

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

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

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

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

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

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