

test him. We see her first coming to take Joachim 'home to dyne' (358).⁸⁴ 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 despise' (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.⁸⁵

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, obey 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),⁸⁶ 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,⁸⁷ 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',⁸⁸ 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 wysdome, 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*].⁸⁹

For Hyrde's *honestie*, read *pudicitia*, 'chastity'.⁹⁰ 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 Ladiships personage, then this *Mirroure of Chastitie*, bicause you are vertuous'.⁹¹

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