

I v o F r a n g e š

ON THE MAKING OF A METAPHOR: FATHER OF CROATIAN ART
OF POETRY (MARULIĆ IN THE CROATIAN LITERARY TRADITION)

This article lists and reviews opinions on the role Marulić played in the Croatian literary process. It elucidates the meaning of, for example, Vinko Pribojević's syntagm Marulić - »another light of our language« (*Oratio de origine successibusque Slavorum*, 1525), or the epitaph in which Donat Paskvalić claims that Marulić earned immortality because his spirit »rose to the stars«.

During the 19th century Croatian national revival, the general attitude towards Marulić was positive, although not particularly enthusiastic. The interest in the poet was roused only in 1869, when the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences launched the series »Stari pisci hrvatski« (»The Old Croatian Writers«), with the first volume dedicated to Marulić. The editor was Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski, who, in his introductory study, called Marulić »the father of the Croatian art of poetry«. This evaluation was renewed and elucidated by Šrepel and Kasandrić at the beginning of the 20th century, on the 400th anniversary of the first publication of *Judith*, which was celebrated in 1901 in Zagreb. For the historiographers of the first half of the 20th century Marulić was a great »source of inspiration« and »the pillar of national glory and pride«, and the »pictorial part of *Judith*« the most remarkable page out of old Croatian literature. The contemporary students of Marulić's work – literary historians, critics, essayists, philologists, philosophers and theologians – all stress that his *opera maxima* as well as his *opera minima* »launched« Croatian literature into new levels of conceptual and poetological sensibility.

The pre-eminence of Marulić's single Latin texts is confirmed by the fact that over the centuries they became true European bestsellers. It is equally true that his diverse works mark the beginning of Croatian vernacular literature on several levels; those of genre, theme and, especially, language or poetic discourse (*Judith*, *Susanna*, *Dialogus de laudibus Herculis*, *Poklad i Korizma* [*The Carnival and the Lent*], *Molitva suprotiva Turkom* [*The Prayer Against the Turks*], *Tužen'je grada Hjerolimima* [*The Lamenting of the City of Jerusalem*], etc.).