

'SUSANNA AND THE ELDERS' IN MEDIEVAL SPANISH TEXTS AND THE IMPACT ON GOLDEN AGE CLASSICAL DRAMA

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The person responsible for making Castilian Spanish both an acceptable literary and a scholarly language as opposed to Latin was Alfonso X, the Wise, who ruled Castile during the thirteenth century. His School of Translators in Toledo produced many texts in romance that were derived from Hebrew, Latin, and Arabic sources. Court scribes compiled two especially important chronicles and translated them into Castilian — the *Estoria general* and the *Grande e general estoria*. The first was later redubbed the *First General Chronicle* by Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal in order to avoid confusion with the latter. This collection pretended to be a compilation of all history that was considered relevant to the Iberian Peninsula and this included the earliest known Castilian version of the story of Dido, Queen of Carthage.¹ Before I speak of the treatment of Susanna by Spanish authors I would like to preface with a comparison to the figure of Dido as another woman who was extolled by writers of the period as a woman of great chastity. She is included in the *Estoria general* because she is credited with the founding of the Spanish city of Cartagena ('new' Carthage). Alfonso X chose to recount the version of Dido's story that was told by the Latin historian Justin (or Marcus Junianus Justinus), because here she is not portrayed as an adulterer, as she is in Virgil's *Aeneid*.² In the 'historical' version, King Yarbas of Mauritania ordered Dido to marry him under the threat that his armies would destroy her city. She refused because he was a non-Phoenician and she had pledged to remain faithful to her dead husband Sychaeus. Sixteenth-century Spanish playwrights chose to tell Justin's story instead of that of the fourth book of the *Aeneid* due to the adultery which they could not portray or even alluded to on the stage during the period of the Counter-Reformation.

Alfonso X likewise published the first version of the Susanna story in Castilian in the chronicle entitled the *General estoria* (1280). Like Dido she was willing to die to preserve her chastity and remain faithful to her husband. The Castilian monarch reminds us that St. Jerome did not actually find this story in the Hebrew Bible, but rather in the Greek Bible compiled by Theodotion during the third century BC,³ in which it was

added as the thirteenth chapter of the *Book of Daniel*. Alfonso ordered a faithful translation of Jerome's text from the Latin Vulgate, which was compiled in the fifth century, and his second son and successor, Sancho IV, also paraphrased the Susanna story in his *specula principis* known as the *Castigos e documentos*, in order to demonstrate how Daniel showed good judgement.⁴

Susanna's story was later retold in its entirety during the first half of the fifteenth century by Don Álvaro de Luna, confidante of the King Juan II of Castile.⁵ In order to combat the many misogynous texts of his time, such as Alfonso Martínez de Toledo's (The Archpriest of Talavera) *El Corbacho* (1438),⁶ he published a defense of women known as the *Libro de las claras e virtuosas mugeres* (*Book of famous and virtuous women*), a title that was clearly modeled on Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (1374). The fifteenth chapter recounts the story of Susanna and begins with a prologue in which he characterizes her as possessing the great virtue of 'chastity' and praises her for her willingness to die in order to avoid adultery. It is worth observing that these are the same two qualities that Alfonso praised in Dido. The author faithfully retells the Biblical story of how Susanna, as she was about to bathe in her garden, was approached by two Elders (judges in an exiled community of Hebrews living in Babylon) who held great power and authority. They gave her the choice of either sleeping with them or being stoned to death. They would tell everyone that they had seen her lying with an adolescent boy in the garden if she refused their advances. This is exactly what they did, yet Susanna chose to stay faithful to her wealthy husband Joachim, and she chose death over incurring God's wrath.⁷ After the false accusation, Don Álvaro tells us that the entire community felt great suffering, and wept for her, knowing that she had always been very chaste and had a good reputation. They accepted the authority of the two Elders, however, and put their faith in the words of these two men. Susanna was very devout and prayed to God to save her because of her innocence, then in an act of divine intervention, He sent the young boy, Daniel, to defend her by protesting that she had been unable to speak up for herself. He interrogated each Elder individually and asked them under what type of tree they had seen Susanna lying with the youth. As they gave different responses their lie was exposed and they had to confess the truth. According to the contemporary Hebrew law the false accuser received the punishment that was intended for the innocent victim. These are essentially the same details that are found in *Daniel* 13 and in the *General estoria*. Vélez Sainz has identified St. Jerome as the

direct source in Don Álvaro de Luna, but notes that he may have also received inspiration from the Letter 65 of the Epistolary of St. Jerome, *A Principiam virginem. Explanatio Psalmi 44*.⁸ In this letter he denounces the corrupt judges of Israel and praises the virtue of women such as Susanna (which means 'lily', as he observes) who bring honour to their spouses through chastity (*puclitiae*).

After concluding the story Don Álvaro de Luna sings the virtues of the wife of Joachim:

¡O muger de muy grande e alta castidad, e de muy grande, e noble, e fuerte corazón! ¡Cuál muro o cuál castillo podiera ser más fuerte e firme que el grande e non vencible corazón desta noble señora, la qual tragó el miedo de la muerte sin algund temor della, porque su grande castidad non fuese corrompida?

'Oh woman of great and noble chastity, and of great and noble and strong heart! What wall or what castle could be stronger or firmer, than the great and invincible heart of this noble woman, who swallowed her fear of death, without being at all afraid of it, so that her great chastity would not be corrupted.'⁹

This same idea is repeated several dozen times and the word 'chastity' is mentioned nine times. The author states that she should also be a model for men who should maintain their faith in the face of adversity just as she did.

The humanist from Valencia, Spain, Juan Luis Vives, wrote *The Education of the Christian Woman* in Latin c.1523, and translated it into Castilian in 1528. This was after he fled the country when his father was burned at the stake for practicing Judaism. Even though he became personally acquainted with Erasmus and his ideas about religion, his treatise still reflects the Spanish religious ideals of the Middle Ages, which would be reinforced with the Council of Trent in 1545 and the ensuing policies of the Counter-Reformation. In the chapter on 'How a woman should behave outside the home' he declares that Susanna was freed from the false accusation, not because of her words but rather her silence. He cites St. Ambrose from *De virginitate* (fourth century AD):

Susana calló y venció a sus contrarios, y no se defendió con palabras delante del juez, sino que callando su lengua; hablaba por ella su castidad.

BOBBY D. NIXON

‘Susanna by keeping silent defeated her opponents, and she did not defend herself with words before the judge, but rather by holding her tongue; her chastity spoke on her behalf.’

He states that chastity is something that married women bring from their parents’ house, and chastity and utter devotion for the husband are the two most important qualities a married woman should have. All of her faith and love should be directed towards her husband, and she should not bother with the evils of the vile adulterers. A lack of chastity offends both God and the husband and reflects poorly on her family.¹⁰

Susanna is additionally alluded to in many of the best-known Spanish medieval texts. When the Cid is exiled from Castile his wife, Ximena, prays to God to protect him:

*... saluest a Daniel con los leones en la mala carçel,
saluest dentro en Roma al señor san Sabastián,
saluest a santa Susanna del falso criminal*

‘You who saved Daniel from the lions in the wicked prison,
who saved St. Sebastian in Rome,
who saved St. Susanna from the false criminal’¹¹

The epic poem of *Fernán González*, another key heroic figure of the Reconquest, also contains a similar prayer:

*Tú que libreste a Susaña de los falsos varones,
Sacuete a Daniel de entre dos leones,
Libreste a San Mateo de los fieros dragones,
íbranos tu, Señor, de estas tentaciones.*

‘You who freed Susanna from the false men,
removed Daniel from among the lions,
freed St. Matthew from the fierce dragons,
free us, Lord, from these temptations’.¹²

The *Libro de buen amor* opens with the prayer:

*Señor, tú que libreste a santa Susaña,
del falso testimonio de la falsa compañía,
líbrame, mi Dios, d’esta y coyta tanmaña,
dame tu misericordia, tira de mí tu saña.*

‘Lord, you who freed St. Susanna
from the false witness of the untrue company,

free me, my God, from this burden so great,
show me your mercy and spare me your anger'.¹³

Later in this book the author, Juan Ruiz, compares Susanna to Mergelina, a character in the Susanna tale-type about the falsely accused Olive, aunt of Charlemagne, in the *chanson de geste* known as *Doon de la Roche*. Finally, Berceo's thirteenth-century *Loores de Nuestra Señora*,¹⁴ speaks of 'He saved Susanna from the crime which you are all familiar with' (*Ésti salvó Susana / del crimen que savedes*), showing just how common the story was, especially because these prayers were commonly spoken for the dying. The friar Diego de Estella published the following prayer in his *Cien meditaciones devotissimas del amor de Dios* from 1576:¹⁵ *Libera, Domine, animam servi tui (ancillae tuae), | sicut liberasti Susannam de falso crimine* ('Free this soul, | as you freed Susanna from the false testimony'). The source is the *Ordo Commendationis Animae* ('Recommendation of a Soul Departing'), and this litany may be as early as the fifth century. Susanna and the Elders is likely the oldest known story of the innocent woman falsely accused. It is number 883A in Aarne-Thompson's motif index, and it was clearly one of the most common topics in Spanish medieval texts.

The figure of Susanna also figured prominently in the Spanish theatre of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Fifteenth-century theatre of the Iberian Peninsula is religious in nature and mainly deals with representations of the birth of Christ, however religious drama continued to flourish afterwards, especially with the *auto sacramental*, a form similar to the English morality plays, due to its use of allegorical figures. These brief dramatic pieces were created for the festival of Corpus Christi and were performed on a large wagon or float, similar to the *andas* that are currently used during the Holy Week in Spain. The Susanna plays continue the traditions established not only with the religious theatre of Iberia, but they also follow many of the rules of Greco-Roman performance.

Marvin Herrick explained the popularity of the Susanna story by noting that the original Biblical version is in itself dramatic rather than narrative and that the story has verisimilitude and a compact structure that makes it easily adaptable to the theatre.¹⁶ For Di Tommaso:

We should not discount the sheer entertainment aspect associated with the Daniel legend. Susanna represents the art of story-telling at its finest. The tale possesses an eminently likeable and admirable protagonist who is also the underdog.¹⁷

The most commonly-cited Susanna play in Spanish is Diego Sánchez de Badajoz's *Farsa de Santa Susaña* (1554), probably written in the first quarter of the sixteenth century.¹⁸ The play does not begin immediately with Susanna in the garden, but rather with a lengthy dialogue between the rustic figures of a shepherd and a gardener who debate who has the better life, the labourer or the noble gentleman. Their conversation is reminiscent of the medieval debate poetry such as *Elena y María* where two young women debate whether a knight or a priest makes a better lover.¹⁹ The shepherd and the gardener agree that both the labourer and the gentleman have a great deal of responsibility, and they criticize those who enjoy leisure and idleness because it puts the soul in danger of Hell. The two characters, who represent the short plays of rustic and pastoral satire, are able to connect these vices to Susanna by saying that 'He who is always relaxing dwells on deception, riches, or another man's wife' (*El que no dexa el holgar | siempre piensa en engañar | hacienda o muger agena*). They claim that Susanna allowed herself to be open to temptation because she was relaxing in the garden. The two Elders are also guilty because they also felt a strong desire towards as a result of their idle lifestyle. The two comical characters also criticise idleness because it drives men to speak with false tongues, thus foreshadowing the future actions of the Elders.

These two men hide in the garden and wait for Susanna to come and bathe, as she normally does in the different variants of this tale; however, they are not the only voyeurs in this work. The rustic characters are also hidden and serve as narrators within the play as they comment on everything that occurs. The audience also participates in the voyeurism, anxious to know whether or not they will see her disrobe. Each of the elderly men confides in the other the passion that he feels for Susanna, and their amorous speech provides a contrast to the rustic language of the comical shepherd and gardener. They both speak as though they were young troubadours reciting from courtly love poetry, books of chivalry, or sentimental novels of fifteenth-century Castile. After the second Elder states that he is losing his mind for love of Susanna, the first Elder says, 'I am ill from the same cause, I neither eat nor sleep, nor shall I feel at ease'. He says that he would likely trade his soul to be with her (*de lo mesmo estoy enfermo que yo ni como ni duermo | ni me puedo sosegar ... pues yo cierto por avella | tengo el alma de trocar*). This is typical of the *religio amoris*, which we find in *amour courtois*, and the playwright even refers to them as 'the elderly *susaños*', possibly meaning worshippers of Susana. This masculinization of the name of the woman who is the object of desire,

typically for a young nobleman, occurs most famously in *La Celestina* when Calisto expresses his love for Melibea by saying that he is not a Christian but rather a Melibeo.²⁰ This makes the Elder's speech even more absurd and comical to the public because they are not, in fact, handsome young men. When the second Elder remarks that Susanna's sensuality has him in her chains (like the hair that imprisons the males in Petrarchan poetry), he fears that she will shun him due to the gray hairs of his old age. The fifteenth-century debate poem *Diálogo del Amor y un viejo* similarly explores the theme of an elderly man who is cruelly rejected by a much younger woman, and this topic has undoubtedly influenced this telling of the Susanna story.²¹

The Elders are also going against Ecclesiastes 9: 8, which warns against desiring a beautiful woman:

Turn your eyes away from a handsome woman. Do not stare at a beauty belonging to someone else. Because of a woman's beauty, many have been undone; this makes passion flare up like a fire.

Susanna arrives to bathe and the Elders threaten to denounce her if she refuses their love, however, when they try to force her, the shepherd decides to intervene. The gardener asks him what he expects to gain from that. He should just listen, watch, and keep his mouth shut, because that is the way things are done around here (this could be interpreted as seeing them as mere spectators of the theatre or it could be seen as political or social commentary). The play certainly does not follow the Aristotelian model, because we see the mixture of tragic, upper-class characters and comical figures of the lower social strata intermingling. It also is unclear how two contemporary rustic Spaniards would have been transported to ancient Babylon. The conclusion of this piece ends after the first Elder accuses Susanna of having been with a young boy. He remarks, 'She has lost her reputation which was highly regarded by all' (*perdió su reputación | de todos tan estimada*), and then he orders everyone to stone her. Daniel arrives to defend her and it is the Elders who are stoned in the end, thus receiving the punishment that they had deemed appropriate for her. Sancho IV stated in the thirteenth century, 'Woe to the man who causes scandal between a man and his wife! This is because after the scandal it is inevitable that the husband will kill her after she has committed adultery, as was permitted by law' (*¡Guay del omne por quien viene el escándalo entre el marido e la muger! Ca por escándalo viene después la muerte della quando la el marido mata, ca con derecho la puede matar*).²²

The second sixteenth-century play on this theme is the *Comedia de Sancta Susaña* by Juan Rodrigo Alonso de Pedraza (c. 1551).²³ Rina Walthaus has analyzed this work and notes that it is more fully developed than the previous *Farsa* by Sánchez de Badajoz. Again we have a play that was produced for the festival of Corpus and that begins with a comic prologue (*introito*) by a rustic shepherd. He informs us, in the dialect of *sayagués* that this is a unique play about how Susanna was falsely accused, and that we should pay close attention because it is brief. Susanna is afraid to disrobe, but her two servants tell her that only the two Elders (here named Sedechia and Achian) are present and that they are to be trusted. Again the two Elders speak as though they were young courtly lovers or Petrarchan poets. Sedechia is overcome by love and wounded in the heart by her cruel hand that knows no equal. He also suffers from *mal d'amores* and only Susanna can restore his health.²⁴

Here there is no scene of voyeurism because the two men approach her as soon as her servants leave her alone. Walthaus notes that this playwright uniquely elaborates a scene out of the reaction of the community to the false accusation. Although the servants of her husband cannot believe what they hear, she is dragged away to a dungeon and bound in chains. The trial occupies a good portion of this piece, and during this event both her mother and father arrive to the trial to defend their daughter's honesty. The mother laments this accusation and hopes to die of sorrow, while the father refuses to believe that she could possibly be guilty. The protagonism of the mother is also unique to this play, and it is extremely surprising because in the Spanish *comedia*, beginning with the works of Lope de Vega in the latter half of the sixteenth century, there is a complete absence of mothers. Accused women in Spanish Early Modern Drama are traditionally assumed to be guilty and must be killed immediately as the honor of the entire household (normally consisting of a father and brother) lies on her shoulders. The Elder Achian tells the false story of Susanna's adultery with a young boy in great detail and demands that she be stoned according to the law of Israel. As she pleads to God for help, the young Daniel arrives miraculously. In this play *la voz del pueblo* or 'the voice of the people' serves a similar narrative function as that of the Greek chorus. When Daniel arrives and proclaims that the Elders have falsely accused Susana, the *voz del pueblo* declares that, 'When a child that small speaks | it's a revelation from God' (*niño tan chico hablar, es de Dios revelación*). Achian protests that the child is possessed by a demon,²⁵ but Daniel demands that the two Elders (the original judges) now be put on

trial and calls for two new judges. As in all of the previously-mentioned stories they are found guilty when each claims that he saw Susanna commit adultery under a different type of tree. The accusers again receive the punishment that had been created for the accused and the town crier proclaims, *quien tal haze, que tal pague* ('let the punishment fit the crime').

The final work of theatre from the sixteenth century is perhaps the most medieval in character. This is Bartolomé Cairasco de Figueroa's, *La Tragedia de Santa Susana* from the latter half of the century.²⁶ He designates his play as a tragedy, unlike Pedraza's comedy, even though they both share the same ending and characteristics. Despite the happy ending, it was probably given this classification due to its use of historical figures. As with the other two plays it was written to be performed during the Corpus Christi festival in the Canary Islands and closely follows the Biblical source. Its novelty is the use of the allegorical figures of Love and Death that open the play. Each one defends its characteristics, and they decide to invert the natural order by having the youth die and the elderly fall in love. They wish to create a type of *mundo al revés* (world turned upside down) before they leave the Canary Islands and head for Babylon. Just as in the previously mentioned pieces, Spanish playwrights felt the need to explain the motivation behind the lust that the two Elders felt towards Susanna, as this was more often reserved for the handsome young protagonist of the theatre. The two Elders in this variant are known as Calasires and Filimón and they are immediately carried away by their carnal impulses. This is highlighted as something extraordinary for their age and social position during the conversation in which the two men debate the pros and cons of being old, as Death hides and watches them.

CALASIRES:

*De la vejez procede la experiencia,
con el conocimiento de las cosas ...
La barba blanca arguye gran consejo,
y se le debe honor en toda parte.*

'Old age brings with it experience,
knowledge of things ...
A white beard reveals good advice,
and should be respected everywhere.'

FILIMÓN:

*La vejez es al cuerpo de cuidado,
mesón de enfermedades y dolencias,*

BOBBY D. NIXON

*de la vecina muerte mensajero ...
[La vejez es] una jactancia vana del pasado tiempo,
un menosprecio del valor presente) ...
un no tener contento en cosa alguna.*

'Old age is for the body's care
an inn of sickness and pain,
and a messenger of the death that is always near ...
[Old age] is boasting of the past
and despising the present ...
It's a complete lack of happiness.'

Death strikes them with one of Love's arrows and they begin to sing of their love for Susanna, who is only mentioned after the supernatural intervention. They sing her praises whilst in a garden, evoking the tradition of the eclogues with their pastoral songs that proclaimed the beauty of an unattainable shepherdess. Following the characteristics of the classical tragedy, this play also incorporates the narrative function of a Chorus, which sings:

*No es amor el de los viejos
por ser ya fuera de tiempo, sino risa y pasatiempo.*

'Love is not for the old
that time has passed, it is laughter and amusement'.

When Susanna arrives the playwright has created an erotic scene with the praise of the garden (here a *locus amoenus*). She bathes in a fountain that springs from below a rock and disrobes due to the tremendous heat. This is much closer to the sensuality that is found in the seventeenth-century Spanish Susanna plays and the Italian paintings of the period, such as those of Lorenzo Lotto (1517) or Alessandro Allori (1561) in which she is depicted after disrobing for her bath. She is accused in front of two witnesses by the Elders, or they attempt to seduce her. Susanna was clearly seen as a model for sixteenth-century Spanish woman, but theme also permitted the pleasure of discussing topics that could be eroticized. As Susanna waits alone in the garden while unclothed, she speaks of enjoying life's gifts and lets down her hair, a clear literary motif that is an invitation to a sexual encounter. She repeatedly comments that no one is in the garden, and this creating a sense of anticipation for the audience, who is not sure about which direction the performance may go. In a wink to the audience, the servant Corinta removes the fourth wall and tells Susanna

that she would be better off not bathing because a thousand people are watching her:

*¡No ves tantas señora, aquí tantos señores,
tantas cabezas, tantas podestades,
tantos galanes, tantos caballeros ...
que con tanto atención te están mirando ... ?
¡No ves tantas señoras, tantas damas
unas tan feas, otras tan hermosas;
unas discretas, otras lejos desto ...
y todas muy atentas en mirarte?*

'Can't you see here, madame, so many men,
so many heads, so much power,
so many young men, so many gentlemen ...
that are watching you so closely?
Can't you see all the ladies and madames,
some so ugly, others beautiful,
some intelligent, others far from it ...
and they are all watching you attentively?'

Susanna thinks it is all a joke and asks her to bring her the aromatic oils and to please close the gates. Of course the public never sees a thing. Everything is narrated:

*Agora, que estoy sola y no hay quien pueda
verme, quiero bañarme en esta fuente.
¡Ay Dios, qué gran calor! Quiero quitarme
aquesta saya, que me da gran pena.*

'Now I am alone and no one can
see me, I want to bathe in this fountain.
Oh God, it is so hot! I want to take off
this robe, which causes me much grief.'

When the Elders enter, Filimón announces, 'We have caught the white heron and she is without plumage' (*Tenemos ya la garza. Está sin plumas*).

This play is also unique because the husband has a more active role. While in the work by Alonso de Pedraza both of her parents come to her defence, her spouse has always waited for her to be cleared of her guilt after she is defended by the young prophet Daniel. As this is perhaps the play

BOBBY D. NIXON

that is the most burlesque and sexually explicit, it was necessary for the husband to leave no doubt in the minds of the audience that Susanna was indeed a most chaste wife who was completely innocent. Joaquín appears and speaks of how fortunate he is to have married a woman who pleases him. She is:

*la ilustre y castísima Susana,
mujer tan principal, de tantas prendas,
que en castidad, belleza y valor, puede
ser ejemplo de todas las mujeres*

‘illustrious and extremely chaste Susanna,
a notable women of many gifts,
who in chastity, beauty and bravery could
be a model for all women.’

His page-boy then arrives and begins to speak ill of all women (using the language of the abundant misogynistic treatises of the period). He tells him that: ‘You can hardly trust women at all. Susanna is in the prison, accused of adultery’ (*Hay poco que fiar de las mujeres. Susana queda presa por adúltera*). The servant of this piece creates a stark contrast with that of Joaquín in Alonso de Pedraza’s play who relayed the message but refused to believe it. Joaquín does not believe the accusation, but, like Susanna, he has faith in God that after this great storm there will be smooth sailing. Susanna appears at the end of the dramatic work alongside the allegorical figures of Desperation and Suffering. She laments her Fortune because people who saw honour in her now see dishonour and feel repulsion. She begs God that if she must die, that her Fame not be blemished. Desperation hands her a blade and tries to convince her to commit suicide, while Suffering encourages her to accept her misery as her dearest friend. Once again we have a typical medieval debate where each figure defends its own qualities. Susanna chooses the latter, which he tells her to also accept Hope and Patience. The Chorus sings:

*Si quieres ver a Dios, alma cristiana
sufre con discreción cualquier tormento,
que la victoria está en el sufrimiento.*

‘If you wish to see God, Christian soul,
suffer with intelligence any obstacle,
for victory is found through suffering’

Daniel appears and says that God sees all and that if the good are punished and the evil are rewarded that God will rectify this in the end (the world will be put back in order). The play ends with an epilogue where the stock character of the Student appears to tell us the moral of the story. He explains the allegory of the play stating that the garden represents the Catholic Church where all Christians fight for the Holy Faith against Lucifer, and the fountain represents the Holy Sacrament. Susanna is the 'lily' and signifies the human soul that wants to refresh its spirit in the Holy Fountain. The two Elders represent the world and Lucifer who wish to cause her moral downfall. Daniel represents pure virtue, which shows its brilliant light. It was necessary to explain the details of this play in terms of Christian morality due to the iron hand of the Spanish Inquisition with its harshest censorship of the theatre during the second half of the sixteenth century.

The story of Susanna and the Elders is that of the innocent woman falsely accused and it served as a frame for many novelesque tales of the Iberian Middle Ages. As previously described, the earliest Castilian Susanna texts appeared in several medieval chronicles. The first known story that follows this tale type was inserted into the Catalan *Crónica del Rey en Pere* which was copied by Bernat Desclot during the final half of the thirteenth century.²⁷ In this story, which is completely unrelated to the historical events of the chronicle, two advisors to the Emperor of Germany warn him that his wife has taken a young lover in the court. We have two accusers as with Susanna, but in this tale they have not been rebuked by her. Rather, they are resentful of her spouse and his political power. She must find two champions to defend her or she will be burned at the stake according to the laws of the Empire. Until then she is locked up in prison, as was Susanna. The Biblical heroine would have been stoned according to the laws of Moses,²⁸ however, just as Daniel was able to clear Susanna's name through divine intervention, the two champions will likewise do battle with the accusers. God will intervene and award victory to the defenders of truth just as he saved Susanna due to her innocence. Instead of the Holy Spirit finding the champion, here a minstrel of the court travels to Catalonia in order to seek help from the Count of Barcelona. Don Beltrán of Provence will be the second champion. They arrive at the court in Cologne but must first interview her to determine her innocence before they risk their lives defending her. This motif is absent in the Susanna story, but it can be compared to Daniel's interview of the Elders

in order to prove their guilt. The Count is of course victorious and the Empress is declared innocent.

A Middle English version of this same story, called the *Erl of Tolous*, exists in a fourteenth-century manuscript stating that it is merely a translation of a Breton lay from 1229. Here there are also two accusers but the motive for the accusation is a negative response to amorous advances. North of the Pyrenees the hero is called the Earl/Comte of Toulouse and in the south the Count of Barcelona. It makes perfect sense because the court of Provence was received by Ramón Berenguer III after his marriage with the heiress, Douce, in 1112. This historical figure is identified as the Count of Barcelona in later versions of the Catalan chronicle. The Emperor in the Breton lay must travel and he leaves two men in charge of protecting his wife in his absence. They fall in love with her and declare their love one after the other. She swears to keep silent about their advances, but they do not believe her promise. They are not judges like the Elders in Susanna so they have to create evidence in order to be believed. They convince an adolescent to disrobe and hide behind a curtain in the Empress' bedroom to play a joke on her. Many men are called in to witness this boy's presence, and after they wake up the Empress, the young boy is mortally stabbed. They lock her up in a deep prison and state that 'The lawe wyll that sche be brente | Be God, that boght us dere'.²⁹ A council decides that she must die at the stake, but an elderly knight who is present brings up the fact that the youth never had the opportunity to explain what had happened and that no one had ever had any reason to suspect the Empress of being guilty. Here we have a parallel to the trial where Daniel spoke up against the Elders in order to protect Susanna. The Earl of Toulouse successfully defeats the accusers, who received the punishment that was intended for her, and each of them is burned at the stake.³⁰

There is one final story with a strong connection to this tale type and it is that of *Enrique, fi de Oliva*, in which a young child grows up to defend his innocently accused mother.³¹ The Spanish version is likely from the fourteenth century but it is a story that originated in the twelfth-century *chanson de geste* of *Doon de la Roche*. The falsely accuse heroine is Oliva, sister of Pippin, who is the literary father of Charlemagne. The count Tomillas plants a young squire in Oliva's bed because he wants her to die so that he can marry his own daughter to her husband, the Duque de la Roche. When Susanna is accused, the Elders force her to remove her veil so that everyone can see how beautiful she is and thus see why the youth

would have been eager to have slept with her. Equally Olive is placed on a pyre naked for all to see, but God does not allow the fire to harm her. This 'trial by fire' is another type of divine judgement that shows her innocence. She even passes two more such tests, but her brother still exiles her. Accompanied by her son, she goes to live in a monastery, and her husband marries the daughter of Tomillas. After growing up and conquering Jerusalem, her son marries the daughter of the Greek Emperor. He then returns to France, captures the false accuser, and forces him to admit his treason. His body is burned, but before this it is torn asunder by four savage horses.

Even though the Susanna story does not appear in the early Hebrew texts, it was declared to be true by the Council of Trent in the middle of the sixteenth century. This may have been due to its popularity or because of the fact that they had prohibited the consultation of the original Hebrew to interpret the Bible and were not permitting any new changes to the texts. Regardless, it was a story that served as a model, along with Justin's Dido, for how women should behave, from Alfonso X in the thirteenth century up to the end of the sixteenth century. It is possible to view her story as a precursor to the roles that young noble women or *damas* played in the Spanish *comedia*, valuing honour above everything else. Since there are no mothers in the *comedia*, the honour of the entire family depended on the daughter's chastity. Essentially, Early Modern Spanish playwrights appropriated the apocryphal figure of Susanna, as portrayed in medieval chronicles, in order to produce a female protagonist that would not offend authorities of the Counter-Reformation but at the same time permitted a certain amount of erotic pleasure for theatre-goers of the period.

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NOTES

1. Alfonso X *General estoria. Cuarta parte* edited Pedro Sánchez-Prieto Borja, 5 vols (Madrid: Fundación José Antonio de Castro, 2009); and see Alfonso X *Primera crónica general de España que mandó componer Alfonso el Sabio y se continuaba bajo Sancho IV en 1289* edited Ramón Menéndez Pidal and Diego Catalán (Fuentes cronísticas de la historia de España 1; Madrid: Editorial Gredos, 1977).
2. Virgil *The Aeneid: Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition* translated Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).
3. William Adler "What the Hebrews Say": Translation, Authority, and the Story of Susanna and the Elders' in *Biblical Translation in Context* edited Frederick W.

- Knobloch (Studies and Texts in Jewish History and Culture 10; Bethesda, Md: University Press of Maryland, 2002) 19–39; see also Frank Zimmermann ‘The Story of Susanna and its Original Language’ *The Jewish Quarterly Review* NS 48: 2 (1957) 236–41; also Betsy Halpern-Amaru ‘The Journey of Susanna among the Church Fathers’ in *The Judgment of Susanna: Authority and Witness* edited Ellen Spolsky (Early Judaism and its Literature 11; Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1996) 21–34.
4. For various interpretations of the meaning of the biblical tale, see George J. Brooke ‘Susanna and Paradise Regained’ in *Women in the Biblical Tradition* edited George J. Brooke (Studies in Women and Religion 31; Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1992) 92–111; see also José Ramón Bustos Saiz ‘La interpretación del relato de Susana’ *Estudios eclesiásticos* 57 (1982) 421–8; see also R.A.F. MacKenzie ‘The Meaning of the Susanna Story’ *Canadian Journal of Theology* 3:4 (1957): 211–18. For feminist interpretations see Jennifer A. Glancy ‘The Accused: Susanna and her Readers’ in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna* edited Athalya Brenner (The Feminist Companion to the Bible 7; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995) 289–95; also Amy-Jill Levine ‘“Hemmed in on Every Side”: Jews and Women in the Book of Susanna’ in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith, and Susanna* 303–323.
 5. Álvaro de Luna *Libro de las virtuosas e claras mugeres* edited Julio Vélez-Sainz (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009). Other texts that consider this work are Vanesa Hernández Amez ‘Mujer y santidad en el siglo XV: Álvaro de Luna y el *Libro de las virtuosas mugeres*’ *Archivum* 52–3 (2004) 255–88 and María del Pilar Rábade Obradó ‘El arquetipo femenino en los debates intelectuales del siglo XV castellano’ *En la España medieval* 11 (1988) 261–302.
 6. Alfonso Martínez de Toledo *Arcipreste de Talavera: o Corbacho* edited E. Michael Gerli (Letras hispánicas 92; Madrid: Cátedra, 1979). A great anthology of medieval Spanish texts on misogyny and defence of women is Robert Archer *Misoginia y defensa de las mujeres: antología de textos medievales* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2001). Another key text from the fifteenth century is Diego de Valera *Tratado en defensa de las mujeres virtuosas* edited María Ángeles Suz Ruiz (Madrid: El Archipiélago, 1983).
 7. For an analysis of the wisdom of Susanna and the evil of the two Elders see Eleonore Stump ‘Susanna and the Elders: Wisdom and Folly’ in *The Judgment of Susanna: authority and witness* edited Ellen Spolsky (Early Judaism and its literature 11; Atlanta GA: Scholars Press, 1996) 85–100.
 8. Álvaro de Luna *Libro de las virtuosas e claras mugeres* 77 and 220; see also San Jerónimo *Epistolario* edited María Teresa Muñoz García de Iturrospe (Madrid: Cátedra, 2009).
 9. Juan Luis Vives *The Education of a Christian Woman: A Sixteenth-Century Manual* edited and translated Charles Fantazzi (The Other Voice in Early Modern

- Europe; Chicago UP, 2000) 223. I have also consulted the Spanish translation *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana* translated Juan Justiniano and edited Elizabeth Teresa Howe (Espirituales españoles Serie A 43; Madrid: Fundación Universitaria, Universidad Pontificia de Salamanca, 1995). Dan Clanton notes that: 'All across the continent, humanist scholars were quick to advise women on proper conduct, often using classical and biblical figures as examples'. See Dan W. Clanton *The Good, the Bold, and the Beautiful: The Story of Susanna and its Renaissance Interpretations* (Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 430; New York: T & T Clark, 2006) 100.
10. Juan Luis Vives *Instrucción de la mujer cristiana* 147, chapter 13 *De cómo se ha de haber fuera de casa*.
 11. *Cantar de Mio Cid* edited Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Alfonso Reyes, Martín de Riquer, and Juan Carlos Conde (Colección Austral 20; Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1999) lines 340–42; see also E. Michael Gerli 'The *Ordo Commendationis Animae* and the Cid Poet' *Modern Language Notes* 95: 2 (1980) 436–43.
 12. *Poema de Fernán González* edited Emilio Alarcos Llorach (Madrid: Editorial Castalia, 1967) Stanza (or *cuaderna*) 108.
 13. Juan Ruiz de Cisneros, el Arcipreste de Hita *Libro de buen amor* edited Alberto Blecuá (Letras hispánicas 70; Madrid: Cátedra, 1992) lines 16–20.
 14. Gonzalo de Berceo 'Los loores de Nuestra Señora' in *Obras completas* edited Brian Dutton (London: Tamesis Books, 1975) stanza 92; see also Gonzalo de Berceo *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* edited E. Michael Gerli (Madrid: Cátedra, 2006).
 15. Diego de Estella *Meditaciones devotísimas del amor de Dios* (Madrid: Gil Blas, 1920).
 16. Marvin T. Herrick 'Susanna and the Elders in Sixteenth-Century Drama' in *Studies in Honor of Thomas Whitfield Baldwin* edited Don Cameron Allen (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1958) 125–35 at 125–6.
 17. Lorenzo Di Tommaso *The Book of Daniel and the Apocryphal Daniel Literature* (Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigrapha 20; Leiden: Brill, 2005) 86.
 18. Rina Walthaus 'Representaciones de Susana' in *Actas del VI Congreso de la Asociación Internacional Siglo de Oro (Burgos—La Rioja, 15–19 julio de 2002)* edited María Luisa Lobato and Francisco Domínguez Matito (Madrid/Frankfurt am Main: Iberoamericana Vervuert, 2004) 1827–39 at 1830; Diego Sánchez de Badajoz *Recopilación en metro del bachiller Diego Sánchez de Badajoz (Sevilla, 1554)* (Madrid: Tipografía de Archivos, 1929). For treatment of this play see Barbara F. Weissberger 'El "voyeurismo" en el teatro de Diego Sánchez de Badajoz' *Criticón* 66-7 (1996) 195–215 and Francoise Cazal 'La adaptación de la Biblia en la *Farsa de santa Susana* de Diego Sánchez de Badajoz' *Criticón* 75 (1999) 91–123. For an analysis of the sixteenth-century *Susanna* plays in Spain, see Robert

- Hathaway 'Dramaturgic Variation in the Pre-Lopean Theatre: Susanna and the Elders' *Bulletin of the Comediantes* 43:1 (1991) 109–31. For international bibliography of medieval and Early Modern *Susanna* plays, see Paul F. Casey *The Susanna Theme in German Literature* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1976) and *Le Mystère du Viel Testament* edited Firmin Didot (1878–1885); re-edited James Rothschild and Emile Picot (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1966). See introduction.
19. *Elena y María* in *Los debates literarios en la Edad Media* edited Enzo Franchini (Madrid: Ediciones del Laberinto, 2001) 95–122.
 20. Fernando de Rojas *La Celestina* edited Dorothy Sherman Severin and Maitte Cabello (Letras hispánicas 4; Madrid: Catedra, 1998) 5. Sempronio, the servant of the young gentleman, Calisto, criticizes his blasphemous praise of Melibea and asks him, *¿Tú no eres cristiano?* ('Aren't you a christian?'). Calisto responds, *¿Yo? Melibeo soy y a Melibea adoro, y en Melibea creo y a Melibea amo* ('Me? I am a follower of Melibea and I adore Melibea, and I believe in Melibea, and I love Melibea). Note that the Spanish *adoro* could also mean 'I worship' when speaking in the religious sense.
 21. Rodrigo de Cota *Diálogo del Amor y un viejo* in *Los debates literarios en la Edad Media* edited Enzo Franchini (Madrid: Ediciones del Laberinto, 2001) 169–93.
 22. *Castigos del rey don Sancho IV* edited Hugo O. Bizzarri (Medievalia Hispánica 6; Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2001) 197. From Chapter 20 — *De quánd grand yerro faze el que peca con la muger casada* ('On what a great error is committed by he who sins with a married woman').
 23. Juan de Rodrigo Alonso de Pedraza 'Comedia de Sancta Susaña' in *Autos, comedias y farsas de la Biblioteca Nacional (Spain) [Homenaje a Lope de Vega]* 2 vols (Coleccion Joyas bibliográficas, Serie conmemorativa 12, 13; Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional, 1962–64) 1 177–92. For a non-palaeographic edition, see 'Comedia de Sancta Susaña' edited Adolfo Bonilla y San Martín *Revue Hispanique* 27 (1912) 423–36.
 24. Alonso de Pedraza 'Comedia de Sancta Susaña' 427: *Vencido del amor, aquí he vencido | Herido en el coraçon de su mano cruel sin par* ('Overcome by love, here have I defeated | Wounded in the heart by her cruel hand without rival'). We can clearly see the motifs of *la belle dame sans merci* and in *sin par* the phrase *sans pareille* from the tradition of courtly love and the books of chivalry such as *Amadis de Gaula* or *Don Quixote* where the eponymous knight frequently speaks of the *sin par Dulcinea*. Another example from Alonso de Pedraza is on line 427: *Señora — los dos morimos por tus amores ... la salud pende de vos* ('Madame — we both die with love for you... our health lies in your hands').
 25. MacKenzie 'The Meaning of the Susanna Story' 211. He identifies two main themes in this story: a) The Genoveva tale — faithful wife, calumniated but later vindicated, and b) The wise child — intervenes to give the correct

- judgment in a case that has misled, or simply baffled, professional judges. I cannot help but be reminded of the twelfth-century *Estoire de Merlin* where the child Merlin successfully defends his mother in a trial where she is falsely accused of adultery. The wizard Merlin is an incubus that was fathered by a demon who impregnated his mother in her sleep.
26. Bartolomé Cairasco de Figueroa *Obras inéditas* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Goya Ediciones, 1957); see also José Ismael Gutiérrez Gutiérrez 'La *Tragedia de Santa Susana* de Cairasco de Figueroa y la cuestión del género literario' *Philologica canariensis: Revista de filología de la Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria* 8–9 (2002–2003) 341–55.
 27. This text may be found in both Castilian and Catalán in the prologue of Menéndez Pelayo's 1898 edition of *Obras de Lopa de Vega, Volume 8* (Madrid: Real Academia Española) lxxix–xcix.
 28. Leviticus 20: 10: *si moechatus quis fuerit cum uxore alterius et adulterium perpetrarit cum coniuge proximi sui morte moriantur et moechus et adultera* ('If any man commit adultery with the wife of another, and defile his neighbour's wife, let them be put to death, both the adulterer and the adulteress'). These are laws that Moses received from God.
 29. 'Erl of Tolous' in *The Middle English Breton Lays* edited Anne Laskaya and Eve Salisbury (Kalamazoo, Mich: TEAMS, 1995) line 858. Two other editions are Gustav Lüdtke *The Erl of Tolous and the Emperes of Almayn: Eine Englische Romanze aus dem Anfange des 15.* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1881) and Gaston Paris *Le roman du comte de Toulouse* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1900).
 30. Laura Alandis Hibbard Loomis *Mediæval Romance in England; A Study of the Sources and Analogues of the Non-Cyclic Metrical Romances* (New York: Oxford UP, 1924). See also Jordi Rubió i Balaguer 'Les versions catalanes de la llegenda del bon comte de Barcelona i l'emperadriu d'Alemanya' *Estudis Universitaris Catalans* 17 (1932) 250–87.
 31. For the Olive tale, see Richard W. Tyler 'Algunas versiones de la leyenda de la Reina Sevilla en la primera mitad del Siglo de Oro' in *Actas del Segundo Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas* coordinated Norbert Polussen and Jaime Sánchez Romeralo (Nijmegen: Instituto Español de la Universidad de Nimega, 1967) 635–41; José Fradejas Lebrero 'Algunas notas sobre *Enrique, fi de Oliva*, novela del siglo XIV' in *Actas del I Simposio de Literatura Española* (1979) coordinated Alberto Navarro González (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1981) 109–360; *Historia de Enrrique fi de Oliua: rey de Iherusalem, emperador de Constantinopla* (Según el ejemplar único de la Biblioteca Imperial de Viena) edited Pascual de Gayangos (Madrid: Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, 1871); Cristina González 'Erotismo y comicidad en *Carlos Maynes y Enrique Fi de Oliva*' *Romance Quarterly* 55:1 (2008) 3–12.