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AN ANALYSIS OF BIBLICAL WOMEN IN MARULIĆ'S WORKS

*JUDITH AND SUSANNA*

To understand the implications of Judith and Suzanna as literary figures in Marulić's work, it is necessary to establish the Biblical premises of these two women, complemented by a closer reading of Marulić's text. The Renaissance context within which these literary models functioned will be analyzed, along with their place within the genre of feminine heroines. On the whole, Marulić's contribution, through his poems *Judith* and *Susanna*, to the literary iconography of Renaissance humanism was particularly significant.

Marulić's choice of Judith and Susanna as literary models was informed by the tradition of epic tales which branched from the Middle Ages and was modernized in the Renaissance with Virgil's epic. By utilizing these two women as the subject of his poems, Marulić infused his verse with their Biblical implications which granted his verse both connotative and denotative meanings. The Biblical stories themselves display aspects which contain multifold meanings and interpretations. These became the ideal subject for Marulić, who was interested in combining the obvious narrative of Judith's and Susanna's heroism with his own attempt to exhort his countrymen in their battles against the Turks.

The enjoyment in reading *Judith* and *Susanna* today is as much due to their literary, stylistic beauty as to the allegorical reverberations of their female heroines. To bring a modern perspective to the poems thus enriches the verse with a depth that would have been lost to the Renaissance (in almost all cases, male) reader, but brings a new level of accomplishment to Marulić's work, for he boldly chose to centre his literary masterpieces on Biblical women who were as reknown for the feminine qualities of beauty and purity as they were for their masculine traits of courage, fortitude and sheer ambition.