked to the production of original theology and the capacity to transform the established order.

The analysis will make it possible to identify how these elements are specifically articulated in Sermon 8 and, on this basis, to characterize the specific modality of female prophetic theology that develops in the *Conhorte*. Although it has been argued that Juana belongs to the medieval female prophetic tradition (Graña 2009, p. 480; Acosta 2023, 2025), the specificity of this sermon does not lie in the defense or resignification of female figures, both of which can be found in earlier and later women authors.[4] Rather, I will focus on the distinctive function these figures assume within the particular construction of the sermon. The possible connections with other women authors would require specific comparative studies.

2. A Social Framework: The Woman Preacher Called into Question

The first part of the sermon shapes the entire discourse. The point of departure is the personal and social problem faced by the woman preacher: the questioning of her public

voice. This issue also implicitly concerns the women writers of the *Conhorte.* Thus, the authors' historical experience constitutes the ground from which their thought emerges and develops.

Christ delivers an argument of reproof and defense in order to resolve the social conflict provoked by disbelief in the divine origin of the preaching of Juana, a woman to whom he descends. His speech constitutes a complete unit of meaning and could be read as an independent sermon. Nevertheless, its connections with the rest of the text largely determine its overall content, configuring a distinctive homiletic form that I describe as "vindicatory sermon."

The question of women's public voice points to the debates concerning women that developed within the cultural and religious context of Humanism and the Renaissance. The sermon may thus be regarded as a theological intervention in the *Querelle des Femmes*, the controversy over female dignity and relations between the sexes, in which the exercise of public speech was a central issue (Rivera 1990; Cabré 1996; Vargas 2016). More specifically, the argument develops two major defenses: one concerning Juana's preaching, which is linked to the origins of the *Conhorte*, and the other concerning women's writing and testimony (Graña 2019a, 2019b).

Both are grounded in the Incarnation, which operates differently in each case. Juana's preaching is presented as an incarnational act in which Christ descends (Graña 2009, pp. 491–92) to speak through a female voice. Writing, for its part, is authorized through the testimony of women to the incarnate God recorded in the Gospel. Nevertheless, the central issue around which the contents are articulated is Juana's preaching rather than the writing of the *Conhorte*, which remains in the background.

Christ proclaims the charismatic nature of this preaching by affirming that it was God who "bestowed the breath of his sacred mouth of truth, through whose power, breath, and exhalation all the secrets and mysteries contained in this holy book were spoken." In response to doubts as to how it was possible for "the true God to come and descend from heaven to a poor and small woman,"[5] Christ affirms God's goodness, freedom, and availability (Surtz 1984, p. 487) and emphasizes that he manifests himself "speaking in this voice." Charismatic preaching is thus configured through the union of the revealed word, whose content proceeds from Christ, and Juana's voice, which retains its communicative agency. The preaching subject therefore assumes a dual configuration: Christ–Juana.

There is a close connection between the authors' historical experience, the communicative event in which they participate, and the form of the discourse. The preacher's charismatic experience and its incarnational theological foundation shape the discourse itself, whose form both gives expression to this experience and develops its theological implications. Its binary and associative organization, perceptible in both content and form, can be interpreted in this light. Particularly significant is the manner of naming, in which grammatical gender plays a central role.[6] The authors manipulate it in different ways and thereby develop an implicit message parallel to the explicit defense of Juana's preaching. This takes place within a specific communicative framework, in which the preacher is called into question by her audience, which also constitutes a speaking subject. Thus, this grammatical play acquires a markedly performative character: it not only contributes to constructing the argument but is also oriented toward acting on listeners and readers.

The problem raised by Juana's preaching and the defense undertaken by Christ must be understood within the broader framework of sexual difference and gender hierarchies. This does not mean that the questioning of Juana's preaching was led by men–or at least not exclusively from them–since the discourse suggests a broad social spectrum, but rather that it is interpreted in light of these hierarchies.

The use of the feminine with universal reference is significant, in contrast to the customary generic masculine in Castilian, as are the positive attributes associated with the feminine. The argument begins with a rebuke addressed "to all people" ("a todas las gentes") for their unbelief and with a reference to the natural intelligence of "persons" ("personas.") (*Conhorte*, fol. 76v). The feminine is thus initially associated both with a negative value, unbelief, and with a positive one, intelligence. However, the subsequent development of the argument reorients the negative association by introducing the possibility of transformation enabled by the positive one.

The discourse likewise unfolds through contrasts between masculine and feminine forms, which progressively associate the two genders with different meanings. When Christ states that he speaks through the voice of Juana, a "poor and small woman" ("mujer pobre y pequeña"), masculine forms are associated with questioning and resistance to divine action. In declaring that God does not take his goodness away "from anyone" ("a ninguno") and that "no one" ("ninguno") may call him to account for his gifts, the masculine acquires universal reference while simultaneously being situated within the semantic field of doubt and questioning. By contrast, a further reference to Juana, now as a "servant" ("sierva"), associates the feminine with love, the search for God, and receptivity to the divine (*Conhorte*, fol. 76v). The result of this distinctive use of grammatical gender is a symbolic redistribution of meanings that relativizes the automatic identification of the masculine with universality while associating the feminine with the positive meanings.

The way in which Juana is named participates in this same dynamic. The expression "poor and small woman" ("mujer pobre y pequeña") may reflect the way in which Juana was socially perceived and designated, but it is ambiguous, since it is not clear whether these qualifiers refer exclusively to her or relate more broadly to women. In the former sense, the expression is connected both to the theme of the divine election of the humble and to the Observant Franciscan ideal of *minoritas*, since the convent of Santa María de la Cruz belonged to the Franciscan Order, which emphasized the spiritual value of poverty. Yet it may also refer to the social perception of women and, precisely through its contrast with the spiritual dignity that the discourse accords Juana, may be connected with traditional female rhetorics of inferiority employed as *captatio benevolentiae* to legitimize women's speech (Rivera 1990, pp. 19–29; Cabré 1996, p. 80).

By contrast, the designation "servant" ("sierva") comes from Christ himself, refers unequivocally to Juana, and is associated with agency. Christ declares that he neither denies nor conceals his mercy "from any person who loved him and with fervor and perseverance desired and sought him, as did this servant of his." (*Conhorte*, fol. 76v). The use of the grammatically feminine noun "person" ("persona"), which retains its universal reference, is connected with the "poor and small woman" ("mujer pobre y pequeña"), now identified as a "servant" ("sierva") and, by implicit association, with women. The discursive logic is significant: that which could culturally be coded as inferiority or subordination is transformed into a privileged space of spiritual receptivity and action. The status of "servant" ("sierva") does not imply passivity: it designates an affective relationship with God that is associated with female agency. The association between "fervor" and "perseverance" links affective intensity with constancy in action. The passage thus subverts two negative associations traditionally attached to the feminine: in place of inconstancy, perseverance; in place of disordered affectivity, an affectivity that impels the search for God and action.[7]

The interplay of associations and contrasts, together with the deployment of grammatical gender, thus structures the passage and particularly affects the relationship between the particular and the universal. A specific female figure acquires a general representative value associated with the idea of service, while the meanings associated with gender shift

over the course of the discourse. The singular feminine is associated with spiritual excellence, receptivity to divine mercy, affective perseverance, and the active search for God; by contrast, the singular masculine is associated with questioning and resistance to divine action. Considered in light of the text's vindicatory tone, these shifts acquire a polemical dimension in relation to the social reality of the sexes and may be understood as a form of symbolic contestation of its hierarchies.

In the second defence, Christ makes a decisive public declaration:

"It was his will that some of the secrets and marvellous things that he spoke should be written down. And it made no difference to him whether those who wrote his sacred words were men or women. For he also wished to be witnessed by women as well as by men in his glorious Resurrection, since he was witnessed by Mary Magdalene and revealed himself to her before any other person—except to his glorious Mother. And he wished his holy Incarnation to be witnessed by Saint Elizabeth. And through other blessed women he wished to be praised and made known as God and as Lord, as indeed he is." (*Conhorte*, fol. 76v).

God himself authorises the writing of the *Conhorte* by declaring his will that women should write down and bear witness to his words within a broader framework of the legitimation of women's speech. The explicit equality established between men and women challenges the exclusive association of men with the public proclamation of truth. Moreover, female testimony is not presented as an exceptional novelty but as integrated into the Christian tradition, and the *Conhorte* is implicitly incorporated into that testimonial genealogy. Nevertheless, the women who wrote the book are never individually named.

This second public proclamation gives way to a discourse on unworthiness: Christ wishes "to show mercy and grant favor to the unworthy" ("indignos") even though they do not deserve it, for it is his nature to exercise charity "toward the sons of men" ("con los hijos de los hombres"). The reference is ambiguous. One may ask whether the use of the masculine plural "the unworthy" ("indignos"), in conjunction with the patrilineal formulation, implicitly associates unworthiness with the male rather than with the human as universal, as well as with the patrilineal structures through which social order and power are reproduced. Guilt, too, is expressed through masculine forms when the text states that "they" ("ellos"), "through their own fault and of their own accord," may choose to condemn themselves (*Conhorte*, fol. 76v). Considered in isolation, these forms might simply reflect the conventional use of the generic masculine; their place within the sequence of associations and contrasts structuring the passage, however, allows them to be examined as part of its discursive construction.

Once again, language operates here to reorganize meaning. The use of masculine forms in references to unworthiness, guilt, and sin contrasts with the preceding attributes associated with the feminine. Through the associations generated by the grammatical organization of the discourse, the sermon destabilizes established patterns of thought and contributes to the subversion of certain misogynistic associations.

The foregrounding of the audience provides another key to this dynamic. The feminine is presented as a privileged locus for the reception of truth, since "devout persons who have some love for him or some experience of his sweetness" ("las personas devotas") "will recognize" that those words are divine. By contrast, masculine forms are once again associated with an inability to recognize this divine origin because "the eye of [their] intention" is impaired (*Conhorte*, fol. 77r).

Only after these shifts does the discourse unequivocally employ the masculine to refer jointly to both sexes. The Son asks the Father for permission to speak to "all" ("todos") who might wish to hear his words and declares his desire to descend in order to do so "through that instrument of voice" ("en aquel órgano de voz"). Shortly thereafter, the masculine

acquires a positive association when Christ refers to the consolations granted "to my own" ("a los míos"), while the feminine is linked to "the souls" ("las ánimas") suffering the pains of hell and purgatory (*Conhorte*, fol. 77r). These shifts confirm that the associations between grammatical gender and meaning are not fixed and reveal the malleability of the symbolic system deployed by the discourse. Significantly, it is within this framework that the purpose of Christ–Juana's preaching is articulated: to reveal the secrets, feasts, and consolations of heaven, as well as the pains of hell and purgatory.

However, the intervention of God the Father ultimately reinforces the association of the masculine with sin—"to sinners who do not deserve it and are unworthy" ("a los pecadores que no lo merecen ni son dignos")—while at the same time legitimizing the incarnational character of the preaching by granting the Son permission to descend "to speak through that instrument of voice" and to say "whatever you wish and whatever is your will." (*Conhorte*, fol. 77r). Although Juana is referred to indirectly as an "instrument of voice" ("órgano de voz"), this formulation ultimately acknowledges a woman's capacity to receive Christ's word and give it voice. Christ, for his part, declares his desire to descend in order to bring heavenly consolation to the world, thereby linking this descent to the needs of the world.

In this way, the first defense of Juana offers a programmatic framework for the *Conhorte* as a whole. The divine word is once again incarnated in history. Heaven and earth are brought together in the preaching of Juana de la Cruz, which is further inscribed within a Trinitarian dynamic, since the Father affirms that whatever is performed by each divine person is performed by all three. The legitimation of this preaching takes place within a discursive framework in which gender associations appear neither natural nor immutable, but variable and context-dependent. This makes it possible to interpret opposition to women's public speech as the result of cultural attributions.

This first section reveals the two major factors structuring the discourse. The first is the contextual dimension, embodied both in the social problem that gives rise to the sermon and in the communicative act itself, with Juana de la Cruz at its center. The prophetess's oral word, even in its textualized form, retains the marks of immediacy and of the need to respond to and persuade her listeners. It is a discourse designed to focus their attention and elicit a response from them. The second factor is theological: the incarnational logic through which this contextual reality is interpreted and transformed into theological discourse.

Divine truth is not formulated in abstract terms. It becomes present in the world through a voice and a body and is incarnated in historical reality, in its problems, in the subjects involved, and also in signs that make it visible. This process of mediation also includes the women writers, whose intervention usually remains concealed beneath the voice of Christ and becomes perceptible only at certain moments, particularly in references to Christ in the third person, which reveal their work of recollection and textualization.

The markedly iconic and performative character of the discourse can also be understood within this framework. The use of signs is not incidental, since discursive form not only expresses meaning but also represents it and renders it perceptible to the senses. Moreover, this is a performative discourse that shifts, juxtaposes, and recombines meanings, thereby enacting the transformation it seeks to bring about. Christ seeks to console and respond to the needs of the world, and incarnational logic is also manifested in this operative dimension. As we shall see, the remainder of the sermon develops this same logic.

3. Female Agency and Equal Holiness in Heaven

The defense is followed by a shift in register: the sermon moves on to describe a celebration in heaven, which marks the beginning of its longest and most complex section. This heavenly feast raises the question of the liturgical nature of Juana's sermons.

Historiography has repeatedly pointed out that these conform to the calendar and adhere to the liturgy (García de Andrés 1999; Triviño 1999; Acosta 2023, 2025). Sermon 8 reflects this conformity while revealing a flexible and creative use of the liturgy. The authors use the calendar and liturgical readings to articulate the contents they wish to transmit, which respond to the problem previously posed in the sermon, and they do so with considerable freedom and flexibility. Furthermore, they organize their discourse around the major theological question they raise.

In this way, they situate the heavenly celebration within the octaves of Fabian, Sebastian, and Agnes, without specifying the day. The narrative nevertheless appears to place the scene toward the end of this liturgical sequence: Christ states that the octaves and feasts of the glorious martyrs have already come to an end and sends them back to their places so that the feasts of other saints, whose feast days are approaching, may be celebrated. Significantly, the Toledo breviary places the octave of Agnes on 27 January. The Toledo missal of 1499 contains Mass formularies for Fabian and Sebastian and for Agnes, but no proper Mass for the octave of Agnes has been identified (*Missale Toletanum* 1499, fol. 2r). Moreover, the sermon itself makes clear that the heavenly liturgical order does not strictly correspond to the earthly one. Thus, it states that heaven does not necessarily conform to the earthly liturgical calendar, since feasts are continually celebrated there for glorified souls and, during those octaves, "male and female saints whose identity is unknown here on earth" are also celebrated (*Conhorte*, fol. 77r).

Although these liturgical peculiarities are reflected in the discourse, the principle that organizes it is, once again, the theological mystery that grounds Juana's preaching and the female voice: the Incarnation, as explained in the first part. The emphasis now falls on Christ's dual nature, above all on his holy humanity, before subsequently returning to the idea of descent. This theological centrality is made visible in heaven, since the "holy God and Man" is the key to the heavenly celebration. Moreover, this designation is openly linked to the binary dynamic that, as we have seen, forms part of the incarnational logic structuring the composition (*Conhorte*, fol. 77v).

Associative patterns continue to structure the discourse and are now also established with the first part of the sermon. Its discursive continuity thus becomes apparent: new theological arguments legitimizing Juana's preaching are introduced, while questions that illuminate the meaning of what has already been expressed are further developed. At the same time, significant contrasts are established between the two planes. Earthly social reality is defined in contrast to the truth of heavenly holiness, which renders its hierarchical principles inoperative. Both parts begin with a social problem and appear to mirror one another.

Hierarchy does not structure the community of saints. Nor does the privilege associated with the saints named in the liturgical calendar necessarily operate. The placement within the octaves makes it possible to bring the three martyrs together within the same liturgical framework. Two important male saints, associated with ecclesiastical authority and power, are celebrated on the same terms as a female saint, a martyr equal to them. The sermon places them on Christ's throne, enjoying his closeness. When he invites them to come down so that others may be celebrated, they ask for relics of his body so that they may continue to worship him. Christ allows them to choose what they want. Each of them speaks and makes a request, but Agnes stands out from Fabian and Sebastian: she is the first to speak, and the fact that she does so is highlighted by the statement that she speaks "with great love and fervor." Furthermore, she presents herself as Christ's wife and asks for his ring. The scene highlights both sexual difference and the different status of the three martyrs, while placing them on equal terms within the celebration. The female figure

nevertheless acquires a certain prominence: she speaks first and the affective dimension of her bond with Christ is more strongly emphasized.

In any case, the martyrs whose octaves are being celebrated, who initially occupy the privileged place beside Christ on his throne, are invited by him to descend and compete in a race to win his relics. The motif of the race itself has a precise liturgical correspondence: the Epistle of the Mass for Septuagesima Sunday (1 Cor 9:24–27) presents the Christian life as a race in which all run but only one receives the prize, exhorting the faithful, "So run that you may obtain it". The authors rework this liturgical motif in their own terms. In a highly graphic manner, the statement of Christ's twofold nature—the prize is the relics of the "holy God and Man"—is linked to equality and association.

So, "all" ("todos") the saints are to be summoned by trumpets and are to run "together." Moreover, Christ commands them to "make ready," and they take one another by the hand in pairs, joining according to categories of sanctity and forms of life: martyr with virgin, male religious with female religious, married man with married woman, confessor with a woman practicing continence, male saint with female saint, and, finally, man with woman. These references give concrete expression to the reality of heaven, which is described through the inclusive language of "male and female saints." This is further reinforced by the presentation of the saints' actions as those of a collective body acting in unison and following a common rhythm. "All" kneel, raise their hands, and pray to Christ to grant them grace so that "he or she" ("él o ella") may win the relics, and they begin to run "together, side by side." (*Conhorte*, fol. 77v). Sexual difference entails no inequality either in action or in access to the prize. The reference to the God–Man thus articulates an egalitarian and associative logic that governs this part of the sermon. Here, the universal masculine can be seen to designate an explicitly sexed and inclusive reality, bringing to completion the discursive development initiated in the first part of the sermon, where this issue was presented in a partially veiled form.

These moving images constitute another form of sensory representation characteristic of the incarnational logic of the discourse.[8] Their use is consistent with the prophetic nature of Juana's preaching, since the prophetic communication of divine truth has a long tradition of transmission through figures and symbolic actions. This figurative dimension may likewise be connected with the mystery of the Incarnation, although such a connection is not explicitly articulated in the sermon. The problem of representing God and the divine in figurative form had a long history in the West, and as early as the eighth century John of Damascus had argued that the Incarnation, by making God visible, made his representation possible. Sermon 8 follows a similar logic: divine truth assumes a sensory form and becomes perceptible through representation. Thus, the heavenly feast is described in imaginative, dramatized, and narrative terms, as a theatrical spectacle that can also be represented on earth (Surtz 1982).[9] It consists of a succession of moving images that articulate interconnected scenes, in the form of a vision of heavenly secrets revealed to the world through preaching. A detailed analysis of these heavenly scenes is therefore necessary to apprehend the theological thought articulated through them.

The correspondence between the first part of the sermon and the section just analyzed is striking. Both are situated within a social context, and in both a female figure linked to Christ assumes particular prominence. At the beginning, Juana appeared as the "servant" who sought God in a context in which her word was called into question; however, the shifting use of grammatical gender revealed the malleability of gendered attributions and hierarchies and ultimately recast the discourse in language of universal scope. Agnes, for her part, traditionally associated with women consecrated to the spiritual life,[10] appears as the wife. Sexual difference does not disappear in her case but becomes particularly visible, while ceasing to constitute a principle of hierarchy. Also in response to Christ's words

concerning female testimony and the lack of distinction between the sexes, heaven does not eliminate differences, but rather the hierarchies that may be constructed from them. Agnes stands on equal terms with Fabian and Sebastian while at the same time acquiring a certain prominence, since the affective dimension of her bond with Christ receives greater emphasis. The conflictual earthly reality in which Juana is situated thus finds its ideal counterpart in the heavenly order, and this takes on particular significance in light of the *Conhorte*'s explicit assertion that earth is the mirror of heaven, which provides the perfect model to follow (Graña 2018, p. 239).

Consequently, Juana's situation finds a parallel in that of Agnes. Both female figures also stand out for their agency. If Juana desired and sought the Christ she loved, Agnes lovingly asks for Christ's ring. The special emphasis placed on this issue is significant. As we have seen, when Christ offers the martyrs the opportunity to take his relics, Agnes takes him by the hand, declares that she is his wife, and asks for his ring. Christ consents and places it on her finger. But later, he acknowledges that she "took the ring from my hand." The expression underscores the efficacy of female initiative: Agnes's action elicits a response from Christ. This capacity contrasts with the lesser quality of the relics available to the titular saints of the octaves, who are respectively associated with prominent positions within the social and ecclesiastical hierarchies: Sebastian, the knight-martyr, and Fabian, the pontiff-martyr (*Conhorte*, fol. 77r). Christ even considers Agnes capable of winning the race for his relics and bearing the canopy and banner.

In any case, the references to Agnes and her representation of agency clearly draw on the celebratory texts of her two feasts, in which the saint emerges as a highly active figure, although her agency is not the central focus of these texts. Among the motifs derived from this liturgical tradition, the spousal ring is particularly prominent (*Breviarium Franciscanum* s. XV, fol. 270v; *Breviarium Toletanum* 1492, p. 277). The sermon subsequently incorporates this motif into the scenographic action and transforms it into an instrument of Agnes's initiative.

Agnes's agency is articulated in relation to her voice, so that she emerges as another speaking female figure who structures the discourse of Sermon 8. Her relationship with God is given bodily form. Christ's humanity makes it possible for this relationship to be spousal and to assume human forms of contact and reciprocal action. Significantly, Agnes takes Christ by the hand before asking for his ring, which he then removes from his finger and places on hers. The Incarnation thus makes it possible to represent God as someone whom a woman can physically touch and upon whom she can act.[11] Moreover, she marks a further development in the forms of association between the feminine and the masculine, since their relationship is now established within a position of authority.

4. The Theological Dissociation of Femininity from Sin

Thus, having addressed the themes of equality and sexual difference, the heavenly feast stages a scenographic exegesis of Genesis. The discourse develops two major issues related to the problem of social questioning faced by Juana, as presented in the first part. One was the need for the authority of female speech to be validated by God himself, and the other was the disbelief surrounding the idea of the divine descent to a "poor and small woman." The sermon now develops its argument around the public voice of the female sex, the possible discrepancy between social image and truth, and the transformation made possible by Christ's descent, which is presented as an inherent aspect of the mystery of the Incarnation.

The reworked biblical motifs concern the Creation and the Fall, precisely the material with which the Toledo breviary opens the lessons of Genesis on Septuagesima Sunday (*Breviarium Toletanum* 1499, fol. 56v–59v). Given the uncertainty surrounding the dating

of the sermon, however, it is impossible to determine whether this liturgical cycle had already begun at the time it was preached. In any case, the Genesis motifs reworked in the sermon are precisely the two that structure the argument of 1 Tim 2:13–14, a Pauline text of immense authority within the Christian tradition as a justification for restrictions imposed on women's speech. The authors of the *Conhorte* subject these motifs to a distinctive exegetical and scenographic rewriting: rather than reproducing the Genesis narratives and the liturgical order, they redeploy their characters and central motifs in new scenes and in reverse order, reconfiguring their meaning in light of the Pauline tradition and their own experience of conflict over the exercise of public speech. Moreover, they symbolically represent their own voice at work in the unfolding of both the scene and the discourse itself. The celestial scene brings into view an earthly social order dominated by hierarchy, in which the female voice is silenced and women are subordinated to men. At the same time, it reveals a solution to this conflict and opens up the possibility of change.

It is no coincidence that the authors begin with Genesis 3:6, the episode of the forbidden fruit (Surtz 1990), before turning to Genesis 2:22 as an underlying scriptural reference. Nor is it coincidental that they assign greater importance to the sequence of scenes associated with the former passage than to those associated with the latter. The Fall constitutes the point of entry for dismantling and reconfiguring the theological significance attributed to the feminine, since it provides the principal scriptural foundation for the association of woman with error and subordination, particularly when read through the Pauline tradition. Moreover, the authors ground this operation in the staging of a situation in which a woman's word goes unheard because she is represented as subordinate to a man. The interplay of references places this narrative against the background of the very situation in which Juana's preaching is called into question, as presented in the first part of the sermon. That situation, previously only named, is now more fully articulated through the images and dynamics of the scenes described. This connection also suggests how the authors understood the questioning of Juana's preaching: as a problem arising from an unjust social order structured by gender hierarchy.

Thus, Eve once again appears as an instigator, but no longer of disobedience or sin; rather, she incites obedience and holiness. Having won the race for the relics together with Adam, she seeks to persuade him that they should both take them and become saints. He resists, however, and, by asserting that he needs to hear God's direct command "from his own mouth" before he can do so, he denies the authority of the female voice. Adam, closed to any form of female mediation, imposes silence and inaction upon the woman and does not even acknowledge her as a subject.[12] The scene stands in sharp contrast to the preceding description of the heavenly saints' race, in which sexual difference was made visible within a framework of equality. In contrast to the egalitarian community of saints, Adam embodies male authority over women and may be read as a representation of the gender system.

At this point, divine intervention occurs. As in the first part of the sermon, Christ takes the woman's side: he endorses Eve's words and commands the heavenly trumpets to urge the couple to take the relics. The situation is thus reconfigured "in action," as these female voices proclaim the full status of each as a subject and explicitly articulate sexual difference by saying: "Adam, Adam! Eve, Eve!" (*Conhorte*, fol. 78r). The discourse then returns to the universal masculine, now clearly inclusive and egalitarian, as the trumpets urge them to take the relics they have won. Holiness is open to all.

The trumpets had already appeared earlier, summoning all the blessed "with very loud voices." They are instruments that mediate divine commands and move others to action. Trumpets have traditionally represented the prophetic voice, and here a functional identification with the woman writers may be suggested. Unlike Juana, who is explicitly

presented as an "instrument of voice" through which Christ speaks, in this particular instance God does not speak through the trumpets but commands them to speak. This distinction is significant, since it may point to the women writers' own participation in the prophetic communication: they receive the divine command, give it voice, and move others to action. The reference to the trumpets in the plural further supports this possibility. Writing would thus function as an echo of the spoken prophetic word, amplifying its effects. Another implicit meaning would be the power of the female voice to make itself heard within a framework of equality that dismantles privilege, something that can be made visible only in heaven.

The narrative plays upon two contrasting situations. On hearing the trumpets, "they" ("ellos") humbly respond that they do not wish to obey, and Adam in particular explicitly states that he will heed only what he hears from the mouth of God, clearly embodying the problem of unbelief raised in the first part of the sermon, which is here symbolically linked to a situation of male domination over women. Immediately afterwards, however, Eve is said to have "rejoiced" on hearing the trumpets and once again urged Adam to act. Thus, the transformative dimension of this performative discourse becomes visible in the successive transformations that the voice of the trumpets produces in Eve and Adam. Eve's transformation after hearing the trumpets leads her to contradict the man and break with the social norm. As a result, he responds with arguments characteristic of the misogynistic side of the *Querelle des Femmes*, although he too has been transformed after hearing the voice of the trumpets and ultimately calls her by name.

His resort to the customary male accusation against women—the deception suffered in Paradise—elicits a direct response from God, who brings the dispute to an end by discrediting him as a "cowardly man" and commanding him to take the relics, "for you and your companion won them, and do not rebuke her, for she is already glorified and can neither sin nor give you bad counsel." God unequivocally affirms equality between the sexes without effacing sexual difference or diminishing their capacity to act together. God's direct intervention takes on special significance in light of Adam's earlier demand: since he had stated that he would heed only what he heard from God, it is now God himself who speaks to refute him and confirm Eve's position. In this way, the misogynistic side of the *Querelle des Femmes* as a whole is implicitly discredited, since Eve's deception constituted one of the principal grounds for its accusations against women. Finally, having heard God himself—the authority whose direct word he had demanded—Adam submits (*Conhorte*, fol. 78r).

The sermon thus reveals the instability of the gender order and the divine will to put an end to it, something that has already taken place in heaven. But it goes further, as the subsequent dramaturgy emphasizes the possibility of transforming the social system. This is linked to universal access to holiness and, in a transgressive move, contemplative prayer is presented as a possible means of such transformation. To express this, the authors employ striking contrasts, such as their portrayal of Christ assuming the role of the unbeliever regarding Adam and Eve's victory in the race, while he plays with them and runs away so that they will seek him (*Conhorte*, fol. 78v).[13] The aim is no longer to obtain his relics and, through them, a certain proximity to him, but to reach Christ himself. If listening to the divine word and the desire to draw near to Christ open the way to holiness, prayerful yearning makes an encounter with him and full transformation possible.

This personal spiritual transformation leads to social transformation, which takes visible form in a reordering of power. Having won the race, Adam and Eve are entitled to use a banner and a canopy, two symbols of power, prestige, and social recognition that may refer to both civil society and the ecclesiastical sphere. Eve participates fully, as together they place Christ's relics upon "their" banner and lead a procession of the blessed. The

scene reveals that the sexes are placed on an equal footing in the sphere of social and institutional preeminence and recognition, that this possibility is also open to the unworthy, and that both hierarchical structures and the social gaze can be transformed. A change in perception accompanies social change and, in this sense, Juana's preaching and the writing of the *Conhorte* participate in this transformative logic.

For the transformation of the system to be complete, the theology of blame must be reconfigured. The argument rests on the staging of events and is reinforced through repetition, which advances the discourse by expanding its ideas with new emphases. The triumphant arrival of Adam and Eve makes their equality in holiness visible, but is also associated with the attribution of blame to both and with the proclamation of their submission to God. Thus, when they see Christ fleeing from them, they humbly prostrate themselves on the ground, recognizing themselves as sinners and unworthy, a scene that subverts the social hierarchy associated with the use of the banner and canopy and with the procession: symbolically, that hierarchy lowers itself and is humbled before Christ.

Moreover, both acknowledge their own guilt. Adam is associated with smallness—"the first and small man"—which stands in contrast to the reference to the "poor and small woman" in the first part of the sermon. His act of speaking takes the form of a prayer in which he asks for mercy and assumes responsibility for Christ's death and the perdition of humankind. He is also contrasted with Christ, whom he acknowledges as "the first man" and the cause of all good and salvation, whereas he himself would be "the cause of all evil." Only after this prayer do the authors refer to him as "Saint Adam." Eve, for her part, likewise assumes responsibility, confesses that she is the "root and beginning" of sin, and affirms that she knows herself for what she is. The situation suggests that the biblical background to the scene has shifted, and the relevant episode would now be that of Creation. The emphasis placed on Adam's precedence may be interpreted in this light: after he has prayed, God allows the woman "to know how to pray as well," so that the idea of female subsidiarity grounded in Eve's creation after that of the man (Børresen 1976; McLaughlin 1974) is here transformed into an affirmation of women's capacity for public speech. Moreover, this scene resonates with the statements concerning female perseverance in the first part of the sermon, for Eve is presented as a responsible female subject possessed of self-mastery and no longer subject to male tutelage.

This indirect reworking of the Genesis narrative, which also evokes the Pauline text, culminates in Eve delivering a public proclamation. Her speech, concerned with holiness and sin, enters the very heart of theology. The contrast with the cultural uses to which Paul's admonition was put at the time could hardly be greater. Moreover, while retaining the figurative association between Eve and Adam, the authors identify a female salvific principle embodied in Mary and, through this operation, dismantle another pillar of misogynistic thought: the opposition between these two female figures.[14] Through this staging as a whole, the authors of the *Conhorte* construct the arguments necessary to provide a theologically grounded response to those who refused to recognize Juana's preaching on the grounds that the female sex, as the instigator of sin, should be kept silent.

In light of all the foregoing, one may ask: do the authors seek to show, through this episode, that theology is transformed when women speak? For the moment, let us retain one clear point: when female voices make themselves heard publicly, something is transformed. The trumpets have brought about a change in humanity as represented by Adam and Eve. Eve is recognized as a subject, and Adam is moved to action by her word. Moreover, each of these voices opens the way for the other.

Furthermore, the scene described operates on several levels of meaning, intertwining the theological legitimation of female speech, the formulation of a new discourse on the feminine that also serves to defend it, and an explanation for the behavior of Juana's

audience, as well as a social pastoral message centered on the universal call to holiness that entails the affirmation of human dignity and the possibility of its transformation.

Thus, Christ brings this part of the discourse to a close by providing its overarching theological explanation. He publicly confirms Adam and Eve's culpability for sin and sets forth the path to holiness opened by the work of redemption. That path is mediated by his "holy humanity," which makes it possible to enter into a personal relationship with him and experience his closeness, and which takes concrete form in access to his body and relics. The sexes are placed on an equal footing both in sin and in the possibility of attaining an encounter with Christ. For Adam and Eve, Christ's body is the instrument of the highest form of communion with him, and they take part in a Eucharistic enactment presented as a mystical experience that can be shared by all humanity.

Christ's twofold nature constitutes the foundation of this part of the discourse. His holy humanity redeems sinful humanity, brings the divine closer to the human, brings the divine and the human together, and constitutes the path to holiness. Prayer opens an ascending mystical path, visually represented by the angels placing on a raised altar the relics that the blessed are to win. Yet the heavenly revelation also points to a descending path, linked to the Incarnation, that dignifies sinful humanity. Both offer the possibility of transforming earthly reality.

The descent is described in spatial and genealogical terms and through binary structures. It establishes new connections with what has already been discussed, thereby expanding its meaning. In contrast to the ascent to the divine throne of those celebrated in the liturgical calendar, all now descend, including Christ, an image that visually conveys the universal scope of divine *kenosis* and connects with Christ's descent to speak through Juana's voice, presented in the first part of the sermon. This association makes it possible to interpret Juana's preaching as participating in this same descending and transformative dynamic.

But in what ways? Christ's descent within the heavenly realm disrupts notions of lineage and descent and dignifies the human. This is suggested by the scene in which Adam and Eve offer him the banner as a form of authority transfer and ask him to accompany them "to their palaces" so that they may hold a celebration in his honor. By accepting, he acknowledges himself as a "son of Adam and also of David, who descended from you." These references are subversive because the idea of lineage, grammatically expressed in masculine terms, is linked to a downward movement that entails exchanging a higher place for a lower one; moreover, the woman is included within that plural "you" as an origin and transmitter of kingship (*Conhorte*, fol. 79r).

Although this transformation has a limit, since divine mercy will benefit only those deemed worthy of it—the "faithful Christians," that is, those who believe in Christ and remember him—the representatives of the institutional order protest. Thus, when Christ returns to his place in the heights of heaven, the blessed, classified according to the institutional categories of "martyrs, virgins, and saints," implore him to "grant us justice" for having allowed Adam and Eve to prevail over them. Christ then proclaims that he wishes to distribute his gifts and grant favors "to the unworthy, who do not deserve them," indicating that the new logic is one of merciful redistribution rather than justice. Moreover, he expresses his capacity to alter the order by affirming that he has the power to take gifts away from "the great" and give them to "the small," thus articulating a language of structural social inversion that connects with the reference to the "small woman." The criteria employed by are thus rendered invalid (*Conhorte*, fol. 79r).

Alongside prayer, pain constitutes a path to holiness open to all. The discourse culminates in a celebration involving the running of seven bulls that are in fact angels. This striking scene, so closely associated with Spanish popular festivities, provides another

powerful discursive device. The bulls kneel before Christ and allow him to wound them with rods, which they receive as relics, while they sing and fly (*Conhorte*, fol. 79v). This serves to convey a pastoral message: through pain, it is possible to share in Christ's wounds and draw closer to him. The association between pain and human culpability for original sin has been neutralized in the preceding discourse, but pain retains a powerful spiritual significance. The striking nature of the scene lends particular communicative force to these themes and makes them more memorable for the audience.

5. Mary, Motherhood and Theological Reconfiguration

As we have seen, Sermon 8 constructs the authority of female speech progressively. Different female voices make themselves heard, each linked to the relationship they maintain with Christ. This progression reaches its fullest expression in the figure of Mary: if Agnes exemplifies the active voice of consecrated women and Eve recovers the voice of the female sex, Mary embodies full speaking authority and even the capacity for liturgical and theological reconfiguration through motherhood.

Mary is the protagonist of the final heavenly episode and participates directly in a theological elaboration that here becomes extraordinarily explicit. The meanings at stake are no longer produced solely through associations, images, or stagings. Given that some of the sermon's boldest reconfigurations take the form of unequivocal doctrinal statements uttered by God himself, the authority of female speech reaches its fullest expression when Mary participates alongside Christ in this theological formulation. Nor is this all: whereas Agnes could act upon Christ and elicit a response from him, with Mary the sphere in which female speech operates expands to encompass the institutional realm. As in the cases of Eve and Agnes, Mary's voice is linked to prayer. Indeed, interceding for humanity is described as her "office," thereby giving Mary a speaking function of her own, exercised continuously and endowed with transformative efficacy.

The discourse on Mary begins with an important reference to the liturgy that emphasizes the possibility of reshaping it in response to female experience. The authors' freedom in reworking liturgical materials thus acquires a clearer purpose: it enables them to respond to aspects of female experience that require public expression and recognition. Commemorating female experience means giving it visibility, reviving it, and, through its celebration, recognizing its positive value. Likewise, the themes associated with Mary affirm the theological value of female experience. Mary embodies an alternative source of authority: the determination of what is worthy of celebration is no longer linked exclusively to institutional authority. Considering the series of associations we have been following, it is worth asking whether the sermon implicitly suggests that the reworking of the liturgy could provide not only a means of giving public expression to female experience, but also of investing it with theological meaning.

Thus, after the celebration of the feasts "of the glorious male and female saints," Mary asks Christ to hold a feast for her that very day, "which I shall tell you about." This emphasis on her own act of speaking is significant, since Mary is the first of the female figures in the sermon to explicitly foreground her own voice. Mary wishes to commemorate a surprising event: the great joy her soul felt when she learned that Herod had died. The reference points to Matthew 2:19–20, where Herod's death is revealed to Joseph in a dream by an angel. Mary grants authority to the revealed word. The *Conhorte*, however, shifts the focus from the scriptural event to her experience: what she wishes to celebrate is not, strictly speaking, Herod's death, but "the very great joy" she experienced upon learning of his death. In this way, the discourse takes an episode recorded in Scripture as its point of departure in order to render visible a female affective experience that the Gospel narrative does not recount and to transform it into a subject of liturgical celebration.

The scene presented here inverts that of the first part of the sermon. Christ appears as a listener to female speech, while Mary exemplifies the dissociation between public image and truth. Christ's reaction emphasizes his position as a listener to a woman's words and is not directly presented as an unbeliever, but rather as someone "greatly astonished" to hear Mary "say such words." In any case, the reference establishes an identificatory connection with the audiences of Juana's sermons. Something similar may be said of the question of public image, a theme on which the authors of the *Conhorte* repeatedly insist throughout the sermon, especially in relation to Adam and Eve, although the reference may also connect with the figure of the "poor and small woman" in the first part. A possible parallel between Juana and Mary thus begins to emerge. In both cases, female speech comes into tension with a pre-existing image of the woman, although the parallel between the two situations is constructed in inverted form: the woman whose speech needed to be defended by Christ now finds her counterpart in Mary, whose speech is heard by him. Christ underscores the question of public image by observing that "everyone" ("todos") calls Mary the Mother of Mercy, "as indeed you are." The name thus once again acquires a significant function within the discourse: the public designation expresses an identity that Christ confirms as true. There is therefore a correspondence here between name and truth, but Mary's words introduce a tension between this acknowledged identity and her actions. The apparent discrepancy focuses attention on her voice.

Mary explains her statement by articulating her distinctive position in relation to male authority when she addresses Christ as "my Son and my Lord," thereby marking a dual position, even as she recalls Eve through her use of "lord" for Adam. There is a clear progression in the forms of relationship between the feminine and the masculine: first, the marital relationship, configured differently in the cases of Adam and Eve and of Agnes and Christ, and now the relationship of motherhood and filiation.

Within this framework, Mary introduces a theologically extraordinary statement by declaring that Herod died "in body and soul." This is another, even more enigmatic reference, since she does not explain how she came to know it. Yet she makes this striking assertion almost in passing, because her concern is to explain that she rejoiced not at the king's death, but because she thought that the Father might have revoked the sentence of death pronounced upon Jesus that had been revealed to her from the hour of his birth. Thus, Mary not only acknowledges the authority of revelation but also presents herself as its recipient. The fact that both Joseph and Mary are recipients of revelation establishes another association between the sexes, but with a significant difference: he receives knowledge of an event that has already occurred, whereas Mary receives knowledge of what is yet to come.

It is important to emphasize Mary's association with knowledge, which in this sermon is reinforced by her relationship with Christ. Alongside the knowledge explicitly attributed to revelation, Mary claims to "know" that Herod died in body and soul, without the source of this knowledge being specified. The preceding reference to "the angels of heaven" retains a certain ambiguity, since Mary states that she learned from them what "they revealed to Joseph in dreams," without it being clear whether she is also attributing an angelic communication to herself. The parallel with Eve may be significant, since she too rejoiced upon hearing the trumpets, which, as we have seen, functioned as instruments of the angels. In any case, the discourse presents Mary as a theological subject whose knowledge is not limited to reproducing scriptural content: she receives revelation, interprets events, and on their basis formulates theologically significant statements.

In continuity with themes developed earlier in the sermon, Mary is also identified with Christ through pain. She speaks of the "great knife of pain" that pierced her soul and states that "at every moment I died a thousand deaths" because of the prior revelation of her

Son's Passion and Crucifixion. Yet the fact that she did not actually die, since "the heavenly Father never wished me to finish breathing my last", establishes a marked antithesis with Herod, whose death "in body and soul" she has just affirmed. The discourse thus contrasts a woman who, despite repeatedly experiencing death through pain, remains alive with a man who epitomizes of power whose death is presented as total, encompassing both body and soul.

The contrast acquires particular significance within the interplay of gendered associations that structures the sermon. Herod is set apart from the human community and associated with sin and evil, whereas Mary is linked to Christ through love, pain, and filiation. The discourse thus displaces the traditional association between the feminine and sin that had constituted one of the issues addressed earlier: it is now a powerful man who embodies its most extreme expression. This inversion also connects with the masculinization of references to guilt, unworthiness, and sin previously observed in the sermon, particularly in its first part.

In contrast to the antithetical duality between Mary and Herod, the bond between mother and Son is given particular emphasis. It is not limited to the aforementioned identification through pain but takes concrete form in a relationship of shared action characterized by reciprocity. Mary's designation of Christ as "my Son and my Lord" is answered by Christ's designation of Mary as "my Mother and my Lady": each thus simultaneously acknowledges their bond of motherhood and filiation and the other's position of lordship. This relationship contrasts with that previously staged between Adam and Eve, which was marked by the imposition of male will and Eve's inability to act independently.

Reciprocity also extends to action. If Mary's "office" consists of "praying and interceding for sinners," Christ joins her in this activity on equal terms: the feast he decides to hold for her consists of helping her pray to the Father that never again should "another creature as evil" as Herod be born or exist on earth (*Conhorte*, fol. 79v–80r). Female speech takes different forms of agency in the cases of Eve and Agnes: Eve attempts to move the man to action, while Agnes succeeds in eliciting a response from Christ. With Mary, however, female speech gives rise to joint action by Mary and Christ. The progression of female agency articulated through these scenes thus reaches its culmination: the relationship between the feminine and the masculine now takes the form of reciprocal collaboration.

This shared action also takes a verbal and prayerful form, assumes a liturgical and festive character, and is projected onto earthly reality. Mary's speech is not merely heard or authorized by Christ: her petition gives rise to an action in which he participates and which becomes the subject of a heavenly celebration. Female speech thus attains the fullest form of authorization, since it does not merely participate in the discourse but contributes to generating a liturgical action shared with Christ. Mary's prayer of petition, seconded by him, is thereby transformed into liturgy. Mary's speech thus contributes to shaping the cultic order through which religious truth is represented and celebrated. Its incorporation into the liturgy constitutes the fullest form of recognition of its authority and transforms female experience into authorized religious memory. This same logic extends to the female affective experience, which is not only recognized and made visible, but also acquires efficacy in the relationship with God and participates in shaping the shared action with him.

The episode may thus acquire a further self-referential dimension: in a sermon prompted by challenges to Juana's public speech, heaven represents and celebrates the efficacy of a female voice that, recognized by Christ, acts alongside him and seeks to transform the existing order. From this perspective, the scene would offer a further implicit endorsement of Juana's preaching.

Christ's words also emphasize men's free will and, in this specific respect, connect with the first part of the sermon. Herod was induced by no one: it was he himself who desired and sought to kill God and who chose to bring about his own perdition and harm "through his own fault and wickedness." Sin is thus de-essentialized: it ceases to appear as bound to a sexed nature and is instead located within the sphere of free choice and personal responsibility. Christ agrees to pray to the Father together with Mary that there may never be "another creature as evil on earth." It is significant, within the interplay of grammatical gender that structures the sermon, that the universal feminine noun "creature" ("criatura") here designates Herod: the feminine grammatical gender is dissociated from identification with woman and can encompass the man who embodies the most extreme expression of sin. In this way, Eve and, with her, the female sex cease to constitute the privileged point of reference for explaining the origin of sin and responsibility for it. A powerful man can embody its most extreme expression without having been induced by anyone.

Nevertheless, the discourse does not replace the traditional identification of the feminine with sin with an equivalent identification of the masculine with evil. Eve's guilt is not erased, and the generic reference to "another creature as evil" avoids associating the possibility of sin exclusively with either sex. Rather than simply reversing the discourse by identifying the masculine with evil, the effect is to dismantle the privileged association of the feminine with sin and guilt and to construct a positive representation of female capacity for knowledge, speech, agency, and theological elaboration. Evil derives not from sex but from the exercise of individual freedom.

Yet the argument does not end here and returns explicitly to the mystery of the Incarnation. Following the incarnational phenomenology of preaching and the reference to Christ's twofold nature, the sermon now explicitly formulates the transformative capacity of the Incarnation. Christ reminds "my Lady Mother" that "you already know" how, after he became incarnate, was born, and became man, "my Father is now a God of mercy, whereas before he was a God of vengeance." The sermon thus arrives at the fullest expression of the transformative efficacy of the Incarnation: the transformation extends to God the Father himself. The Incarnation therefore constitutes not only the theological content that structures the sermon, but also the foundation of its transformative logic: if God's entry into history has made possible a transformation of such magnitude, transformation is inscribed within the very core of the economy of salvation.

There was a reason for this transformation: Christ always appeased the Father, but Mary, together with him, also greatly appeases the Father. The joint action of Mother and Son is here given a specifically incarnational formulation: it is their humanity that possesses efficacy before the Father. When he becomes angry, Mary shows him her womb and breasts, while Christ shows him his humanity and his wounds. Mary's female body thus appears alongside Christ's human and suffering body as an efficacious argument for mercy. The association acquires still greater theological density because Christ's humanity has a female origin: he himself acknowledges having received it from his Mother. The body that Mary shows to the Father is therefore the body from which the humanity that Christ presents alongside hers derives.

The Incarnation thus grounds an operative relationship between Mother and Son in which the humanity of both has intercessory efficacy. Their action is not occasional but continuous: Mary cries out in heaven on behalf of sinners, and Christ acts together with her. The female voice, the maternal body, and Christ's humanity are thereby integrated into a single dynamic of mediation, endowed with efficacy in the relationship between God and humanity.

The reference to Mary's maternal body acquires still greater significance when its liturgical background is taken into account. It is particularly important that Christ states

that Mary shows the Father "the virginal womb in which you bore me and the breasts with which you nourished me," because in this statement he takes up a female voice: the words of the anonymous woman in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 11:27). The passage had been incorporated into the Toledo liturgy for the feast of Saint Mary of Peace, a celebration immediately adjacent to that of Saint Ildefonsus (Sierra 2005, p. 190). The process of liturgical appropriation and transformation that we have been tracing is thus reproduced. Female speech, previously incorporated into the liturgy, is now assumed by Christ and acquires a new function: the womb and breasts proclaimed blessed in the Gospel text become, in the sermon, bodily arguments for mercy before the Father.

The operation also possesses a notable self-referential dimension. If, at the beginning of the sermon, Juana, the poor and small woman, conveys Christ's words, Christ now makes words originating in a female voice his own. The circulation of speech between Christ and women thus operates in both directions and provides a new form of legitimation for the female voice.

The interplay of voices with which the sermon culminates is highly significant. Its importance is emphasized by the verb "to declare," which introduces a formulation concerning the workings of the Trinity and connects with the first part of the sermon, where the joint action of the divine persons was linked to Juana's preaching. Against the background of the efficacious prayer shared by Christ and Mary and its active efficacy, the discourse once again formulates the transformative capacity of the Incarnation through a new binary sequence: when the Father is angry, humanity appeals to divinity, mercy to justice, humility to greatness, charity to power, and the Son to the Father; finally, Christ "with" the Virgin never ceases to pray, and together they always obtain mercy for humanity (*Conhorte*, fol. 80r). The binary structure that has run throughout the sermon thus culminates in a relational dynamic: the differentiated terms are not erased but enter into a relationship capable of effecting transformation.

The sermon's greatest theological density is ultimately concentrated in words spoken in unison by Christ and Mary. Together they pray to the Father that no other creature may be born who, like Herod, desires to kill God. The argument introduces a further reformulation of sin by asserting that the gravest sin consists of desiring and seeking to kill God, that such a sin will never be forgiven, and that whoever commits or contemplates it, unless they repent, will meet the same fate as Herod, "who is and will remain forever in hell." The statement is particularly significant in the context of the sermon, since it displaces the central role traditionally assigned to Eve in explaining the origin of sin. In contrast to Adam and Eve, whose transgression was transmitted to humanity but has already been forgiven—as their glorified presence in heaven and their victory in the race for Christ's relics make manifest—Herod is responsible for an extreme form of evil for which, as stated shortly before, he was responsible "through his own fault and wickedness." His sin is not transmitted to humanity and does not inaugurate a new condition of collective guilt, but remains attached to his own free choice and personal responsibility. Herod therefore does not replace Eve as a new, masculine origin of evil. Rather, the contrast modifies the very logic through which sin and guilt are articulated: the female voices of Mary and the female authors intervene, more or less directly, in a reformulation that loosens the privileged association between the feminine, the origin of evil, and its transmission to humanity.

The association of the voices of Christ and Mary invites a parallel with the Christ–Juana union in the first part and with the phenomenology of the visionary's preaching, in which a female voice conveys the divine word at the very moment in which it is formulated. The correspondence is not exact: Mary speaks alongside Christ as a distinct subject, whereas Christ descends into Juana and speaks through her body and voice. Yet the development of the sermon and its incarnational logic, especially its recurrent associations, invite us

to reread the Christ–Juana relationship in light of the Christ–Mary relationship. Having successively presented female voices that recover speech, act through it, and finally speak alongside Christ, the discourse opens up the possibility of understanding the Christ–Juana association as not reducing the visionary's speech to a merely instrumental function.

If the joint speech of Christ and Mary participates in the theological reformulation of sin, the association between Christ's word and Juana's voice could likewise serve to legitimate the capacity of female preaching to produce theological thought. The connections between images and ideas that link Juana with the Virgin[15] would reinforce this possibility. It cannot be claimed that the sermon identifies these two forms of association or that it explicitly attributes to Juana a voice of her own distinct from that of Christ; what can be argued, however, is that its network of correspondences allows for an understanding of Juana's preaching that exceeds the merely passive transmission of a divine word belonging to another.

6. The Question of Textual Incarnation and the Voice of the Women Writers

Among the major difficulties posed by the *Conhorte* is the question of its authorial and communicative status. We do not know to what extent the text faithfully reflects Juana's preaching, nor where the contribution of the women writers begins or ends.[16] Sermon 8, however, is particularly important for addressing this problem because it brings to light different elements of the communicative process: the voices involved, the audience and the ways in which the spoken word is received, and, most significantly, writing and the book itself. The women writers, however, are not explicitly mentioned as such.

This foregrounding of the communicative process is particularly significant in a sermon whose point of departure is precisely the contestation of Juana's preaching. The discourse does not merely convey particular contents, but reveals the process through which the divine word is communicated: who speaks, through what voice and body, who listens to it, and how it is received. The authority of the message thus appears inseparable from the mediations that make its presence and circulation possible. From this perspective, voice, body, audience, reception, and writing are not merely external circumstances surrounding theological formulation, but participate in the very process through which theology is produced and acquires authority. The communicative dimension is thereby integrated into the sermon's incarnational logic.

The women writers become indirectly visible at various points in the discourse. I proceed on the hypothesis that Juana's words, presented as discourse directly uttered by Christ, constitute the basis upon which the women writers subsequently carried out their narrative and textual elaboration, discernible, among other indications, in references to Christ in the third person. Their presence is also revealed through the use of the first-person plural. Particularly significant in this respect are the scenes involving Adam and Eve, which appear to provide an especially revealing locus for this indirect manifestation, since the women writers unequivocally situate themselves within sinful humanity: they refer to the harm Adam and Eve caused "us," describing them as "our first parents," "our father" Adam, and "our mother" Eve, and later as "our glorious parents." They similarly position themselves in relation to "Our Lady the Virgin Mary" and "Our Lord Jesus Christ." (*Conhorte*, fol. 78r–79v).

Still more significant is the reference to the heavenly trumpets, likewise in connection with Adam and Eve. If the interpretation proposed above is correct, at least in this sermon the trumpets could be identified with the women writers rather than with Juana. This would imply that they were not limited to preserving the memory of and textualizing the preacher's prophetic action, but would figuratively participate in it and make their own

voices heard in full accord with the divine commands. Their intervention in the process of writing would thus form part of the operative dimension of the discourse: the women writers would not merely transmit a transformative word, but would contribute, through textualization, to constructing the scenes, associations, and shifts in meaning through which that transformation is represented and made effective. On this reading, their action would also appear to be legitimated by the divine command itself. The fact that they support Eve's voice and twice repeat the names of Adam and Eve would also allow their action to be understood as twofold sense: they would endorse female speech and amplify the message that God intends to convey to the world.

The women writers become indirectly visible once again in Christ's final admonition through the use of the first-person plural. Here we find a particularly significant overlap of voices, since the exhortation is attributed to Christ and yet incorporates expressions that situate the textual voice among those who inhabit the earth: "all of us who live on earth," the mercies that he "always shows us," or the anguish and tribulations that, "if we endure them with patience," lead to heaven. A significant overlap of enunciative levels thus emerges, making it difficult to separate the divine voice, the prophetic voice, and the instance that remembers and textualizes the discourse. This convergence of voices can be read as the culmination of the progression developed throughout the sermon: following the successive forms of authorization of female speech embodied by Agnes, Eve and Mary, the voice of the women writers emerges at the end of the text, integrated into the discourse attributed to Christ himself. From this perspective, their enunciative presence would bring to culmination the process of conferring authority upon female speech that structures the sermon.

This admonition also forms a counterpart to the one that opens the piece, although it modifies both its addressees and its scope. It is no longer addressed to an undefined group of "people," nor does it mark divisions within the audience, but instead to "all of us who live on earth." It urges them to attain Christ's relics through good works: keeping him present in their minds, weeping over what he suffered, giving thanks for the mercies he "always shows us," and enduring illnesses as "jewels and relics" that lead to heaven, as do anguish and tribulations "if we endure them with patience". The heavenly scene of the relics is thus ultimately projected onto the earthly realm and acquires a universal scope. The body and affective experience are presented as paths to sanctification open to all. The vindicatory arguments concerning gender and the theological reformulation of sin and guilt thus culminate in a pastoral exhortation of universal scope.

Textualization is likewise inscribed within the sermon's incarnational logic. This is not to equate writing with the Incarnation, but rather to identify a logic of mediation through which the word successively assumes perceptible forms of presence. The women writers, never mentioned as such in the sermon, inscribe their presence in the textual materiality of the discourse: in its modes of enunciation, in the organization of voices, and, possibly, in the figures through which prophetic action is represented. The revealed word, first incarnated in Juana's body and voice, assumes, through their intervention, a new perceptible and enduring form in writing. The performative dimension of the sermon extends to this level as well: textualization does not merely preserve a pre-existing word, but participates in the construction of a discourse that, through associations, contrasts, shifts, and stagings, represents the transformation it proclaims and seeks to render it operative.

7. Considerations on Female Prophetic Theology in the *Conhorte*

Throughout these pages, we have seen the considerable textual and thematic complexity of the *Conhorte*, the multiplicity of its visionary images, and the plurality of associations that can be established among them and between the different elements that shape the

discourse. It is not possible to exhaust these contents, but the analysis of Sermon 8 has at least enabled us to identify some characteristic features of female prophetic theology as it specifically takes shape in this book.

In this respect, the sermon makes visible and defends female prophetic voice, speech, and discourse. Its prophetic character is manifested in several aspects. First, in the charismatic origin of the knowledge that is received, elaborated, and transmitted, and in the prophetic status of the person who receives and communicates it. Sermon 8 brings all these aspects into view: the divine origin of the word transmitted by Juana's voice and the fact that Christ descends to speak through her constitute the core of the problem of unbelief surrounding her preaching. As for Juana's prophetic character, it is true that she is only mentioned as a "voice" in relation to the public sphere, but she is also a "poor and humble woman" and a "servant." The sermon's content confers dignity on both dimensions. The first is closely related to social standing, and we have seen the concern for separating public image from truth, as well as the rehabilitation of women as a whole through the unique development of the figure of Eve. As for the dimension of "servant," it finds its heavenly counterpart in the figure of the "wife" represented by Agnes, an image clearly directed at consecrated women.

But if Agnes and Eve demonstrate the value of female speech and its capacity for agency through prayer, Mary exemplifies the role of spiritual motherhood that Juana herself exercised. Mary's role is to pray for others, and this was also one of Juana de la Cruz's principal activities (Graña 2018). The prophetess is also a mother who prays for the salvation of others. The interplay of associations that runs throughout the sermon leads to a final, implicit association between Juana and the Virgin Mary through the "office" they both exercised. This association was also situational, since the Virgin Mary and Christ joined their voices to pray to the Father, and this evokes the very phenomenology of Juana's preaching, in which Christ's word and her own voice converged in a communicative act of an incarnational nature.

The prophetic character of this female voice and discourse is also manifested in its distinctive relationship with historical reality. As Sermon 8 shows, the discourse is rooted in a context that is both personal and social and seeks to respond to that reality through theological arguments. The historical problem at issue is the contestation of women's prophetic public speech, which constitutes the central issue of the discourse. The sermon responds by constructing an argument that defends and authorizes that speech and makes it operative "in act." The prophetic preacher and the writers are women, and their experiences are conditioned by their social and cultural position as women.

The markedly self-referential character of a sermon that responds to the questioning of the legitimacy of its own discourse makes it possible to attribute a potentially programmatic dimension to this approach within the *Conhorte*. If in other sermons the authors legitimize their capacity to produce theology through their own exegesis of Scripture (Graña 2023), Sermon 8 makes it possible to broaden this foundation: women's historical experience also becomes a site for the production of theological meaning. But the argument goes further. The female prophetic voice acquires here a performative dimension: it not only asserts itself and becomes effective within the discourse, but also intervenes in the transformation of the established order, both social and theological. This performative character is disruptive: female experience and revealed knowledge, intimately connected as Mary exemplifies, transcend established formulations, generating new theological meanings through the reconfiguration of inherited Christian tradition. The authors' interest in articulating new theological meanings through the reconfiguration of established structures is also evident in their desire to highlight the limitations of the established liturgy and, more generally, of the Church's institutional order. It seems no coincidence that these issues are emphasized

twice. From this perspective, the prophetess's position and the intention of her discourse become clear.

The female character of the discourse, in turn, derives not merely from the fact that those who participate in its elaboration are women, but from the way in which they inscribe their difference and historical experience into the production of theological discourse. From this particular starting point, however, they also elaborate meanings of universal scope: female experience becomes a means of understanding and articulating aspects of Christian doctrine from a perspective different from the customary one, potentially leading to their reformulation.

In Sermon 8, some of the foundations of theological anthropology are reformulated, and new meanings are given to humanity, contemplation, and petitionary prayer. Moreover, the reformulation of theological anthropology is accompanied by a reconsideration of the theology of sin and of the scope of original sin. The Incarnation grounds the work of salvation, and Christ's humanity constitutes a means of direct relationship with God that, at the same time, dignifies sinful humanity. The body, the flesh, and materiality are likewise dignified. The traditional association of woman with flesh and sin is thereby destabilized, as is the disparagement of the human as inferior or secondary. Within the sermon, the Incarnation becomes a principle for transforming and disrupting the hierarchical order of the world because it introduces the logic of mercy in place of that of justice and destabilizes the value attributed to hierarchical positions. Thus, smallness and unworthiness cease to determine one's position within the hierarchical order or access to divine gifts. The result is a profoundly hopeful vision of the human condition, grounded in the transformative capacity of the Incarnation and in the universality of divine mercy.

In line with this, another fundamental characteristic of this female prophetic theology is its transformative purpose. It does not merely respond to a specific historical reality but seeks to intervene in and transform it. In this respect, the Incarnation, the central theological principle underlying Sermon 8, provides both the interpretative key and the theological foundation for this transformative purpose. This female prophetic theology is therefore not limited to revealing and transmitting knowledge of charismatic origin but has a markedly operative character: it makes problems arising from its historical context visible, formulates responses to them, and seeks to act upon reality, involving the audience in this process. This operative character also entails a marked pastoral dimension: the discourse addresses the Christian community and seeks to involve it in the process of transformation.

This transformative dimension is inscribed in the very construction of the discourse and is manifested in the close relationship between form and content that the analysis has brought to light. The use of grammatical gender intervenes directly in the production of meaning, while images and scenes function as models of theological elaboration, not only through their content but also through the movements, relationships, associations, and dialogues they articulate.

These characteristics acquire particular significance in light of the incarnational logic that structures the sermon. The Incarnation is not merely one of its principal theological contents but also provides a principle of intelligibility for its discursive construction. In this sense, one may speak of discursive iconicity: theological meanings assume perceptible forms of presence through bodies, voices, images, actions, and, ultimately, writing.

Form, communication, and theological content thus appear closely interconnected. The discourse not only affirms the possibility of authorized female speech but represents it in action; it not only formulates transformations of order but makes them visible through the relationships among its characters, voices, and meanings. Its performative dimension also resides in this correspondence between what is said and the way in which it is constructed and communicated. Ultimately, form is not subordinate to theological content: it

participates in its elaboration and allows certain theological meanings to emerge from the images, voices, actions, and relationships that the discourse itself constructs and transforms.

The particular visibility given to the communicative process must also be understood within this framework. In a sermon prompted by the contestation of a woman's public speech, the communicative chain is not merely a historical or sociological circumstance but forms part of the theological problem addressed by the sermon. By constructing Juana's position of enunciation and making visible different forms of authorized female speech, the discourse brings about a reordering of enunciative authority.

This theological construction rests on another fundamental pillar: the liturgy. Alongside preaching's inherent function of disseminating the word of God, the authors' status as consecrated women situates them within a spirituality and practice of prayer structured by the liturgy. Moreover, the liturgy, its temporal cycles, its associated texts, and its rituals constitute a shared space of intelligibility within which both the producers of the discourse—the preacher and the women writers—and its recipients—listeners and readers—can participate, through their familiarity with its fundamental texts and points of reference. The liturgy also provides a framework of legitimation. The prophetic word is constructed upon the already known divine Word: although presented as newly revealed knowledge, it is situated in continuity with what has already been revealed and develops its interpretive possibilities. This continuity contributes to authorizing the new discourse.

However, neither the preaching nor its textualization is subordinated to the liturgy or necessarily governed by its logic. The authors use liturgical texts flexibly, reworking and developing them in different ways to construct a discourse of their own. The liturgy thus provides materials, structures, and mechanisms of legitimation for an original theological construction, but it does not determine its development: in Sermon 8, its point of departure lies in historical experience and in the problems to which the discourse seeks to respond. The liturgy therefore functions as a malleable discursive resource. For this reason, I do not share the claim that the liturgical context "causes and justifies" (Acosta 2023, p. 883) the vision that underpins the discourse. Such a determining relationship with the liturgical context may occur in some sermons (Graña 2023), but the analysis of Sermon 8 shows that it does not necessarily constitute the determining principle of its construction. A similar dynamic can be observed in biblical exegesis: the selection and combination of texts open up different interpretive possibilities in response to the argumentative needs of the discourse.

In conclusion, female prophetic theology acquires a clearly defined profile in the *Conhorte*: it is grounded in knowledge of charismatic origin, formulated by women and situated within their historical experience, theological in its capacity to interpret and reformulate doctrine, performative in its orientation toward action and the transformation of reality, and capable of universalizing a female experience without erasing its particularity.

Other prominent female prophets of the Middle Ages, such as Hildegard of Bingen (Newman 1987) and Bridget of Sweden (Børresen 1993), share some of these features. The specificity revealed by Sermon 8 therefore lies not in the existence of a theology produced by women on the basis of prophetic authority—a phenomenon that may more broadly be described as "female prophetic theology"—but in the particular articulation of female historical experience, charismatic authority, theological elaboration, and transformative purpose, as well as in the way this articulation becomes operative in the construction of the discourse. These features define the particular modality of female prophetic theology configured in the *Conhorte*.

Consequently, the *Conhorte* compels us to reconsider the place of female prophecy in the history of Castilian theology at the beginning of the Early Modern period. Far from constituting merely a devotional or visionary phenomenon, it emerges as a space of original

theological production, capable of engaging with major theological questions through its own distinctive procedures of elaborating thought. Sermon 8 shows that the authors not only claim the legitimacy of women's public speech but also construct an authoritative female theological voice, capable of producing theological meaning and of transforming understandings of faith and the world.

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Notes

1 I use here the manuscript held at the Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, ms. J-II-18: *Comiença el libro que es llamado Conorte el qual es hecho por boca del Espíritu Santo, que hablava en una religiosa elevada en contemplación, la qual habla se hazía en persona de Nuestro Señor Ihesu Christo*. . . (=*Conhorte*). All translations from the *Conhorte* are my own.

2 I have previously examined aspects of this sermon (Graña 2019a, 2019b), but not the sermon in its entirety, which reveals a broader scope when considered as a whole.

3 See, for female prophecy and the Medieval framework: Muessig (1998b), Fitzgerald (2017).

4 The presence of the feminine and its theological significance occupy a prominent place in the works of female prophets such as Hildegard of Bingen and Bridget of Sweden, to cite only two examples. Their works illustrate the extent to which prophetic authority could provide women with a framework for theological reflection on the feminine and its place within Christian thought (Newman 1987; Børresen 1993).

5 Both references, in (*Conhorte*, fol. 76v).

6 On the importance of inclusive language and the use of grammatical gender in Juana's sermons, see Graña (2009), Muñoz (2012), Graña (2020).

7 (*Conhorte*, fol. 76v). On mysoginistic thinking: Archer (2001), Caballé (2019).

8 Bynum has emphasized the historical, incarnational, and bodily character of medieval women's mysticism, particularly its focus on Christ's physical body and the Eucharist (Bynum 1991, p. 66). Juana may share some of these features, but her Franciscan background should also be taken into account, given the centrality of the Incarnation in Franciscan spirituality. In his Letter to All the Faithful, Francis of Assisi describes the faithful as spouses of Christ when the soul is united to him through the Holy Spirit and as mothers when they bear him in their hearts and bodies and bring him forth through holy works. This spousal and maternal language is particularly significant in relation to the Conhorte. In Sermon 8, moreover, the incarnational movement is explicitly presented as a descent: Christ descends to Juana and speaks through her body and voice. The "incarnational logic" discussed here thus points to a broader phenomenon than the bodily and Eucharistic dimensions emphasized by Bynum: divine truth becomes present and operative through concrete bodies, voices, subjects, scenes, and actions, so that the Incarnation functions not only as a theological theme but also as a principle of discursive construction.

9 Some of the sermons in the *Conhorte* pointed precisely to this need for representation. On the pedagogical value of the liturgy: Boynton (2000); Vitz (2005). For the Castilian context: Cátedra (2005); Sanmartín and Curto (2024); Sanmartín (2023).

10 Ideal image of "sponsa Christi" (Magli 1974, p. 49).

11 Bynum has emphasized that the image of the bride or lover was a central metaphor for the female mystic's union with Christ's humanity and has cautioned against interpreting nuptial mysticism in terms of female passivity and submission (Bynum 1991, p. 134). The scene analyzed here goes further in a specific direction: Christ's embodied humanity enables a reciprocal relationship in which Agnes not only enters into a spousal bond with him but physically touches him and acts upon him.

12 Thus, Adam does not call Eve by name; he orders her to be silent and not to approach the relics, adding, "I will not approach them, nor will I allow you to approach them." (*Conhorte*, fol. 78r).

13 (*Conhorte*, fol. 78v). On Christ's playing, see Boon (2011).

14 The bibliography on this subject is very extensive. See, for example, the observations of Archer (2001, pp. 26–30).

15 More visible identifications in other parts of the book, in Boon (2010).

16 This issue has been a concern for some time. See recent reflections, in Acosta (2025).

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