

Tonko Maroević

THE PAINTER WITH THE GUITAR:
A CONTRIBUTION TO MARULIĆ'S POETICS

Judith's dedication is often quoted as a poetic programme. Justifiably so, since it explicitly expresses the poet's attitude to tradition (domestic and classical) and his view of the function of *ornatus* as opposed to mere rendering of thematic layer. *The History of Susanna* adds to the poetic achievements of *Judith* as it pinpoints, in poetological terms, the original traits of Marulić's creative writing. Namely, in his second epic Marulić presents his subject more freely, depending less on the biblical model than he did in *Judith*, and deliberately enriching the text with iconic and phonic values.

It suffices to read a couple of characteristic lines from *Susanna* to understand the poet's didactic orientation and his Christian humbleness in pledging his love to God, whom he supplicates to inspire his words with the desired meaning. At the same time, he neither underestimates nor neglects his own role. On the contrary, he likens his talk to the singing voice accompanied by the guitar (»sad kitara moja obarni glas k njoj« - »let my guitar now turn its song to her«), while in another place compares the limitations of literary description with the impossibility of complete pictorial rendition of a given subject (»...ni pentur na svit bil / toli hitre škole sve spengat ki bi umil...« - »... in the world there has not been a painter / who could paint so skilfully...«). Yet, by self-confidently appropriating certain competencies of the musician and the artist, he transcends the conceptual frame of the mere moralist writer. In a way (even synesthetic) Marulić is »the painter with the guitar«. In the light of this observation the author invites to an exciting investigation of Marulić's works, especially the *opera minora*, which will hopefully prove the prevalence of the visual and the acoustic in his oeuvre, also touching upon the question of the woodcut illustrations of *Judith* (and Marulić as their possible author, at least at the level of invention, if not at that of execution).