

B r a n i m i r G l a v i č i ć

IRONY AND SARCASM IN MARULIĆ

Marulić is a moralistic and didactic writer *par excellence*. No matter what his subject-matter may be, moral teaching is always strongly foregrounded. As he likes to say, his purpose is not to entertain but to teach. He writes in a sober, serious, measured and disciplined way. Yet, his presentation is never cold or detached, but emphatic and involving. It seems as if he always kept in mind John's saying: »But because you are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth« (Apoc. 3.15-16). His letters to friends and acquaintances show him as a kind, compassionate, sociable and cheerful man. He counted nothing human indifferent to him: he understood human weakness as well as human suffering. He loved song and music, and the pleasant company of his friends at a table groaning with food. Yet, he demanded moderation and was scornful of hard drinking and overeating. Himself a hard worker, he cursed laziness as he condemned lechery, haughtiness, lack of compassion and piety, hypocrisy and falseness. Above all, he loved truth and sincerity. That is why he was particularly sharp on vice. As soon as he would spot it, all his good-natured humour and mild irony turned into pungent sarcasm.

The author of the present paper endeavours to chart the full range of these reactions of the writer, based on the numerous examples provided by his Latin works, in prose and verse. The source of Marulić's irony and sarcasm is twofold. Sometimes, it is demanded by convention, as the literary genres such as the epic (*e.g.* the *Davidias*) have the long tradition of utilising these particular stylistic devices to enhance drama and sharpen characterisation. In other cases - on which is the focus of interest - irony and sarcasm spring from his truthful character, especially when he is provoked to stormy reaction by a negativity in public or private life. Yet, even in such cases »ornatus« is in the function of moral teaching.