I felt a bit awkward too so I went into the Sunday School Room. There was some Fuzzy Felt to make Bible Scenes with and I was just beginning to enjoy a rewrite of Daniel in the lions' den when Pastor Finch appeared. I put my hands into my pockets and looked at the lino.

'Little girl,' he began, then he caught sight of the Fuzzy Felt.

'What's that?'

'Daniel,' I answered.

'But that's not right,' he said, aghast. 'Don't you know that Daniel escaped? In your picture the lions are swallowing him.'

'I'm sorry,' I replied, putting on my best, blessed face. 'I wanted to do Jonah and the whale, but they don't do whales in Fuzzy Felt. I'm pretending those lions are whales.'

'You said it was Daniel.' He was suspicious.

'I got mixed up.'

(Jeanette Winterson, Oranges are not the only fruit)

Winterson's 'mixed up' twentieth-century rewriting of the book of Daniel is but one in a long line of interpretations based upon the Old Testament text, a text foregrounded in the medieval period in such works as the (anonymous) Old English poem Daniel, a selection of Ælfric's Homilies, portions of The Canterbury Tales, Gower's Confessio Amantis, Cleanness, the fourteenth-century alliterative Susannah and a wide body of medieval drama and lesser known poems in Middle English.

It is obvious from the above list (one which is by no means exhaustive) that the story of Daniel gained prominence and became a popular source for literature during the Middle Ages. This was true not only in England but on the Continent as well. Fourteenth-century Italy produced, amongst others, three poems dealing with the Susannah episode, the De Sancta Susanna, Tractatus metricus de Susanna and Rithmi Susanna. From northern

1 References to, or full-scale reworkings of, the book of Daniel are also found in Piers Plowman, the metrical romance Robert of Sicily (c.1370), and the late fourteenth-century poem entitled The bird with four feathers (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 596).

Europe there is the Middle High German *Daniel* and an Icelandic version of the *Somniale Danielis*: the latter provides a good illustration of how Daniel’s reputation for being the master of dream interpretation was consolidated in the Middle Ages. In French a number of ‘major and representative works in several genres – *La chanson de Roland*, the *Romance of Horn*, and *La vie de Sainte Modwenn*’ use the prophet’s story as a salvation *exemplum*. Moreover, throughout the medieval period there are innumerable Latin writings such as hymns, biblical commentaries and the various *Somniale Danielis* texts which deal, in some shape or form, with the book of Daniel. The drama, largely from the twelfth century, yields such works as Hilarius’ *Historia de Daniel representanda* and the anonymous *Ludus Danielis* from Beauvais, both composed in Latin verse.

Though the book of Daniel was decidedly popular with medieval authors, it was not put to any homogenous use. Writers such as Ælfric, Gower and the poet of *Cleanness* chose to draw upon the highlights of the first five books of their Old Testament source, concentrating primarily on Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams and madness, the ‘writing on the wall’ passage and Belshazzar’s feast. Chaucer, on the other hand, makes substantial use of the Susannah and the Elders episode, especially in *The Man of Law’s Tale*. Whilst it is difficult to discern any unified literary approach to the book of Daniel in the Middle Ages, it is possible, nevertheless, to group some of the relevant material in terms of shared characteristics. With this in mind, the remainder of this study will be primarily devoted to a discussion of the Old English *Daniel* and the fourteenth-century alliterative *Susannah*; both texts attempt at least in part to explore the relationship between sin and repentance (or lack thereof).

In the Old English *Daniel* Nebuchadnezzar summons the Chaldean commanders (*folctogan*, 527a) to him to ask the significance of a terrifying dream, and the poet here adds a

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4 Susannah is mentioned by name in Custance’s invocation to God, and it seems, rather obvious that Chaucer is alerting his audience to the fact that he is recreating Susannah’s story in his own tale of a chaste woman who refuses to commit adultery, is then wrongly accused and, at the eleventh hour, is saved by divine intervention.

5 All future references to these works and to the poems of the Junius Manuscript as a whole are taken from *The Junius manuscript* ed. George Philip Krapp, Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records [ASPR], 1 (New York and London, 1931) and *Susannah: an alliterative poem of the fourteenth-century*, ed. Alice Miskimin (London: Yale University Press, 1969). ‘The emended text of *Susannah* incorporates the editor’s conjectural emendations and choices among MS variants from all five versions of the poem’ (Miskimin, 1). All translations from OE are my own.

6 This is Nebuchadnezzar’s second dream, the dream of the tree. See Daniel 4:7-15.
comment not found in the Vulgate source: *nalles by he wende þæt hie hit wiston/ ac he cunnode hu hie cwedan woldon* (l.529–30): ‘not because he imagined that they would know it, but he was trying to discern what they would say’. Having posited a ‘riddle’ he knows his own men cannot decipher the king then calls in Daniel to remedy the situation. The prophet’s appearance on the scene attests to the failure of the *folctoga* (‘leader of the people’) and prompts the poet to extol Daniel’s virtues. The description which follows, like others relating to Daniel, is highly formulaic:

Da waes to ðam dome Daniel hate,  
godes spelboda. Him waes gæst geseald,  
hálig of heofonum, se his hyge trymede.  
On þam drihtenweard deopne wisse  
sefán sidne géþanc and snyтро cræft,  
wisne wórdcwide. Ofte wundor manig,  
metodes mihta, for men æþbær.  
(ll.531–7)

Then was Daniel, God’s messenger, called to the judgement. From heaven a holy spirit was given to him which strengthened his soul. In him the Guardian-King was aware of a deep and expansive intensity of intellect, the power of insight and wise speech. Often, for the man’s benefit, he had explained many a marvel and the might of the Lord.

As the prophet delivers his *wisne wordcwide* (l.536a) he speaks *for men æþbær* (l.537b), thus creating a point of high drama in the poem. In this address to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians Daniel is, in effect, the poet addressing his own audience. The moral lesson concerning penitence and contrition is, therefore, meant for us all:

*Gehyge þu, frea min, fæstlicne ræd.*  
*Syle ælmyssan, wes earmra hleo,*  
þinga for æodne, ær ðam seo þrah cyme  
þæt he þec aworpe of woruldrice.  
Oft metod alæt monige æode  
wyrca bote, þonne hé woldon sylfe,  
yfrene fæstæn, ær him fær godes  
þurh egesan gryre aldre gesceode.*  
(ll.585–92)

Consider, my prince, my constant counsel. Give alms, be the refuge of the needy remnant, appeal to the Lord before the time comes when He will cast you out of your worldly-kingdom. Often the Lord permits many a people, bound fast in sin, to make amends – when they themselves have been desirous – before the dreadful terror of God’s wrath drains the life from them.

The nature of the speech cited above, homiletic in tone, suggests that it is possible to place the Old English Daniel within the context of early medieval penitential literature. One of the poem’s
main aims, after all, is to chart the transformation of Nebuchadnezzar from se hædene þeoden (1.241a) to one who bead metodes mihte (ll.646b–7a). This progression is defined in five easy steps:

Wyrd wæs geworden, wundor gecyðed,
swefn gesœðed, susl awunnen,
dom gedemmed, swa ær Daniel cwæð,
þæt se folctoga findan sceolde
earfordiðas for his ofermedian.
(ll.652–6)

Fate was fulfilled, the enigma explained, the dream realized, the torment overcome, the judgement executed just as Daniel had prophesied; that the leader of the people should experience a difficult journey because of his pride.

Whilst there is no fixed definition of penitential literature,7 the Babylonian king experiences all of the identifiable stages in the penitential cycle: temptation, sin, repentance, confession, punishment, forgiveness, and then a rebirth. He is tempted and sins out of pride, and his punishment is exile and madness. Ultimately, however, Nebuchadnezzar (and by extension his people) is offered the chance of a new beginning, both politically and spiritually:

swa him ofer eordan andsaca ne wæs
gumena ænig őðþæt him god wolde
þurh hryre hreddan hea rice.
Siddan þær his aferan ead bryttedon,
welan, wunden gold, in þære widan byrig,
ealhstede eorla, unwaclice,
heah hordmægen, þa hya hlaford læg.
(ll.668–74)

So that there was not any man on earth who strove against him until God willed, through death, to take away that exalted empire. Afterwards, when their loaf-lord lay dead, his successors nobly enjoyed prosperity, riches, wound gold and a sublime abundance of wealth there in the ample city, the haven of men.

Aside from the stages of the penitential cycle charted above, there is another factor to consider in relation to Nebuchadnezzar. Alien J. Frantzen points out that in the literature of penance the sinner often makes a public confession and, interestingly, this is exactly what the Babylonian king does in lines 645–51 of the Old English Daniel:

The prince of the people did not then linger over the prophet's words but he preached widely of the Lord's might wherever he could make a proclamation. He told his people of his fated journey, the great wandering he had done with the wild beasts until, from the Lord God, a prudent understanding entered into his soul when he looked to the heavens.

Little explanation for these lines has been offered throughout the course of Daniel-criticism. Examined in the context of penitential literature, however, they take on a new and significant meaning.

Nebuchadnezzar's role must also be taken into consideration here, for exile is often the punishment deemed suitable for the sinner. Traditionally it is Daniel and the three youths who are seen as the exiles of the poem and have, for this reason, been compared to the three patriarchs (Noah, Abraham and Moses) of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Junius 11. This comparison, in turn, is often used to establish exile as a major theme throughout the first part of the codex. It is possible in addition, however, to say that this theme also links the sinners found within the poems of this manuscript. In Genesis B, for example, Satan is banished from his heavenly home (Actwaed hine pa from his hyldo and hine on helle wearp, 1.304: 'He banished him then from his favour and cast him down into Hell') and Adam's ultimate punishment in Genesis A is described in terms of wraec ('the misery of banishment'):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Þu scealt oðerne edel secean,} \\
\text{wynneasran wiæ, and on wraec hweorfan} \\
\text{nacod niedwælda, neorxnawanges} \\
\text{dugeðum bedæled: þe is gedal witod} \\
\text{lices and sawle.}
\end{align*}
\]

(ll.927-31a)

You shall seek another homeland, a joyless habitat, and in exile wander as a naked indigent, bereft of the blessings of Paradise; for you is decreed the separation of body and soul.

Similarly, after the murder of Abel God declares to Cain:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Þu þæs cwealmes scealt} \\
\text{wite winnan and on wraec hweorfan,} \\
\text{awyrged to widan aldre.}
\end{align*}
\]

(ll.1013b-15a)

For this murder you shall suffer punishment and wander in exile, corrupted for all time.
In *Exodus*, good and bad alike are dispersed and suffer as a consequence. It is clear that exile is a preoccupation of the poem from its opening lines:

```
Hwaet! We feor and neah gefrigen habad
ofer middangeard Moyses domas,
wræclico wordriht, wera cneorissum,
```

(ll.1–3)

Listen! We have heard, far and near throughout middle-earth, exceptional people speak of the judgements and commandments of Moses to generations of men.

Like *Daniel*, the Old English hagiographical poems (the poems of the *sanctorale*) are allegories of conversion and salvation. Like Daniel, the Old English hagiographical poems (the poems of the *sanctorale*) are allegories of conversion and salvation. 8 Juliana, for example, insists upon Eleusius’ conversion before she will even consider becoming his bride:

```
‘Næfre ic þæs þeodnes þafian wille
mægrædenne, nemne he mægna god
geornor bigonge þone he gen dyde,
lufige mid lacum þone þe leohht gescop,
heofon ond eordan ond holma bigong,
eodera ymbhwyrt. Ne mæg he elles mec
bringan to bolde. He þa brydlufan
seal to oferre æhtgestealum
idese secan; nafad he ænige her.’
```

(ll.108–16) 9

‘Never will I consent to marry this prince unless he more eagerly embraces than he has yet done the worship of God, demonstrating his love with offerings for Him who shaped light, heaven and earth, the course of the oceans and the circuit of the territories. Otherwise he may not else bring me to his abode. With his wealth he must seek a bride’s love from some other woman. He shan’t have any here’.

Eleusius, in his failure to convert, functions as a negative *exemplum* in *Juliana*. This is seen in a warning issued by the poet:

```
Ða se synscapa
to scepe sceohmod sceþena þreate
Heliseus ehtstream sohte,
leolc ofer laguflod longe hwile
on swonrade. Swytl ealle fornorn
secga hloþe ond hine sylfne mid,
ærþon hy to lande geliden hæfdon,
þurh þearlic þrea.
```

(ll.671b–8a)


9 All references to *Juliana* are taken from *The Exeter Book*, eds George Philip Krapp and Elliott Van Kirk Dobbie, ASPR, 3 (London: Routledge, 1936).
Then the sinful miscreant Eleusius, wanton-hearted, sought the ocean by ship with a band of warriors; for a long while they struggled over the waves along the swan-road. As a harsh punishment, death consumed them all – the crew of men and he himself with them – before they had managed to sail to land.

Turning to Guthlac A, the benefits of conversion are illustrated largely through the figure of Guthlac himself. We are told, for example, that he followed the path of sin in early life:

\[
\text{Hwæt we hyrdon oft þæt se halga wer}
\text{in þa ærestan ældu gelufade}
\text{frecnessa fela;}
\]

(ll.108–10a)\(^{10}\)

Why, we have often heard that the holy man, in his earliest days, enjoyed many dangerous things.

The future saint eventually mends the error of his ways, however, through the help of God:

\[
\text{fyrst wæs swa þeana}
\text{in Godes dome honne Guðlace}
\text{on his ondgiætan engel sealdæ}
\text{þæt him swæðrædæ synna lustæs.}
\]

(ll.110b–13)

Yet the time when an angel would visit Guthlac in his conscience in order that he would forgo all sinful lusts was in the judgement of God.

In contrast to this highly individual experience, conversion in Andreas is carried out on a mass scale:

\[
\text{Þa se modiga het,}
\text{cyninges cræftiga, ciricean getimbræn}
\text{gerwan Godes tempæl, þær siæ geogod aræs}
\text{þurh sæder fulwiht ond se flod onspræng.}
\text{Þa gesamndon secga þreatæ}
\text{weræs geond þæ winburg wide ond side,}
\text{eorlas anmode, ond hira idesa mid;}
\text{cwæðon holdlice hyran woldøn,}
\text{onfon fromlice fullwihtes bæð}
\text{dryhtne to willæn, ond diofolgildæ,}
\text{ealde ælðstedæs, anforhlætan.}
\text{Þa wæs mid ðy folce fulwiht hæfæn,}
\text{æðele mid eorlæm, ond æ Godes}
\text{riht araædæ, ræd on landæ}
\text{mid þam ceasterwaræm, cirice gehalægod}
\]

(ll.1632b–46)\(^{11}\)


Then the noble-minded man, the King's craftsmen, bid that they build a church, make ready God's temple, there where the young were raised up through the Father's baptism and the flood burst forth. Then men gathered together in groups of people from far and wide around the wine-town, men of one mind and their women with them. They professed that they would loyally obey, fearlessly receive the waters of baptism and renounce idol-worship and the old temples. Then in that nation, amongst that folk, baptism was established and God's law and rightful counsel was extolled in the land amongst the city-inhabitants, and the church was consecrated.

In terms of the way in which penance and conversion are achieved, *Elene*, of all the poems of the *sanctorale*, offers a special point of comparison to the Old English *Daniel* for Constantine's embracing of the faith, like Nebuchadnezzar's, is partly brought about by a dream. Constantine's dream is a multi-media event in two parts. The first is comprised of the address which the *wlitig wuldres boda* (1.77a) speaks; the second, delineated in a way which echoes the description of the heavenly messenger, is *wliti wuldres treo* (1.89a) as vision. This marks the beginning of Constantine's conversion to Christianity:

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{æt ðam se leodfruma} \\
& \text{fulwihte onfeng and þæt forð geheold} \\
& \text{on his dagana tid dryhtne to willan:} \\
& \text{-- (l.191b–3)}^12
\end{align*}
\]

Through them the prince of the people received baptism and adhered to it all the days of his life, as the Lord willed.

Constantine and Nebuchadnezzar are also comparable in that their dreams have a political as well as a spiritual significance and, as a result, the Roman Empire and Babylon are directly affected by the content of these visions. Furthermore, it is important to note that both of these leaders (once they have achieved salvation) conform to the behaviour expected of the penitent by becoming humble and obedient to God's law. This is in keeping with Mary Flowers Braswell's observation that

The reformed penitent is never an individual, but a type. His confession has stripped him of those particular sins which have made him unique, and he has espoused the cardinal virtue of humility. His is a passive good; the goal of the confessional has been met, and we find him interesting not for his future activities but for his past.\(^14\)

---

13 "The critics say that dreams concerning the welfare of the state are not to be considered significant unless military or civil officers dream them, or unless many plebeians have the same dream* Commentaries on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 91.
Even more apposite to the present discussion is Robert Emmett Finnegan's analysis of Nebuchadnezzar's tumultuous spiritual journey and awakening:

That this faith in the true God, once found, should be lost is serious, perhaps tragic; but not finally damming. For the poem demonstrates both man's curious incapacity to maintain faith with God, and God's loving compassion in always offering man, often despite himself, another opportunity for grace and salvation.\(^\text{15}\)

This brief comparative analysis of the Old English *Daniel* and the poems of the *sanctorale* has perhaps uncovered some important points of commonality between these texts. As a final thought, then, it might prove useful to cite James W. Earl in the hope of instigating further discussion at some later date:

It is common for the hagiographer to point to the traditional nature of the saint's legend and the legend's non-historical (or non-literal) basis. This is because the saint's life is ultimately devotional rather than historical in our sense of the word. It is more concerned with the truths which underlie Christian history, which motivate it and can be derived from it, than with the particulars of actual historical events.\(^\text{16}\)

The fourteenth-century alliterative *Susannah*, as its name suggests, takes its main story from the apocryphal thirteenth chapter of the book of Daniel,\(^\text{17}\) a chapter which seems to have captured the medieval mind in a particularly dramatic way. Like the other major episodes from the Old Testament book, Susannah was important largely because it could be put to a variety of didactic uses. Jerome, for example, interpreted the story as an important historical testimony to divine intervention insofar as Daniel, God's earthly emissary, saves Susannah from a great injustice. Jerome also saw a theological significance in the Susannah episode in that he read the false witness of the Elders as a prefiguration of that of Judas. As the Middle Ages progressed, other commentators and writers began to discern any number of moral lessons for women, youths, old men, judges and witnesses (to name but a small section of the potential audience) in the story. Chaucer, as has already been suggested, was convinced enough of the episode's creative potential to incorporate it into *The Man of Law's Tale*. Indeed, the poet framed much of the tale around this piece from the Apocrypha. As Alice Miskimin writes in her edition of the alliterative *Susannah*:

\(^{15}\) 'The Old English *Danul the king and his city*, *Neophilologische Mitteilungen*, 85 (1984), 211.

\(^{16}\) 'The typological structure of *Andreas*, 69.

\(^{17}\) The books of the Apocrypha are problematic and are seen by some commentators as deriving from an entirely separate tradition from the canonical books. We can best define the apocryphal Daniel material, therefore, as those stories contained in the Greek translation of Daniel which are not found in the original text. Jerome, in his Latin translation, retained the apocryphal books, and in this way they were handed down to medieval writers.
It was interpreted on many levels and in countless forms: as an authentic miracle, illustrating the reward of chastity, patience and faith; as an allegory of the blindness of man contrasted with the sacred innocence of the vision of a child; a lesson on the punishment of atheists (the judges turn from heaven to look on Susannah’s beauty); as symbolic of the sufferings of the Church, or of the Christian soul in its dilemma of flesh and spirit. 18

In light of my earlier discussion of Nebuchadnezzar’s role as repentant sinner in the Old English Daniel, the following analysis of the alliterative Susannah will take into account its potential to be read, in Miskimin’s words, as ‘a lesson on the punishment of atheists’.

As with so many of the texts derived from the book of Daniel, Susannah (perhaps the only extant poem written by the elusive Huchown) deviates quite radically from its Old Testament source. This discrepancy is noticeable from the very opening of the poem where the reader is immediately placed in Joachim’s garden, a setting indebted to a medieval, as opposed to a biblical, tradition. The garden, long descriptions of which are scattered throughout the poem, 19 is an earthly paradise where flowers bloom abundantly (The rose raggyd on [rote] richest in [rane], 1.72), birds sing (Ther briddis on bloesmes brokkid wel loud, 1.79), and the weather is never inclement. The joy which Joachim and his wife Susannah experience in this prelapsarian environment is initially unbounded (iewes wip loachym priuyly gan play, 1.28) and an obvious attempt is made to identify Susannah with the garden: like the flowers she is semely of hewe (1.44) and is /In] ryche robys arayde reed as pe rose (1.212). 20

Joachim’s garden, delineated as a place of earthly bliss, is seen to be rightfully enjoyed by God’s chosen. Thus, the Elders’ intrusion and their attempted violation of Susannah (and, by extension, the garden) takes on an even greater significance here than in the apocryphal source, where the setting plays no significant symbolic role. Frequently referred to as domysmen (the word is used six times in the poem), the Elders/Judges foreground the issues of judgment and the law even as they blatantly defy them. As the Elders approach the unsuspecting Susannah, for example, the poet

18 Miskimin, 199.
19 There are no allusions to the beauty of the garden in the Old Testament, nor is it even properly described in the source. All we are told is that Erat loakim dives valde, erat ei pomarium vicimum domui suae (Daniel 13:4). This being the case, it calls into question Miskimin’s claim that ‘Susannah is a close verse paraphrase of the Latin prose version of the story in the Vulgate Bible, found in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Daniel’ (17). Quotations from the Vulgate in the present paper are from Biblia Vulgata, eds Alberto Colunga and Laurentio Turrado, Biblioteca de autores Cristianos (Madrid, 1982).
20 The name Susannah (sosannah) means lily in Hebrew and, thus, identifies this figure even more closely with the garden. In keeping with this, she is described as Lovely and liey white [lele] of bynage in line 16 of the alliterative poem.
writes: *Now are pese domesmen [derf] drawn to derne* (1.131). These words signal the most crucial moment in the poem, for it is here that its central concerns are made clear, concerns perhaps best articulated by a series of questions: how can innocence (embodied in Susannah) be protected? How can those who attempt to violate purity be punished and, correspondingly, how can God’s law be carried out on earth, outside of the confines of the garden?²¹

If the construction of the Elders as ‘unbelievers’ is the main focus of the poem, their lust for Susannah is of importance principally because it is the most obvious manifestation of their spiritual decay:²²

> Whan bes perilous prestes perceyvid her play  
> Po þoght [pe] wrecches to [bewile] þat worþi in wone  
> Her witwis [al wytherward] þei wrythyn a way  
> Ant turnyd from his teching þat [teeld is] in trone  
> [Fro] sight of her soueraigne soply to say  
> Her hore hedis fro hevyn þei [hyd apon one]  
> [And] caught fro her covetyse [camys] curs for ay  
> For rightwis luggement recordid þei none  
> They two  
> [Iche] day by [pe] day  
> In pe pomery þei play  
> While þei myght susan [assay]  
> To worchyn her woo.  

*(II.53-65)*

These *perilous prestes* (1.53) and *wrecches* (1.54), captivated by Susannah’s beauty, lose sight of the symbolic heavenly bliss embodied in both Susannah and the garden and, consequently, turn away from God to pursue their own desires: *[Fro] sight of her soueraigne soply to say* (1.57). In this regard, the greatest mistake they make lies in their failure to recognize that Susannah’s beauty is ultimately a reflection of the *sotil and sage* (1.14) qualities she shares with Daniel. It is also important to remember that the connection

²¹ Of particular relevance here is J. Huizinga’s comment in *The waning of the Middle Ages* (New York: Doubleday, 1954) that the medieval imagination was ‘directed to the gravity of fault and the horrors of the chastisements. All moral conceptions are exaggerated, overcharged to excess, because they are always placed in direct connection with divine majesty. In every sin, even the least, the universe is concerned. No human soul can be fully conscious of the enormity of sin. All the saints and the just, the celestial spheres, the elements, the lower creatures and inanimate objects, cry for vengeance on the sinner’ (217).

²² See 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5: ‘Haec est enim voluntas Dei, sanctificatio vestra: ut abstinenceis vos a fornicatione, ut sciat unusquisque vestrum vos suum possidere in sanctificatione, et honore non in passione desiderii, sicut et gentes, quae ignorant Deum’. Another example of the Elders’ spiritually lawless behaviour is their giving of false witness, an act which allies them with Judas. Not only do they testify falsely against Susannah but they also lie to Daniel, telling him that they initially entered Joachim’s garden *in prayer and penance [as] was our purpose* (210).
between physical beauty and inner spirituality has a long history. Augustine writes in *De civitate Dei*, for example, that:

*Iam vero in ipso corpore, quamvis nobis sit cum beluis mortalitate commune multisque eorum reperiatur infirmius, quanta Dei bonitas, quanta providentia tanti creatoris apparat. Nonne ita sunt in eo loca sensuum et cetera membra disposita speciesque ipsa ac figura et statura totius corporis ita modificata ut ad ministerium animae rationalis se indicet factum? ... Sunt vero quaedam ita posita in corpore ut tantummodo decorem habeant, non et usum . . . Transiitura est quippe necessitas tempusque venturum quando sola invicem pulchritudine ad laudem referendum est conditoris, cui dicitur in psalmo: *confessionem et decorum induisti.*[^23]

Moreover, even in the body, which is something we have in common with the brute creation – which is in fact weaker than the bodies of any of the lower animals – even here what evidence we find of the goodness of God, of the providence of the mighty Creator! Are not the sense organs and the other parts of that body so arranged, and the form and shape and size of the whole body so designed as to show that it was created as the servant of the rational soul? . . . There are some details in the body which are there simply for aesthetic reasons, and for no practical purpose . . . For practical needs are, of course, transitory; and a time will come when we shall enjoy one another's beauty for itself alone, without any lust. And this above all is a motive for the praise of the Creator, to whom the psalm says, 'You have clothed yourself in praise and beauty'.[^24]

Inversely, a woman's beauty can be seen to signify evil, as in the following extract where, in a discussion of the prophet Jeremiah, the homilist digresses considerably to offer his opinion on the physical allure of women:

*Alswa doð monie of þas wimmen heo smuried heom mid blanchet þet is þes deofles sape and claþed heom mid eoluwe claþe þet is þes deofles helfter. and seoddan heo lokied in þe scawere. þet is þes deofles hindene.*[^25]

Thus far, I have merely alluded to Daniel's role in the alliterative *Susannah.* This is due, in part at least, to the fact that the prophet does not make an appearance until the final stages of the poem. Just before he is introduced (or perhaps 'raised up' is a more exact phrase) Susannah makes an urgent appeal to God to save her from an unjust fate:

```
Grete god of his grace of gyftes vngnede  
[Wip] help of þe holy herde hyr prayere  
He [dyrectid] his dome [on þis] derf dede  
To danyell þe prophete of dedys so dere  
Such 3yftys he him 3af in hys 3ong hede  
3ett [fayled hym of fourten ful of al] 3ere  
Not to layne  
Then cryed þat frely food
```

In keeping with most portraits of this prophet, Daniel is described as being intelligent, a possessor of the ever-important *dōm*, and a performer of *dedys so dere* (1.279). The poet elaborates somewhat on the apocryphal account, however, by designating a specific age to Daniel, fourteen (1.281). In the Apocrypha, all we are told is that the prophet is *pueri iunioris*.

Despite all of his goodly and godly qualities, Daniel emerges as a harsher figure in *Susannah* and in the corresponding apocryphal material than he does in the other chapters of the Old Testament book (in particular the sections upon which the Old English *Daniel* is drawn). This is demonstrated in the language used by the boy prophet when he addresses the Elders:

\[
\text{Thow seyst žu segh sussanne synne in žy syght} \\
\text{Tell me now trystily vndur what tree} \\
\text{Man be the [mikel] god bat most ys of myght} \\
\text{Vnder a syne sothly my self i [hir] se} \\
\text{Now žu lyest in žy hed be heuen vpon hyght} \\
\text{An angell wib a naked swerde že nyses full ne} \\
\text{He hath braundest [his] bronde burnysshed full bryght} \\
\text{To merk [bi myddil] in [melle in more Žan in] thre} \\
\text{No lees} \\
\text{Thow [brak] goddes comandement} \\
\text{To sle such an innocent} \\
\text{Wyth any fals iugement} \\
\text{Vndewly on dees}
\]

(*ll.313–25*)

*Susannah* is a poem which explores the nature of justice and it is not surprising, therefore, that Daniel becomes a merciless criminal prosecutor during his interrogation of the Elders. Divine law, of which the prophet is an agent, requires the punishment of these...
sinners. In the end, the Elders are summarily dispatched whilst Daniel looks on, nonplussed:

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{Then } & \text{ be folk of israel fellon knees} \\
    \text{And [lovyd] our lord } & \text{bat her } \text{be lyf lent} \\
    \text{All gomes } & \text{bat her gode wolde glades & glees} \\
    \text{That } & \text{prophete so pertly preued hys entente} \\
    \text{They trumped before } & \text{be tratours & trayled hem on trees} \\
    \text{Thorow out } & \text{be cyte [for soth] be comune assent} \\
    \text{[Who so] leueth [on our] lord } & \text{bar hym [not] lees} \\
    \text{That } & \text{bus his servaunt con saue } \text{bat schuld [ha] be schent} \\
    \text{[Vnsete]} \\
    \text{Thys ferly be fell} \\
    \text{In } & \text{be dayes of danyell} \\
    \text{The [pistel witness]ip it] well} \\
    \text{Of } & \text{[bat] prophete}
\end{align*}
\]

(1.352-64)

The poem, in its cruel chastisement of the immoral Elders and its unequivocal characterization of the godly Susannah, displays characteristics of the saint's life, and it may well be that the text absorbed some of the more salient features of that genre. Susannah's hagiographical indebtedness is further reinforced by the quiet Christian tag which brings the poem to a close:

P. \textit{Here endith }be storye of Susanne and Danyell,  

I. \textit{Qui scripsit carmen sit benedictus, amen.}

V. \textit{Ihesus crist wip mylde steuene}  
\textit{Granunt vs alle }be blisse of heuene amen

A. \textit{God graunt }vs \textit{pi grace to play us pertly in }pi place  
\textit{And feipely }pi feire face to se \textit{pat is swete amen}

\textit{explicit epistola susanne secundum daniele.}

The Old English Daniel and the alliterative Susannah help to illustrate the fact that during the Middle Ages the book of Daniel was largely used by western writers to illustrate some facet of Christian morality. It is interesting to note, however, that though the story of Susannah and the Elders continued to be reworked during the Renaissance, these later writers manipulated it to more secular ends. There is, to cite but one example, a sixteenth-century play, \textit{The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna} (c.1578), which conforms to this trend. The play,\textsuperscript{30} especially its latter half,
concerns itself primarily with theories of jurisprudence. This immediately signals a major departure from the Vulgate source, as does the fact that in *The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna* the heroine’s deliverance is not secured exclusively through divine intervention; and Daniel, though his initial entrance is seemingly effected by ‘supernatural’ means, acts only partly as God’s prophet. At other times he emerges as a shrewd solicitor exercising his constitutional authority on Susannah’s behalf. We see the Judge (*Iudex*) in the play, for example, being so impressed by Daniel’s judicial skills that he invites the prophet to join him in the seat of judgement:

```
And synce that God by thee hath given,
a warning to us al,
Com sit with us in judgement seate,
least we agayne should fall.
(ll.1077-8)
```

Thus, Daniel’s earthly status is elevated to that of a judge. This is also, interestingly enough, the guise he adopts in another sixteenth-century play, *Nice wanton* (c. 1550). Here, the prophet’s opening lines leave the audience in no doubt as to his function:

```
As a judge of the country, here am I come,
Sent by the King’s Majesty, justice to do:
Chiefly to proceed in judgment of a felon:
I tarry for the verdict of the quest, ere I go.32
```

David Bevington writes of Daniel’s role in *The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna* that:

The authorial spokesman, Daniel, is a reforming moralist who places civil authority under the guidance of divine law, and who comes close to justifying some kind of human intervention in the name of that higher law ... Daniel is concerned not merely with justice after this life but with the legal safeguards of this world.33

It is clear, if one extends the above argument, that the play has a political bias. The genre from which it stems, that of the political morality, is, in part, devoted to an exploration of the nature of tyrants. In this respect, *The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna* has much in common with other plays of the period such as *Cambyses*,

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31 The stage direction (ll.1061-2) reads *... and God rayseth the spirite of Danyell.* Bevington suggests that this technically complicated direction may indicate that the play was never actually performed (*Tudor drama and politics*, 162).


33 *Tudor drama and politics*, 162.
Apius and Virginia and Jocasta. The somewhat secularized portrait of Daniel offered in this play is also likely to have been influenced by the growing preoccupation with the law found in a great deal of Humanist writing. As Benjamin G. Kohl observes, Humanism arose "in the cities of Padua, Bologna, Milan and Verona at the time of Dante, fostered by the nascent professional classes of the Italian city-states - lawyers, notaries, school-masters and merchants". In this respect, The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna is very much a product of Humanist thought and perfectly illustrates how the book of Daniel was manipulated to reflect particular epochs and their own pressing concerns.

34 In George Whetstone's Promos and Cassandra, Thomas Garter's The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna, R.B.'s Apius and Virginia, and Preston's Cambyses, tyranny is identified not allegorically but by the king's or magistrate's lust and his cruelty and hypocrisy in trying to satisfy that lust and protect his position.

'... When he meets a woman, the morality tyrant usually attempts to rape her but is overcome by his own passion. Voluptas and Sensualitas, the wicked judges of The Most Virtuous and Godly Susanna, are stricken by Cupid's arrows and flames, "the greatest scourge that may be given" (1.728). Each man's compulsion to "heale my secrete wo" (1.732) is almost instantly turned into rage against Susanna when she refuses their advances; as Sensualitas says to her, "we mean to have our will" (1.759). But Susanna's resistance ultimately defeats them': Rebecca W. Bushnell, Tragedies of tyrants: political thought and theater in the English Renaissance (London: Cornell University Press, 1990), 89-90.