

The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses of Rome (1663) as Children's Literature: Textual History, Gender and Folktale Motifs

The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses of Rome (1663) como literatura infantil: historia textual, género y motivos de la literatura popular

TOMÁS MONTERREY

Institution address: Universidad de La Laguna. Departamento de Filología Inglesa y Alemana. Apartado de Correos 456. Facultad de Humanidades. 38200 La Laguna, Tenerife. Spain.

E-mail: jmonterr@ull.edu.es

ORCID: 0000-0002-7741-4741

Received: 10/11/2020. Accepted: 24/06/2021.

How to cite this article: Monterrey, Tomás. "*The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses of Rome* (1663) as Children's Literature: Textual History, Gender and Folktale Motifs." *ES Review: Spanish Journal of English Studies*, vol. 42, 2021, pp. 11–36.



This work is licensed under [CC-BY-NC](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24197/ersjes.42.2021.11-36>

Abstract: This article analyses *The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses of Rome*, attributed to Thomas Howard, and traditionally underrated by literary critics and historians as a mere imitation of the *Seven Sages*, despite its enormous success. The early parts examine the literary and editorial relationship with its source text, and Howard's prefatory "Epistle." The latter parts concentrate on the frame story and the fifteen exemplary tales. Special attention is drawn to the gender/feminist issues in the original extension of the frame story, and to the folktale motifs displayed in this compilation, stylistically and thematically conceived to help children improve their reading competence.

Keywords: Restoration fiction; *The Seven Wise Mistresses of Rome*; gender; folktales; children's literature.

Summary: Introduction. *Wise Mistresses* and Its Source Text. Thomas Howard's Prefatory "Epistle to the Reader." The Frame Story. The Exemplary Tales. Conclusion. Appendix.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza *The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses of Rome*, atribuido a Thomas Howard, y tradicionalmente infravalorado por la crítica e historia literarias como una simple imitación de *Los siete sabios de Roma*, a pesar de su enorme éxito. Las dos primeras partes examinan la relación literaria y editorial con el texto fuente, y la epístola inicial de Howard. Las partes finales se centran en la historia principal y los quince cuentos moralizantes. Especial atención merecen los temas de género/feministas en la novedosa extensión de la historia marco, y los motivos de cuentos populares presentes en esta colección, estilística y temáticamente ideada para ayudar al público más joven a mejorar su competencia lectora.

Palabras clave: Ficción de la Restauración; *Las siete sabias de Roma*; género; literatura popular; literatura infantil.

Sumario: Introducción. *Wise Mistresses* y su texto fuente. Thomas Howard y su “Epístola al lector”. La historia marco. Los cuentos moralizantes. Conclusión. Anexo.

INTRODUCTION

Killis Campbell only mentioned *The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses of Rome* (henceforth *Wise Mistrisses*) in a footnote in his study of *The Seven Sages of Rome* (1899). He described it as “a chap-book modelled after the chap-book version of the *History of the Seven Wise Masters of Rome* [henceforth *Wise Masters*], and a sort of counterpart to it. . . . [B]ut, though very interesting, they possess little value” (93). Campbell’s assessment was correct. Firstly, if *Wise Masters* is a prose version of the rich tradition of the *Seven Sages* romances, *Wise Mistrisses* signalled a further alteration by featuring female characters in the main roles, while both books increasingly targeted younger readers in format and language. Secondly, their interest is unquestionable. They proved to be highly successful as children’s literature and were in great demand until 1850. However, while *Wise Masters* still attracts scholarly attention, *Wise Mistrisses* has been criticised rather badly,¹ and remains almost ignored, even though—unlike *The Seven Sages* and *Wise Masters*—it was a purely English project. It is traditionally collected in bibliographical lists of seventeenth-century fiction, but rarely mentioned in scholarly studies. Margaret Spufford only indicated that Pepys kept a copy (225), and Paul Salzman classified it as “Didactic Fiction,” describing it as a “series of exempla in romance frame” (359), but omitting any reference to its target public. This essay will attempt an introductory analysis of *Wise Mistrisses* as a children’s book—with special emphasis on gender issues and folktale motifs—by focusing on its relationship with its source text, Thomas Howard and his prefatory letter, the traditional frame story and its new extension, and its fresh compilation of exemplary tales.

¹ W. A. Clouston described it in 1884 as a “wretched catchpenny of the *Wise Masters*” (356).

1. WISE MISTRESSES AND ITS SOURCE TEXT

The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses of Rome was first published in octavo format in London in 1663, “Printed for M. Wright, at the Kings Head in the Old Bailey” (fol. A3r).² It has always been attributed to Thomas Howard, the signatory of the prefatory letter. According to the Stationers’ Company register, “Mrs. Mary Wright” entered *Wise Mistrisses* on 10 April (Eyre 322). Since she was active in the book trade from 1658 to 1662 (Plomer 198), and perhaps until 1664, she was more likely the widow of John Wright than the wife of his namesake son, who edited *Wise Masters* in 1673, 1677, 1682 and 1684, always announcing stock availability of *Wise Mistrisses* in the advertisements. After 1687, *Wise Masters* was published by Wotton and Conyers, who also financed the next extant edition of *Wise Mistrisses* in 1686.³ It was revised and updated in the early eighteenth century, when it also appeared under *Roman Stories* and in abridged editions. By the end of that century, it had been published several times in America. The book totalled over forty editions by 1850, when it was last printed in Dublin jointly with *Wise Masters*.

The first printer of *Wise Mistrisses* was probably Robert Ibbotson. He had worked for Mary Wright in the publication of Thomas Gouge’s *Christian Directions* in 1661 (Plomer 198), and his initials “R. I.” coincide with the printer of the 1656 edition of *Wise Masters* for Edward

² All citations of *Wise Mistrisses* are taken from the first edition: *The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses of Rome*. London: printed for M[ary] Wright, at the Kings Head in the Old Bailey, 1663 (EEBO facsimile reproduction of the Huntington Library copy (Acc. No. 55251). ProQuest, 2011). The subtitle and the content information on the title page read “Whose Names were Halicuja, Mardula, Cicre, Penthisilia, Debora, Dejanara, Boadicia. Wherein, the Treachery of Evil Counsel is discovered, the Innocency of harmless Virgins cleared, and the Wisdom of Seven Wise Women displayed, to the wonder of their own Nation, and the Admiration of all the World” (fol. A3r). The copy (Wing H3008) contains 95 leaves, of which 87 correspond to the main text. All gatherings are in eights and signatures run A to M. The first leaf, signed A, is blank; the last printed leaf is M7. Contents can be described as follows: preliminaries (fols. A1r–A3v), “Epistle to the Reader” (fols. A4r–A8v), “The History of the Seven Wise Mistrisses” (fols. B1r–M7v). 1 plate: frontispiece (fol. A2v). 18 illustrations (woodcuts; four of them are repeated twice).

³ Millington catalogued in 1683 a *Wise Mistrisses* copy published in 1676, which must now be lost or unregistered (fol. C2v). Esdaile also refers to “another edition. For D[orman] Newman, etc. 1684. 12°. Hazlitt, H. 660” (247), now probably lost or held in a private library.

Blackmore, who died in 1658. In fact, the printer of *Wise Mistresses* uses the same material as in the previous editions of *Wise Masters*: black-letter font for the body text; Roman type for the prefatory letter, headings, indented quotations of poems and one letter, and characters' names; italics in the prefatory letter; ornamental glyphs, as well as the illustrations—designed for the 1633 edition by Thomas Purfoot and reproduced in the next two editions of 1653 and 1656—even though they obviously did not depict any scene from *Wise Mistresses*.

One of the printing novelties of *Wise Mistresses* was a woodcut factotum for the initial S. It apparently depicts the imperial couple of the framework story—the empress and the late emperor, linked by the rose emblem of England. Maureen Mulvihill has shown that it was already used in 1660, and later, in 1679, in a poem which she attributes to Lady Mary Villiers, maid of honour to Queen Henrietta Maria and wife (in her third marriage) of Thomas Howard.⁴ The other printing novelty—this time exclusive for *Wise Mistresses*—was a poor woodcut as frontispiece, portraying the nine female characters of the frame story, i.e., the seven ladies, Princess Sabrina, and Empress “Lucesius” (fol. B1r).

The question whether the Empress's name was an intentional antiphrasis or a mistake by the staff seems controversial. Her name only appears in the opening sentence, and she is identified as the “Empress” or “her mother” from then on. Thomas Purfoot had chosen the image of Lucretia stabbing herself as the emblem of his bookshop and his publications, in which he would insert a woodcut colophon depicting the Roman maiden, as in his 1633 edition of *Wise Masters*. Thus, like a Derridean spectre, the choice of the Empress's name for *Wise Mistresses* suggests a posthumous tribute to Thomas Purfoot and an acknowledgment of the source text. However, the masculine instead of the feminine form of the name may be problematic. Perhaps there was no proofreading, the mistake was overlooked, or simply assumed to be the correct name. In any case, the masculine ending was maintained in the 1686 edition, despite a new typesetting.⁵ If it was a kind of intentional antiphrasis (i.e., “A figure of speech by which words are used in a sense opposite to their proper meaning” *OED*), the interpretation is twofold. The masculine name would

⁴ Mary Villiers is also known as Mary Stewart, Duchess of Richmond and Duchess of Lennox.

⁵ The Empress's name read “Lucretia” in eighteenth-century editions. See, for example, *Roman Stories* (fol. A3r).

invest the Empress with manly authority and dignity; but it could also denote a male public identity of somebody who is actually a woman, possibly mirroring the same relationship between the signatory of the prefatory letter (Thomas Howard) and the true writer of the exemplary tales, who could also have been a woman, as will be hinted in the following sections.

Wise Mistresses reproduced the same frame story of *Wise Masters*, but reversing the characters' sex and extending Sabrina's history until her death. Thus, Emperor Pontianus, Prince Dioclesian and his step-mother the young Empress were respectively changed into Empress "Lucrecius," Princess Sabrina and Governor Radamentus. In the frame-story extension, Sabrina's husband King Alexander of Egypt was taken from Dioclesian's story in the source text. Like the wise masters, the wise ladies—Halicuja, Mardula, Cicre, Penthisilia, Debora, Dejanara, and Boadicia—were not personages of the history of Rome, except perhaps Cicre, Circe. In fact, no historical background, literary or mythological association, or biographical sketch is ever given in the book. They merely act collectively; the narrator does not even indicate the teller of all four stories, but only their ordinal numbers. Except Halicuja and Mardula, their names were not unfamiliar for the average mid-seventeenth-century audience. Moreover, the lives of Amazon Queen "Penthisilia," biblical "Debora," and Celtic "Boadicia"—three powerful, non-Roman female leaders—had been written by Thomas Heywood in *The Exemplary Lives and Memorable Acts of Nine the Most Worthy Women in the World* in 1640. In this respect, besides the tradition of the *Seven Sages*, *Wise Mistresses* can also be ascribed to the tradition of Chaucer, and Boccaccio before him,⁶ foregrounding good women to thwart the misogynist slant in the characterisation of the step-mother—the Empress—as a plotting, ambitious, incestuous and adulterous woman in *Wise Masters*, inherited from the *Seven Sages*.

2. THOMAS HOWARD'S PREFATORY "THE EPISTLE TO THE READER"

Wise Mistresses has always been attributed to Thomas Howard because he signed the prefatory "Epistle" and his authorship was stated in the advertisements of the book; but his identity—whether a real name or a pseudonym—remains uncertain. Maureen Mulvihill has recently proposed

⁶ The lives of Deianira, Penthesilia and Circe are part of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris* (1361).

two candidates. For her, the “the most sensible . . . and satisfying candidate for the authorship” is the 14th Earl of Arundel (1585–1646). As he died in 1646, it is highly unlikely he wrote a preface for a female version of *Wise Masters* and recommended it as an alternative to “hard books appertaining to Divine Knowledge” (fol. A7r) for improving reading competence in schools, placing it at the same level as “Historical *Fables*” (fol. A7r). Even so, the use of Howard instead of Arundel would have echoed the moral prestige of the “Father of vertu in England,” while dissociating the “Epistle” from his authorship.

The second candidate is “Colonel Thomas Howard” (“Northern Tom”),⁷ who married Mary Villiers secretly in 1664, once the matter of a duel in 1662 had been cleared up. This other profile of Thomas Howard as a military man, a duellist, and childless does not portray the pedagogic sensibility required to write the extension of Princess Sabrina’s story—apparently, the only original part of the book—and much less somebody with enough authority and credibility in the eyes of his contemporaries to preface and recommend a book for the young. However, as Mulvihill has argued, *Wise Mistresses*, “surely intersects with the explicitly feminist tastes of . . . Mary Villiers . . . ; for [it] praises wise women, . . . [and was] published and sold by a woman . . . , a fact which would have pleased a reader of Mary Villiers’ feminist leanings.” Indeed, whoever adapted the misogynistic *Wise Masters* would have had similar qualities to a schoolmaster or a governess, such as the one Mary Villiers would have employed for her daughter, aged nearly twelve when the book was published.

The possibility of a ghost (female) writer should not be discarded. Howard is ambiguous in this matter. In the “Epistle,” he—perhaps rhetorically—detaches himself from the authorial figure when he declares: “if thou wouldst ask the Author from whence he gathered all these varieties of Delight? He doth answer . . .” (fol. A5v); but, in the end, he claims that his compilation task took “some certaine yeares” (fol. A6r) and endorses his achievement: “as I have taken the pains in Collecting it, so do thou spend thy labour in Reading it” (fol. A7v). A comparison of the preface with the main text does not solve this question. While the tone of “Epistle” features a resolute male engaged in one way or another in children’s education, the unadorned style and simple language of the new tales hinder any conclusive ascription of the main text to either gender. In any case, the

⁷ Brother to Charles Howard, 1st Earl of Carlisle.

example of Madelaine de Scudéry in France evinces that the customary procedure for women writers was to publish fiction under a male name (or anonymously), while the opposite would trigger a scandal, best instanced by Margaret Cavendish who, like Villiers, was a maid of honour to Queen Henrietta Maria.

Even though the masculine form of the Empress's name may be indicative of a female pen and a male public author, *Wise Mistresses* is far removed from Cavendish's radical (proto-)feminism. Nonetheless, the book shares her same agenda of elevating the condition of women, but never explicitly revealing that it was a gender counterpart of *Wise Masters*, or naturally addressed to girls. Perhaps the publication of *Wise Mistresses* may seem irrelevant for contemporary feminism, but one should bear in mind that, in 1663, the book was not even conceived as entertainment for adults; however, it provided girls in particular with a compilation of tales which mirrored their sex in the main roles, and fictionalised women as sites of wisdom and artificers of justice.

A comparison of the "Epistle to the Reader" with other prefaces of *Wise Masters* and *Wise Mistresses* shows their development from high literature to popular chapbooks especially suitable for children. The first preface to *Wise Masters* was written by Thomas Greene to "the learned Reader" (fol. A2r) in the 1576 edition by Thomas Purfoot. Greene's main concern was to justify the updated spelling and diction, attributing the faults to the "stile of this translatur" (fol. A2v). It was reproduced in the 1602 edition. In the 1633 edition, Thomas Purfoot (junior) removed the adjective "learned" from the reader, and devoted his preface to marketing the book in several ways: by spotlighting the beautiful illustrations "to my great cost" (fol. A2r); by variously describing the stories as "example," alluring "tales and fables," (fol. A2r), and "fabulous storie" (fol. A2v); and by elaborating an extraordinary interpretation of the moral teaching and allegory of *Wise Master* (i.e., the traditional frame story of the *Seven Sages*):

The Emperor may signifie the *World*, who hauing but one only beloued Sonne (who is *MAN*) him to bring up well, is all his care. But *Man*, loosing his owne Mother (who is *Reason*, or diuine *Grace*.) and falling into the hands of his Step-mother, (signifying Sinne) who is an Emperesse of great bewitching, and one that Commaunds the *World*, shee workes by all meanes possible to utter confusion of *Man*. . . hee [Man] hath *Seauen wise Maisters*,

which are Seaven liberall Sciences, to give him wholesome instructions, and by these helps saue him from mortall danger. (fols. A2v–A3r)

This preface was reprinted in 1653 and 1656 by Edward Blackmore, and in the subsequent editions by John Wright, at least in 1673 and 1677.

In 1663, Howard described the subject of *Wise Mistresses* in terms of “Counsel and Wisdom” (fol. A4v), its form as “Examples and Declarations to a Moral Sense” (fol. A5v), and its moral message as “the platform of sincerity, Truth, Zeal and Fidelity; whereby Treason is discovered, Truth is advanced, Treachery is executed, Vertue is exalted, and Vice is confounded” (fol. A5r). The most substantial part of his epistle aims to defend the genre of history as a literary art.

Perhaps influenced by the classics, he remarked on the capacity of history for preserving past events and lives unforgotten and unaffected by the limitations of time and space, but his short exemplary “histories” are untouched by any principle of modern historiography whatsoever. In fact, “Rome” could be replaced by any other city. There are tales set, for example, in China, Cappadocia, or Burgundy, and Princess Sabrina became the ruler of the “Eastern part of the World” (fol. L7r) in the Kingdom of Epirus. Instead, Howard defended his “histories” for their moral instruction and literary beauty. He linked the moral teachings, which the reader could extract from the profane stories, with religious instruction when, in a short paragraph, he recalled the Last Four Things: “From all which thou wilt learn, Vanity to contemn it; Death to expect it; Judgement to avoid it; Hell to escape it; and Heaven to desire it” (fol. A5v). He also remarked on the stimulating charm of this genre for young readers: “Therefore History ought to be praised not contemned; for it doth encourage Youth through the pleasantness of the Story, whereby he doth sooner attain to his English Tongue, and is still more desirous to read further” (fol. A7r).

In the late seventeenth century, these tales were commonly used in schools. In his preface to *Prince Eratus* (1674), Francis Kirkman recommended *Wise Masters* in particular and mentioned the great esteem it enjoyed in Ireland, where “Children are in general put to read in it, and I know that only by that Book severall have Learned to read well, so great is the pleasure that young and old take in reading thereof” (fol. A2r). The educational usefulness of *Wise Mistresses* was also explicitly underlined in both prefaces of the two versions published in the early eighteenth century. In the updated, revised, and shortened note in G[eorge] Conyers’s

edition of around 1705, it was described as “fitting to be Taught in all Schools” (fol. A3v). Similarly, the one-page note “To the Reader” in George Conyers’s edition of *Roman Stories* addressed it to children for its content and style: “This small *Book* . . . , by the diverting Stories therein, encourages and allures *Children* and *Youth* to learn to read *English*; for which End it is written in an intelligible and easy Style, adapted to the meanest Capacities” (fol. A2v; original emphasis). Both reproduced Howard’s formulation of the book’s moral message (quoted above). However, the note to the traditional text maintained the reference to the Last Four Things, possibly to meet the taste of the more conservative public, while the note to the *Roman Stories* reworded the fourfold benefits of reading “Histories,” which Howard had originally pointed out: “For in Histories are to be found numerous Delights pleasing the Fancy, expelling Melancholly, sharpening the Wit, illuminating the Understanding, and refining the Tongue to the purity of all Oratory” (fol. A6r). The publisher of *Roman Stories* strove to modernise *Wise Mistrisses* by retitling it, and by revising the language and the extended part of the frame story to give it a more tenable (or, at least, less strikingly fictitious) Roman historical background. Moreover, in T[homas] Sabine’s edition of *Roman Stories* [circa 1795], the addition of two extra short stories or “Choice Novels” (1) at the end,⁸ “A Pleasant Story of the Unhappy Counterfeit, or Fortunate Gipsey” and “A Remarkable Story of the Gratitude of a Reformed Whore,” suggests a wider profile of potential readers than young learners.

3. THE FRAME STORY

The frame story replicates the *Wise Masters* plot, but reversing the characters’ sex. Thus, after the introduction of the Empress “Lucretius” and her daughter Sabrina, we learn that the Emperor, on his deathbed, asked his wife to give the princess the best education and to employ a governor to assist her in the state affairs. It was decided that seven wise mistresses would educate Sabrina (in ecclesiastical and civil wisdom, natural philosophy, all arts and sciences, and marvellous things) and that Radamentus would aid the Empress. Seven years later, Radamentus plotted Sabrina’s destruction through a law whereby anyone found guilty of fornication or adultery would be punished with the death penalty. He persuaded the Empress to bring Sabrina back to the palace. On receiving

⁸ Pagination restarts from 1 after the end of *Roman Stories* on page 107.

the order, the mistresses read in the stars Radamentus's intentions and the perils awaiting Sabrina. They also advised her to utter only one word—justice—and to remain silent for seven days, and this she did. Radamentus tried to seduce her. On rejection, he accused her of fornicating with another. The Empress commanded her to be burned at the stake, but the court tried to change her mind. Sabrina was imprisoned instead. Radamentus told the Empress a tale to convince her to carry out the sentence. When Sabrina was being taken to the stake, the first mistress appeared in her defence and succeeded in stopping the execution while she told the Empress a story. Radamentus complained further and gave a second example, which was counteracted by another mistress, and so on for seven days, after which Sabrina was allowed to speak. She revealed Radamentus's wicked plot and treachery, and had his favourite stripped naked to show that "he" was indeed a woman. Sabrina also told a tale—an abbreviated variation of Dioclesian's example in *Wise Masters*, reversing the sex of the main characters. Radamentus and his concubine were sentenced to death. When the Empress died, Sabrina was crowned, and renowned for her wisdom and power. The imitation of the *Wise Masters*' frame story ends here.

The original extension of it covers Sabrina's life until her death. She became a powerful and respected monarch. No nation declared war against her, except the Tartars, whom she defeated with the invaluable assistance of "a champion in her army called Gorgon, a giant" (fol. L8r). Sabrina married King Alexander of Egypt. The King of "Syra" invaded her realm of Epirus. Sabrina and Alexander were forced "to flye into an uninhabited Island, wherein they spent the remnant of their dayes with three other petty kings. Soon after Alexander dyed, and his Empress, who in a Sepulchre which he hewed out himself, they were both interred" (fol. M7r).⁹ The story concludes with the epitaph on their tomb.

This narrative coda is significant in at least three ways. Firstly, unlike Margaret Cavendish' Empress in *The Blazing World* (1666), Sabrina portrays a much more radical empowerment of women by becoming monarch in her own right and in her own realm, and—despite her youth and singleness—by governing judiciously through her own wisdom and

⁹ In *Roman Stories*, this narrative extension was updated to give it a more credible historical factuality. Thus, the Tartars were changed to the Gauls, Alexander was the King of Germany, and their challenging enemy was the King of Macedonia. The giant Gorgon was modernised to "General Gorgen" (101).

virtue, gaining the respect of other kings. Yet, Cavendish's transgression was stronger. While *Wise Mistresses* was popular literature for the young, an adaptation of the *Wise Masters'* plot, and written by or attributable to a male author, *The Blazing World* was a wholly original piece for learned readers and authored by a famous noblewoman who had already provoked considerable scandal for that reason alone. Secondly, Alexander's poetical expression of love for his wife, "O Sweet Sabrina" (fols. M3v–M5r), is followed by a turn in their fortunes and bliss when the King of "Syra" challenged and defeated the couple's armies, and laid waste to Egypt and Epirus. The apparently unhappy ending of Sabrina and Alexander's surrender and subsequent exile taught a moral lesson about the transience of earthly happiness and the dramatic reversals of fate, which the characters nobly endured through the consolation of their mutual love. Thirdly, the choice of the name "Gorgon" for the giant in Sabrina's army is problematic, as it raises doubts about the male authorship of the text. According to Sigmund Freud, the Medusa's head is linked with "the terror of castration" (105). He argued that the goddess Athena was unapproachable because she wore this symbol on her dress. Similarly, Sabrina is also unapproachable because she is shielded by Gorgon. Yet, the giant's "petrifying" efficiency against the enemy is not caused by the representation of the "horrifying effects" (106) of female genitals, since he is male. Instead, he bore a (phallic) club "like the mast of a Ship" (fol. L8r). In the same essay, Freud adds that "the erect male organ also has an apotropaic effect To display the penis (or any of its surrogates) is to say: I am not afraid of you. I defy you. I have a penis" (106). Gorgon symbolically displays Sabrina's power at war (the most masculine activity in seventeenth-century England), while she remains wholly feminine.

Gorgon's exaggerated height and deeds certainly demolish whatever credibility the story may claim, even though such marvellous types and episodes were to be expected in romances at any point of the plot. The mindful and playful narrator lets the (young) audience decide on the factuality of the Gorgon episodes: "But whether you may take this to be incredible or no, Ile leave that to your judgement" (fol. M1r); thus, this sudden display of wonder reinforces the suspension of disbelief in the rest of the frame story.

4. THE EXEMPLARY TALES

Like its source text, *Wise Mistresses* contains fifteen tales, alternating each example told by Radamentus with one by each of the seven ladies in the sixth chapter, followed by the example of Sabrina, which is part of the frame story and, thus, placed in the next chapter (wrongly numbered 6). They bear no similarity to the *Wise Masters* stories, except “1R”¹⁰ about a magic well—a variation of the magic tree in the first example of the Empress—and the first part of Sabrina’s example. A comparison with *Wise Masters* evinces that the narrative elements of the new compilation were purposely simplified; however, the new tales were selected and arranged to generate a more consistent and sustained debate between Radamentus and Sabrina’s female defenders about the conflict at hand.

Like in *Wise Masters*, Radamentus’s elucidation of the allegory in “1R,” whereby the well and the spring respectively symbolise the Empress and Sabrina, outlines his view of the situation. “Debora” (fol. C7v), or “Hallicuja” (fol. D2v), contests Radamentus’s views by telling a story that sharply pinpoints a treacherous counsellor at the core of the conflict. As a counterargument, Radamentus abandons the allegory, describes the present facts with a tale that mirrors the frame-story events from his perspective (i.e., spotlighting the daughter’s evil nature), and forecasts a most tragic denouement. His next tales warn of the perils of believing in deceitful wise women, neglecting sensible advice, and indulging inveterate evil daughters—a theme he foregrounds in his last tale. Meanwhile, the mistresses tell stories about treacherous employees and councillors, and the fatal consequences of taking hasty decisions based on unverified evidence. Their concluding story portrays a mighty, rich widow cheated by her administrator’s (a minister) deceitful language. This is the sole story close to the fabliaux, which abound in *Wise Masters*. In *Wise Mistresses*, they are substituted by tales more appropriate for the Empress and young readers,¹¹ involving children or young characters, animals and witches, but

¹⁰ In the discussion, the tales of Radamentus and of the seven mistresses will be abbreviated with the corresponding number followed by R or M, respectively.

¹¹ However, sentences such as “the Daughter of the Empress is both a Whore and a Strumpet” (fol. C5v), getting rid of dogs by hanging them, or the violent denouements, are currently unfit for children’s books.

equally avoiding—though not suppressing—magic and the supernatural.¹² Moreover, the characters are archetypal, the plots even more episodic and, in general, the style is simpler.

Howard's emphasis on the arduous gathering of the tales suggests they are not original, but variations, adaptations, abridgements, and combinations, of existing stories. In the "Epistle," he claimed he had collected them from "various sorts of Histories: as, *Plato, Virgil, Ovid, Dares*,¹³ old *Homer*, and divers others" (fol. A5v). However, the tales seem not to have been derived directly from their works, except the adaptation of Dares' account of the Trojan War in "4M," unless he was also considering the manifold medieval retellings of the classics.

Similarly, it is possible that a medieval adaptation of a classic hero's return from the underworld could have inspired the agreement between the lady and the Charon-like Devil in "2M." This story is the most complex in the collection. The main motif—an unverified report causes the killing of a grateful and loyal lion—is preceded by a sequence of unrelated episodes inspired by several sources, including an underlying pattern of the Parable of the Prodigal Son. This story also contains a variation of "Androcles and the lion," popularised for young readers through Aesop's *Fables* ("The Slave and the Lion") and *Gesta Romanorum*, chapter 104 (Swan 180–82),¹⁴ whose chapter 27 partly inspired "6R" as well. The shadowy hand which wrote the enigmatic words on the wall in Sabrina's example is borrowed from the biblical Belshazzar's feast in the "Book of Daniel." Robert Greene's *Pandosto* (more precisely *The Pleasant Historie of Dorastus and Fawnia*), rather than Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale*, is the source of Debora's tale, "5M," which, though set in China, manifests an uncommon preference for the national rather than the classical or contemporary European literary background. This tale is one of the best in the collection, together with "3M," the most accomplished one, which can be read as an allegory against predestination. The examples also tend to narrate events likely to happen in their pre-scientific, popular view of the world, though hard to believe, as in "3R," about witches transformed into

¹² For example, in "1R" we are told that tin made the water toxic. In other tales, witchery represents wickedness and opposes astrology, which is associated with wisdom and goodness.

¹³ *Roman Stories* does not give the sources, while Dares was logically excluded in eighteenth-century editions.

¹⁴ Cf. "The 23. History" in the *Gesta Romanorum* abridgement that circulated in Renaissance England.

cats whose limbs, when severed, return to their former appearance. Stories of this kind exist in the folklore of every European country, but the famous case of the witches of Thurso in early eighteenth-century Scotland proves that such incidents could be heard long after *Wise Mistresses* was published.

Wise Mistresses shares with *Wise Masters* and *Gesta Romanorum* their educational usefulness for improving reading beyond the verbal reproduction of the written signs. The stories are followed by an explanation, which is longer after the tales of Radamentus, who delves into the figurative, allegorical meaning, usually in separate sections called “The Declaration of the Example.” The instructive purpose of the book may constitute a reason to exclude it from the canon of children’s books. In 1932, Harvey Darton defined children’s books as “printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them *profitably* quiet” (1; original emphasis). He also situated the emergence of this genre as a distinctive branch of English literature in the mid eighteenth century, remarking that “there were no children’s books in England before the seventeenth century, and very few even then” (1)—among them Aesop’s *Fables* and a few romances, though he also mentioned *Wise Masters* in passing (37). In 1954, Percy Muir tried to expand Darton’s canon in what he called “The Prehistoric Age” (23–44), i.e., before 1740, but none of these titles was mentioned. In 1989, Mary Jackson contended that “major developments in children’s books reflect diverse influences from the adult world and reflect the nearly universal assumption that children were resources to be molded or engineered to needs and specifications determined by a prevailing social standard” (xi). Her brief comment on *Wise Masters* alluded to the Arabic, probably Sanskrit, origin of the frame story and its misogynist plot (62–63). *Wise Mistresses*, however, was once again ignored despite its extraordinary relevance in the history of children’s literature in Britain. Unlike *Wise Masters*—it was not a children’s “adopted” book,¹⁵ but originally addressed to the younger readership. Moreover, the gender inversion of the frame story (and the corresponding selection of tales) was not an imported design, but an English one. Also, though almost every exemplum ends with a death (either by justice or despair), the innovative extension of the frame story

¹⁵ For Muir, “adopted” are “those written for adults but firmly taken over by children” (40).

accentuates the purely entertaining, pleasurable reading from the giant Gorgon's episodes and King Alexander's long poem to Sabrina. Furthermore, following the model of *Wise Masters*, the tale allegories are interpreted in terms of the frame-story plot, rather than Christian doctrine and morality as in *Gesta Romanorum*.

The scholarly disregard of *Wise Mistresses* is shared by many other chapbooks of prose fiction likely printed for the younger public in the early years of the Restoration, such as *The Noble Birth and Gallant Achievements of Robin Hood* (1662), Nicolas de Herberay's *Don Flores of Greece* (1664), as part of the *Amadis of Gaul* revival in the 1660s, Charles Croke's picaresque *Fortune's Uncertainty, or Youth Unconstancy* (1667), and the closing three little "novels" in Richard Preston's *Angliae speculum morale* (1670). Each one of these titles represents a different genre, attesting to the variety available on the market for young readers. In this literary spectrum, the tales of *Wise Mistresses*, imitating the medieval flavour of their hypotext, simulate or actually emanate from popular, folktale literature (though they are too modern to become a classic).

The analysis of *Wise Mistresses* as folktale literature sets out to identify the folktale motifs as catalogued by Stith Thompson in *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (1955–1958), this being the most widely accessible edition.¹⁶

Regarding the frame story, Gorgon falls into the category of giants (F531) and his enormous weapon in the entry F531.4.5. *Wise Masters* is indexed as "youth educated by seven sages" (J141). However, in Thompson's translation of Antti Aarne's *The Types of the Folktale*, another version (*The Prince's Seven Wise Teachers*) was initially registered by the Finnish folklorist (875D*) and later indexed by Thompson in the motif of "Potiphar's Wife" (K2111).

In the tales, as the appendix makes clear, 50% of the motifs fall in group K ("Deception"), especially related to slander, false accusation, hypocrisy, treachery and villainy. Sometimes a narrative element is not exactly described by Thompson's formulation of very precise motifs. For example, the four-coloured cat in "3R" comes under the type B731.0.1, "animals of strange and varied coloring." However, while Thompson

¹⁶ The motifs are outlined in detail in the appendix, which contains the plot summaries of the fifteen tales, thereby facilitating observation of the correlation, divergence or loose analogy between the narrative elements and their motifs. The motifs are listed in two columns, with Thompson's formulation followed by their reference.

added a subtype for “polychromatic dogs” (B731.6.0.1), none exists for such cats. Furthermore, the reversal of the main characters’ sex in *Wise Mistresses* can also prove a source of new motifs. For example, within type K2214, which applies to “treacherous children,” subtype K2214.3 features a “treacherous son: leads revolt against his father,” yet in “2R” it is a daughter who challenges and annihilates her mother. Other episodes, such as the uncommon pact with the devil in “2M” (as the woman succeeds through her good deeds, symbolised by the lion), and the father’s request that the wise knight name his ill-fated son and be his godfather in “3M” may also be instances of unrecorded motifs in folktale literature.

CONCLUSION

Although *Wise Mistresses* has only been referred to as a chapbook-imitation of the *Wise Masters* (and this rarely), it was a remarkable publication in many respects as this introductory essay has tried to show. *Wise Mistresses* originally targeted a younger readership; but, like many other books in the early Restoration period, it has not yet been acknowledged as children’s literature. Despite being didactic fiction, the tales were considered so entertaining and alluring as to stimulate young learners’ reading skills.

Owing to the simplified narrative elements and the educational purposes, the resulting book lacks literary lustre. Yet, it is a valuable English text because it pioneered feminist implications in early modern children’s literature. The very project of reversing the misogynistic bias of *Wise Masters* heralded a significant innovation in the early years of the Restoration, when romances bearing a single female name proliferated, while female novelists or playwrights remained a source of scandal. In this context, veiling the gender implications of *Wise Mistresses* and highlighting the book’s educational benefits would allow it to be accepted by the general public, while providing female readership in particular with a text in which women are the source of wisdom and moral instruction. Whether or not Howard actually wrote the book and whether his identity was true or fictional are matters that remain unclear; but his role as a protective social shield to conceal a female author is strongly suggested, especially by the figure of the giant Gorgon in Sabrina’s army. Furthermore, Sabrina’s education, virtue, and wisdom epitomised the ideals of the period’s incipient feminism, best represented by Margaret Cavendish’s agenda.

The discussion of the book's textual history and tales shows that *Wise Mistrisses* is rooted in the folktale genre, though it is not a classic. The appendix to this essay provides a full description of the motifs in all fifteen tales. While some of them exactly match Stith Thompson's formulation, others may be regarded either as variations or even as uncommon, uncatalogued subtypes (e.g., the daughter's conspiracy in "2R," the Devil episode in "2M" or the child naming in "3M"). In any case, while the ascription of *Wise Mistrisses* to folktale literature might be questionable for its modernity, though not for its popularity, it should not be forgotten that it became the best-selling book of fiction originally published in England in the 1660s, and was widely read in Britain, Ireland and North America for two hundred years.

FUNDING

This article is a result of the research project "Early Novel in English, 1660–1700: Database and Textual Editing" (ENEID), financed by MINECO (Ref. FFI2017–82728–P).

REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Anon. *The history of the seuen wise maisters of Rome*. Imprinted at London in Paules Churchyard by Thomas Purfoote, dwelling at the signe of the Lucrece, 1576. ESTC S4865.

Anon. *The hystorie of the seaven wise maisters of Rome*. At London: Imprinted by Tho[mas] Purfoot, Anno. Dom. 1633. ESTC S106633.

Howard, Thomas. *The history of the seven wise mistrisses of Rome*. London: printed for M[ary] Wright, at the Kings Head in the Old Bailey, 1663. Wing H3008; ESTC R4376.

Howard, Thomas. *The history of the seven wise mistresses of Rome*. London: printed by W. O. for G[eorge] Conyers, in Little Britain, over against Bartholomew-Close-Gate, [1705?]. ESTC T114475.

Howard, Thomas. *Roman stories: or, the history of the seven wise mistresses of Rome*. [1701?]. The three and twentieth edition. [London]: Printed by A. W. for G[eorge] Conyers at the Ring, in Little-Britain, [1728?]. ESTC T127967.

Howard, Thomas. *Roman stories: or the history of the seven wise mistresses of Rome*. [1701?]. The twelfth edition. London: printed and sold by T[homas] Sabine, [1795?]. ESTC R22013.

K[irkman], F[rancis], translator. *The history of Prince Erastus, son to the Emperour Dioclesian, and those famous philosophers called the seven wise masters of Rome*. London: Fra[ncis] Kirkman, 1674. ESTC R20131.

Secondary Sources

Aarne, Antti. *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. Translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson, 2nd rev., 1961. Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia - Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981.

Campbell, Killis. "A Study of the Romance of the Seven Sages with Special Reference to the Middle English Versions." *PMLA*, vol. 14, no. 1, 1899, pp. 1–107, *JSTOR*, doi:10.2307/456514.

Clouston, W. A. *The Book of Sindibad*. [Privately printed], 1884, *Internet Archive*, archive.org/details/cu31924027114143/.

Darton, Harvey. *Children's Books in England*. 3rd ed., Cambridge UP, 1982.

Esdaille, Arundell. *A List of English Tales and Prose Romances Printed Before 1740*. Printed for the Bibliographical Society. Blade, East & Blades, 1912.

Eyre, George Edward Briscoe, editor. *A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers: From 1640–1708 A.D. In Three Volumes*. Vol. II: 1655–1675. [Privately Printed], 1913.

Freud, Sigmund. "Medusa's Head." *Sigmund Freud: Collected Papers, Volume V*, edited by James Strachey, International Psychoanalytical Library 37, Hogarth P and The Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1950, pp. 105–06.

Jackson, Mary. *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in England from Its Beginnings to 1839*. U of Nebraska P, 1989.

- Millington, Edward. *Bibliotheca Whateliana, sive Catalogus variorum librorum bibliothecæ selectissimæ Rev. viri D. Whateley juxta Banbury in comitatu Oxoniensi*. [London: s.n., 1683]. ESTC R221990.
- Muir, Percy. *English Children's Books, 1600 to 1900*. Batsford, [1954].
- Mulvihill, Maureen E. "Appendix D: The 'Smoking Gun' of the Villiers Case." *Thumbprints of "Ephelia" (Lady Mary Villiers): The End of an Enigma in Restoration Attribution*. *ReSoundings*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2001, n. pag., www.ephelia.com/.
- Plomer, Henry Robert. *A Dictionary of the Booksellers and Printers Who Were at Work in England, Scotland and Ireland from 1641–1667*. The Bibliographical Society, 1907.
- Salzman, Paul. *English Prose Fiction, 1558–1700: A Critical History*. Oxford UP, 1985.
- Spufford, Margaret. *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England*. Cambridge UP, 1981.
- Swan, Charles, translator. *Gesta Romanorum, or Entertaining Moral Stories*. Revised by Wynnard Hooper, George Bell, 1905.
- Thompson, Stith. *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folk-Tales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, and Medieval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*. Rev. and enlarged ed., Indiana UP, 1955–1958, 6 vols., *Internet Archive*, [archive.org/details/Thompson2016MotifIndex/](http://archive.org/details/details/Thompson2016MotifIndex/).

APPENDIX

This appendix provides detailed information about the folktale motifs in the fourteen exempla and Sabrina's story. It identifies both the main motif(s) and the secondary ones. A broad category reference is sometimes indicated either because the particular motif is not indexed, or it does not match any other subtype in that category. For this reason, there are two columns: one for the indexed motifs, and another for those that may illustrate a new subtype. In general, the sign * denotes the main motif/s; letters in superscript indicate other motifs; and "cf." is used for similar or related motifs. However, when the latter could potentially constitute non-indexed motifs, they will be marked with the symbols †, ‡, § and listed in a separate column.

Abbreviation, title, & signatures	Summary	Thompson's motifs	Non-indexed motifs
1R The first Example of Radamentus. C6r–C7r	A Cappadocian lady had a garden with a magic healing well. ^a She saw a small spring flowing from a rock and asked the gardener to hew the rock to make a fountain from the spring. As the stream was deep and the main current flowed to the well, she ordered the destruction of the well, believing the spring would provide better water. But the water tasted bitter because the stream ran through a tin mine. Whosoever bathed there would suffer from putrefied sores and increasing pains.*	^a <i>Magic well</i> , D926; cf. <i>Magic healing fountain</i> , D1500.1.1	
1M The Example of the first Mistriiss. C8r–D2r	A Syrian queen had married the winner of a tournament, the Crown Prince of Parthia. But his father fell very ill and he returned to that kingdom. In his absence, an evil counsellor intercepted the couple's correspondence and falsely informed the queen her husband had married another woman. ^a By his advice,* she sent him a poisonous balm, causing him a painful death. ^b When she learned the truth and sad news, she took revenge by stabbing herself to death.	^a <i>Man falsely accused of infidelity</i> , K2114 [*] <i>Treacherous counselor</i> , K2298 ^b <i>Murder by poisoning</i> , S111	

<p>2R The second Example of Radamentus. D3r–D5r</p>	<p>The daughter of a widowed Queen of Pirus complained about a nobleman and talked with a witch to have him dispatched.^a The witch advised her to go to the garden, sit near the nobleman, and arouse him. If he rejected her, she should scream. She did so and accused him of having deflowered her.^b The queen sentenced him to death, but the lords advised her to first give him a trial. Her daughter conspired against her mother by rousing the people against her,*† depleting the treasury, and eventually by causing her death. Once enthroned, the princess became a lascivious and tyrannical monarch‡ until she was killed by a butcher.</p>	<p>^a <i>Villains and traitors</i>, K2200 ^b <i>False accusations</i>, K2100; <i>Man slandered as having deflowered princess</i>, K2121 * <i>Treacherous daughter</i>, K2214.1</p>	<p>† cf. <i>Treacherous son</i> [daughter]: <i>leads revolt against his father to whom he owes all</i>, K2214.3 ‡ cf. <i>Tyrannical king</i> [queen], P12.2.1</p>
<p>2M The Example of the second Mistriss. D5v–D8v</p>	<p>A lady and her husband set out on a sea voyage. After a terrible storm, the law of the sea was applied; but they, being the last survivors, refused to let the dice choose who would feed the other,† and resolved to die together and sewed themselves into a carpet. A griffin carried it off to its nest on an uninhabited island. The man killed the griffin and its creatures, and then died. The woman chanced to meet a lion with a thorn in its paw and removed it.^b The lion led her to its den, protected her, and provided her with food.^c The Devil^d appeared and bargained with the woman to take her away from the island—to no avail. Eventually he proposed a boat. If she fell asleep during the three-day voyage, he would win her soul; if not, he would renounce to it forever.‡ She accepted as long as the lion journeyed with her. They agreed.^e Once at sea, when she became drowsy, the lion touched her with its paw to keep her awake and, thus, free from the Devil.§ Back at her father's, she was recognised by her ring.^f The lion lived with them. One day her father came across a boar in the countryside. The lion went towards the boar, but a steward believed it was going to kill the father and returned with the news. The lady sent servants who found the lion with blood in its mouth and reported that it had killed her father. She ordered the lion slain. Immediately afterwards, her father returned telling how the lion had come to his aid against the boar.*</p>	<p>^a <i>Hostile griffin</i>, B17.2.2; cf. <i>Child borne off by tiger, which is caught by griffin, which is killed by lioness, which rears child with her whelps</i>, N215 ^b <i>Thorn removed from lion's paw (Androcles and the Lion). In gratitude the lion later rewards the man</i>, B381 ^c <i>Animals provide food for men</i>, B531 ^d <i>Devil</i>, G303 ^e <i>Bargain with devil</i>, M210 ^f <i>Identification by ring</i>, H94 * <i>Helpful animal killed through misunderstanding</i>, B331</p>	<p>† cf. <i>Hungry seamen eat human flesh</i>, G70.1 ‡ <i>Other devil contract motifs</i>, M219 § <i>Miscellaneous devil motifs</i>, G303.25</p>

<p>3R</p> <p>The third Example of Radamentus.</p> <p>E1v–E5v</p>	<p>A lady from the Kingdom of Utergo sent her only daughter to be educated by a learned mistress who was indeed a witch.† After seven years, the girl could transform herself into a cat.* The lady sent for her and she came with the mistress, who promised to present the lady with the finest cat if she could educate her daughter for seven more years. The lady accepted. The mistress delivered the girl transformed into a multi-coloured (black, red, green and yellow) cat,‡ which began to steal.* The cat seriously injured the lady, who decided to return it and reclaim her daughter. She gave the girl a ring. At night, the daughter would adopt the shape of a cat and visit a nearby mill where she would meet five other cats.§ The mill worked by night. A man who tried to solve the mystery was found dead, and then another. A third man managed to disperse the cats, severing the front paw of one of them: the paw became a hand with a ring.†† The lady saw it belonged to her daughter^b and sentenced her to be burned at the stake.</p>	<p>* <i>Witch in form of cat</i>, G211.1.7</p> <p>^a <i>Animals of strange and varied coloring</i>, B731.0.1</p> <p>* <i>Treacherous daughter</i>, K2214.1</p> <p>^b <i>Identification by ring</i>, H94</p>	<p>† <i>Sham wise man</i> [woman], K1956</p> <p>‡ cf. <i>Polychromatic dogs</i> [cat], B731.6.0.1</p> <p>§ cf. <i>Castle (house)</i> [mill] <i>infested by demon cats</i>, F771.4.2.1</p> <p>†† cf. <i>Witch in form of cat has hand cut off: recognized next morning by missing hand</i> [the paw turned into a hand], G252</p>
<p>3M</p> <p>The Example of the third Mistris.</p> <p>E7r–F4r</p>	<p>A knight, staying overnight in a forest house, heard the host's wife in labour. By the position of the planets,^a ^b he predicted the child was destined to be hanged.* He begged to delay the birth a few minutes, but the wife could not. The host asked the knight to name his son (be his son's godfather).^c† He wrote the child's destiny in a parchment, sealed it, and placed it around the child's neck on a string. He instructed the father that the child should learn to read so as to know his destiny, and should constantly pray to God to relieve him of his misfortune. In due course, the boy opened the parchment and went out to meet his fate. He was employed by a knight and twice promoted for his efficiency, but also envied by other servants, who plotted against him and accused him of stealing.* The knight interrogated the young man who proved both his truthfulness and identity, when he showed the knight the parchment that he had written.^d‡ The servants were hanged and the young man saved.*</p>	<p>^a <i>Horoscope taken by means of stars</i>, M302.4</p> <p>^b <i>Astrologer</i>, P481</p> <p>* <i>Prophecy: death by hanging</i>, M341.2.23</p> <p>^c <i>Godfather</i>, P296.1</p> <p>* <i>False accusation of theft</i>, K2127</p> <p>^d <i>Identification by token</i>, H80</p> <p>* <i>Fulfilment of prophecy successfully avoided</i>, M391.1</p>	<p>† cf. <i>Naming of children</i>, T596 [since the narrator never gives the child's name, this act of naming (or baptism), triggers an allegorical reading of the tale]</p> <p>‡ <i>Circumstances of recognition</i>, H150 (cf. <i>Recognition by cup in sack: alleged stolen goods</i>, H151.4 [as in biblical Joseph's life]).</p>

<p>4R The fourth Example of Radamentus. F4v–F7v</p>	<p>A great Roman lady had a famous deer park. A huntsman presented her with a hound which proved amazingly skilled and beneficial.^a Years later, the same huntsman presented the lady with a wolf-dog. Her love for the hound declined because it quarrelled with the young wolf-dog. Seven wise mistresses were called to judge the young dog. They commended it highly. When the hound grew old, the lady got rid of it. As soon as it was hanged,^b deer began to go missing. The wolf-dog had killed them. The lady lamented having trusted the advice of the seven mistresses.* She beat the wolf-dog, which jumped upon her and killed her.</p>	<p>^a <i>Helpful dog</i>, B421 ^b <i>Death of helpful animal</i>, B330</p>	<p>* cf. <i>Sham wise man</i> [women], K1956</p>
<p>4M The Example of the fourth Mistris. G1r–G4v</p>	<p>When the Lycian king attacked Queen Hicuba [Hecuba] of Thracia, counsellors Eneus and Anthinor defended the city; but, as the offensive intensified, she was advised to negotiate a peace agreement. The two counsellors were appointed to talk with the Lycians. As evil traitors and for their own benefit, they helped the enemy invade the city by proposing to erect a brazen horse^a full of armed men who would come out once the peace agreement was signed.* Hicuba's daughter Palestina [Polyxena] hid in a tower,^b but Anthinor, whose advances she had rejected, discovered her there and brought her to the temple where she was cut into four quarters.^{c,d} Hicuba went mad,^e and was taken into a strange island where she died.</p>	<p>^a cf. <i>Trojan wooded</i> [brazen] horse, K754.1 ^b cf. <i>Imprisoned virgin to prevent knowledge of men</i>, T381 ^c <i>Rejected suitor's revenge</i>, T75.2.1 ^d cf. <i>Murder by cutting</i>, S118 ^e <i>Madness from grief</i>, F1041.8.2</p>	<p>* cf. <i>Treacherous counsellor</i> [peace negotiator], K2298</p>
<p>5R The fifth Example of Radamentus. G5r–H1v</p>	<p>A Roman lady had two daughters. She sent the youngest abroad to be educated. When she came back, her misconduct grew increasingly wicked.* An old woman always came to her defence, and her mother forgave her. When the girl fell in love with a thief and a murderer, the old woman knew that the lady would not tolerate her daughter marrying him. She advised her to kill her mother.^a The daughter was burned at the stake.</p>	<p>* <i>Treacherous daughter</i>, K2214.1 ^a <i>Treacherous old woman</i>, K2293</p>	

5M The Example of the fifth Mistris. H2r–H6r	<p>Debora's tale is set in China, where a virtuous queen married a great eastern king, who had an influential counsellor. Soon after the marriage, the king had to leave for half a year. During this time the queen became pregnant. The counsellor wrote to the king telling him that he thought the child she was expecting was a bastard.* The king returned and repudiated his wife. The counsellor advised the queen to approach him with a bowl of wine, but he also warned the king not to drink the wine because it was poisoned.* She did so and was imprisoned. She gave birth to a girl, whom the king ordered to be thrown into the sea.^a The waves took the cradle to a strange country. The baby was found by a shepherd who raised her. Years later, the king was hunting in the mountains where the girl was herding a flock, and he was impressed by her.^b He asked the shepherd about her story and realised she was his daughter.^c The oracle of Delphos confirmed it and declared the queen innocent. The king ordered the queen's release, but she was dead. The traitor was sentenced to death.</p>	<p>* <i>Woman slandered as adulteress</i>, K2112; <i>Slander: prince is bastard</i>, K2128</p> <p>* <i>Treacherous counsellor</i>, K2298</p> <p>^a <i>Exposure of child in boat (floating chest)</i>, S331</p> <p>^b <i>Accidental meeting of father and daughter</i>, N732.3</p> <p>^c <i>Circumstances of recognition</i>, H150</p>
6R The sixth Example of Radamentus. H7r–H8v	<p>In Asia, a pregnant lady longed for a young lion. A nobleman presented her with one. She then gave birth to a boy. The lion cub was as tamed as a dog, since it was well fed. On one occasion the lady had to go out, leaving a maid in charge of the lion cub. Since it was not given enough food, it killed a sheep. The shepherd complained, but the lady excused the cub. Soon afterwards, the lion devoured more sheep, and a greyhound ate the leftovers. Though the lion had returned first, the greyhound's bloody mouth caused it to be hanged.^a When the lion slayed three sheep, the lady did not kill it. Instead, she kept it in her chamber, where it devoured her child and her.*</p>	<p>^a cf. Llewellyn and his dog, B3312.2</p> <p>* <i>Absurd disregard or ignorance of animal's nature or habits</i>, J1900; <i>Nature will show itself</i>, U129</p>
6M The Example of the sixth Mistris. J1r–J4r	<p>A Burgundian princess fell for Brutus, a knight of Malta. She invited him to a banquet. After feasting for a week, Brutus returned to his country, promising to come back, but he did not. The princess asked her steward why Brutus did not come to her. He replied he had noticed her hound displeased him. She ordered the dog killed. On a</p>	<p>* <i>Treacherous steward</i>, K2242</p>

	second occasion, the victim was her parrot, and, on the third, her own daughter. Brutus arrived in time to rescue her from the altar of the oracle of Apollo, and took her to her mother. He told her she had three things he had liked and she had destroyed: her daughter, her hound, and her parrot. The steward confessed he had lied and was hanged.*	
7R	A Queen of the Vandals had a daughter who soon showed her cruel nature when she blinded a bird with her bodkin because it would not sing. ^a * An old man, Mimmon, interpreted its song ^b and warned the queen to beware of her daughter's cruelty: as she had blinded the bird, so would she strive to depose her from her throne. ^c When she reached maturity, her mother decided to make her queen for one year. Wanting to remain in power, the daughter accused her mother of high treason for her father's death, and eventually had her killed;* she then ruled as a tyrant.	^a <i>Astrologer</i> , S481 ^b <i>Cruel children and grandchildren</i> , S20 ^c <i>Propheying through knowledge of animal language</i> , M302.1 ^c cf. <i>Prediction of danger</i> , M340.5 * <i>Treacherous daughter</i> , K2214.1
The seventh Example of Radamentus. J5r–J6v		
7M	Penthsilia narrated the story of a mighty widow who had one daughter and a large estate. She employed a minister who strove for his own advantage by dispossessing the heiress and manipulating the widow.* He proposed to marry her and to disinherit her daughter, who would receive the estate upon their death. The widow accepted. Then he promised to marry her if she would assign her estate to him, which the gullible widow did.† However, he disregarded his promise. When she asked him why, he replied he would gladly marry her if she had a husband, adding that he had promised to marry her, but not to be her husband.* She stabbed herself with the same hand that had signed the documents. ^a	* <i>Villains and traitors</i> , K2200 (cf. <i>Treacherous minister</i> , K2248; cf. <i>Treacherous priest</i> , K2284) † cf. <i>Bargains and promises</i> , M290 ^a cf. <i>Disappointed lover kills self</i> , T93.3 * cf. <i>Refusal to perform part in mutual agreement</i> , K231.1
The Example of the seventh Mistris. J7r–J8r		
The Example of Sabrina, the Empress Daughter. K2v–K7r	A queen's only daughter was brought up and instructed in virtuous learning and wisdom by a wise mistress. After a time, the queen wanted her daughter back. It happened that, as the daughter served her mother a bowl of wine, a shadowy hand wrote three lines on the wall,† which only the girl could	* <i>Wisdom (knowledge) through education</i> , J140; cf. <i>Youth educated by seven sages</i> , J141 † <i>Means of propheying</i> , M302 [words written on the wall, as in the Book of Daniel]

interpret.* She told the queen that one day she would become a mighty princess, loved by all, especially by her mother who would give her a bowl of wine and kneel before her. ‡ The queen became furious and ordered her to be taken away to the forest,^a slain and her heart brought back. But the servants spared the girl's life and brought the queen the heart of a lamb instead.^b The girl was found by a strange knight who took her to his kingdom and further educated her.^c The young Emperor of Blodermario married her and they lived happily for three years until he died. She ruled over the whole empire. She saw in the stars that her mother had been deposed.^d Feeling compassion for her, she went to her aid. The queen knelt before her, brought a bowl of wine, and bowed three times.* The empress repeatedly asked her if she had any children, and the queen told the whole story as she knew it. The empress replied that her strife against the determinations of God was much in vain and revealed her identity to her mother, telling her the true events.

^a *Exposure (murder) of child to avoid fulfilment of prophecy of future greatness,* M371.1

^b *Compassionate executioner: substituted heart,* K512.2

^c cf. *Travelers find exposed baby girl and take her to emperor's court,* S354.2

^d *Astrologer,* P481

* *Fulfilment of prophecy,* M391

‡ cf. *Prophecy: parents will humble themselves before their son [daughter],* M312.2