

## VIRTUOUS AND GODLY SUSANNA: EXEMPLUM AND ALLEGORY

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Thomas Garter's *Virtuous and Godly Susanna* (published 1578, entered in the Stationers' Register 1568)<sup>1</sup> is one of those hybrid plays, very popular in the mid-sixteenth century, where historical characters (or fictional characters pretending to be historical) unselfconsciously rub shoulders with allegorical ones. Or perhaps we should say, pending further analysis, characters with allegorical names. Among these 'hybrids' are *A New Tragical Comedie of Apius and Virginia* by R.B. (SR 1567, published 1575);<sup>2</sup> John Phillip's *Commodye of pacient and meeke Grissill* (s.d. but licenced SR 1565/6);<sup>3</sup> *A newe enterlude ... of godly queene Hester* (1561);<sup>4</sup> Thomas Preston's *A lamentable tragedy ... conteyning the life of Cambyses* (c. 1570);<sup>5</sup> and Lewis Wager's *A new Enterlude ... of the Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene* (1566).<sup>6</sup> Though *Hester* may date from as early as the reign of Henry VIII,<sup>7</sup> they were all clearly considered particularly marketable in the first two decades of Elizabeth's reign.

The term 'hybrid play' was coined by Bernard Spivack to describe

A group of more than a dozen plays out of the middle half of the sixteenth century which deserve to be called *hybrid* or *transitional*, because in them exists the *open* fusion of two radically different dramatic methods, the abstract and the concrete. They are products of the interaction between the old convention and the new ...<sup>8</sup>

These plays 'dramatize stories out of history or legend and present individual men and women' in place of the Mankind figure, but 'they also retain the personifications of the morality convention, and combine them, strangely to our modern eyes, with the original story' which is thus 'reshaped into a Psychomachia'.<sup>9</sup> He sees them primarily as one-way bridges between two modes, 'metaphorical to ... literal, unnaturalistic to ... naturalistic'.<sup>10</sup> Since the most immediate criterion for recognising an allegory is that the characters are called after abstractions, any play which contains both types of character can, according to this scenario, be seen as a step on the journey from metaphorical 'unnaturalistic' medieval conventions to literal 'naturalistic' modern ones.<sup>11</sup> Bob Potter describes

the process as ‘an adaptation of morality conventions to the biography of an historical or legendary character’.<sup>12</sup> He has the ingredients right, but I think he is looking at it the wrong way round. I want here to narrow down the list and consider a small group of them, *Susanna* in particular, but also, *Grissill*, *Virginia*, and occasionally *Hester* (there are obvious reasons for this selection), as a much more understandable blend of two traditional genres, innovative perhaps, but not so ‘radically different’ as Spivack suggested.<sup>13</sup>

The term *hybrid* can be confusing here, as it has also been taken to refer to plays that do not totally conform to the classical categories of comedy and tragedy, the names for which were beginning to be used by publishers, somewhat uncertainly, to describe English plays (some imitations of the Latin, some not) during the same period.<sup>14</sup> It is probably inevitable that we should prefer our own categories and criteria; but it is salutary to try to look at them through the eyes of a contemporary audience, without benefit of hindsight. Whether or not they are described generically on the title page as an interlude, a tragedy, a comedy, a *Tragicall Comedie*, or in the case of *Cambyzes* ‘A lamentable tragedy mixed ful of pleasant mirth’,<sup>15</sup> their audiences would have recognised the stories they told as *exempla*.

Contemporary publishers recognised this. The title pages of *Apius and Virginia* and *Pacient and Meeke Grissill* explicitly combine the fashionable classicising genre description with this traditional one:

A new tragicall comedie of *Apius and Virginia* wherein is liuely expressed a rare example of the vertue of chastitie, by *Virginias* constancy, in wishing rather to be slaine at her owne fathers handes, then to be deflowered of the wicked iudge *Apius*.

THE COMMODYE OF *pacient and meeke Grissill*, Whearin is declared, the good example, of her pacience towards her Husband: and lykewise, the due obedience of Children, toward their Parentes.

The title page of *Godly Queene Hester* describes the work as *A newe enterlude*, but couples this with an advertisement:

Com nere vertuous matrons & women kind  
Here may ye learne of Hesters duty,  
In all comlines of vertue you shal finde  
How to behaue your selves in humilitie.

Though it does not mention the word *example*, it makes it clear that that is what the *enterlude* provides.

Even in plays where this is not foregrounded on the title page (the sphere of the publisher), it tends to appear in the authorial voice of the Prologue. The Prologue to *Susanna* (described on the title page as a *commodity*) declares:

... for because example good, is meete in these our dayes  
 This hath he [*the author*] done to shorten tyme ... 23

and the Prologue to Lewis Wager's *Mary Magdalene* is specific about what the *exemplum* teaches, repentance and justification by faith:

Here an example of penance the heart to grieue,  
 May be lerned, a loue which from Faith doth spring,  
 Authoritie of Scripture for the same we will bring. sig. A ij<sup>v</sup>

The lead characters themselves, usually towards the end, may call on the audience to recognise them in this role. Mary Magdalene says:

To all the worlde an example I may be,  
 In whom the mercy of Christ is declared, sig. H IV

and Susanna:

Let myne example comfort you, in all kinde of distresse,  
 That if you suffer for his sake, he will your cares release. 1108

We are clearly being offered the plays and their characters as *exempla*, and it is assumed that this is not only acceptable but contemporary and relevant: 'for because example good is meete in these our dayes'.

What is an *exemplum*? (To avoid confusion, I will stay where possible with the Latin form of the word. My illustrations may however use either the Latin or the English *ensample* or *example*.) Or more precisely, what would the original audiences have expected from it?

The *OED*'s first definition of *example* is 'A typical instance; a fact, incident, quotation, etc. that illustrates, or forms a particular case of, a general principle, rule, state of things, etc.; a person or thing that may be taken as an illustration of a certain quality'.<sup>16</sup> It reserves the term *exemplum* for 'a moralizing tale or parable; an illustrative story', with particular reference to the collections of such tales 'intended for insertion in sermons'.<sup>17</sup> In practice, however, both terms and their meanings belong to the same concept.

As a literary device, it is an extended trope. It posits two separate and potentially free-standing discourses: one which discusses a particular quality or principle, and one which provides an apparently independent

illustration of that quality or principle. Discourse A (the discussion) is likely to be more abstract than Discourse B (the *exemplum* proper). Thus a section of a confessional manual (A) will name and describe a sin, then illustrate it by a story (B) showing the sin in practice.

Enuye is one þe werst synne  
 Þat þe deuyl maketh any man fal ynne.  
 Seynt Gregory telleþ a tale þar-by; A tale  
 And as he seyþ, so wil y.<sup>18</sup>

A Boethian tragedy (B) will illustrate the maxim (A) that Fortune is unreliable and man should not trust her:

Lordynges, ensample heerby may ye take  
 How that in lordshipe is no sikernesse;  
 For whan Fortune wole a man forsake,  
 She bereth away his regne, and his richesse,  
 And eek his freendes, bothe moore and lesse.<sup>19</sup> CT VII 2243

The majority of such *exempla* are narratives,<sup>20</sup> either told in full, or so familiar that they can be evoked by the simple mention of the central character's name.

Usually this character's experience in the narrative makes them the focal point of the illustration, so that by shorthand they themselves can be said to be the *exemplum*. In a confessional manual, for example, they can be seen as actively embodying the virtue or vice concerned, though not in the same way as a 'standard' allegorical figure. They are not personifications of the quality; they demonstrate it by what they do or suffer in the narrative. (The illustrations to the *Somme le Roy* by the miniaturist Honoré demonstrate the difference neatly. For example, one page shows Chastity and Lechery at the top as two emblematic female figures, while underneath they are exemplified by Judith slaying Holofernes, and Potiphar's Wife laying hands on Joseph.)<sup>21</sup> When Susanna says, 'Let myne example comfort you in all kinde of distresse' (1107), she is not referring to herself purely as an embodiment of patience under persecution, but to her experience in the whole story, in which she suffers from persecution patiently and is ultimately rescued.

Moreover, the story in B is assumed to have existed outside and independently from the argument in A. Also, and most importantly, it is considered to be historical ('real') and therefore believable and convincing.

It not only illustrates the quality, it acts as corroboration of the point being made.

These narratives are thus potentially freestanding — they can exist on their own without being embedded in an argument, and sometimes *exemplum* collections (like the *Gesta Romanorum*) are virtually indistinguishable from story cycles with a frame story (like the *Decameron*). They can also be any length, from a sentence or two to, in our case, a full-scale play. Their relative length in comparison with the argument in A is also variable. Sometimes they can be reduced to a mere allusion. Sometimes they can be told in full while conversely the argument is reduced to a sentence or two: a moral. ‘Lo, such it is for to be reccheles | And negligent and trust on flatterie’; ‘Let no man trust on blind prosperitee | Be war by these ensamples true and old’.<sup>22</sup> In our plays, as we have seen, the argument of A can be reduced to the occasional authorial guideline, spoken either by a character, or by the metatheatrical voice of the Prologue or Epilogue. What makes them *exempla* rather than independent narratives is that they are told to reinforce an explicit value-system. They thus become *examples* in the more familiar sense: patterns of behaviour to be followed, or eschewed.

Larry Scanlon, looking at the *exemplum* in its more obviously didactic form, concludes that ‘[i]n its narrative the exemplum re-enacts the actual, historical embodiment of communal value in a protagonist or an event, and then in its moral, effects the value’s re-emergence with the obligatory force of moral law ... an exemplum is a narrative enactment of cultural authority’.<sup>23</sup> One could read all exemplary literature as operating in this rather hectoring way, but Scanlon’s analysis feels over-schematic, only suited to an overtly didactic discourse. The plays are more exploratory and discursive, not to mention the fact that the stated moral may, by accident or design, be rather different from the one that comes across through the action. Thus though the heroine of *Godly Queen Hester* is presented on the title page (probably by the publisher rather than the author)<sup>24</sup> as a paragon of ‘duty’ and ‘humilitie’, the plot shows a rather manipulative woman using this as a cloak to subvert her husband’s (admittedly ill-judged) intentions on behalf of her own ethnic group. (Presumably this was not precisely what the publisher meant by ‘How to *behaue* your selves in humilitie’).<sup>25</sup> But this is a modern reading. Since in the sixteenth century Old Testament Jews were read as ‘true’ Christians, and more specifically as the particular sect the writer favoured, we find her being used in 1559 as a type for Ann Boleyn, with Haman as ‘The Cardinall’,<sup>26</sup> while in the mid

seventeenth century, as a type of how to approach men in power she became ‘virtually a patron saint of Civil War women’s petitions’.<sup>27</sup> Thus the significance of an exemplary figure need not remain static: it can change with changing attitudes. Equally the same story may yield different lessons at different stages in the narrative, as we shall see in Garter’s *Susanna*: and the central figure may exemplify quite a wide range of desirable qualities, depending on the literary contexts in which the story had been used before.

The Christian use of the *exemplum* was of course rooted in a much older rhetorical tradition, a technical one which attempts to analyse how it persuades, and its potential dangers, as well as its effects. It had been an important feature of mainstream forensic rhetoric from Aristotle onwards. He classifies it (under the term *paradeigma*) as one of the two major forms of demonstrative proof, equivalent to induction in logic.<sup>28</sup> It was alive and familiar in sixteenth-century theory. Thomas Wilson in his *Arte of Logique* (1551) explains:

An example, is a maner of Argumentation, where one thyng is proued by an other, for the likenes, that is found to be in them both, as thus. If Marcus Attilius Regulus had rather lose his life, then not kepe promise with his enemie, then shoulde eury man beyng taken prisoner kepe promise with his enemy.<sup>29</sup>

The emphasis here is not so much on the illustration of a moral point, as on a model for behaviour. Wilson’s conclusion is a good demonstration both of the way in which the *exemplum* tends to be used, and of its pitfalls. Puttenham’s explanation<sup>30</sup> is more tentative:

if in matter of counsell or perswasion we will seeme to liken one case to another, such as passe ordinarily in mans affaires, and doe compare the past with the present, gathering probabilitie of like successe to come in the things wee haue presently in hand ...<sup>31</sup> it is called resemblance by example: as if one should say thus, *Alexander* the great in his expedition to Asia did thus, so did *Hanniball* comming into Spaine, so did *Caesar* in Egypt, therefore all great Captains & Generals ought to doe it.<sup>32</sup>

Puttenham correctly points out that assuming the ‘like successe [outcome] ... in the things wee haue presently in hand’ is only a *probability*, not a certainty: but both Wilson and Puttenham, by using *should* and *ought*, suggest not only that similar events are likely to fall out similarly, but that

there is an obligation on those who know of them to act accordingly. We should draw on the past to learn from the lessons of history:

examining and comparing the times past with the present, and by them both considering the time to come, [*the man who makes proper use of it*] concludeth with a stedfast resolution, what is the best course to be taken in all his actions and aduices in this world.<sup>33</sup>

This reasoning sounds very convincing and was (and still is) very popular: but it is fatally easy to miss out the implicit *probably*, and make the sweeping assumption that what happened in the past must *necessarily* happen in the future. In the play, Susanna uses this ‘hasty generalisation’<sup>34</sup> when she encourages the audience:

Let myne example comfort you, in all kinde of distresse,  
That if you suffer for his sake, he will your cares release ...      1108  
You see I am at libertye, that earst hath bene in thrall,  
And thus will God deale with all such, as on his mercy call.      1112

This demonstrates the triumph of faith over logic: which may of course in context be perfectly valid. Nonetheless, it is, as she says, a comforting generalisation, which made Susanna a popular and uplifting *exemplum* for those suffering persecution, especially religious persecution.<sup>35</sup> John Bradford, a Protestant Reformer imprisoned in the Tower in 1553, speaks here in the persona of Verity:

O false time of iniquitie,  
O season most vniust:  
where exiled is Veritie,  
and cast downe to the dust.  
what though false Iudges doe me dam  
as Susan was most chaste:  
yet by a Daniell sure I am,  
to be absolved at the laste. <sup>36</sup>

His Verity too misses out the *probably*: she is *sure*.

It is generally accepted in writings on rhetoric that *exempla* are very powerful, if potentially suspect. A modern rhetorical handbook for American students says, ‘As a reader, you should be wary of examples because they sometimes tend to have more persuasive power than a direct argument’.<sup>37</sup> Puttenham says, ‘no one thing more preuaileth with all ordinary iudgements than perswasion by *similitude*’, of which ‘*Resemblance* by example, which they call *Paradigma*’ is his third kind;<sup>38</sup> and ‘no kinde of

argument in all the Oratorie craft, doth better perswade and more vniuersally satisfie then example, which is but the representation of old memories, and like successes happened in times past'.<sup>39</sup> Neither authority, present-day or Early Modern, explains why, but it must lie in the appeal made to 'real' events and common experience, rather than to abstract logic or unadorned didacticism, which are less acceptable to those of 'ordinary iudgements'.<sup>40</sup> It also draws on the pleasure of contemplating our forebears, in this case our cultural forebears: 'No one thing in the world with more delectation reuiuing our spirits then to behold as it were in a glasse the liuely image of our deare forefathers, their noble and vertuous maner of life, with other things autentike',<sup>41</sup> which offers psychological reinforcement to our own acts. They are also reassuring: they appear to give us signposts to a future which is by definition unknowable.<sup>42</sup> A play, in which flesh-and-blood actors present a 'lively image' of a 'true' history in present time, has an even more immediate effect, bringing the lessons of the past into the experience of the present:

For why the Story being good, the matter also true,  
Doth but declare [*explicate*] a matter olde, as it were done anew.

*Susanna* 5–6

It was therefore important that 'the matter' should be properly authenticated. True histories can be drawn from chronicles, or from the Bible, since 'The historye of Goddes boke to the christian is infallible, and therefore the rehearsall of suche good thinges as are therin conteyned, moue the faythfull to all vpriht doinge and amendmente of their lyfe'.<sup>43</sup> However,

The Ethnicke [*pagan*] aucthoures styrre the hearers, beyng well applied to the purpose. For when it shall be reported that they whiche hadde no knowledge of God, liued in a brotherlye loue, one towards an other, detested aduoutrye, banished periures, hanged the vnthanckefull, kepte the ydle withoute meate, tyll they laboured for their liuyng, suffered none extorcion, exemted Brybers from bearyng rule in the commune Weale: the Christians muste neades be ashamed of their euyll behaiour, and studye much to passe those, whiche are in callynge muche vnder them ...<sup>44</sup>

History is seen as a quarry of moral examples. As Henry Peacham says:

Paradigma, is the rehearsall of a deede, or saying past, and applying of it to our purpose, wherofthere be two kinds, the one true, which



is taken from hystories, chronicles, and memory of deedes done, and it is of great force to perswade moue, and enflame men with the loue of vertue, and also to deterre them from vyce ... In Chronicles we fynde, how cruelty hath bene requited, how pryde hath bene cast down, how good men have prospered, & the wicked dyed in misery [*and so forth*], how mightily God hath shewed his power from time to tyme. Likewyse, the holy Scriptures haue examples of all sorts, which doe manifestly shewe vs, how God hath punished pryde, couetousnesse, drunckennesse, glottony, whoredome, Ambition, periury, vnfaithfulnesse, and all other manner of sinnes, how he hath destroyed the vngodly, and exalted the louers of his lawes.<sup>45</sup>

In the prologue of *Grissill*, John Phillips subscribes to this view:

Historians oft in Hystories, their hole delightes haue staid  
 To pen & paynt forth painfully, the modest liues of those,  
 That do in Uertues Scoole their hoap, and confidence repose 2-4

In our group we have two biblical heroines, Hester and Susanna, and one from the 'Ethnicke aucthoures', Virginia. Whether John Phillips saw the story of *Pacient Grissill* as fact or fiction<sup>46</sup> is not plain. He might have thought it came into the category of recent history. But it was even permissible to use invented stories, since 'as ye know mo and more excellent examples may be fained in one day by a good wit, then many ages through mans frailtie are able to put in vre [*use*], which made the learned and wittie men of those times to deuise many historicall matters of no veritie at all, but with purpose to do good and no hurt, as vsing them for a maner of discipline and president [*precedent*] of commendable life'.<sup>47</sup> This type had such a powerful emotional and moral effect on its readers because it was in its sort truer than real life; Sidney's argument about the primacy of poetry over history.

We need not seek, therefore, to classify the different items in our list as biblical plays, classical plays, or folktale/legend: they are all *exempla*.

The literary context in which the playwrights found their exemplary characters seems bound to have an effect on the way they are read. The *exemplum* was not confined to religious literature: as 'a narrative enactment of cultural authority' it was used, for example, in works on moral and social education ('conduct books'), where it attempted to capture the attention of the young with stories, more effective than bare precept. A slightly unexpected context, though particularly relevant to our plays, is

the manual of guidance for young women and girls, of which an early example is *The Book of the Knight of the Tour Landry*, highly popular in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries:

my faire daughters I wylle shewe and declare vnto yow by this booke  
the trewe women and good ladyes / that oure lord god preyseth so  
moche in his byble / by whoos hooly deedes and operacions were  
and shalle be euermore preyseed<sup>48</sup> / Wherby ye may take good  
Ensaumple of honest and clenly luyunge / And also I shalle shewe  
yow somme euyl wymmen that were furyous and replenysshed of  
alle malyce / the whiche fynysshed theyr lyf in grete sorowe and  
heuyness / to thende ye take of them goode Ensaumple to kepe yow  
fro all euylle and fro the perdycon: wher as they fallen in.<sup>49</sup>

He does not scruple to provide nebulous but dreadful fates for them (or their children) if the Bible fails to. There are more of these than one might expect: the Knight is expert at bending the moral of familiar stories, especially when they concern threats to chastity. Blameless biblical victims find themselves arraigned with the 'she was asking for it' argument. Tamar should not have been alone with a man, even though Amon was her brother and she had gone to nurse him.<sup>50</sup> Or the stories are censored for their youthful audience: Bathsheba 'ones kembed & wessed her heer at a wyndow where as kyng dauid might well see her', thus leading him into sin:<sup>51</sup> a curious mixture of prudery and prurience. Likewise the Knight's Susanna in the garden does not disrobe to wash, but merely 'kymbed her heres whiche were blonke and fayre':<sup>52</sup> the Elders were inflamed at the sight, but, for once, she was clearly too much of a traditional *exemplum* of chastity to be blamed for this.

Other writers use the female-*exemplum* collection polemically to celebrate women, often as a rebuttal of anti-feminist accusations, as with Christine de Pizan's *Cité des Dames*.<sup>53</sup> Some authors, like Boccaccio in his *De claris mulieribus*,<sup>54</sup> which introduced a bevy of classical and recent heroines into the repertory of biblical ones, state that they have chosen to recount tales of famous women specifically in honour of a female patron. Whether didactic, apologetic, or complimentary, this genre assumes that its female readers will use their heroines as role models.<sup>55</sup>

In the sixteenth century, the stories of these heroines and others like them were recommended as suitable reading for girls and women. In 1579, the year after *Susanna* was printed, Thomas Salter, though he disapproves

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PLATE 1: Ruth, Michal, Abigail, Judith, Esther, and Susanna: second sheet from woodcut series *Twelve Famous Women of the Old Testament* (c.1530); print by Erhard Schön. Susanna as a housewife, Esther as a queen.  
London: British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings

for the most part of learned women, urged in his *Mirrhoe of Modestie* that instead of light literature and

lasciuious ballades, our wise Matrone, shall reade or cause her Maidens to reade, the examples and liues of godly and vertuous Ladies, whose worthy fame, and bright renowme, yet liueth and still will liue for euer, whiche shee shall make choise of, out of the holy Scripture, and other histories both auncient and of late dayes whiche bookes will not onely delight them, but as a spurre it will pricke and incite their hartes, to follow vertue, and haue vice in horror and disdaine ...<sup>56</sup>

For playwrights, they provided a ready-made source of good female-centred plots, particularly welcome, presumably, when one queen regnant was succeeded on the throne by a second.<sup>57</sup> Some of the heroines seem more suitable for this than others. If the author of *Virginia*, 'R.B.', was indeed Richard Bower (died 1561), this was probably a Chapel Royal play intended for the Court, and one can see how *Virginia* might, in very general terms, be a compliment to a young Elizabeth and an admonition to her ladies, though the play's insistence on nuclear-family values where the father is supreme sits rather oddly with this scenario. *Grissill* also on the surface preaches a submission to one's (royal) husband which seems to come from a pre-Elizabethan age.<sup>58</sup> Maybe, like the ladies in Boccaccio, they were all complimentary just by virtue of being female protagonists. Both *Grissill* and *Susanna* are *exempla* of patience under undeserved trials: in 1582 Thomas Bentley's florilegium and dictionary of virtuous women of the Old Testament lists among those remarkable for 'obedience to God, more then man, & for their constancie in the trueth, [who] chose rather to suffer persecution, yea violent death & martyredome, then to offend god', *Susanna* and 'our vertuous soueraigne Queene Elizabeth'.<sup>59</sup>

Somewhat disconcertingly, the effect is that these plays seem to be addressed to a predominantly female audience. It is an interesting question whether there really was one, and if so under what auspices; or whether female-directed admonitions were just so much part of the genre from which the plots were taken that they were transferred automatically to the plays. Thus the title page of *Hester* summons 'vertuous matrons & women kind' to come near and 'learne of Hesters duty';<sup>60</sup> the refrain of *Grissill*'s first song is 'Ye Uirgins all come learne of mee'. The Prologue of *Virginia* addresses first men, then their wives, but stresses that the heroine is chiefly an example for virgins:



in Christes Colledge in Cambridg'; *The Disobedient Child* is said to be 'Compiled by Thomas Ingelend late student in Cambridge', and *Pacient and Meke Grissill* by John Phillip(s), who was an undergraduate at Queens';<sup>64</sup> Colwell also printed three translations of Seneca, two by 'Iohn Studley, student in Trinitie Colledge in Cambridge' and one by Alexander Neville, cousin of Barnaby Googe, matriculated St John's College Cambridge.<sup>65</sup> There is also an 'Other Place' joke which suggests that Ill Report may have been at Oxford, at least in the jail there (1348–55). Unfortunately there is no indication that any Garter matriculated at Cambridge in this century, though there is a slew of them in the City of London in its second half. Once more, the audience seems to have included 'wives' and 'maids' (girls) as Ill Report the Vice addresses both of them. Was it presented at Court? One of Susanna's servants says, 'When fyrst I came into the Court, where we doe serue and dwell' (611), and describes, in the pastoral mode of Alexander Barclay and Barnabe Googe (also one of Colwell's authors), how she was a country girl who had pressurised her parents until they let her go to work in that glamorous place, when she realised that

... we but wayters are on them, that leade these happy days,  
 We trudge and traually and take payne,  
they do possesse the prayse. 635.

But we do not know whether this 'court' is the actual audience, or the fictional household of Joachim, the 'greate rych man'<sup>66</sup> of Babylon. In the absence of further information, we cannot conclude how large the proposed female audience might have been, or if, again, its imagined presence was due to the other literature in which Susanna customarily appeared.

Certainly, reading the play, you sometimes have the odd sensation that you are flipping from chapter to chapter of a conduct book for wives and daughters such as Vives' *Education of a Christian Woman*.<sup>67</sup> *Virginia* and *Grissil* are even more obviously about 'bringing up of tender youth' (*Virginia* 1028) of the female sort. As plays they seem to be a branch of the popular genre of 'youth' plays, designed to be played by schoolboys or students. We are used to plays about boys to be played by boys, such as *Wit and Science*, or *The Disobedient Child*. These are plays about girls and women to be played by boys,<sup>68</sup> presumably because boys were rather good at playing girls, and there was a piquancy about the whole concept.

However, this particular exemplary tradition also means that they are role models in a specific (to us rather restrictive) social context. In general,

schoolboy or student plays treat education not as book-learning, but as moral formation. Plying your book is important, but largely because it shows self-discipline and perseverance. This is even more so with girls. Even Vives, who commends learning in a woman, does so because he has never known a learned woman unchaste. This is because of the moral content of their reading: though 'it is mete that the man have knowlege of many and dyverse thynges that may both profet hym selfe and the common welthe ... I wolde the woman shulde be all together in that parte of philosophy, that taketh upon hit to enfourme and teache and amende the conditions'.<sup>69</sup> The heroines of *Virginia* and *Grissill* are not bookish, and though they offer themselves as role models, they are firmly situated in the family unit, the accepted female sphere. *Grissill*'s first entrance is 'Syngyng and Spinning: wyth her Parents' (sd at 215), handling 'wolle and flaxe' being 'two craftes yet lefte of that olde innocent worlde',<sup>70</sup> and her song runs:

Let Children to their parents giue,  
 Obedience due, as they are taught,  
 Then they on earth full long shall liue,  
 & ioy þe place which Christ hath bought<sup>71</sup> 227-30

The refrain alternates 'Ye Uirgins all come learne of mee' with 'Let children all come learne of mee'.<sup>72</sup> The Epilogue to *Apus and Virginia* urges the audience:

... by this Poets faining here, example do you take  
 Of Virginias life, of chastete, of duty to thy make,  
 Of love to wife, of love to spouse, of love to husband deare;  
 Of bringing up of tender youth, all these are noted heare 1028

a fairly comprehensive summation of ideal family relations, with a pleasing emphasis on mutual affection. *Virginia*'s first entrance is with her mother, who is full of admonitions about the chastisement due to 'the pert and pricking time of youth'; when her approving father joins them, they sing a song whose refrain is

The trustiest treasure on earth that you see  
 Is man, wife and children in one to agree. 142

There is a school of thought which claims that this emphasis on family values is new and essentially Protestant, though Ralph Houlbrooke argues that the Reformation wrought no real change.<sup>73</sup>

*Susanna* also makes a curtsy to this tradition. The story in the Book of Daniel<sup>74</sup> starts with a network of family relations, and an emphasis on moral education:

There dwelt a man in Babylon, called Joachim, þat toke a wyfe, whose name was Susanna, þe daughter of Helchia, a very faire woman, and soch one as feared God. Her father and her mother also were godly people & taught theyr daughter accordynge to the lawe of Moses.

Susanna thus becomes an *exemplum* of a good Christian upbringing. Thomas Becon, in a dedication (1566) to Jane Seymour, one of three aristocratic sisters who were famous for their intelligence and erudition, points to the Bible for the ideal model of the education of children:

There are no Parents (most godlye Ladye) that deserue better of the Christen publike weale, then they whiche thorow gods gift hauing Children, employ all their endeouours to traine them vp euen from there verye cradels in good letters & in the knowledge of gods moste blessed wil, that with their young yeres, learning, vertue and godlines, may grow and encrease and the younglinges by this meanes be made at the last auncient and perfect schollers in the mistery of Christes schole. This careful study and studyous care for the vertuous bringing vp of youth, god in time paste earnestlye required of all Fathers and Mothers in the common weale of hys people the Israelites, and according to gods holy commaundement suche as vnfainedlye feared the Lorde their God, and wished wel to their countrey, refused no laboure, no paine, nor cost that their children might be made profitable members of the publike weale.<sup>75</sup>

Among his examples are, ‘the Parentes of that most godly and chast woman Susanna ... [*who*] being righteous them selues, taught their yong daughter to feare the Lord her god, euen from her verye cradle, and diligently brought her vp, according to the law of Moyses’.<sup>76</sup> As Helchia her father says in the play, ‘And for our partes thou knowest O Lorde, it was our chiefest awe, | Our Daughter to instruct and teach· the trade of Moyses lawe’ (860–61).

In other *Susanna* plays, she is sometimes shown as herself instructing her family in moral principles. In the good Lutheran family of Paul Rehbus’s *Susanna* (1535),<sup>77</sup> her precocious son Benjamin reports that he has overheard the maid swearing and is afraid she will not get to heaven: his mother agrees and warns him against doing the same. His little sister



asks how she will get to heaven, and is told *sey frum*, 'be God-fearing'.<sup>78</sup> At the end of the play, both children draw the appropriate lesson from her release, and the Epilogue emphasises her role as an example how to instruct children and servants.<sup>79</sup> The Susanna of the *Mistère du Viel Testament*<sup>80</sup> instructs her eldest son in table manners rather than religion (40452–71: the *Stans Puer ad mensam* tradition), but also counsels her maidservants on modest behaviour (39977–40002). However, in Garter's play she has no children (despite the Bible's insistence that they were present at her trial), and the emphasis is on her relationship with her own parents.

Contemporary works of religious instruction for the laity, which are packed with *exempla*, stress the way in which the biblical Susanna's upbringing grounded her in the virtues she needed to see her through her ordeal. A 1561 translation of a collection of *ensamples of vertue and vice, gathered oute of holye scripture* by the thirteenth-century Bishop of Jerusalem, Nicholas Hannapes, refers frequently to Susanna under various headings, including *Of the erudition of Chyldren; Of Goddes preceptes and commaundementes & of the obseruation and keepinge of them; Of tribulation, and the vtilitye there of; and Of constancy and continuauance in purposes*.<sup>81</sup> It is implied that her education has a ripple effect which engendered all her other virtues. In the play, when her father Helchia appears to be entertaining the possibility of her guilt, her mother indignantly invokes her upbringing:

[*Helchia*] Peace wyfe, attempt not God, thou knowest all flesh is frayle.

[*Uxor*] I know also where is Gods feare, such lust cannot preuayle. 877

(Helchia's note of doubt sounds a healthy corrective to the saccharine unanimity of the portraits of family solidarity in most *Susanna* plays.) Coverdale counts her among those who were given strength to choose the right priorities, for in them 'The loue of God no doute ouercame the loue of the worlde',<sup>82</sup> so that (Hannapes again) she 'putting her life and good name in pearell [*peril*] and daunger, iudged it better to fal into the hands of man, then to forsake and leaue the lawes of God'.<sup>83</sup> This emphasis on the laws of God will be of importance later.

Surprisingly to us, though perfectly in keeping with the way conduct books for girls can switch from the consideration of high moral integrity to far more pragmatic considerations, Garter's Susanna is also the perfect household manager, concerned with 'My Cattayle in the field abroade, my seruauntes in the house, | My Corne both in the Barne and field' (677–8): though this inevitably must be intended to echo Job before Satan came to

test him. We see her first coming to take Joachim 'home to dyne' (358).<sup>84</sup> She will not go for her bath until she has made quite sure the cook can be left unsupervised with the preparations for dinner (684–7). Her male servants think highly of her (785–92, 810–14); she has a pair of flighty maidservants who think she is too strict, and even call her a shrew (145); but they agree 'it is a poynt of pollicy' to do as she asks. The catalogue of the Seven Deadly Sins with which Satan tried to tempt her specifically targets wives, 'But here you wiues, I would not wish that you should take her part, | But if your husbandes anger you, beshrew their crooked hart' (161–2), and stresses 'her sober diet' (156) and that, when offered gold, 'She takes it but for needefull vse, or else doth it despysse' (172). Sloth is no temptation to 'busy Susan' (165), though girls are particularly prone to it on frosty mornings when staying in bed seems very attractive. To be an *exemplum* of superlative household management may not seem spiritually very uplifting, but it shows her fulfilling her allotted female role as ruler, under her husband, in her own house.<sup>85</sup>

Her relationship with her husband is exemplary: he gives way to her in small things, knowing that 'As I doe you, so shall you me, obay another tyme' (377). She replies,

And reason good in fayth my Lorde, both now and alwayes to,  
That I should follow your behestes, as reason wils me do. 379

She and Joachim engage in some rather heavy-handed sub-Shakespearean banter, 'women there be none at all, but shrewes they are by kynde' (356),<sup>86</sup> which is clearly intended to show their affectionate and easy relationship. The tone, however, remains domestic: there is nothing of the honeymoon rhapsodies of the Dutch,<sup>87</sup> or the lyric exchanges of the French: *Mon trescher amy gracieux* (39944), *mon amour exquisite* (39948), *le plaisir de mes yeulx*, | *Mon amour, la belle des belles* (39967–8); clearly the English are not meant to go in for extravagant public displays of marital affection.

Presumably all this is to create an ideal domestic world which is about to be shattered, like Job's, in order to test her. But it gives us the strange phenomenon of the playwright apparently creating his own *exemplum*, Susanna as a Mirror for Housewives, out of the literature in which her story is usually embedded. This is not peculiar to Garter: Helen Watanabe O'Kelly points out how in post-Reformation German literature, the Susanna theme provides an image of 'the model wife and of the ideal marriage'. It is impossible to tell whether the English playwright knew any

of the German plays, but his Susanna seems more involved with the detail of household management than any of them. Watanabe O’Kelly also suggests that the ‘Lutheran view of the woman’s role is reinforced by the passive female figures presented in these dramas’,<sup>88</sup> which is not the first thing that comes over about Garter’s Susanna: persecuted, yes, passive, no.

This is not, however, the main reason for which she was usually celebrated. Going back to our title-pages, we see that each heroine is given a specific exemplary quality: Grissil is ‘paciēt and meeke’, Virginia ‘a rare example of ... chastitie’, ‘godly’ Hester shows ‘duty’ and ‘humilitie’. Susanna is ‘virtuous and godly’: but this seems strangely generalised. In what does her *virtue* particularly consist?

If we have to ask, we are too centred in our own culture. As Vives says,

As for a man nedeth [*there is a need for*] many thynges, as wysedome, eloquence, knowleg of thynges, with remembrance, some crafte to lyve by, Justice, Liberalite, lusty stomake, and other thynges mo ... no man wyl loke for any other thing of a woman, but her honestye [*pudicitiam*]: the whiche only, if hit be lacked, is lyke as in a man, if he lacke al that he shuld have. For in a woman the honestie is in stede of all [*in foemina, pudicitia instar est omnia*].<sup>89</sup>

For Hyrde’s *honestie*, read *pudicitia*, ‘chastity’.<sup>90</sup> The Prologue’s summary of the plot suggests that it is to be about the assault on her chastity:

Of Susans lyfe the story is, what trouble she was in,  
 How narrowly she scaped death because she would not sinne,  
 How wonderously she was prouokte, how vertuously she fled,  
 The strong assaultes of wicked men, that lecherous lustes had led,  
 To rauish her, and to pollute, her chaste and wyfely view,  
 This is the somme of all that shall be shewed vnto you. 15

Robert Greene, who wrote a version of the Susanna story entitled *The myrroure of modestie* (1584), dedicated it to Margaret, Countess of Derby, with ‘Well *Dianas* present was euer a bowe. Bicause she loued hunting: *Pallas gift* was a shield, in that she was valiant: and I thinke no fitter present for your Ladships personage, then this *Mirroure of Chastitie*, bicause you are vertuous’.<sup>91</sup>

When a post-Reformation author praised a woman, Susanna was the preferred icon of chastity: ‘*Dianaes* peere for chastitie, | A seconde *Susan* shee’.<sup>92</sup> She was the biblical alternative to Lucretia.<sup>93</sup> John Phillips (who wrote *Paciēt Grissill*), says of Elizabeth: ‘[God] gaue vs a wise and wittie

HESTER, a godly IVDITH, a valiant DEBORA, or rather a chaste SVSANNA, to rule, to gouerne, and raygne ouer vs'.<sup>94</sup> Susanna was of course a married woman, not a virgin like Virginia (or Elizabeth), but this made her more applicable to the majority of female patrons. As an *exemplum* of married chastity, she went back at least to Ambrose, not the *De virginitate* (though she is mentioned there), but *De viduis*, where he speaks of the three states of chastity, *unam conjugalem, aliam viduitatis, tertiam virginitatis* ('one kind that of married life, a second that of widowhood, and the third that of virginity').<sup>95</sup> Of his *exempla*, Anna the prophetess later gives way as a type of widowhood to Judith,<sup>96</sup> and Mary the Virgin is discarded with Catholicism, but Susanna persists as the epitome of the chaste wife.

Thomas Becon, giving examples 'Against fornication and adultry', says:

Susan feared God, and desired rather to be stoned vnto death then she should defile her husbandes bed or once consent to the two filthy Iudges, and so become an whore, god therfore preserued her.<sup>97</sup>

This explains why the Susanna of the title is not only *virtuous* but also *godly*. She feared God and therefore she was chaste. Succumbing to the Elders' advances would not have been a private betrayal of loyalty to her husband, but a breach of God's law: the Sixth Commandment, to be precise; the Elders break the Tenth. She herself sums it up at the end of the play: 'from thy lawes I will not slyde, although I dye therefore' (1432). It also explains her insistence that she is a kind of martyr: 'if you suffer for his sake, he [God] will your cares release' (1108); and why she was invoked in all seriousness by John Bradford and others as a model of persecution for truth's sake. For them, to recant would be a whoredom of the spirit.

A chief quality of the martyrs is perseverance in their convictions. Susanna's constancy to God even under the prospect of death is, after chastity, the attribute most frequently associated with her:<sup>98</sup>

This Flower (*i.e.* constancy) in her garden greene  
*Susanna* planted daye and howre,  
 Which by her lyfe was dayly seene,  
 when her good fame for to deuoure  
 The wicked Elders did pretend,  
 to bring her dayes vnto an end.<sup>99</sup>

The ballad 'There was a man in Babylon' is called 'The Constancy of Susanna'. In 1562/3 Colwell himself licensed a 'ballett' entitled 'the godly and constant wyse Susanna'.<sup>100</sup> As Garter's Susanna says, 'let not feare of

any man your *constant* hart remeve | From him that thus most *constantly* his simple folke doth love' (1109–10). This likewise makes her a Mirror for Martyrs. In the domestic sphere which she inhabits, it naturally also entails constancy to her marriage vows: 'the constant vertue, of Susan moste kynde | Vnto her husbande'.<sup>101</sup> Her marital constancy reinforces her role as a 'looking glasse' of wifely chastity.<sup>102</sup>

From Susanna's point of view, to be a convincing *exemplum* of chastity, she must be tested, and come through triumphant. Otherwise it could be said, as Joachim in Sixt Birck's play quotes (as a popular proverb but in fact from Ovid), *casta est, quam nemo rogavit* ('she is chaste, whom no one has solicited').<sup>103</sup>

Her chastity is tested, but even in the original story there is never much doubt of the outcome. Unlike the story of Lucretia (in whose predicament the sixteenth-century audience perceived some awkward moral grey areas which Susanna's avoids),<sup>104</sup> the Elders' attempt on Susanna is not a rape, but a seduction, and given what we have been told of her, it is unlikely to succeed. In the play it is even less likely: Garter portrays the Elders as *senes amantes*, so grotesque and so repellent that it manages to convey the impression that she was never in any real danger. Ill Report the Vice suggests at the beginning of the play that 'such they be shall her intise to do that pleasaunt deede | As shall preuayle, I tell you true, by force or else by meede' (177–8); but enticement hardly comes into the picture, the second alternative was never really in question, and one wonders if, despite their boasting of previous conquests (389–404), they could summon up the necessary 'force'.

So the plot is given a twist. Susanna is presented with a fearsome dilemma:

If thou wylt not, we shall brynge a testimoniall agaynst the: that there was a yonge felowe with the, and that thou hast sent away thy maydens from the for the same cause. Susanna syghed, and sayde: Alas. I am in trouble on euery syde. Though I folowe your mynde, it wyl be my death, & yf I consent not vnto you, I cannot escape your handes. Well, it is better for me, to fal into your hande wythout the dede doynge, then to synne in the syght of the Lorde: and with that, she cryed out with a loude voyce:<sup>105</sup> the elders also cryed out agaynst her. Great Bible of 1540 fol. lviii<sup>f</sup>

From the moment she makes her choice, the play changes direction. It switches focus from lechery-versus-chastity to false witness, slander, and the

loss of one's good name. Susanna becomes a victim and a potential martyr. Indeed, the earliest (third-century) Christian commentary on the tale interprets it as a full-blown anagogical allegory of the Church (Susanna) married to Christ (Joachim), who is persecuted by the Jews and the Gentiles (the two Elders).<sup>106</sup> It has been an *exemplum* for those in adversity ever since, but in the sixteenth century, as we have seen, it acquired a particular resonance in a climate of sectarian violence and religious persecution.

In fact, everything up to this point has been a preamble. The lust of the Elders, the beauty and chastity of Susanna, are all a colourful and circumstantial build-up to the courtroom scene. The story was probably originally told to illustrate a legal point. It showcases the two-witness rule<sup>107</sup> of Deuteronomy 19: 15: 'One wytnesse shall not ryse agaynst a man for any maner trespass, or for any maner synne, or for any maner faute, that he offendeth in. But at the mouth of two wytnesses or of .iii. wytnesses shall the matter be stablyshed'. But it seems more concerned with how to prevent collusion between the two witnesses: so Daniel separates them for cross-examination to try to catch them out in an inconsistency, just as practiced in police dramas and for all I know in genuine police stations today. Did it really happen? Was there an historical case of a woman, whether or not called Susanna, slandered by two venal religious leaders in revenge for her rejection of their sexual advances? And was she rescued by divine inspiration and the forensic skills of a young boy? It does not matter: whoever first noticed and then closed this loophole in Mosaic Law, the story sets a legal precedent — in Quintilian, an *exemplum*.<sup>108</sup>

It is not just an edge-of-your-seat courtroom drama with the accused's life hanging in the balance. The forensic setting is crucial to the plot, and also to the meaning of the play. Any retelling is going to be confronted with the question of the perversion of the course of justice, and consequently, probably, with the details of current law. Sixt Birck explains in the Prologue to his *Susanna* that it seemed a heaven-sent opportunity for alerting his schoolboys to the challenges of justice and the beauty of equity. Besides this, so that the young 'should be seized with some delight for civil studies [*civilium studiorum*, the study of civil law], as far as the reason of the Hebraic argument admitted, we scattered everywhere certain generalities of canon law [*generalialia quaedam iuris canonici*] in suitable places'.<sup>109</sup> The two-witness rule was part of this.<sup>110</sup> It was also applied in contemporary post-Reformation English ecclesiastical courts: where no

specific number of witnesses was required, two witnesses were sufficient,<sup>111</sup> but the testimony of a sole witness should always be backed up by another.<sup>112</sup> It was less so at this period in English common law, but it was provided for in treason and, significantly, heresy trials.<sup>113</sup>

*Susanna* does not necessarily reference the common law: as many people would have come into contact with the ecclesiastical courts, which dealt with moral offences, including marital causes and slander, and with the all-important registration of wills and testaments. The trial of Garter's Susanna appears from the procedural details to be set in an ecclesiastical court, though I leave it to those more skilled in this branch of legal history to tease out the details.<sup>114</sup> Earlier in the play, Ill Report has casually indicated that he might be seen as an unreliable prosecuting counsel: 'Thou you iudge me scant worth to be a proctor [*the equivalent in an ecclesiastical court of an advocate in common law procedure*], | Marke me well now, and I will play the Doctor' (192–3), presumably with a reference to Doctors Commons, though the Doctor he then plays is a Doctor of Medicine and not of Civil Laws.<sup>115</sup>

There are some mismatches. In the play, legal procedure clashes with the question of Susanna's virtuous silence: 'The holy woman Susan held her peace and overcame her enemies: for she defended nat herself with resonyng of wordes, nor with speche of any attorney, but the holy woman her selfe holdyng her tongue, her chastite spake for her'.<sup>116</sup> In an ecclesiastical court this would count against her: in the play she does not produce any evidence against the accusation, has no compurgators<sup>117</sup> (her household would not be allowed to be involved because of 'fear or favour',<sup>118</sup> and everyone else is convinced of her guilt), and thus is assumed guilty. In practice she speaks to God, which makes her defence audible to the audience (though not apparently to the Judge — he only seems to hear her call on God (1057) — while still preserving her modesty.<sup>119</sup> The Middle Eastern setting of the original story means that adultery carries the death penalty: no contemporary European court prescribed this, though certain 'advanced Protestants' thought that it should be introduced,<sup>120</sup> and that the English let adulterous wives off with virtually no punishment: the shame of appearing in a white sheet and barefoot was only transitory, 'though the weather be neuer so cold'.<sup>121</sup>

Susanna's accusers, the Elders, were initially, as we might expect, cited as an *exemplum* of 'Of luxuriousnesse, and incontinency': 'The two old priestes, wer so deceiued and set in the loue of Susanna, y<sup>t</sup> they, when she refused to accomplish and fulfill theyr will, went aboute to procure her





The dilemma with which they present Susanna is either to do wrong or to have the reputation of it. We cannot overestimate the ferocity of feeling over one's good name.<sup>128</sup> The facts of a case seem almost less important than what people say about it. Chastity and reputation are spoken of in the same breath: 'Susan was greuously afflycted by those ii. olde iudges, but she supposed nothing to be preferd aboue chastity, and her good name and fame'.<sup>129</sup> For a woman it was her very *raison d'être*; as Vives pointed out, a man may have many virtues, but 'in a woman the honestie is in stede of all'.

Take from a woman her beautie, take from her kynrede, riches, comelynes, eloquence, sharpenes of wytte, counnyng in her craft, gyve her chastite, and thou hast gyven her all thynges. And on that other syde, gyve her all these thynges, and calle her a noughty packe, with that one worde thou hast taken all from her and hast lefte her bare and foule.<sup>130</sup>

Perhaps significantly here, Vives does not speak of loss of chastity itself, but merely of the name of it. *Dives and Pauper* acknowledges that shame can be laid on a woman even if she has done nothing to deserve it; men can use it as a revenge if they are rejected:

lechouris speken mest vylenye of women for þey mon nout han her foul lust ofhem at wille. And for þei mon nout defylyn hem with her body þey defylyn hem with her tunge & speken of hem wol euele & diffamyn hem falslyche & procuryn to hem þe harm þat þey mon. Ensample ha we in þe booc of Daniel, xiii, of þe gode woman Susanne & of þo two false elde prestis<sup>131</sup>

but there does not seem much hope that in the normal course of things this will be recognised. We are shown the repercussions of slander on Susanna's family; her father half believes it, and prays that 'with her lyfe, her fame may also dye, | And that we heare no more her fault' (864-5).<sup>132</sup> Conversely, Virginia's lasting good fame is a more than mere consolation to her grieving father.

The Elders were, as might be expected, cited as *exempla* 'Of deceit and subtlety'; 'Of lies and lesinges'; 'Of Detractors and euel speakers'. However, Garter goes further than this, and creates the one genuinely allegorical character of the play: the Vice Ill Report. He is not in the original story except as a pervasive human tendency. Since as the Vice he is in the story but not of it, it is easier to see him as an abstract force, someone who affects the world without himself being affected, and who

can comment on the action from a knowing outsider's point of view. He is different from other allegorical characters, because he is not trapped in the web of the plot: he manipulates it. Garter uses him to show that this is not just the story of a perfect wife threatened by an assault on her chastity, but something much more deep-seated which threatens the very fabric of human institutions. He demonstrates the depth and pervasiveness of this threat, sometimes overtly and sometimes obliquely, but the more menacingly because it is presented as a light-hearted entertainment. He can do this partly because in this case the allegorical character (Ill Report) and the theatrical role (the Vice) are an almost perfect fit.

By the 1530s, the Vice seems more of a theatrical function than either a person or an allegorical figure. He is there to move the plot along.<sup>133</sup> He is the one who prods the vacillating antagonist to turn his potential villainy into action. He thus operates on two levels: narratively he pushes the plot forward, and spiritually he makes his victim succumb to temptation which he *could* — and *should* — have resisted. (The Dutch *sinnekens* have a similar role.) He wins our attention and our affection because he makes things happen: without him there would be no story.<sup>134</sup>

He is also a high-energy entertainer. He has customised a whole range of stock theatrical turns for his own use. They are predominantly verbal: the 'I've been on an extremely long and complicated journey' routine; the 'Who am I?' routine; the quick costume-and-assumed-character changes; the mercurial volte-faces; the tongue twisters, the patter turns, the deliberate verbal misunderstandings. He is there to tie his interlocutors in knots, to debunk authority, to confuse and seduce. His take on the world is slightly skew to reality, but he manages to make it totally convincing — for the moment. He is a destabilising figure, and immensely attractive. In this play, he fits Ill Report, and what he stands for, like a glove. Seductive, amusing, attention-grabbing, and knowingly *wrong*, he is the very epitome of tabloid journalism — and why we fall for it.

Ill Report is not just slander, but any distortion of the truth. As Vice, each of his turns has something to say about where and/or how this operates in the real world. Some of this was presumably more meaningful to the original audience than it is to us. We can see how the quack doctor might have been a spreader of slightly suspect news as well as a vendor of fake medicines. The 'impossible journey' monologue shows how rapidly and widely rumour and scandal can spread. The fact that it appears to include a list of pubs (469–74) suggests that they have always been a hotbed of gossip: see Ulpian Fulwell's Tom Tapster (1579), who has 'in my

taphouse both stale and fresh newes: yea, & if neede require, I haue there a stamp to quoyne newes at all times'.<sup>135</sup> This tapster tells a tale of a Lucianic Banquet of the Gods into which 'came in *Mercurius* in the habite of a trauayler, and hee tould vnto *loue* wonderfull newes and monstrous lyes ... it is a worlde to see how acceptably his newes were receyued'. The first half of the sixteenth century saw the rise of the broadside ballad: Susanna herself featured in one, 'There dwelt a man in Babylon, lady, lady',<sup>136</sup> of which Sir Toby Belch is fond. The staple fare of the publisher of *Susanna*, Thomas Colwell, was ballads and sensational 'news-sheets' with titles like *The true discription of two monstrous chyldren borne at Herne in Kent*<sup>137</sup> and *A moste true and marueilous straunge wonder, the lyke hath seldom ben seene, of. XVII. monstrous fishes, taken in Suffolke, at Downham brydge, within a myle of Ipswicke* (1568).<sup>138</sup> (Was this why Colwell was interested in the plot of *Susanna*, because he was a sort of Ill Report himself?) There are some references, probably scandalous, which are irretrievable: why for example does Ill Report say to the Jailer, 'it is not an hower ago, | Since we were both Knaues, the people sayeth so' (930-1)?

Others are more transparent. He provides a comment on 'official' news channels: 'Ill Report is a cryer, [*and he rings his Town Crier's bell*] | And a common lyer' (911-12). Then there is the 'fake proclamation' routine, where Ill Report 'mishears' the official version being dictated to him (compare the Towneley Cain and Garcio) and broadcasts it: Chinese whispers, deliberately deployed. He is a living comment on how words can be distorted. He continuously makes small adjustments to what other people say: 'We burne both with lust to Susan', says Voluptas; Ill Report picks this up 'Didst not thou say to me euen now man, | That thou waste in loue, and could not get thy shoes on?' (548, 553-4). Presumably the Elder has a speech impediment, or ill-fitting false teeth. True Report is a Cockney, and like Sam Weller, says, 'Away with the Willain'; Ill Report turns it triumphantly to 'See the Knaue himselfe can now call me Willyam' (1378-9).

We are treated to the spectacle of a theatrical role itself becoming an allegory. It is also a diagnostic tool in a way an *exemplum* could not be. The *exemplum* shows an instance of desirable or undesirable behaviour; or in the case of a (Boethian) tragedy, an acceptance of the way things are. It teaches you how to put your principles into action, and how to react to events. It does not on the whole delve deeply into causation. It would seem that, in these plays, by naming the Vice, the playwright can point the finger at the catalyst of the action. In *Apus and Virginia*, the Vice

Haphazard personifies the characters' active tendency to gamble that a situation will turn out to their advantage. *Grissill's Politick Persuasion* at least suggests something about Walter's motivation, though he seems to me less successful. Necessarily the choice of Vice will determine how we read the playwright's take on the story. In the 1607 Dutch Rhetoricians' play of *Susanna*<sup>139</sup> the two *sinnkens* are called *Quaet Ingeven* and *Vleeschelycke Begertte* ('Evil Suggestion' and 'Carnal Desire'), which lays the blame fairly straightforwardly on the moral failings of the two Elders. At the end, the verdict is: 'So perish all those who indulge in lust or destroy a woman's honour' (874-5); the moral is, 'take example from Susan, | Mirror of chastity'; and the hoped-for outcome that men and women will now, 'as the law demands, be in fear | Of adultery' (948-9), and the number of 'those who steal honour and fame and swear false oaths, barking like dogs, | In order to create mischief' will now decline (950-4).

Garter points out that the ethical implications are much more comprehensive than that. Attributing causation to the lust of two old men is correct — as far as it goes. It operates within the individual human psyche, hence implies individual human responsibility (the message of the classic moral play). But *Ill Report* uses their lust to set up a much more complex attack. He does not primarily want to bring *them* down, though that would be a satisfactory side effect (and they seem to cheat him at the end of his ultimate prey by repenting); he wants to bring down Susanna. The details of this plan keep changing. Originally it seems that he expects them to succeed 'by force or else by meed', but as the speech goes on,<sup>140</sup> it becomes more subtle:

... though the Deuill himselfe, could not tempt Susans grace  
The wit of Mayster *Ill Report* hath her and it defaste. 84

She may not have done it, but she will be thought to have done it, and so virtue itself will be brought into disrepute.

This has much wider implications than the story of one falsely accused woman. The characters are also wryly or indignantly aware of the gullibility of 'the common sort'. This is in the original story: 'The comen sorte beleued them, as those that were the elders and iudges of the people. And so they condemned her to death'. Sixt Birck's *Susanna* (1537) and the Dutch play both have characters named 'the Common People' and Hannapes uses the story to illustrate 'the mobility, and inconstancy of the people'.<sup>141</sup> Garter's servant True Report is the counter to this: the characters who really know her have a true opinion of her innocence.

However, her accusers are ‘elders and iudges’, and the dénouement is set in a courtroom. In the context of legal proceedings at the time, the opinion of the Common People is more important than we might realise. In the ecclesiastical courts, ‘office’ or ‘correction’ causes, especially those ‘for reformation of morals and the soul’s health’ were pursued either on ‘presentments’ by ‘representatives of the local communities who ... had to take their neighbours’ opinions into account’,<sup>142</sup> or by the judge *ex officio*.<sup>143</sup> Richard Cosin (1593) stresses that a major feature of ecclesiastical court procedure is that the judge’s inquisition may be based largely on ‘a *fame*, or *clamosa insinuatio*’:<sup>144</sup>

The first of such meanes is a *Fame* of an offence to be by some certeine person committed. For albeit no *Fame* be presented by *officers* specially appointed: yet if there be such a *fame* in deed to be prooued, when need shall require; then an *Ordinarie* Iudge may hereupon proceed to *speciall enquire* against the offender so by *fame* discourd [*discovered*].

This word *Fame* is deriued from the Greeke word φημη ... *quasi à fando*, of speaking; as a thing often spoken and by many. And therefore is it by *Tullie* defined to be *testimonium multitudinis*; the testimony of a multitude.<sup>145</sup>

*Fame* can also be used in the case ‘of a fact that cannot easily (by direct proofs) be conuincd, but *presumptiuelly*; as the very fact of adulterie’ (though it must not be used when this is a capital charge).<sup>146</sup>

Joachim, possibly rashly, refuses to believe in the rumours of the Elders’ bribery and corruption:

I speake but as the common brute, hath fylled euery eare,  
I hope my selfe oh Lord my God, they do thee loue and feare. 847

Unfortunately he is wrong. When we first meet him and the Elders, they are discussing the difficulties of finding their way through complex cases, not, it would seem, because of thorny points of law, but because it is difficult to work out where the truth lies. *Voluptas* encourages him by suggesting that they should rely on evidence (318–19); but the story is about to show how verbal ‘evidence’ can be wilfully perverted.<sup>147</sup>

The forensic setting means that Garter can invoke the unsettling vision of the undermining of justice in general. Justice cannot be served unless those involved tell ‘the truth, nothing but the truth, and the whole contents therof’.<sup>148</sup> Susanna is condemned by a court of law through false

witness. Narratively, the implementation of the Elders' blackmail may be secondary, but thematically it is central. Ill Report and all it implies strikes at the heart of all human institutions.

There are hints in this period of a general malaise about the execution of justice. Was this particularly focussed on the reputation of the ecclesiastical courts? The experience of rapidly changing confessions and the consequent heresy trials meant that the victims on both sides are more willing to see their judges as unjust (and hence the tendency to cite Susanna as John Bradford did), over and above the ever-present sense of the gap between theory and fallible human practice.<sup>149</sup> Several contemporary plays hint at corruption among the judiciary. In both *Apilus* and *Susanna*, the judges are accused of using their position to solicit sexual favours. (In *Apilus* it is a fake custody case.) But in both cases the means by which the fraud is engineered, false witness, is pushed centre stage. It is of course a direct contravention of the (medieval) Eighth Commandment, 'Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour'. The 1566 series of engravings of the Ten Commandments by Hieronymus Cock after Maarten van Heemskerck illustrates the Eighth Commandment by the Trial of Susanna [PLATE 2]. In *Dives and Pauper* this leads to a detailed discussion of 'What maner folc may beryn wisse in doom be þe [ecclesiastical] lawe'.<sup>150</sup> Among other things it has a frightening exposition of the role of social status and office in the credibility of witnesses which explains a lot about the acceptance of the Elders' 'evidence'.<sup>151</sup>

Susanna's husband Joachim is the mouthpiece of these worries. He is an *exemplum* of the just magistrate who agonises over the heavy responsibilities on those who administer justice,

The charge we haue to helpe the iust, and vyce to punish to,  
O Lorde thou knowest it is to great for mortall men to do           290

because

The matters are so croockt and vyle, that commeth forth ech day,  
As how to ende without some-wrong, I know not well the way. 315

He attributes this to the Fall of Man, and hence to Original Sin: that is to say, our innate proneness to choose the wrong while knowing the right. (Again, his attitudes would repay investigation by someone better versed in the sixteenth-century discussions on ecclesiastical and common law.)

We have been much exercised recently in Britain over corruption in public life, and the immediate reaction has been to change the rules, so that possible future delinquents cannot be tempted. Joachim's attitude is

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PLATE 2: 'Thou shalt not bear falsewitness against thy neighbour'  
from series *The Ten Commandments* (Netherlands c.1566): print by Harmen Jansz.  
Muller after Maarten van Heemskerck, published Hieronymus Cock.

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that you must change the hearts and minds of men, not the system. He has heard that the Elders engage in bribery,

... if they be such wicked men as Fame hath spread for true,  
Doe teach them Lord to mend their fault,

& frame themselves anew.

Thou gloriest not in sinners state, which from thy lawes remeve,  
Thou grauntest the tyme of thy grace, for to repent and liue.<sup>152</sup> 845

Human justice is however bound to be fallible, given our fallen nature. The Susanna story gives us a monitory glimpse of perfect, divine justice. As Pauper says 'There is a wisse abouyn us þat knowith al & may nout be deceyuyd, þat is God whych seth al, and he schal ben to us at þe doom

boþin iuge & witsnesse'.<sup>153</sup> In the story, Daniel, in the form of a twelve-year-old boy, is his earthly surrogate.

However, does the chain of causation stop here? In the story of the Fall, as Adam blamed Eve, so Eve blamed the serpent. Ill Report is the son of Satan, with all that implies; and Satan starts the play by appearing in person, a theatrical attraction but also a key stage in the chain. But this Satan also bears a remarkable resemblance to Job's (remember that *diabolus* means 'the accuser'):

Among the plagues of thee O God,  
Wherewith thou plaguest man,  
Plague such as I would haue thee plague,  
Or let me if I can. 30

Why did God allow the Devil's disciple to put the innocent Susanna through this ordeal? Partly, it appears, because she had asked for it:

And I haue heard, and so haue you, our mistresse often say,  
Why Lorde doest thou loue me so well, that liue in welth alway,  
Graunt to me God once in my lyfe, a little peece of thrall,  
But stande by me good Lord I say, let me not synke nor fall.  
And this hath God I warrant thee, done for to shew his might,  
And though her case doe now seeme crookte, he will set it aright. 832

It seems here that Susanna is plagued in order, like Job, to be an example to us; more specifically, a Mirror for the Persecuted. We are back to John Bradford.

So: does the play present us with an *exemplum* of constancy under persecution, or of the perversion of justice by false witness, or of the damaging effects of senile lust? All of them: though Ill Report brings the false-witness theme to the foreground. The exemplary approach allows us to shift focus from scene to scene, just as our attention shifts from one set of characters to another or one point of view to another. The real-time nature of drama virtually enforces this continually-shifting concentration. Moreover, audiences go away with as many different impressions of a play's message as there are individuals. They may discuss them afterwards, and create further and even more complex patterns, since the audience does not cease to be the audience once the play is over.

There might be an assumption that if *exempla* are there to confirm the audience's accepted communal values (one can almost hear critics say 'prejudices'), they must resist any attempt at exploration or questioning.



Here the plot of *Susanna* seems to be playing off this sense of stability. Susanna is set up as an *exemplum* of all the womanly virtues partly to provoke the question, 'How could this happen? How could someone so admirable and God-fearing have found herself in this predicament? Is no-one safe?' (And is nowhere, even a walled garden, safe, after Eden?) This must have touched a chord, given recent history. Susanna herself asks, 'Why God if I most synfull wight, might reason once with thee, | Canst thou permit and suffer still, these wicked thus to lye?' (798–9). An exemplary story does not preclude questioning, even if it must ultimately provide resolution (*Susanna* is after all a 'commodity', not a tragedy), and even if the answer is the non-answer of Job: 'this hath God I warrant thee, done for to shew his might' (831). The other answer of course comes from Hebrews 12: 6, 'For whom god loueth, he chasteneth', and in the Beatitude, 'For blessed be they (saith Christ) whiche suffre persecucion, for righteousnes sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heuen'.<sup>154</sup>

How significant is it that most of our plays place women in this victim-situation? Even before the advent of a queen regnant, Ralph Radcliffe's 1540s schoolboy plays included the exemplary-sounding *De patientia Grisildis*, *De Iudith fortitudine*, *De Susannæ liberatione*. They also included *De Iobi afflictionibus*.<sup>155</sup> (It is interesting that Lois E. Bueler counts the story of Job among her 'Tested Woman' plots.)<sup>156</sup> Wilson's *Arte of rhetorique* gives one reason for the proliferation of heroine stories:

Uneguall examples commende muche the matter. I call them vneguall, when the weaker is brought in againste the stronger, as if chyl dren be faythfull, much more ought menne to be faythfull. If womene be chaste, and vndefiled: menne shoulde muche more be cleane, and wythoute faulte.<sup>157</sup>

Though patronising, this does at least give an alternative reading to the usual one of male oppression.

Robert Greene's title to his retelling of the Susanna story sets out the two sides of the exemplum perfectly: 'THE MYRROVR OF MODESTIE, wherein appeareth as in a perfect Glasse howe the Lorde deliuereth the innocent from all imminent perils, and plagueth the bloudthirstie hypocrites with deserued punishments. / Shewing that the graie heades of dooting adulterers shall not go with peace into the graue, neither shall the righteous be forsaken in the daie of trouble'.<sup>158</sup> This seems to tie everything up very neatly. Only the allegorical figure of Ill Report destabilises it. He is the vehicle of exploration and uncertainty. He not

only demonstrates the means, but also the pervasiveness of his workings. He is hanged at the end of this particular story, but as in all Vice-hangings, we hear the echo of the mocking laughter of regeneration. ‘Must Ill Reporte dye?’ (1270). Only this time round.

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#### NOTES

1. Thomas Garter *The commody of the moste vertuous and godlye Susanna neuer before this tyme printed* (London: Hugh Jackson, 1578). All quotations are from this edition, but line numbers are supplied from the edition by B. Ifor Evans and W.W. Greg (Malone Society Reprints; Oxford UP for Malone Society, 1937 for 1936).
2. *Apius and Virginia*: ‘R.B.’ is possibly Richard Bower, Master of the Children of the Chapel Royal from 1545–61, when he died. Published London: William How for Richard Jones, 1575. Line numbers from the edition in *Tudor Interludes* edited Peter Happé (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) 271–317.
3. Published Thomas Colwell. Line numbers from Malone Society Reprints edition by R.B. McKerrow and W.W. Greg (1909).
4. No author given: published William Pickering and Thomas Hackett; entered in SR 1561. Edition in *Six Anonymous Plays: Second Series, comprising: Jacob and Esau; Youth; Albion, knight; Misogonus; Godly Queen Hester; Tom Tyler and his wife* edited J.S. Farmer (London: Early English Drama Society, 1906); no line numbers.
5. Published John Allde, s.d. but licensed 1569.
6. *A new Enterlude, neuer before this tyme imprinted, entreating of the Life and Repentaunce of Marie Magdalene: not only godlie, learned and fruitefull, but also well furnished with pleasaunt myrth and pastime ...* (London: John Charlewood, 1566); entered in SR the same year. Wager had died in 1562.  
One might add Bale’s *King Johan*, but there the relationship between the historical and allegorical characters is more consciously intellectualised
7. On the original auspices of *Hester*, see *Appendix*.
8. Bernard Spivack *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil* (New York and London: Columbia UP, 1958) 253 (his italics); see his chapter 8 for discussion. He also includes *John the Evangelist, King Darius, Bale’s King Johan, The Cruel Debtor, Horestes, Clyomon and Clamydes, Common Conditions, The Cobbler’s Prophecy, and Tom Tyler and his Wife*.
9. Spivack *Allegory of Evil* 254.
10. Spivack *Allegory of Evil* 254. See e.g. J.M.R. Margeson *The Origins of English Tragedy* (London: Oxford UP, 1967) 90: ‘*Apius and Virginia* is a hybrid play,

neither pure morality nor pure mimesis'. As recently as 2001, Lois E. Bueler says of *Grissill*, 'By 1559 Phillip also had the means of literal drama available, allowing him to enliven his play with realistic characters'; *The Tested Woman Plot* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2001) 54.

11. Thus by extension from old-fashioned didacticism, where the audience is told what to think, to the modern approach where the audience are invited to make their own deductions, though usually with a more or less covert shove in the 'right' direction.
12. Robert Potter *The English Morality Play* (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973) 119.
13. Current thinking has moved on from Spivack, but his general attitude lingers.
14. See Janette Dillon *The Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre* (Cambridge UP, 2006) 148–56. The term is not confined to this particular mix: Howard B. Norland refers to the Digby *Mary Magdalene* as a 'hybrid play' because it combines 'elements of the three major forms of medieval drama — the cycle, the morality, and the saint's play'; *Drama in Early Tudor Britain, 1485–1558* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1995) 12; while Shakespearean scholars have used it of *Measure for Measure*, and *Cymbeline*.
15. Supposedly the source of Peter Quince and Co's description of their *Pyramus and Thisbe*, 'a very tragical mirth'.
16. Earliest English quotation in this meaning dated 1447.
17. The classic discussion is J.-Th. Welter *L'exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du moyen âge* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973, reprint of Paris: Guitard, 1927), which maps the vast range of handbooks and collections of *exempla*. Welter quotes St Ambrose as the first Western Christian practitioner to use the *exemplum*, largely from the Bible, and to recommend its use to preachers. His examples of the latter (*PL* 17 cols 236, 254) are however from Pseudo Ambrose. See also Larry Scanlon *Narrative, Authority, and Power: the medieval exemplum and the Chaucerian tradition* (Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 20; Cambridge UP, 1994) for a more sociological view.
18. *Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne'* edited F.J. Furnivall *EETS OS 119* (1901) lines 3997–4000.
19. *The Monk's Tale* from *Poetical Works of Chaucer* edited Larry D. Benson (Riverside Chaucer; Oxford UP, third edition 1988).
20. What the marginalia of William of Waddington call an *exemplum*, those of Robert Mannyng of Brunne call a *tale*: *Handlyng Synne'* lines 1191 and 1591; 1251 and 1853; 1547 and 2097, and so forth. Though modern critics and editors have tried to define it more precisely, largely for their own convenience, for medieval homiletic writers, as Owst pointed out eighty years ago, 'no such restriction of usage seems to have existed': G.R. Owst *Literature and Pulpit* in

- Medieval England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1961 second revised edition of 1933 edition) 151. Owst himself decides on *exemplum* for ‘the general all-inclusive term for any kind of homiletic simile or illustration’, while subdividing them into *narration* (humans), *fable* (animals), and *figure* (natural world) for his own convenience (152).
21. Manuscript c.1300. *Chastete and Luxure*, Cambridge Fitzwilliam Museum, MS 368 (single leaf); see <[www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/friends/exhibits/honore\\_roi.html](http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/gallery/friends/exhibits/honore_roi.html)>. In another, *Amistié*, a crowned female figure, is exemplified by David and Jonathan, while *Henvy* (not *Eli*), a male figure, is exemplified by Saul throwing his javelin at David; BL Add MS 54180, fol. 107r: see <[www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add\\_ms\\_54180\\_f107r](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=add_ms_54180_f107r)>.
  22. Chaucer ‘Nun’s Priest’s Tale’ *Canterbury Tales* VII 3436–7; ‘Monk’s Tale’ *Canterbury Tales* VII 1997–8.
  23. Scanlon *Narrative, Authority, and Power* 34.
  24. See *Appendix*, and Greg Walker *Plays of Persuasion* (Cambridge UP, 1991) 15.
  25. Janette Dillon discusses Hester’s increasing boldness of speech, which is however deployed ‘within a framework of deference’ in ‘Powerful Obedience: Godly Queen Hester and Katherine of Aragon’ in *Interludes and Early Modern Society* edited Peter Happé and Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007) 117–39, at 139.
  26. John Aylmer *An harborovve for faithfull and trevve subiectes agaynst the late blowne blaste, concerning the gouernment of vvemen* (‘Strasborowe’ [London], [John Day], 1559) sig. B4v.
  27. Susan Wiseman ‘Exemplarity, women, and political rhetoric’ in *Rhetoric, Women and Politics in Early Modern England* edited Jennifer Richards and Alison Thorne (London: Routledge, 2007) 129–48 at 132–4. For example, Wiseman stresses the moral ambiguity of the story of Lucretia.
  28. Aristotle *The Art of Rhetoric* translated and edited H.C. Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1991, 2004) 75–7, 189–91; Part One, Chapter 1.2, Part 3, chapter 2.20. OED sv *example* 2: ‘The species of argument in which the major premiss of a syllogism is assumed from a particular instance’. In Cicero and Quintilian the Greek *paradeigma* becomes the Latin *exemplum*.
  29. Thomas Wilson (1525?–1581) *The rule of reason, conteinyng the arte of logique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1551) sig. H vii; *De Exemplo*.
  30. George Puttenham *The arte of English poesie* (London: Richard Field, 1589). Though the publication date is rather late for the rest of my argument, it seems possible that it reflects current thinking: the ODNB article on Puttenham says that ‘*The Art* was somewhat out of fashion by 1589, drawing most of its examples from early to mid-sixteenth-century writers’.

31. The segment I have omitted here is: 'or if ye will draw the iudgements precedent and authorized by antiquitie as veritable, and peraduenture fayned and imagined for some purpose, into similitude or dissimilitude with our present actions and affaires', which introduces the concepts of legal precedents and invented illustrations. I have merely left it out to make his argument clearer.
32. Puttenham *Arte of English Poesie* 205–6.
33. Puttenham *Arte of English Poesie* 31; Chapter XIX 'Of historicall Poesie, by which the famous acts of Princes and the vertuous and worthy liues of our forefathers were reported'.
34. A technical term used of drawing a general inductive conclusion from insufficient data. Susanna argues that since God has rescued her when she prayed for help, He will necessarily rescue everyone when they pray for help.
35. It was not confined to Protestants: I drew a blank looking for comparisons between Susanna and Anne Boleyn as suggested by John N. King 'The Godly Woman in Elizabethan Iconography' *Renaissance Quarterly* 38: 1 (1985) 41–84, at 72; but found a most impassioned one by Sir John Leslie on Mary Queen of Scots: 'Suerlie they haue plaied the saide pageante vvithe this innocente Susan, as the tvvo vvicked Iudges did playe vvithe the other former Susan. They laye harde to her charge theire ovvne navvghtie and vvycked counsell and deuise'; *A defence of the honour of the right highe, mightye and noble Princesse Marie Quene of Scotlande and dowager of France ... that the regimete of women ys conformable to the lave of God and nature* (1569) fol. 9<sup>r</sup>. 'What I do I must needs do, although thou wert a Queene?'
36. John Bradford (1510?–1555) *The complaynt of Veritie* (London: ?John Day for ?Owen Rogers, 1559) sig. A ii<sup>v</sup>. The phrase for which he is best remembered, 'There, but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford' (on seeing a fellow prisoner led to execution), has survived in common parlance in its variant, 'There, but for the grace of God, go I'.
37. Brendan McGuigan *Rhetorical Devices: A Handbook and Activities for Student Writers* (Clayton, Del: Prestwick House, 2007) 97. All authorities point out that the force of the argument lies in the exact correspondence of the example to the situation to which it is being applied.
38. Puttenham *Arte of English Poesie* 201. Note the emphasis on 'ordinary judgements'.
39. Puttenham *Arte of English Poesie* 31.
40. See e.g. Martin Luther *A propre treatyse of good workes* (London: Robert Wyer, [1535?]) sig. q vi<sup>r</sup>–v:

For we be euer taughte more by examples and storyes, than by lawes,  
decrees, & constytucyons, bycause that in suche examples & hystories /  
sure experyence teacheth vs, and here bare wordes teache vs.

41. Puttenham *Arte of English Poesie* 31.
42. Puttenham *Arte of English Poesie* 32. On the other hand, he is scathing about prophecies and prognostications.
43. Thomas Wilson *The arte of rhetorique* (London: Richard Grafton, 1553) fol. 101<sup>v</sup>.
44. Wilson *Arte of rhetorique* fol. 101<sup>v</sup>.
45. Peacham *The garden of eloquence* (London: Henry Jackson, 1577) W ii<sup>v</sup>–W iii<sup>r</sup>.
46. Petrarch thought it must be made up, despite its factual sounding setting, because of its literary context: ‘Whether what I have narrated be true or false I do not know, but the fact that you wrote it would seem sufficient to justify the inference that it is but a tale. Foreseeing this question, I have prefaced my translation with the statement that the responsibility for the story rests with the author; that is, with you’; Petrarch *Letter to Boccaccio* on his Latin translation of Boccaccio’s *Griselda* in the *Decameron*, translation online at  
<[http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/read\\_letters.html?s=pet06.html](http://petrarch.petersadlon.com/read_letters.html?s=pet06.html)> .
47. Puttenham *Arte of English Poesie* 32.
48. It is the women who are to be praised: *Les preudes femmes et bonnes dames que Dieux loue en sa Bible, qui par leurs saintes euvres et bonnes meurs, furent et seront à tousjours mais louées* (*Le livre du chevalier de La Tour Landry pour l’enseignement de ses filles, publié d’après les manuscrits de Paris et de Londres* edited Anatole de Montaiglon (Paris: P. Jannet, 1854) chapter 38, page 84). Started in 1371 and probably finished the next year.
49. William Caxton *The Book of the Knight of the Tower* edited M.Y. Offord *EETS* SS 2 (1971) 62. Caxton translated and published it in 1484. There was an earlier translation in the mid fifteenth century, preserved in MS Harley 1764.
50. Chapter 61; Caxton *Knight of the Tower* 87.
51. *Tour Landry* chapter 76, page 154: *Si se lavoit et pignoit à une fenestre dont le roy la pouoit bien véoir; sy avoit moult beau chief et blont*. Caxton (*Knight of the Tower* 107) may have misinterpreted the *lavoit* as also referring to her hair. This was an age in which a married woman would probably cover her hair completely; most people might have no idea even what colour it was.
52. *Tour Landry* chapter 97, page 191: *la bonne dame peignoit so chief, qui estoit blanche et blonde*. Caxton *Knight of the Tower* 130.
53. The only modern edition is Maureen Cheney Curnow *The ‘Livre de la Cité des Dames’ of Christine de Pisan: A Critical Edition* (PhD Vanderbilt University, Nashville, 1975) which I have not seen. Modern translation Christine de Pizan *The Book of the City of Ladies* translated Rosalind Brown-Grant (London:

- Penguin, 1999). Translation by Bryan Anslay, *Yeoman of the Cellar of Henry VIII, The Boke of the Cyte of Ladyes* (London: Henry Pepwell, 1521).
54. Giovanni Boccaccio *De mulieribus claris* in *Tutte le opere* edited Vittorio Zaccaria (Milano: Mondadori, 1967) online at [www.bibliotecaitaliana.it/xtf/view?docId=bibit000947/bibit000947.xml](http://www.bibliotecaitaliana.it/xtf/view?docId=bibit000947/bibit000947.xml). Translation *Concerning Famous Women* by Guido A. Guarino (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1984).
55. Exemplary heroines featured in other media. They appear in pageants: there is a lengthy cycle of Famous Women of the Old Testament, based originally on the types of the Virgin Mary in the *Speculum humanae salvationis*, the fullest set of which appeared in the Leuven *ommegang* from about 1500 (see Meg Twycross 'Worthy Women of the Old Testament: The *Ambachtsvrouwen* of the Leuven *Ommegang*', in *Urban Theatre in the Low Countries, 1400-1625*, edited by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé (Medieval Texts and Cultures of Northern Europe, 12; Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); 221-250); inevitably individual biblical heroines also appear in Royal Entries for female rulers. In a woodcut sequence of twelve by Erhard Schon from about 1530, the last three are Judith, Hester, and Susanna [PLATE 1]. There was a parallel set of Nine Female Worthies to match the male Worthies: at first they were Amazons, but then imitated the male pattern of three biblical Worthies, three classical Worthies, and three Worthies from more recent history. The biblical Worthies are Hester, Judith, and Jael, more proactively heroic to match their male counterparts. Christine's *Cité de Dames* provided the subjects for several sets of tapestries (for a general discussion see Susan Groag Bell *The Lost Tapestries of the 'City of Ladies'* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004); *The Inventory of King Henry VIII: the Transcript* edited David Starkey (London: Harvey Miller for the Society of Antiquaries, 1998) item 14033, 'Six peces of Tapestry of the Citie of ladies' in the Prince's Wardrobe; item 15272 for the Lady Elizabeth), including one which seems to have gone to Scotland with Margaret Tudor, and one which was allocated to the household of the Princess Elizabeth, on the death of Henry VIII (Thomas P. Campbell *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty: Tapestries at the Tudor Court* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 2007) 91 (Margaret Tudor), 248, and 325 (Prince Edward, and Princess Mary).) Wolsey (1522) had a set of *Susanna*, a set of *Esther*, and a set of *Judith and Holofernes*; Campbell *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty* 136; also *Inventory of King Henry VIII* items 11982, 11995, 13358 13362, 13364. Henry's inventory included several other pieces of *Susanna*: items 9742, 11982, 12049) and an *Esther* which probably belonged to his father; Campbell *Art of Majesty* 75-6. Presumably these were meant to be inspirational as well as decorative.
56. [Thomas Salter] *A Mirrhor mete for all Mothers, Matrones, and Maidens, intituled the Mirrhor of Modestie, no lesse profitable and pleasant, then necessarie to bee read and practised* (London: Edward White, 1579), sigs B ij<sup>v</sup>-B iij<sup>r</sup>. This was a

translation and adaptation of Giovanni Bruto's *La institutione di una fanciulla nata nobilmente* (Antwerp: Plantin, 1555). I have removed an otiose comma between 'whiche' and 'bookes'.

57. We are used to the celebration of Elizabeth as Deborah, Judith, and Hester; but the same heroines were used as analogues of Mary Tudor: see for example George Marshall *A comendious treatise in metre declaring ... the firste receauinge of the Christen fayth here in Englande* (London: J. Cawod, 1554) sigs C iij<sup>v</sup>-iiii<sup>r</sup>.
58. And would have been politically contentious in Mary's reign.
59. Thomas Bentley *The sixt lampe of virginittie containing a mirrour for maidens and matrons: or, the seuerall duties and office of all sorts of women in their vocation out of Gods word, with their due praise and dispraise by the same: together with the names, liues, and stories of all women mentioned in holie Scriptures, either good or bad* (London: Thomas Dawson [and Henry Denham], for the assignes of William Seres, 1582) 90.
60. Though it seems likely that this is a publisher's blurb intended to market the play as improving reading: see note 24.
61. There is a school of thought that says he was related to, possibly the father of, the minor poet Bernard Garter, who devised some of the speeches for Queen Elizabeth's Entry into Norwich in 1578. There are apparent echoes of *Susanna* in these, but they may merely be generic to fourteeners:
- Graunt then (oh gracious soueraigne Queene) this only my request,  
That that which shal be done in me, be construed to the best. Norwich
- And for the commons of this realme, O Lord graunt my request,  
But what thou and the Prince doth will, they iudge it for the best. Susanna
- And wishe to God, that thou mayste raigne, twice Nestors yeares in peace Norwich
- God send you Nestors tyme to raigne, with helpe in all assayes Susanna
- Thus shalt thou liue and raigne in rest, and mightie God shalt please.  
Thy state be sure, thy subiectes safe, thy common welth at ease. Norwich
- But this I thinke if euidence our matters doe desyde,  
Our ground is sure, our path is straight, our sentence cannot slyde. Susanna
- However, Bernard and Thomas had different publishers, though in the same year: Bernard's Norwich script was printed by Henry Binneman, while Thomas's *Susanna* was printed by Hugh Jackson.
62. *Gammer Gurton* was entered as 'Diccon of Bedlam' in 1562/3, but not printed until 1575. Colwell's staple fare was ballads and other ephemera.
63. The subject was also a favourite with contemporary German-language school plays: see especially Paul Rehbun and Sixt Birck. Paul Rehbun *Susanna* (1535) in *Dramen* edited Hermann Palm (Stuttgart: Litterarische Verein, 1859) 1-88; translation (rather odd octosyllabic couplets) by M. John Hanak in *Sachs*,



- Gryphius, Schegel and others: German Theater before 1750* edited Gerald Gillespie (New York: Continuum, 1992) 27–97; Sixt Birck (Xystus Betulius) German version for Basel: *Die historie von der frommen Gottsforchtigen frouwen Susanna / Im M.CCCCC.XXX.II Jar ... durch die jungen Burger gehaltenn* (Basel: Thomas Wolff, 1532); Latin version for Augsburg: *Sixt Birck Susanna, comicotragoedia in Dramata sacra: comoediae atque tragoediae aliquot e Veteri Testamento desumptae* 2 vols (Basel: Johannes Oporinus, 1547) 2; online at <[www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camena/drama/te15.html](http://www.uni-mannheim.de/mateo/camena/drama/te15.html)>. Nineteenth-century edition: Xystvs Betvlivs (Sixt Birck) *Susanna* edited Johannes Bolte (Berlin: Speyer and Peters, 1893). Translation: *Susanna: a tragi-comedy by Xystus Betulius Augustanus* translated C.C. Love (Toronto: 1992): online at <[www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/rnlp/susanna1.html](http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/epc/rnlp/susanna1.html)>.
64. See ODNB sv *John Phillips*.
65. Subsequently of Gray's Inn. Neville later wrote about Kett's rebellion and the antiquities of Norwich, which might suggest an acquaintance with Bernard Garter.
66. *The Byble in Englyshe, that is to saye the content of al the holy scrypture, both of þe olde, and newe testament, with a prologue therinto, made by the reuerende father in God, Thomas archbyshop of Cantorbury* (London: Edward Whitchurch, 1540) fol. lvii<sup>v</sup> (hereafter cited as 'Great Bible of 1540'): 'Now Joachim her husbände was a greate rych man'; picked up in the ballad of 'The Constancy of Susanna'.
67. Juan Luis Vives *The Instruction of a Christen woman ... turned out of Laten into Englysshe by Rycharde Hyrd* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1529); quotations from modern edition by Virginia Walcott Beachamp, Elizabeth H. Hageman, Margaret Mikesell, and others (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002); Latin *Io. Lodovici Vivis Valentini Opera* 2 vols (Basel: 1555) 2 650–755.
68. This is to be taken as a generic term for 'young male actors' be they schoolboys or undergraduates. Undergraduates were much younger than they are now.
69. Vives *Instruction of a Christen Woman* 23.
70. Vives *Instruction of a Christen Woman* 16.
71. Sig. B iiiii<sup>f</sup>. See the Fourth Commandment.
72. Sig. B. iii<sup>v</sup>; with the variant 'Each child with speed come learne of me'.
73. Ralph A. Houlbrooke *The English Family 1450–1700* (London and New York: Longman, 1984) 30–34. Interestingly, he maintains that responsibility for education was however being shifted from the home to the school. Through the plays, the school is teaching the parents how they should behave. For an additional slant on this, see Pamela M. King 'Minority Plays: Two Interludes for Edward VI' *METH* 15 (1993) 87–102.
74. Great Bible of 1540, fol. lvii<sup>v</sup>.
75. Thomas Becon *The gouernaunce of vertue teaching all faythful christians, how they oughte daily to leade their lyfe, & fruitfully to spend their time vnto the glorie of God*

- & the health of their owne soules (London: John Day, second edition 1566) sig. [A iii]r. It is a handbook of *exempla* and biblical quotations.
76. Becon *Gouernaunce of vertue* sig. [A v]v.
77. See note 63.
78. Rebhun *Susanna* Act 2 scene 4 lines 255–72, after which she instructs her maids to be diligent in household tasks. Helen Watanabe O’Kelly suggests that in the German plays she is presented as the ideal Lutheran housewife. She also comments on the plays’ ‘moral and didactic intention and ... their clear aim to impose certain behavioural norms on the community which both acts in and watches the play’; ‘The early modern period (1450–1720)’, in *The Cambridge History of German Literature* (Cambridge UP, 1997) 92–146 at 104.
79. In Birck (see note 63) she enters expounding ‘the Heavens declare the glory of God’ to her maidservants; Act I scene 3.
80. *Le Mistère du Viel Testament* tome V edited Baron James de Rothschild (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1885). See Alan E. Knight ‘The Stage as Context: Two Late Medieval Susanna Plays’ in *The Stage as Mirror: Civic Theatre in Late Medieval Europe* edited Alan E. Knight (Cambridge: Brewer, 1997) 201–216.
81. Nicolas de Hannapes *The ensamples of vertue and vice, gathered oute of holye scripture. By Nicolas Hanape patriarch of Ierusalem. Very necessarye for all christen men and women to loke vpon. And Englyshed by Thomas Paynell* (London: [J. Tisdale], 1561). Hannapes also makes her an example *Of matrimony; Of chastity; Of the benignitie of God to hys seruantes; Of deuine consolation; Of prayer; Of silence and clattering;* and several others.
82. Miles Coverdale (1488–1568) *A goodly treatise of faith, hope, and charite necessary for all Christen men to know and to exercyse themselues therein translated into englyshe* (Southwark: James Nicolson, 1537) fol. 74v.
83. Hannapes *Ensamples of vertue and vice* sig. K iiiiv.
84. In the *Mistère* the dinner table becomes a focus of family life and good manners (40440–71, 40504–17).
85. Juan Luis Vives *The office and duetie of an husband ... translated into English by Thomas Paynell* (London: John Cawood, 1555) sig. V i<sup>r</sup>: ‘in the which the husband geueth ouer his ryght vnto the woman, as to rule & gouerne her maydens, to see to those thinges yt belong vnto ye kitchen, & to ye most part of ye houshold stuffe’.
86. Possibly a joke about Erasmus’ (1557) *A mery dialogue, declaringe the propertyes of shrowde shrewes, and honest wyues* ?
87. *Tspeel van Susanna* (‘The Play of Susanna’) in *For Pleasure and Profit: Six Dutch Rhetoricians Plays, Volume One* edited and translated Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé (Lancaster: Medieval English Theatre, 2006) lines 29–78.

88. 'The early modern period' *Cambridge History of German Literature* 104.
89. *Vives Instruction of a Christen Woman* 33. Latin text from *Io. Lodovici Vivis Valentini Opera* 2 vols (Basel: 1555) 2: 662.
90. See also OED sv *honest* 3(b); *virtuous* 2(b).
91. Robert Greene *THE MYRROVR OF MODESTIE, wherein appeareth as in a perfect Glasse howe the Lorde deliuereth the innocent from all imminent perils, and plagueth the bloudthirstie hypocrites with deserued punishments ...* (London: Roger Warde, 1584) introduction fols 3<sup>r-v</sup>. Greene's rendering contains a scattering of what sound like verbal echoes of the play, not attributable to their joint source.
- The EEBO book is from a microfilm with several pages missing. These can be supplied from the facsimile by J. Payne Collier in *Illustrations of Old English Literature* 3 vols (London: privately printed, 1866) 3 1-32; pdf available at <<http://google.co.uk/books?id=6Z1TAAAACAAJ>>. The edition in *The life and complete works in prose and verse of Robert Greene: Vol. 3 Prose* edited Alexander B. Grosart (privately printed, 1881-6) is very difficult to get hold of.
92. Ulpian Fulwell on Elizabeth wife of Henry VII in *The flovver of fame Containing the bright renowne, & moste fortunate raigne of King Henry the viii* (London: William Hoskins, 1575) fol. 7<sup>v</sup>.
93. 'I would wish that women would folowe the pagane *Lucretia*, or Hebrue *Susanna*'; Polydore Vergil *An abridgement of the notable woorke of Polidore Vergile Compendiously gathered by Thomas Langley* (London: Richard Grafton, 1546) fol. lxxv<sup>r</sup>.
94. John Phillips *A frendly larum, or faythfull warnynge to the true harted subiectes of England Discoueryng the actes, and malicious myndes of those obstinate and rebellious babists that hope (as they terme it) to haue theyr golden day* (London William How for Rycharde Iohnes, [1570]) sig. A v<sup>r</sup>.
95. *Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi De Viduis Liber Unus* chapter 4, PL 16 cols 241-2; translation in Ambrose *Select Works and Letters* translated H. de Romestin with E. de Romestin and H.T.F. Duckworth (Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 10; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1891, reprinted Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1955) chapter 4, pages 679-80.
96. E.g. Friar Laurent *Ryal book or a book for a kynge* (Westminster: William Caxton, 1485 or 6) sig. [S vi<sup>r-v</sup>]; Gui de Rove translated William Caxton *Doctrinal of sabyence* (Westminster: Caxton, 1489) sig. [J viii]<sup>r</sup>; Marshall *A compendious treatise* sig. C iij<sup>v</sup> (see note 57). The prophetess Anna was thought to belong to a religious order of widows.
97. Thomas Becon *Gouernaunce of vertue* sig. N ii<sup>r-v</sup> (fols ?90<sup>r-v</sup>).
98. She had a sure trust in the Lord, which enabled her to 'constantly resist those two old priestes, that tempted her so vehemently': Hannapes *Ensamplis of vertue and vice* sig. Hh vii<sup>r</sup>.

99. Nicholas Breton *A smale handfull of fragrant flowers selected and gathered out of the lowely garden of sacred scriptures, fit for any honorable or woorshipfull gentlewoman to smell unto. Dedicated for a Newe-yeeres gyft, to the honorable and vertuous lady, the Lady Sheffefeld* (London: Richard Johnes, 1575) sig. A v<sup>r</sup>.
100. Edward Arber *A Transcript of the Registers of the Company of Stationers of London, 1554–1640 A.D.* (London: Stationers' Company, 1875–94) fol. 89<sup>b</sup>.
101. Robert Burdet *A dyalogue defensyue for women, agaynst malycyous detractoures* (London: Robert Wyer, for Rycharde Banckes, 1542) sig. [B iiiii]<sup>v</sup>.
102. Breton *Handfull of fragrant flowers* sig. A v<sup>v</sup>.
103. Ovid *Amores* 1: 8 line 43. Birck *Susanna* Act 5 scene 8 (no lineation or pagination): *Quin uulgo dictitant, | Castam esse eam, quam nullus uir rogauerit.*
104. That she had 'a chaste mind in a corrupt body'; Vives *Christen woman*, 34. See Susan Wiseman's discussion of Lucretia; 'Exemplarity' 146–7 (see note 27).
105. Had she not done that, she would have been considered to have consented: Deuteronomy 22: 24: 'because she cryed not, beynge in the cytie'; Great Bible of 1540 fol. lxxviii<sup>v</sup>.
106. Hippolytus of Rome (c.170–c.236) in *Hippolytus, Cyprian, Caius, Novatian*, edited Alexander Roberts & James Donaldson, revised A. Cleveland Coxe (Ante-Nicene Fathers 5; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1971 reprint of Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1886) 191–4.
107. See Olga Horner's essential article, 'Susanna's Double Life' *METH* 8:2 (1986) 76–102.
108. Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* translated H.E. Butler, 4 vols (Loeb; Cambridge Mass. and London: Harvard UP and Heinemann, 1921) 2 158–9; Book 5. ii. 1: *lam praeiudiciorum vis omnis tribus in generibus versatur: rebus, quae aliquando ex paribus causis sunt iudicatae, quae exempla rectius dicuntur ...* ('As regards decisions in previous courts, these fall under three heads. First, we have matters on which judgment has been given at some time or other in cases of a similar nature: these are, however, more correctly termed *precedents* ...').  
It was used in that sense at the period: *OED* sv *example* 5: 'A precedent appealed to, to justify or authorize any course of action'. In ecclesiastical law, the legal precedent did not have exactly the same force as it does in common law, but it was significant nonetheless.
109. See note 63 for references. Birck's Prefatory Letter to the citizens of Augsburg about the Latin play, from *Susanna* edited Bolte, 8:  
*Porro quo inconsulta iuuentus aliqua civilium studiorum delectatione caperetur, quantum argumentum Hebraici ratio admisit, generalia quaedam iuris canonici suis passim locis aspersimus.*

Rehbun *Susanna* inserts scenes (Act 2 scenes 1–3) in which the Elders help a farmer cheat a neighbour of his better land, and a widow and orphan out of their inheritance.

For a succinct explanation of the differences between civil and common law, see <[www.law.berkeley.edu/library/robbins/pdf/CommonLawCivilLawTraditions.pdf](http://www.law.berkeley.edu/library/robbins/pdf/CommonLawCivilLawTraditions.pdf)>.

110. See Hostiensis (Henry of Suso) *Summa Aurea* (Cologne: Lazarus Zetzner, 1512) section *De testibus*, Book 2 column 548:

*Quotus numerus testium requiritur: Ad minus binarius: quia licet aliquae causae plus quam duo testes exigant, nulla tamen est, quae unius testimonio, quamvis legitimo, terminetur: ergo in ore duorum vel trium testium stat omne verbum.*

111. See previous note, and Thomas Cranmer, Walter Haddon, John Cheke, and others *Reformatio legum ecclesiasticarum* (London: John Daye, 1571) fol. 121v: *At ubi numerus testium non requiritur, duo testes probabunt* ('But where a specific number of witnesses is not required, two witnesses will provide proof'). The *Reformatio legum* never became statute law, as its progress through Parliament in 1553 was cut short by the death of Edward VI, but in these points it remains the same as pre-Reformation canon law.

112. Fol. 120r:

*Quando dictum unius testis suppletur per dictum alterius. Cap. 35: Dictum quoque unius testis suppletur, per dictum alterius testis, plenius deponentis, interpretationemque à pleniori illo dicto meritò recipiet, si modo constet, quòd de vno, & eodem facto deponere conentur.*

113. E.g. 25. Hen. 8. cap. 14 and 5 & 6 Ed.6 cap. xi.

114. On procedure, see Martin Ingram *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England 1570–1640* (Cambridge UP, 1987) 47–54; Ralph Houlbrooke *Church Courts and the People during the English Reformation* (Oxford UP, 1979) 38–47; Brian L. Woodcock *Medieval Ecclesiastical Courts in the Diocese of Canterbury* (Oxford UP, 1952) 50–67. Among parallels are: the Judge sits without a jury; the Bailly makes a proclamation calling on possible compurgators to 'Come in and disclose, | What you heare *and suppose*' (a significant addition) 'By this woman Susan' (962–4) with the equitable intention of 'sauing her blood, | If she did not amis' (969–70); the two Elders act as proctors: 'My Lorde Susanna is the wighte, whose fault we must accuse' (987). Cosin points to the essential difference of witnesses in common law and ecclesiastical courts and has a great deal to say about how so-called 'witnesses' are really accusers: 'By the Ciuill lawe ... Accusers be as parties, and not as witnesses. For witnesses ought to bee indifferent, and not to come till they be called. But accusers doe offer themselues to accuse'; Richard Cosin *An apologie for svndrie proceedings by iurisdiction ecclesiasticall* (London: for Christopher Barker, 1593) 18.

115. See *OED* sv *proctor*: 4. *Law*: ‘A person whose profession is to represent others in a court of canon or (formerly) civil law; a profession corresponding to that of attorney or solicitor in courts of equity and common law’. See Horner ‘Susanna’s Double Life’ 93; Ingram *Church Courts* 61–2, Houlbrooke *Church Courts* 28, 51–2.
116. Vives *Instruction of a Christen Woman* 63, quoting Ambrose (‘Of the duties of the clergy’ in *Selected Works and Letters* 45):  
 Susanna was silent in danger, and thought the loss of modesty was worse than loss of life. She did not consider that her safety should be guarded at the risk of her chastity. To God alone she spoke, to Whom she could speak out in true modesty. She avoided looking on the face of men. For there is also modesty in the glance of the eye, which makes a woman unwilling to look upon men, or to be seen by them.
- See also Hannapes *Ensamplis of vertue and vice* sig. Nn ii<sup>r</sup>:  
*Of silence and clattering.* When Susan was brought, she, least those two wycked olde priestes shuld beare false witness against her, wept and loked vp toward heauen, and cried to God, for her hart had a sure trust in our lord: but yet it is not red, y<sup>t</sup> she did directly answer to her accusers.
117. If a defendant denied a charge, they would usually be called upon ‘to undergo “compurgation”, that is, to produce a specified number of honest neighbours, usually of the same sex and standing, who were prepared to swear in court that they believed the charge to be unfounded’; Ingram *Church Courts*, 51–2. The Bailly’s cry, as rendered by Ill Report (958–76) could be a summons to potential compurgators.
118. Henry of Suso *Summa Aurea* col. 539: *servus non admittitur in testimonium nam saepe servus metu dominantis supprimit veritatem*. This originally referred to slaves: but see also *Dives and Pauper* 1:2 222; Commandment 8, cap. vi, which translates *servus* as ‘bonde seruans’.
119. Another detail preserved from the Middle Eastern setting is that Susanna modestly wears a heavy veil; the Elders request that she remove it, in case of mistaken identity, though really to feast their eyes on her beauty (987–90). Compare the parallel with current arguments about wearing the burqa and niqab in court: <[www.theguardian.com/law/2013/aug/23/judge-refuses-muslim-to-wear-burqa-court](http://www.theguardian.com/law/2013/aug/23/judge-refuses-muslim-to-wear-burqa-court)>.
120. Ingram *Church Courts* 151. It was briefly a capital offence in the Commonwealth; Ingram *Church Courts* 153. Heinrich Bullinger is particularly fierce: *The golden boke of christen matrimonye* (London: John Mayler for John Gough, 1543) fols xxxi<sup>v</sup>–xxxiii<sup>i</sup><sup>r</sup>. But it was not confined to Protestants: see Polydore Vergil *Abridgement* fol. lxxxii<sup>r</sup>, also *Knight of the Tower* 155–6, who reports with satisfaction on the much more stringent penalties of Southern Europe.

121. William Harrison in Raphael Holinshed *The first and second volumes of Chronicles* (London: Henry Denham, 1587) 185.
122. Hannapes *Ensamplis of vertue and vice* sigs Y i<sup>r</sup>; Bb viii<sup>r</sup>; Dd ii<sup>r</sup>; Mm vi<sup>v</sup>.
123. The Elders were identified (Jerome *Commentary on the Prophet Jeremiah*, Book 5, chapter 24, PL 24 col. 862–3) with the two false prophets of Jeremiah 29: 21–3, even though it is clear that Jeremiah's characters were burnt alive, not stoned:  
[21] Thus hath the Lorde of hostes the God of Israel spoken of Ahab the sonne of Colaiah, and of zedekiah the sonne of Maasiah, which prophecye lyes vnto you in my name. Beholde, I wyll deliuer them into the hande of Nabuchodonsor the kyng of Babilon, that he maye slaye them before youre eyes. [22] And all the presoners of Juda, that are in Babilon shall take vpon thys terme of cursynge, and saye: Nowe God do vnto the, as he dyd vnto zedekiah and Ahab, whom the king of Babilon rosted in the fyer, because they synned shamefully in Israel. [23] For they haue not onely defiled their neyghbours wyues, but also preached lyinge wordes in my name, which I haue not commaunded them. This I testifye, and assure, sayth the Lorde.
124. In production, we gave them half masks to see what this degree of abstraction would do. It merely seemed to make them more grotesque.
125. Deuteronomy 19: 18–21.
126. Esther 7: 10. See e.g. John Bradford *Complaynt of vertie* (see note 36) sig. B iiiiv, 'The complaynt of Raufe Allerton and others, being prisoners in Lolers tower':  
when Aman made a gallowes strong,  
for Mardocheus the lewe:  
Himselfe was hanged theron ere long,  
for God is iust and true.  
When Susan was without refuge,  
and like to suffer paine:  
The Lord that is a righteous iudge  
did pay her foes againe.
127. Thomas Becon *Gouernaunce of vertue* fol. 82<sup>v</sup>.
128. Olga Horner stresses the importance of reputation to one's livelihood, and hence the urgency with which slander cases were prosecuted; 'Susanna's Double Life' 84–8.
129. Hannapes *Ensamplis of vertue and vice* 'Of chastity' Cap. Lxxxx, sig. Mm iiiiv.
130. Vives *Instruction of a Christen Woman* 34. Vives as a Spaniard is probably more strict than the English about guarding girls from any occasion of talk: he famously said, 'Tucydides sayd, she was the beste woman, of whom was leas talke, eyther unto her preyse, or her dispreyse' (*Instruction* 58), but this is only an

- extreme form of the general protectiveness of parents. The Knight of the Tower tells tales of girls who lost their marriages because of a perceived forwardness.
131. *Dives and Pauper Volume 1 Part 1* edited Priscilla Heath Barnum EETS OS 280 (1980) 87–8.
  132. Susanna's father shows no Christian forgiveness, which is strange, since the story was paired in the Missal as the Reading for the third Saturday in Lent (*post oculi*) with the Gospel of the Woman Taken in Adultery; *The Sarum Missal* edited J. Wickham Legg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1916) 78. But many writers on the subject see it firmly from an Old Testament point of view, and either gloss over Christ's modification of the Law, or disregard it completely.
  133. For a transparent example of this, see Diccon the Bedlam in *Gammer Gurton*. He appears to have no motivation for his plot interventions, apart from his lunacy.
  134. Ill Report's account of the Devil's attempts to suborn Susanna is a catalogue of failures, ending story-wise in stasis. It is also a psychomachia in little, but it remains verbal: Garter does not develop it into a theatrical allegory.
  135. Ulpian Fulwell *The first parte, of the eyghth liberall science: entituled, Ars adulandi, the arte of flatterie with the confutation therof* (London: [William How for] Richard Jones, 1579) sig. G iii<sup>r</sup>. Mercury's 'wonderfull newes and monstrous lyes' include 'English lies, French lies, Spanish, Dutch, Italian, Irish, Welsh, Romaine, Polonian, Muscouian, Babylonian, and Turkish lyes. And to conclude, hee could set out manner of lyes, with all manner of colours'; sigs G iii<sup>v</sup>– iii<sup>i</sup><sup>r</sup>.
  136. 'The Constancy of Susanna': the opening lines are in fact, 'There was a man in Babylon | Of reputation great by fame'. A broadside song originally registered in 1562/3; also in 1592, 1624, and 1675. A transcription of the Roxburghe Collection example, printed for John Wright the Elder, appears in *Roxburghe Ballads* (1 190–193) as 'An excellent Ballad Entituled: The Constancy of Susanna.' It is rather longer than the above.
  137. ... *The. xxvii. daie of Auguste in the yere our of [sic] Lorde. M.CCCCC.LXV. They were booth women chyldren and were chrystened, and lyued halfe a daye. The one departed afore the other almoste an howre* (London: Thomas Colwell for Owen Rogers, 1565). They were conjoined twins.
  138. Most of Colwell's ballads have not survived, but the Stationers' Register gives an alarming selection; Arber *Stationers' Register*, scattered throughout the years 1561–1571.
  139. In Strietman and Happé *For Pleasure and Profit* 1 119–86.
  140. There is a hiatus here. His original speech sounds as if he expects her to succumb, and the resulting Ill Report will publicise her failure.
  141. Hannapes *Ensamles of vertue and vice* chapter Cxiii, sig. Xx ii<sup>v</sup>.
  142. Holbrouke *Church Courts* 47. See also Ingram *Church Courts* 44.



143. Ingram *Church Courts* 43–4.
144. See Cosin *Iurisdiction ecclesiasticall* (see note 114) Part 2, chapter 7, page 52.  
See also Part 2 page 53:  
a Iudge may haue Conisance against crimes, not onely vpon the prosecution of some partie ... but also of Office by way of *speciall enquire*; though no such *solemne presentment* be preferred vp, by *Officers* purposely thereunto appointed.
145. Cosin *Iurisdiction ecclesiasticall* Part 2 pages 56–7. He goes on to say that if it is not notorious, it should be backed up by at least two witnesses:  
But if the fame be not so strong and vehement; then it is expedient for such a Iudge to haue the fame (being not presented) to be in Actes, first Iudicallie prooued, by deposition of two witnesses at least. For so many will suffice to prooue a fame (though they be none Officers thereunto assigned:) But two alone (where a greater number is) cannot make a fame.
146. Cosin *Iurisdiction ecclesiasticall* Part 2 pages 57–8.
147. On evidence, see Cosin *Iurisdiction ecclesiasticall* Part 2, 61–2:  
A fourth means besides *Presentment*, whereupon a *special enquire* may be entred vnto, are *Indicia*, so called *ab Indicando*, which (according as y<sup>e</sup> english word *with* vs is commonly vsed) I do interpret *Euidences*, or certaine markes and tokens ... For when other inducements thereunto doe want, these may serue that turne. In which respect it is sayd that *Indicium sufficiens aequi paratur Famæ*: a sufficient evidence or signe is aequivalent vnto a *Fame*.
148. J.H. Baker *The Oxford History of the Laws of England Volume VI: 1483–1558* (Oxford University Press, 2003) 519. For the form as administered in the play (1009–14) see *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* (London: John Day, 1571) fol. 116<sup>v</sup>: *Iuramentum testium*, cap. 9  
*Iurabunt autem totam dicturos veritatem, quam norunt, de re super qua iurant, nec vllam admixturos falsitatem, quòd pro vtraque parte dicent veritatem, quam sciunt ad negotium pertinere, etiam non interrogati, & quòd nec pretio, nec amore, aut odio, nec timore, aut commodo quocumque dicent testimonium.*  
Translation in James C. Spalding *The Reformation of the Ecclesiastical Laws of England, 1552* (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies 19; Kirksville, Miss: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992) 165 (oath of witnesses).
149. The overhaul of English canon law in Edward VI's reign by a committee headed by Cranmer was completed in the winter of 1552/3, then discarded at the accession of Mary, but when Elizabeth succeeded, the reformed laws never reached the statute books: see Spalding *Reformation of the Ecclesiastical Laws* 32–54.

150. *Dives and Pauper* 1:2 edited Priscilla Barnum *EETS* 275 (1976): 20 (headings); 222–4, 232–41.
151. *Dives and Pauper* 1:2 233–4. Based on Henry of Suso *Summa Aurea* section *De testibus*, Book 2 column 548; *Quotus numerus testium requiritur*. Originally a different number of witnesses were required for accusations against different ecclesiastical ranks: 72 for a cardinal or bishop, 44 for a priest, 16 for a deacon, at least 6 for a subdeacon. Pauper explains why so many witnesses are required for ‘personys in dignete’, since in the execution of their office they may often ‘getyn hem mychil hate of þe peple, & oftyn withoutyn gilt and for her goode dede’. Also if persons of dignity could be easily condemned by ‘symple folc’, their office might be held in contempt, so sometimes it is better to allow ‘a schrewyd man to regnyn’ than to depose him at the request of the people.
152. ‘Who desirest not the death of a sinner’: *Nolo mortem peccatoris* (Ezekiel 33: 11); also the colophon to the *N.Town Woman Taken in Adultery*. Daniel also says, ‘I speake it not I will you know, the worst man to offende, | But for that such as guiltie be, their guilt may soone amende’ 1114–15.
153. *Dives and Pauper* 1:2 238; Commandment 8, cap. 13.
154. Matthew 5: 10: this version from Erasmus Sarcerius translated Richard Taverner *Common places of Scripture ordrely and after a compendious forme of teachyng set forth* (London: John Byddell, 1538). He cites Susanna as one example of those who have also had ‘a glorious deliuey annexed vnto it’; fol. cxxiii<sup>r</sup>.
155. Ralph Radcliffe, schoolmaster of Hitchin (1518/19–1559). John Bale *Scriptorum illustrium maioris Brytannie quam nunc Angliam & Scotiam uocant catalogus* (Basel: Ioannes Oporinus, 1557–1559) 700–701.
156. See note 10.
157. Wilson *Arte of rhetorique* fol. 101<sup>v</sup>.
158. See note 91.

## Appendix: The Changing Face of Hester

It seems generally accepted that the eponymous heroine of *Godly Queene Hester* 'is' Katherine of Aragon, that Haman is Cardinal Wolsey, and that the play must therefore date from about 1529.<sup>1</sup> It is not however a full-scale political allegory in the sense that every character can be identified with someone in the contemporary real world. Greg Walker makes a convincingly detailed case for Haman as Wolsey, and an accompanying one for Ahasuerus as Henry, but does not identify a Mordecai, and is dubious that Katherine/Hester could have been seen as an effective spokeswoman for the clergy of the religious houses.<sup>2</sup> By 1 December 1529, when the case against Wolsey was finally drawn up, the proceedings for the annulment of Katherine's marriage with Henry were well under way, and she was unlikely to have that influence with the King which the story of Esther<sup>3</sup> demands.

In an attempt to flesh out the identification with the Queen, Janette Dillon<sup>4</sup> compares Hester's supplication to Ahasuerus with Katherine's dramatic gesture at the legatine court on 21 June 1529, when she 'toke payn to goo abought vnto the kyng knelyng down at his feete / in the sight of all the Courte & assemble' and addressed him affectingly 'in broken Englysshe',<sup>5</sup> a scene made familiar to us by Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. This may have graphically demonstrated her 'obedience', something on which Henry emotionally commented; but otherwise it does not fit. Katherine was pleading for her own marriage, not altruistically for her 'people', and unlike Esther, she was unsuccessful. As a piece of political pleading in the Queen's cause, if that was what was intended, the play misses its target.

Rather than Hester imitating Katherine, Katherine may consciously have intended to emulate Esther — the Esther of the Bible, not the Hester of the play.<sup>6</sup> The image of Esther as Queen kneeling as intercessor before Ahasuerus was a traditional one in Royal Entries, based on the typology of the Virgin interceding with Christ at the Judgement.<sup>7</sup> It was a popular scene in recent continental Entries for queens consort, especially foreign-born ones (including Mary, sister of Henry VIII, and Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy), who were exhorted henceforward to intercede for the subjects of their adopted country.<sup>8</sup> They carried this role through: in 1549, Robert Wedderburn praises Mary of Guise for staying in Scotland to defend them like Esther against 'the ruisant volfis [*wolves*] of ingland' instead of returning to France.<sup>9</sup> In England, the best-known example is

that of Anne of Bohemia and her role in Richard II's 1392 Entry of Reconciliation with the citizens of London. Instead of suggesting this role to the Queen in a pageant, the citizens as recorded by Maidstone plead directly with her:

*Grata loqui pro gente sua regina valebit,  
Quod vir non audet sola potest mulier.  
Hester ut Assueri trepidans stetit ante tribunal,  
Irritat edicta<sup>10</sup> que prius ipse tulit.  
Nec dubium quin ob hoc vos omnipotens dedit huius  
Participem regni, sitis ut Hester ei.<sup>11</sup>*

'A favoured<sup>12</sup> queen will be effective in speaking for her people; a lone woman can do what a man does not dare. As Esther stood trembling before the throne of Ahasuerus, she invalidates the edicts which he promulgated previously. There is no doubt that it was to this end that the Almighty gave you a share in this kingdom, that you should be an Esther to him.'

(The last line echoes Mordecai in Esther 4: 14.) She thanks them and says that she will do this as far as it lies within her. Arrived at Westminster, she throws herself at his feet as he sits on his golden throne, and pleads successfully with him to forgive the City.<sup>13</sup> The traditional image of a suppliant queen was powerful enough for Katherine to have hoped that it might succeed: but in this case it did not.

By the time in 1561 that the play of *Hester* had been dusted down and presented by the publishers as 'A newe enterlude ... newly made and imprinted', the connotations of Esther's role as intercessor had necessarily been rethought. A queen regnant had no need to plead publicly with her husband, even if she had one. Esther did not appear as a pageant figure in the Royal Entries of either Mary I or Elizabeth I, but she was invoked in celebratory sermons and panegyrics for each of them, often alongside Judith, as a saviour of her people.<sup>14</sup> Of Mary in 1553, a sermon enquired (with echoes, to us, of *Respublica*):

What can be a more euident token and signe of Goddes mercie, and grace: Goddes fauour, and loue: towards this daughter Englande, then, after correction to sende her at length soch a Gouvernesse which should entre in myraculously, passage all Mannes Reasonne? soche a Iudithe, as shoulde cutte of the heade of Holofernes? suche

an Esther, as should conuerte the wailng of the Iewes into reioycynge? <sup>15</sup>

Another compares her with Judith and Esther (both were traditional *exempla* of the power of prayer) to their moral disadvantage:

Hester made her prayers for the Iewes only  
Which aman wente about by enuy to destroye  
Whose prayer god heard, & the Iues deliuered  
But Mary our Quene, prayed in generallye  
That no bloude myght be shedde, of her frende or enemy  
God heard her praier, and the matter so ended.<sup>16</sup>

Elizabeth is apostrophised, somewhat patronisingly:

Proceede therefore, proceed O most noble Quene ... so haue you a  
Mayden Queene begonne, so beganne youre brother a chylde, and  
kynge ... As you haue begonne therefore, so proceede. Though  
aloane, though a woman. So wonteth Christ to daunt the world.  
Not in mennes myght, but enfantes, sucklynges, women. Debbora,  
brake the Iron Charrettes of Labinus the Cananite. Iudith slewe  
Holofernes. Hester saued the Iewes condemned to dye, from the  
rampyng mouth, and yawninge lawes [*jaws*] of death.<sup>17</sup>

In each case the point of contact of the comparison is that they have rescued their subjects from the Haman of the previous regime, but not this time through supplication of their husband (unless that husband is God) but through their own efforts.

However, the only Queen who is compared to Hester at length, and whose story is carefully mapped onto the original, is not Katherine, but Ann Boleyn, though not until the accession of her daughter made it possible and politic to speak of her. John Aylmer, the ex-tutor of Lady Jane Grey, wrote a riposte (1559) to Knox's *First Blast of the Trumpet* in which he singles out the Queen's mother as the instigator of the Protestant Reformation in England:

And as we began with the matter of women so to returne thither  
againe with the example of a woman. Was not Quene Anne the  
mother of this blessed woman, the chief, first, and only cause of  
banyshing the beast of Rome, with all his beggerly baggage? was  
there euer in Englande a greater feate wrought by any man: then  
this was by a woman? I take not from kyng Henry the due praise of  
broching it, nor from that lambe of God king Edward, the finishing

and perfigting of that was begon, though I giue hir, hir due commendacion. I know that that blessid martir of God Thomas Cranmer Byshop of Canterbury, did much trauaile in it, and furthered it: but if God had not gyuen Quene Anne fauour in the sight of the kynge, as he gaue to Hester in the sight of Nabucadnezar [sic]: Haman and his company, The Cardinall, Wynchester, More, Rochester and other wold sone haue trised [hoisted]<sup>18</sup> vp Mardocheus with al the rest that leaned to that side. Wherefore though many deserued muche praise for the helping fowarde of it: yet the croppe and roote was the Quene, whiche God had endewed with wisdome that she coulede, and gyuen hir the minde that she would do it.<sup>19</sup>

‘Wise and wittie’<sup>20</sup> Esther was traditionally noted for her ‘synguler wysdome’.<sup>21</sup> In the play, after approving her beauty, Ahasuerus is assured that Hester, besides being irreproachably virginal, is ‘In learninge and litterature, profoundlye scene, | In wisdome, eke semblante to Saba the Quene’; he chooses and crowns her after she triumphantly passes the test of defining the ‘virtues that be best and fittest for a queen’, which turn out to be identical with those of a king.<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere, however, it looks as if Esther’s ‘wisdom’ was thought to have consisted largely in knowing how to manage a moody and occasionally unbalanced husband: a woman should take

thensample of the wyse quene hester / wyf of the kyng Assuere / whiche was moche melancolyque and hasty / But the good lady answerd not to his yre / But after when she sawe hym well attempryd / place / and tyme / thenne dyde she what she wolde / And it was grete wysedom of a woman ...<sup>23</sup>

This is not to suggest that Hester ‘is’ Anne Boleyn, but it is instructive to compare Aylmer’s brief but full comparison with the way the play treats its source. Anne is very much the heroine of Aylmer’s version: ‘the croppe and roote was the Quene’, but it is difficult to tell whether the play was originally intended to be about Hester or about Haman.<sup>24</sup> It was perfectly possible to tell the story as the tragedy of Haman, a Mirror for Magistrates, making only a cursory reference to Esther as the means of his downfall.<sup>25</sup> Lydgate’s title for the episode in *The Fall of Princes* is ‘How the proude tirant Haman was honged and the Innocent preserued’.<sup>26</sup> Allegorically Haman can represent any oppressive political opponent, whether the Pope of Rome,<sup>27</sup> or the wolfish English. In *Hester*, he is identified with Wolsey

not so much by the narrative as through an almost overwhelming mass of circumstantial detail. Hester is very much a secondary figure.

Presumably, having decided 'to market it as a mirror for godly women',<sup>28</sup> William Pickering and Thomas Hackett looked for a suitable item from the list of *exempla* associated with Esther, and came up with 'duty' and 'humilitie'. The assumption is that these virtues are directed towards her husband. Unfortunately this falls foul of two things. Firstly, they ran up against the 'Susanna' problem: to be properly virtuous and self-effacing, Hester should not have presumed to speak at all, let alone so decisively or at such length against her husband's decisions. The biblical Esther risks her life to speak to the king uninvited, but when she does it is with the utmost humility, brevity, and circumspection.<sup>29</sup> But the play Hester has to be a mouthpiece for the predicament of the 'Jews', and is so eloquently: Janette Dillon coins the phrase 'powerful obedience'. This is somewhat different from the Knight of the Tower's view of the tactful closet lecture: 'whanne she had hym alone/ and sawe the tyme and the place be conuenyente/ she blamed hym/ and curtoysly shewed hym his fawte'.<sup>30</sup>

Then, Esther was indeed a traditional *exemplum* of 'duty', meekness, and humility,<sup>31</sup> but there are unexpected facets to this. De Hannapes cites her under *Of obedience and disobedience*, but because of her loyalty to her family: 'Whatsoeuer Mardocheus commaunded, that did Esther obserue & keepe, & did all thinges so, euen as she was wont to do, when she was yonge and vnder hys gouernaunce'.<sup>32</sup> In the Bible, she is a political pawn, reminded by Mardocheus of her duty to the Jews, showing outward obedience to her husband, but deep-rooted loyalty to her kin. Any of Henry VIII's English wives would recognise her obligations and how she might be torn between them. In the play, Mardocheus' admonition to Esther, 'thynke not to saue thyne awne lyfe, while thou art in þe kynges house ... And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kyngdom, for this causes sake?', is excised, and she almost seems to overhear the Jews' lamentation and to decide to champion them of her own accord, though she does acknowledge her Jewishness to the King.

As a wife, Esther is a type of obedience largely by contrast with her predecessor. In the Book of Esther, the episode of Queen Vashti is presented starkly as a male reaction to an act of female insubordination:

The quene Vashti hath not onely done euill agaynst the kyng, but also agaynst all the princes and agaynst all the people þat are in all þe landes of kyng Ahasuerus: for this dede of the quene shall come abrode vnto all wemen, so þat they shall despised [*sic*] their

husbandes before their eyes, and shal saye: the kyng Ahasuerus commaunded Vashti þe quene to be brought in before hym, but she wold not come. And so shall the princesses in Persia and Media saye likewise vnto all the kynges princes, when they heare of his dede of the quene, thus shall there aryse to moch [*too much*] despitefulnes & wrath.<sup>33</sup>

Since 'Euery man shoulde be lorde in his owne house',<sup>34</sup> Vashti is formally divorced, and the way is open for Esther to become queen.

Hester's behaviour in this role is clearly correct and tactful, and she shows a proper fear of the Great King her husband, but there is not much about it even in the Old Testament to showcase it as ostentatiously submissive and obedient (though the extended Vulgate version provides more evidence for this). She asks for permission to speak, and for permission to invite the king to a banquet, but this reads as no more than proper etiquette. The playwright then does something strange: he writes Vashti out of the play. She was possibly removed because Katherine did not have a predecessor; possibly because if the play was written to support Katherine's side of her marital predicament, the biblical Ahasuerus gives too good a precedent for divorce; or possibly merely because the play was not essentially about Hester (it would be interesting to know what the original title was), and Vashti was not necessary for the tragedy of Haman. But by removing Vashti our playwright also removes the traditional contrast between her disobedience and Hester's obedience, and makes the publishers' hopeful appeal for the play as an *exemplum* of her 'duty' and 'humilitie' much weaker.

#### NOTES

1. See Greg Walker *Plays of Persuasion* (Cambridge UP, 1991) chapter 4; Janette Dillon 'Powerful Obedience: Godly Queen Hester and Katherine of Aragon' in *Interludes and Early Modern Society* edited Peter Happé and Wim Hüsken (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007) 117–39.

The writing of the play must have preceded 1553, since Hester's test speech declares 'No quene there is, but by marriage of a prince / And vnder couert according to the lawe' i.e. as a *femme couvert* (edition by J.S. Farmer, 258; there are no line numbers). Hester also refers to a situation when the Queen might have to act as Regent, which would apply to Katherine of Aragon in 1513, but also to Catherine Parr in 1544. But it could be read as recommending the choice of a future consort (see Farmer edition 253) rather than encouraging a current one in a potentially dangerous course of action.



2. Walker *Plays of Persuasion* 130–131.
3. I use *Esther* of the biblical character, and *Hester* of the character in the play.
4. Dillon 'Powerful Obedience' 121–5.
5. George Cavendish *The Life and Death of Cardinal Wolsey* edited Richard S. Sylvester *EETS* 243 (1959) 80; probably written 1554–1558.
6. N.b. that the date of Christmas 1529 is purely speculation, but if it were correct, the enquiry would have been a model for the play, as Dillon suggests, not vice versa. The source could not have been Cavendish's account.
7. See *Biblia Pauperum* edited Avril Henry (Aldershot: Scolar, 1987) 119 followed by sig. .q.; *The Mirour of Mans Saluacioune* edited Avril Henry (Aldershot: Scolar, 1986) 4187–4200, and image on page 196 which shows Esther kneeling before Ahasuerus. In the *Speculum* she is a type of the Virgin before Christ: in the *Biblia* of the Coronation of the Virgin, but with the same implications: 'When Esther goes in and entreats Ahasuerus'.
8. Gordon Kipling *Enter the King* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 324–7. See also John N. King 'The Godly Woman in Elizabethan Iconography' *Renaissance Quarterly* 38: 1 (1985) 41–84.
9. Robert Wedderburn *The Complaynt of Scotlande ... 1549* edited James A.H. Murray *EETS ES* 17 (1872) 2–3:

as he inspirit queen esther to delyuir the captiue ieuis [Jews], quhen thai & mordocheus var [were] sinisterly accusit, and alse persecutit, be [by] amman, be for assuerus kyng of inde. and as the holy vedou [widow] iudich vas [was] inspirit, to delyuir the ieuis fra the crualte of that infideil paga[n] oliphernes. Ther is na prudent man that vil [will] iuge that this pistil procedis of assentatione or adulatione, considerant that ve [we] maye see perfytyle, quhou [how] that 3our grace, takkis pane to duelle in ane strayinge cuntre distitute of iustice

when she might have returned to the pleasures of France.
10. I follow Rigg and Carlson's emendation in Richard Maidstone *Concordia (The Reconciliation of Richard II with London)* edited David R. Carlson, translated A.G. Rigg (TEAMS Middle English Texts Series; Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003); online at <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/rigg-and-carlson-maidstone-concordia>>.
11. Maidstone *Concordia* lines 439–44.
12. Or 'A queen can effectively speak pleasing/acceptable things', *grata* as neuter plural accusative (possibly of an implied *verba*) rather than qualifying *regina*.
13. Maidstone *Concordia* 48–9.

14. Judith presumably because as a widow and a *femme sole* she could act autonomously. Esther is the only Old Testament heroine who is portrayed in illustrations as a queen.
15. James Brooks *A sermon very notable, fructefull, and godlie made at Paules crosse the. xii. daie of Nouembre, in the first yere of the gracious reigne of our Souereigne ladie Quene Marie her moste excellente highnesse* (London: Roberte Caly 1553) sigs J vi<sup>v</sup>–J vii<sup>f</sup>. Mary's coronation was on 1 October 1553.  
See also John Harpsfield *Concio quaedam admodum elegans, docta, salubris, & pia magistri Iohannis Harpesfeldi, sacre Theologiae baccalaurei, habita coram patribus & clero in Ecclesia Paulina Londini .26. Octobris 1553.* (London: John Cawod, 1553) sig. A iii<sup>f</sup>. He speaks of Judith, then  
*Quod olim regina Hester iudaeis praestitie, id illa nobis in praesens praestat, ut luctus et tristitia, in hilaritatem & gaudium conuertantur, ut sint nobis dies epularum & letitiae, ut mittamus inuicem ciborum partes & pauperibus munuscula largiamur.*
16. George Marshall *A compendious treatise in metre ... of the firste receauinge of the Christen fayth here in Englande* (London: Iohn Cawod, 1554) sig. C iii<sup>v</sup>.
17. Laurence Humphrey *The nobles or of nobilitye The original nature, dutyes, right, and Christian institucion thereof* (London: Thomas Marshe, [1563]) sigs A viii<sup>v</sup>–B i<sup>r</sup>.
18. See OED sv *trice* (verb) 2: 'To pull or haul with a rope; *spec.* (*Naut.*) usually with *up*, to haul or hoist up and secure with a rope or lashing, to lash up'.
19. John Aylmer *An harborovve for faithfull and trevve subiectes agaynst the late blowne blaste, concerninge the gouernment of vvemen* ('Strasborowe' [London]: [John Day], 1559) sig. B4<sup>v</sup>. Cranmer is presumably Mardocheus. John North mentions this (58) but does not quote or consider it at length. The passage from Foxe that he cites praises Queen Anne's charity, but does not say much about her role in the English Reformation, and does not mention Hester; John Foxe *Actes and monuments of these latter and perillous dayes* (London: John Day, 1563) 508–510.
20. John Phillips *A frendly larum. or faythfull warnynge to the true harted subiectes of England* (London: William How for Rycharde Iohnes, 1570) sig. A v<sup>f</sup>.
21. Edward Gosynhyll *The prayse of all women, called Mulierum pean* (London: William Myddylton, 1542) sig. C iii<sup>v</sup>.
22. Edition by J.S. Farmer (London: EEDS, 1906) 258: no line numbers.
23. William Caxton *The Book of the Knight of the Tower* edited M.Y. Offord EETS SS 2 (1971) 35.
24. Mike Pincombe seems to suggest this in his 'Comic Treatment of Tragic Character in *Godly Queen Hester*' in *Interludes and Early Modern Society* 95–116
25. E.g. Thomas Becon tells the story of the book of Esther 'concerninge the Iewes / which were the people of God', citing Haman and Mardocheus, but makes no mention at all of Esther herself; *A comfortable epistle, too Goddes faythfull people*

*in Englande wherein is declared the cause of takynge awaye the true Christen religion from them, & howe it maye be recouered and obtayned agayne* (Strasburgh in Elsas [Wesel?]: J. Lambrecht, 1554) sig C ii<sup>r</sup>. Bale summarises (*The epistle exhortatorye of an Englyshe Christyane* (Antwerp: A. Goinus, 1544?) fol. 9<sup>r</sup>):

The same selfe part in a maner wolde they haue played with his noble grace [Edward VI] that proude Haman the Amalechyte played with kynge Assuerus / maliciouslye sekynge the destruccyon of Mardocheus and other which aboute all menne had sought his lyues preseruacyon Hester. iii. Wherin of right they haue deserued vpon a gybbet to be hanged as he was.

See also Sir Thomas Elyot *Bibliotheca Eliotae Eliotis librarie* (London: Thomas Berthelet, 1542) sig. C iii<sup>r</sup>, *A ante M: Aman*; and so forth.

26. John Lydgate *The Fall of Princes: Part Two* edited Henry Bergen *EETS ES 122* (1924 for 1918) 462, title before line 4761.
27. John Leland *The laboryouse iourney ...* edited John Bale (London: S. Mierdman, 1549) sig F ii<sup>v</sup>: 'The harte of our noble Kynge [Edward] is clerelye auerted from the cruell Haman of Rome, and from hys dysgyssed tormentours that so gredyly sought the innocent bloude of hys people'. Bale is particularly fond of Haman.
28. Walker *Plays of Persuasion* 15.
29. Note that the Vulgate and the Great Bible version of the Book of Esther was much longer than the Authorised Version, and contained much more material about Esther's prayers and her terrified approach to Ahasuerus.
30. *Knight of the Tower* 129, *How no good woman ought to ansuere to her husband whanne he is wrothe*.
31. See e.g. Chaucer *Legend of Good Women* F 250: 'Ester, ley thou thy mekness al adown'; *Book of the Duchess* 985-7: 'she | Had as moche debonairte | As ever had Hester in the Bible'; and sardonically *The Merchant's Tale* CT E 1744-5: 'Queene Ester looked nereve with swiche an ye | On Assuer, so meke a look hath she'.
32. Nicolas de Hannapes *Ensamples of vertue and vice* (1561) sig. K viii<sup>r</sup>. The Book of Esther says, 'Esther dyd after the worde of Mardocheus, lyke as yf she had bene yet vnder hys gouernaunce' and kept her Jewishness concealed.
33. Thomas Bentley *The sixt lampe of virginite* (London: Thomas Dawson [and Henry Denham] for the assignes of William Seres), 1582) 256:
 

and after y<sup>e</sup> law & statute made, y<sup>e</sup> king sent from his court letters in diuers languages, to publishe the same law & statute in all his prouinces, and to euery people after their language, straightly charging & commanding y<sup>t</sup> euery man should beare rule in his own house, & y<sup>t</sup> euery wife shoulde be subiect to her husband, & at his commandement.
34. Thomas Paynell *The piththy [sic] and moost notable sayinges of al scripture ... after the manner of common places* (London: Thomas Gaultier for Rychard Kele, 1550).