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Middle Ages or Renaissance? Rapacka on Marulić

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The famous Polish Slavist Joanna Rapacka published three studies on Marko Marulić. After they came out as separate publications, she collected them under the title *Fragmenti o Maruliću* (Fragments on Marulić). Rapacka refers to Marko Marulić extensively in several other works, such as the articles in her *Leksykon tradycji chorwackich* (Lexicon of Croatian Traditions) or in synthesizing studies on the formation of the modern Croatian nation and on regionalism in pre-modern Croatian literary culture. Her views of Marulić are worth citing and examining for two reasons: because they can still be relevant for the understanding of Marulić's literary works and because in present-day Croatian studies they have not had the appreciation they deserve. Rapacka groups Marulić, and particularly the vernacular part of his opus, closely together with the poetics of the European literary Middle Ages, while Croatian literary historiography has in the last few decades exerted great efforts to "demedievalize" Marulić. When one reads the writings of Rapacka carefully, it becomes clear that she sees him as the first great author of medieval Croatian literature.

Keywords: Joanna Rapacka; Marko Marulić; periodization; Renaissance; Middle Ages; Croatian literary historiography

Among the numerous important and innovative observations by Joanna Rapacka (1939–2000) about Croatian pre-nineteenth century literature, her findings about the opus of Marko Marulić (1450–1524) take a special place. Rapacka devoted three studies to Marulić, and after they came out as separate publications, she collected them under the title *Fragmenti o Maruliću* (*Fragments on Marulić*). These are *"Poklad i korizma" Marka Marulicia* in 1978 (in the Croatian translation *Nekoliko opaski o* Pokladu i Korizmi *Marka Marulića* [*A Few Remarks on* Poklad i Korizma ⟨Carnival and Lent⟩ *by Marko Marulić*]), *O rodzimych wzorcach poetyckich Marka Marulicia, czyli o problemie tzw. začinjavców* in 1979 (in the Croatian translation *Još jednom o začinjavcima* [*Once Again on the začinjavci*]) and *Marko Marulić w Valle Surda, czyli antyk jako pokusa* in 1989 (in the Croatian translation *Marko Marulić u Valle Surda, ili antika kao kušnja* [*Marko Marulić in Valle Surda, or Antiquity as a Temptation*]).[1] Rapacka mentions Marulić in important contexts in several other works, e.g. in some of the articles in her *Leksykon tradycji chorwackich* (*Lexicon of Croatian Traditions*) or in synthesizing, extensive cultural-historical studies on the formation of the modern Croatian nation and on regionalism in pre-modern Croatian literary culture. In these texts she in fact criticizes the national myths and national essentialism in Croatian literary historiography and philology in general.[2] Such are, for example, the studies *Rola regionalizmu w kulturze chorwackiej* in 1993 (in the Croatian translation *Uloga regionalizma u hrvatskoj kulturi* [*The Role of Regionalism in Croatian Culture*]) and *Funkcje łaciny*

1 The three separately written and published studies were first collected together in the Croatian edition of selected studies by Joanna Rapacka (Rapacka, 1998a), and only thereafter were they joined in Polish, in the journal "Pamiętnik Słowiański" (*Fragmenty o Maruliciu*; Rapacka, 2001). For a list of Rapacka's works and the order of their publication see Rapacka, 2002b, 475–483. The first version of the present article appeared in Croatian ("Croatica et Slavica Iadertina," 2022, vol. XVIII, no. 2, pp. 413–435); here it is somewhat adapted and reworked. As in the first version, here wherever possible I cite the Croatian translations of Rapacka's works.

2 I recently wrote more in detail about this in Bogdan, 2018a, distinguishing and analyzing two approaches, two methods in Rapacka's scholarly opus: a) reconstruction of the historical poetics and study of the sources and b) deconstruction of national myths and falsifications and of national essentialism in literary historiography. The same article, with slight changes in content, has also been published in Polish translation, see Bogdan, 2018b.

w regionalnych i ogólnonarodowych systemach kultury chorwackiej in 2001 (in the Croatian translation *Uloga latinskog jezika u regionalnim sustavima i općenacionalnom sustavu hrvatske kulture* [*The Function of Latin in Regional Systems and the Nation-Wide System of Croatian Culture*]). Here we should mention at least one further work which is vital for our topic, since Marulić is in the center of attention; unlike the previously mentioned texts, it has not been translated from Polish: *Pisarze wczesnego renesansu chorwackiego wobec tradycji europejskiego średniowiecza. Tezy* (*Writers of the Early Croatian Renaissance Vis-à-Vis the Tradition of the European Middle Ages. Theses*).[3]

I believe that Joanna Rapacka's theses on Marko Marulić are worth citing and examining for at least two reasons: because they can still be relevant for the understanding of Marulić's literary works and because in present-day Croatian studies they have not had the appreciation they deserve. Rapacka groups Marulić, and particularly the vernacular part of his opus, closely together with the poetics of the European literary Middle Ages, while Croatian literary historiography has in the last few decades exerted great efforts to "demedievalize" Marulić, as one literary historian has truculently stated, meaning that it seeks to reduce the importance of the connection between Marulić's works and medieval literature. To give a basic idea about how Rapacka views Marulić's opus, I will briefly lay out and comment on the fundamental theses in her studies, at least in the three that I cited at the beginning and which are devoted exclusively to Marulić and in the later-cited text on writers of the early Croatian renaissance and the tradition of the European Middle Ages.

In her *A Few Remarks on* Poklad i Korizma [Carnival and Lent] *by Marko Marulić*, Rapacka views Marulić's humorous-instructive poem as a "work that belongs to the literary system of the Middle Ages" (Rapacka, 1998a, 24) and seeks to connect it with the genre of *bataille* in medieval Romance literatures, an offshoot of the genre customarily termed *kontrast* or *prenje* [dispute] in Croatian literary history. In *Poklad*

3 I consulted this work, originally published in 1978, in the edition of Rapacka's studies Rapacka, 2002b (92–97). Dunja Fališevac kindly helped me with her knowledge of Polish and made it possible for me to grasp the significance of the theses in that text, for which I am highly grateful.

i Korizma Rapacka observes a combination of grotesque and medieval sermon, humoristic triviality and Christian moralizing, a feature typical for the group of Marulić's humorous-instructive poems, also including *Anka (satira)* (*Anka (a satire)*) and *Spovid koludric od sedam smartnih grihov* (*Nuns' Confession of the Seven Mortal Sins*). In these three poems Marulić uses humoristic elements in order to make his strict didactic message more attractive to its recipients, more easily acceptable. Or, as he formulates it himself in the conclusion to *Spovid koludric od sedam smartnih grihov*, in a sort of *congedo* (leavetaking), addressing the reader and figuratively justifying the poetics of his humorous-instructive poems (Marulić, 2018, 383, verses 511–520):

Omazah ti medom kraje
Ovej čaše, da t' je slaje;
Jeda potom budeš piti
Ča će t' nemoć griha odbiti.
Smih ustaviv, tuj ćeš najti
Po čem nećeš s puta zajti;
I vidit ćeš Marko Marul
Toj učeći da nî zarul.
Na svem hvala svemogomu
Gospodinu Bogu momu.[4]

Rapacka considers that in *Poklad i Korizma* Marulić "moves in paths well-trodden within the Middle Ages" (Rapacka, 1998a, 28) and claims that the possibility of pure plebeian grotesque, which opens up at one spot in the poem (most of all through the parody of knightly epic and the very lively, dynamic representation of the conflict of two camps), retreats before the seriousness and didacticism which prevail at the end. The poem begins by telling of the conflict between Carnival's and

4 I spread honey on the edges / of this cup, to make it sweeter; / so that you could afterwards drink / something to remove your weakness toward sin. / Halting your laughter, here you will find / what will help you not to stray from the path; / and you will see that Marko Marul / was not hee-hawing when teaching you. / Thanks for everything to the almighty / Lord my God.

Lent's armies, with monks fighting on the side of personified ascetic Lenten virtues, while knights are on the side of personified Carnival sins. A concrete occasion for writing the poem, and for such a choice of actors, clearly is to be sought in the Christian calendar, in the time of year when purity wins over debauchery and the Lenten period begins. Describing the conflict of armies, Marulić uses elements of the grotesque, parodies knightly epics and brings in culinary humor, but in the second half of the poem, at the moment when Lent's army is victorious, the narrator becomes a fiery Christian preacher. His style – "in the spirit of medieval homiletics" as Rapacka notes (Rapacka, 1998a, 28) – abounds in images of the tortures of Hell and the torments that Christian saints were subjected to, in direct, forceful edifying messages and moralizing, with examples quoted from the Bible. At the end of the poem Lent is assigned the role of a cleric leading the Mass, while the narrator himself in the first person plural becomes identified with the community of the faithful (Marulić, 2018, 389, verses 145–150):

Od tada Korizma poče gospodovat,
    Nima misto šizma, i svak ju jâ štovat;
I mi joj služimo ter, počan od danas,
    Ča će Bog, činimo, a ne ča Satanas;
I nos'mo na sebi sveta križa zlamen,
    Da Isus na nebi nastani nas, amen.[5]

Rapacka particularly cites the stylistic and discursive layering of Marulić's text – with its alternation of high and low, sublime and trivial, mass and carnival – as typical for the Christian culture of the Middle Ages, in which almost any literary device is permissible as long as it seeks to achieve some moral goal. In accordance with the scholastic principle of *analogia entis*, which Rapacka calls "the *catena aurea* of hidden meaning" (Rapacka, 1998a, 29), one can find a background tropological

5 From then on, Lent has begun to reign, / there is no room for schism, and all began to honor it; / let us too serve it, and beginning today, / let us do what God wants, and not Satan; / and let us carry the mark of the holy cross on us, / so that Jesus will bring us into heaven, amen.

significance in everything. Through allegory or symbolization, even at the price of lack of *decorum*, any phenomenon from the material sphere can as an *exemplum* be semantically brought into the sphere of the spiritual. In Marulić's time, the procedure of humorization could certainly have been treated differently than he did in *Carnival and Lent*, even when it was applied to religious content and dogma. This is shown, for example, by the case of Marulić's half a century younger contemporary, the well-known Dubrovnik Renaissance writer Nikola Nalješković (ca. 1505–1587), in whose dramas and *maskeratas* (Carnival poems) sacred content is often treated lightly; liturgical and, more broadly, religious discourse is parodied and humoristically twisted, such as prayer, exorcism and the fundamental concepts of Christian eschatology, without this being given any religious or moral significance afterward. Nalješković felt no obligation to justify his instrumentalizing of religious discourse, nor did he wish, at least in the genres we have mentioned, to place it hierarchically above literary discourse and literary esthetics. For Marulić, on the other hand, at least in the later phase of his creative work (when most of his vernacular opus arose, as far as we can tell), humorization could not have had an independent esthetic purpose, nor been a literary device on its own. He did not wish to linger over the Bakhtinian grotesque realism of humoristic devices, since they served him first and foremost as an aid in articulating his moral instruction. Thus we have an author who, quite consciously, subordinates the humoristic elements in his humorous-instructive poems to non-literary, utilitarian purposes, which as a consequence reduces their literary-esthetic independence, and religious discourse is placed above the literary even within the literary work itself.

In her study *Once Again on the začinjavci*, Rapacka examines the problem of Marulić's mysterious *začinjavci* (perhaps to be translated *maker* or *originator*), which have been much written about in literary historiography. This term appears, as is well known, only once, in the prose dedication of the epic *Judita* addressed to Dujam Balistrilić, paired with the notion of *stari poete*; it is in an important location, where Marulić attempts to explain which literary traditions he relied on while transforming the Biblical story of the widow of Bethulia into the verses of his epic, the first vernacular authorial epic in Croatian literature. Here

is the famous beginning of the long sentence in the middle of the dedication: "Evo bo historiju tuj svedoh u versih po običaju naših začinjavac i jošće po zakonu onih starih poet, kim nî zadovoljno počitati kako je dilo prošlo, da mnoge načine obkladaju neka je vičnije onim ki budu čtiti" ("For here I have composed reduced the story into verses according to the custom of our *začinjavci* and again according to the law of those old poets, for whom it was not sufficient to relate how the event occurred; rather, they used many devices to make the reading more pleasant for those who will read it") (Marulić, 2021, 54). Many quite different opinions have been expressed about whom and what Marulić intended by the term *začinjavci*, while for "the law of those old poets" consensus was reached long ago that it refers to classical poets and the poetics of ancient epics. Rapacka connects the entire dedication of *Judita*, including the place mentioning *začinjavci*, with the traditional circles of European culture in which Dante's works represent the sum of intellectual and literary creation. For her, thus, this is one more example linking Marulić with a conception of literature "which faithfully follows medieval traditions" (Rapacka, 1998a, 34), the pinnacle of which is Dante. Though she points out Dante's influence more precisely at several other places in the dedication of *Judita*, I would say Rapacka has not satisfactorily resolved the problem of *začinjavci* when she regards them – like many older literary historians – as hypothetical authors of versified legends of saints, who allegedly preceded Marulić but whose works have not been preserved for us; that is, she connects *začinjavci* first and foremost with the problem of versification. I have myself recently written about the *začinjavci* and offered a different solution: I see the *začinjavci* and the *poete* as Marulić's adaptation of Dante's conceptual pair *dicitori per rima*/*rimatori* – *poete* from the *Vita Nuova*. Both poles of the opposition, for Marulić as for Dante, belong to artistic high literature and are responsible for stylistic decoration of the text, differing only the language medium (some create in the vernacular, the others in the privileged Latin language), and hence have somewhat different cultural statuses.[6]

6 Cf. Bogdan, 2022. Rapacka was right to cite Dante when looking at the dedication of *Judita*, but from her correct insight about Dante's importance for Marulić's theoretical reflection on literature she did not, at least concerning the *začinjavci*, draw

Though Rapacka evidently does not reach a correct conclusion about the *začinjavci*, who are the central topic of her study, she is right in connecting the entire dedication of *Judita*, via Dante, with medieval conceptions; she claims further, probably with some exaggeration, that the dedication is "their most complete expression in the Croatian writing tradition" (Rapacka, 1998a, 35). The adoption of Dante's conceptions and solutions in the dedication of *Judita* clearly should be considered in connection with the project of establishing artistic literature in the vernacular language, a project which engrossed both Marulić and Dante, each in his own time and his own context. The very need to specially defend recourse to the methods of *poete* and *začinjavci* while retelling the holy Biblical story is, basically, a justification for the formal embellishment of theological-religious discourse. Clearly, for the mature Marulić, this means an a-priori true discourse, and the embellishment is done with means that are taken from the pagan literary heritage.

Rapacka's *Marko Marulić in Valle Surda, or Antiquity as a Temptation* seeks to show that Marulić even when writing in Latin, when trying his hand at the humanistic genre of poetic epistle (here referring to the epistle, familiar from anthologies, that he sent from Šolta to Frane Božićević about 1510, inviting his Split friends to visit), nevertheless resists the temptation of ancient times and the challenge of the sensual beauty of the world. Here too the preacher and moralizer wins out over the humanist. Though in the description of the feast he promises to prepare for his friends one can recognize many ancient prototypes[7], Rapacka sees

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the proper conclusions. I will just recall that it has long been known how important Dante was for Marulić's literary creations: Marulić rendered the first canto of Dante's *Inferno* into Latin; he arrived at the device of repeating the rhyme in the middle of the line in double-rhyming dodecasyllables (…A…B /…A…B /…B…C /…B…C / etc.) from the *terza rima* rhyme scheme of the *Divine Comedy*; in *Judita*, *Suzana* and religious lyric he took motifs and figures from Dante's works; and as for the dedication to *Judita*, correspondences to Dante's conceptions are the way Marulić justifies writing in the vernacular language, the use of culinary metaphors, rhetorical conceptions of decoration, and even, as Bogdan 2022 seeks to show, the conceptual pair *začinjavci*/*poete*.

7 Cf. Novaković, 1999a, 57 and 58 and 2005, 70, pointing out possible classical models (Martial, Catullus, Horace) for the treatment of the theme of a "feast"

Marulić here first and foremost as a Christian moralizer, particularly in the second part of the epistle. Though tempted to surrender completely to the "power of classical poetic sensibility," Marulić "repeated the gesture of St. Anthony and resisted the temptation, stopping at the border between late medieval, erudite humanism of the form and the humanism of the Renaissance" (Rapacka, 1998a, 42). After describing to Božićević how he would receive him and the other friends who might visit from Split, what dishes he would offer and in what surroundings, Marulić launches into lengthy considerations of the fate of life in this world and the need to concentrate on the other world, the Christian hereafter. Rapacka may be right in thinking of Marulić's relation to antiquity as an example of "the late medieval, erudite humanism of the form," but when she specially stresses the second part of the epistle she seems to ignore the presence of two separate problems, two distinct sets of themes in Marulić's poem, and the reasons for distinguishing them; she seems to ignore the fact that Marulić is responding to implicit yet quite concrete requests in the message which he had previously received from Božićević. That is, Marulić's poetic letter clearly cannot be properly understood without considering Božićević's earlier one. The moral rigor, partly stoic in tone, and the Christian metaphysical consolation are, certainly, strongly present in Marulić's second part, but these lines are an attempt to respond to his friend's requests; Frane calls on Marko not only to console the Split friendly circle for having temporarily left it, but also to counsel and comfort it in the face of the Ottoman threat, the insecurities and disappointments of this world and particularly the immoral and turbulent life in Split itself, and the conflicts among its citizens. In the middle of the letter, introducing a list of existential fears, Božićević reasons as follows: (Marulić, 2005, 338, lines 31–40):

Heu patria altisonas subicit gemebunda querellas
    Vulsa comam, lacerum pectus et ora notat.
Nam modo qui fueras Spalatensi solus in urbe

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prepared by a poor but hospitable host, as well as the description of the merry atmosphere of friendship during the simple but tasty meal.

Omnibus exemplar consiliumque decus,
Tam cito raptus abis, abiit tecum omnis honestas
Et probitas uitę relligioque fides.
Nos sine te lęti nequaquam uiuimus, auget
Tot mala nostra tuę facta ruina fugę.
Viuimus, et si uis nostram cognoscere uitam
Accipe, pars animę maxima, Marce, meę[8]

and near the end, after detailing the sad state of affairs, the writer despairs: "Nullus amor; quę sint miseris solatia rebus? / Prospicis arma foris, prospicis arma domi. / Interea foelix tu lęta mente reponis / Ocia candidulis candidiora rosis" ("Love is gone. What can console our misery? / Weapons destroy the city, weapons destroy the home. / While you happily enjoy blessed peace, / more brilliant than the shining roses") (Marulić, 2005, 340, lines 65–68). Emphasizing the peace which his friend enjoys in the hamlet of Nečujam on the island of Šolta and regretting that Split is now deprived of his wisdom, Božićević in these lines implicitly calls for a commentary and consolation from Marulić, and so Marulić's moralizing and consideration of the last things, which he was not averse to doing anyway, is stimulated by the content of Božićević's missive. In any case, Marulić himself at the beginning of his poem announces that he will take up two topics that Božićević has opened (Marulić, 2005, 226, lines 1–8):

Grata salutatrix a te mihi littera uenit,
O Francisce, meę cultor amicicię!
Hęc docuit quanto est absentia nostra dolori
His quibus extiteram semper in urbe comes.

8 But the homeland weeps with loud sighs, / pulls out her hair, scratches her face and breast with a cry. / You alone recently with us in Split / showed the way to all, were our exemplar and honor. / With your sudden leaving, all honesty departed, / all respect and shame, faith and promised word. / Without you here we live in sadness and regret; now our / evils are still more frightful, your fleeing ruins us. / We are alive – but if you wish to know our life better, / Marko, my most dear, now hear me attentively.

Tum quod tristitię cumulus superadditur isti
Dum pecus in prędam ferri hominesque uident.
Ferre utrumque malum mentique mederier ęgrę
Dicere conabor qua ratione decet.[9]

Marulić, hence, offers what his friend has sought, but we should note that he nevertheless avoids explicitly commenting on the conflicts among Split residents and Božićević's complaint about their disunity and moral depravity.

Finally, in *Writers of the Early Croatian Renaissance Vis-à-Vis the Tradition of the European Middle Ages. Theses* – which is, since the methodological framework for the three previously mentioned analyses is prepared in it, presumably older than the study on *Carnival and Lent* published the same year, and hence would be the oldest of the four works – Rapacka treats Marko Marulić and the Dubrovnik poet Mavro Vetranović (1482–1576) as authors whose vernacular works largely fit the esthetics characteristic for the Middle Ages. In this study she brings out several important and far-reaching points of principle, such as the claim that Marulić's and Vetranović's works which display poetic features of medieval literature are by no means imitative, do not repeat forms and genres of Croatian medieval writing, but rather expand its repertory, and that this demonstrates the vitality of the medieval literary system at the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th in Dubrovnik and Dalmatian authorial literature – its ability to conquer new territory even simultaneously with the advent of the Renaissance. Marulić's vernacular opus, the Polish Croatist affirms, continues a process begun in the 14th century in Croatian Glagolitic literature, that of reorientation toward the West and breaking connections with South Slavic literatures. Marulić represents the apex of this process and its intensification. The

9 Your letter of greetings filled me with joy, Frane, / it gave me proof that I remain your dear friend. / From it I learned how people regret my departure / people with whom I shared all my moments. / Now they suffer still more because they see how / wartime plunder is taken, men and beasts taken away. / I will try to say how one protects oneself from spiritual pain, / and what is the best remedy for both of these evils.

broadening of the repertory of genres and forms from Croatian medieval literature, which our Split poet succeeds in carrying out, is in fact the result of turning to the heritage of Western European medieval literature which had arisen in the Romance/Latin cultural circle. For Rapacka, all this even calls for bringing the concept of Pre-Renaissance into the study of Croatian literature, a concept which would allow for the diversity of the Middle Ages and for the simultaneous appearance of the new, Renaissance era. As far as I know, Rapacka did not repeat this bold thought or develop it further.

What we have just said shows the degree to which Rapacka poetically connects Marulić with the literary Middle Ages; she regards him as an author who is also a Renaissance figure, but in whom the Middle Ages prevail, particularly in the vernacular part of his opus. One gains the impression that she chooses the topics of her studies so as to make it easier to emphasize the importance of his works' medieval component. Her belief in the particular importance and almost dominance of the Middle Ages in Marulić's opus is also visible in the short introduction to *Fragments on Marulić*, written when she joined the three studies into one. She summarizes her view of the Middle Ages in Marulić, after pointing out that he continued traditional layers instead of rejecting them: "Choosing such an attitude enabled him to enrich and take full creative advantage of the achievements of the Croatian Middle Ages, and simultaneously to transfer traditional values into a higher, qualitatively different artistic and ideological dimension. This is most forcefully expressed in *Judita*" (Rapacka, 1998a, 23). And in the *Lexicon of Croatian Traditions*, which naturally required brevity in its articles, the article on *Judita* states concisely that Marulić's opus "represents the crown of the tradition of medieval literature and simultaneously opens new Renaissance horizons" (Rapacka, 2002a, 93). Marulić is without doubt a poetically heterogeneous author, at the boundary between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, but when he writes in the vernacular language, his debt to medieval literary traditions becomes quite clear. It would be wrong to say that Rapacka was alone in such views or that they had not appeared before her time in literary historiography; many older literary historians had observed the medieval component in Marulić, but none had discussed it so cogently and with so many poetological arguments

as Rapacka, with so much erudition in literary history and knowledge of the European literary Middle Ages. There is hardly any notable older literary historian who had not, in considering Marulić's opus, sought to bring the two components into some relationship – the older, medieval, and the newer, the Renaissance. They did this in various ways, and the pendulum always swung between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, even though those terms might not have been used or might have been defined (slightly) differently by different historians.

I will cite only a few of many possible examples. Petar Kasandrić, in his preface to the anniversary edition of *Judita* back in 1901, figuratively argues that in Marulić's epic "we find a dualism, a fluctuation between the demands of the humanistic school and strict ascetic principles, which surely offends our modern taste, but is quite natural in a man of that culture and those moral feelings" (Kasandrić, 1901, 68). At roughly the same time Ivan Milčetić (1903, 40) expresses himself more concretely on the same problem:

> In his [Marulić's, T. B.] views there is no complete harmony. A humanist education led him into ancient ages, Christian faith and preferences for an ascetic life turned him toward the Middle Ages, while the modern age was knocking at his door. All these ages with their various views found expression in his works, but it was the Middle Ages that impressed him most strongly.

The pendulum swung even more toward the Middle Ages in Branko Vodnik's treatment: he found that *Judita* reflected "Marulić's knowledge of the poetry of troubadours and ancient classics, though he diverged from both of these in spirit, walking as a representative of our churchly Renaissance in the footsteps of medieval Latin poets"; he calls Marulić's humorous poems "entirely medieval poetry" (Vodnik, 1913, 108, 113). Similarly Franjo Fancev, with very few literary-historical or poetological arguments, claims "Marko Marulić was in spirit fully in the Middle Ages; his humanistic education, a few contemporary events, and the attitude he took against Renaissance licentiousness make him a man of the Croatian Renaissance but not of its poetry" and that Marulić "represents a transition, a bridge, from our medieval to our modern

Renaissance literature" (Fancev, 1937, 601). I believe the views of Mihovil Kombol, one of the 20th century's most important scholars of older Croatian literature, deserve special attention. He, too, strongly emphasized the medieval in Marulić, often in highly interesting and previously unknown ways, but here and there from false premises and with surprising arguments, almost taking the shape of ideological denunciations such as would be expected from somewhat younger literary historians with different intellectual backgrounds. This last, of course, refers to Kombol's works published after the Second World War. Previously, in his capital work *Poviest hrvatske književnosti do narodnog preporoda* (*History of Croatian Literature Until the* [19th century] *National Rebirth*), he claimed more moderately that "the serious figure of Marko Marulić" stood at the "crossroads of times, with a world view closer to the Middle Ages than to the Renaissance" (Kombol, 1945, 75), thus basing himself on a condensed summary of Marulić's *Weltanschauung* or image of the world. A page or two later he comes closer to poetological arguments, although still without extensive argumentation and not particularly precisely, when he asserts that Marulić's shorter Croatian poetic works "in their fundamental tone are in fact a continuation of our religious poetry from the end of the Middle Ages" (Kombol, 1945, 81). But in Kombol's preface to the 1950 anniversary edition of *Judita*, the claims about the medieval in Marulić become more forceful, and the Split writer now figures as a representative of a more ancient period, strongly connected with medieval traditions and "in a large part of his poetic output, in fact one of the last figures of Croatian medieval literature," who in the new Renaissance literature would have "stuck out" almost as an anachronism (Kombol, 1950, 22). The same preface was published as an article in the journal *Republika* in the same year; it is in many ways an outstandingly lucid synthesis[10], but we find in it the following apodictic statements by Kombol about humanism (Kombol, 1950, 13):

10 Interesting, inter alia, are Kombol's conjectures that Marulić in his youth wrote secular Latin poetry which had been lost; this was later proven by the discovery of new manuscripts. Also his opinion that Marulić in *Judita* applies the devices of ancient epic mechanically (Kombol, 1950, 18), which corresponds to Rapacka's ideas of Marulić's late medieval, erudite humanism of the form. Kombol had already in

> [Their] enthusiasm for classical antiquity was not only the enthusiasm of antiquarians, philologists and pure litterateurs. The study of antiquity had a much deeper significance; although, because of the Latin language, it was largely inaccessible to the broader masses and was often imitative and one-sided, it was nevertheless progressive in the sense that it served the young bourgeois class as a strong weapon in the struggle against the feudal-churchly ideology of the Middle Ages.

The author then places Marulić in the negative context of "feudal-churchly ideology," stating reproachfully that "despite all his humanistic education he did not waver for a moment in his devotion to the church" (Kombol, 1950, 14), and while bringing up the position of the bourgeois class and the decomposition of medieval feudal ways of life, even cites Friedrich Engels.[11] Many such ideological condemnations of Marulić appeared immediately after the Second World War, for example the essays of Marin Franičević or Miroslav Krleža, but since these are not genuine and serious literary historiography, we need not examine them here.

In general, older literary historians often defined the Middle Ages thematically and by world view, i.e. as Christian, and rarely took into

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his *History* noted that the dedication to *Judita* "has something mechanical in it" in its understanding of the "device of old poets," as well as that "such mechanical features are in the epic itself in its use of classical decorations" (Kombol, 1945, 83).

11 Cf. Kombol, 1950, 9. Clearly Kombol then, shortly after the end of the Second World War, needed to make amends to the new socialist order for having published and engaged in other activities in the Quisling "Independent State of Croatia," so he at times made himself out to be a fervent Marxist. The consequences are visible not only in his terminology but in his overdoing of some literary-historical and esthetic evaluations. It is hard to avoid the impression that he was seeking to prove himself to the new rulers rather than developing methodologically on his own. Kombol was in great need of rehabilitation: because of his 1941–1945 sympathies he was deprived of his professorship and sent into retirement by a decree in 1946, and forbidden to publish for two years. Mirko Tomasović in his monograph on Kombol minimizes these post-war Marxist escapades, arguing that they need not be taken to mean a change in his previously established "system of thought" or "esthetic position". Tomasović apparently sees them not as the result of opportunism or imposed conformism but as a logical development of Kombol's theoretical reflection and literary-esthetic consciousness, though this does not seem convincing (Tomasović, 2005, 74, 75, 112, 113).

account literary devices, genres, or the system of discourse. Most literary historians of the middle generation, who were active in the second half of the 20th century like Rapacka, were, unlike her, inclined toward similar simplifications in periodization and history of ideas.[12] Even after her, there have been recent literary historians who correctly, as she did, use arguments about historical poetics or poetological arguments to stress the medieval component in Marulić, most often while emphasizing the duality of his poetics. Here they are similar to Rapacka and perhaps inspired by her writings. Good examples are Dunja Fališevac and Bratislav Lučin. Fališevac in some of her studies brings out the medieval components in Marulić's works, with extensive contextualization in the historical poetics. In fact, like Rapacka, Fališevac wrote a study on *Carnival and Lent*, as well as one on all of Marulić's humorous-instructive poems, coming to conclusions similar to Rapacka's, e.g. on the connection of Marulić's works with medieval poetic principles, with medieval genres, rhetorical norms and doctrine on mixing of styles, though she differed from Rapacka in stressing the dramatic potential of *Carnival and Lent* and the destruction of allegory in it. In her book *Stari pisci hrvatski*

12 It might not be out of place to bring up the illustrative cases of three reputable literary historians and members of the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts who devoted their works both to the problem of Marulić's opus between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and to that of his relationship to tradition. The texts of the three, aside from other regrettable cognitive stumbles, display the abovementioned simplistic view of the difference between the two epochs in literary history and a reduction of the Middle Ages to thematics or world view. Thus, for Rafo Bogišić themes and experiences become fundamental for comparing the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, and the "basic content" is almost the only relevant element of a literary work; the work is reduced to a statement on problems of life, and humanism is sometimes given its colloquial meaning, equated with a feeling of solidarity among people, with humaneness (Bogišić, 1991). Nikica Kolumbić despite the promising title of his work (*Marko Marulić at the Transition From the Middle Ages to the Renaissance*) in fact writes hardly anything about the Renaissance and the Middle Ages, and when he does, mostly ignores poetics, ending his study with a simplified reduction of the Renaissance to interest in man, and of the Middle Ages to religious-moralistic content (Kolumbić, 2005). Josip Bratulić also tends to equate the Middle Ages with Christianity, so that he too reduces it to thematics and world view and shows little understanding of literary, formal devices or genres (Bratulić, 1990a; 1990b).

i njihove poetike (*Old Croatian Writers and Their Poetics*) Fališevac, tellingly, placed the studies on Marulić in the chapter entitled *Između srednjovjekovlja i renesanse* (*Between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, cf. Fališevac, 1989a; 1989b). Later, writing on the genre system of Marulić's entire Croatian lyric poetry, Fališevac tries to isolate the Renaissance and medieval elements, and seeks to show their interrelation, citing among the medieval elements Marulić's adaptation of particular lyric genres (e.g. laude, Marian lyric, prayers), and among the Renaissance ones certain more complex forms of structuring the text, particularly the individualizing of the lyric subject (Fališevac, 2001). Among numerous publications by Lučin on Marulić, we would point out several synthesizing works which exactly and concisely demonstrate the dual poetic quality of Marulić's opus, i.e. his placement at the boundary of two eras, and properly distinguish his Renaissance and medieval components (Lučin, 2018; 2021, and also Lučin, 1997; 1999). In the series of literary historians who have brought out Marulić's poetic duality, Rapacka deserves special mention for the shift in emphasis which was advantageous at the time of writing her works and which can still be referred to with profit. She is naturally aware that Marulić has dual poetic qualities, but wishes to point out specially his connection with the Middle Ages, regarding this as quite important, and with justification though this is sometimes ignored today. This she achieves with arguments differing from those used by her predecessors – not only arguments of principle and from cultural history, not only those from world view and from topics, but just as much, if not more, from historical poetics and poetology.

As we mentioned at the beginning, although Marulić's poetic duality has long been recognized – with his most successful example of a synthesis of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance being the epic *Judita* – in recent decades efforts have been made to emphasize his Renaissance features and minimize the medieval ones, as if this would make him an even more modern author. Behind such efforts one can detect a somewhat naively negative (perhaps Burckhardtian) evaluation of the Middle Ages. Such an approach is noticeable in the decades-old important study by Cvito Fisković, which, largely through non-literary arguments, seeks to portray Marulić as a man of the Renaissance (Fisković, 1978), and is clearly represented in the works of Mirko Tomasović,

particularly in his influential monograph on Marulić (Tomasović, 1999). Here there is a clear tendency to identify the Middle Ages with Christianity, and hence – despite occasional consideration of other levels of the literary work – to identify the whole of medieval literary culture with Christian content. Tomasović does his best to demedievalize (his term) Marulić's opus, even in those segments where almost all have seen the influence of medieval poetic principles and world views, such as the poems in Croatian. To achieve this, Tomasović deploys unusual lines of argument and highly problematic literary-historical judgements. Thus he claims, counter-factually, that the opposition between the Christian and the pagan in Marulić did not evoke any "clear tension, deeper crisis of doubts," although Marulić's works are full of testimonies showing how, especially in the latter part of his life, these two elements were in conflict (Tomasović, 1999, 37). Also strange is the claim that belonging to the Western European cultural circle inherently presupposes Christianity, so that in pre-Modern European literary figures one need not specially mention this as a mark of "medievalism" (Tomasović, 1999, 38). Such a view is once again a consequence of reducing the literary Middle Ages to Christianity, so that, for Tomasović, discussing the medieval elements in someone's opus would be the same as discussing Christianity. If Christianity is omnipresent throughout the Western European literature, then it seems the same could be applied to the Middle Ages understood in this way: it would be both everywhere and nowhere. Further, Tomasović seeks to use elements of Renaissance poetics to mask the medieval part of Marulić's opus, e.g. by claiming that the Christian moralizing in the Croatian lyric poetry and the prevalence of piety are part of a link to conventions, so that the medieval elements in the vernacular lyric would almost be the result of the Renaissance principle of *imitatio* (Tomasović, 1999, 142), which is absurd. Literary phenomena observed in the imitation of canonical ancient authors in general do not include the elements that make up Marulić's vernacular lyric, and adherence to the conventions of medieval literary culture cannot lead to the extensive re-establishment of ancient rhetoric or to the humanistic poetics of imitation. One of Tomasović's favorite methods in seeking to show the Croatian part of Marulić's opus to be as Renaissance as possible is linking him to Petrarchism. But Tomasović has overstated

the role of Petrarchism in Marulić, particularly in *Judita*. He often finds Petrarchism where there is none, whether regarding love motifs from classical literature as Petrarchistic, or taking the elements of erotic lyric which the poet repurposes and instrumentalizes, mostly for religious or didactic purposes or to make the plot lines of his narrative works seem more convincing, to be proofs of Petrarchism. An example is his claim to recognize the image of the lady from the Canzoniere in the character of Judita, which is unfounded.[13] How can we explain such efforts, such argumentation and logical acrobatics aiming to rid Marulić's opus of the medieval? Perhaps by the following logic: Tomasović reduces the Middle Ages to Christianity, and has to some extent adopted Burckhardt's negative evaluation of the Middle Ages, and so he simultaneously, and quite unnecessarily, sees citation of Marulić's medieval elements as both an esthetic disqualification and a criticism due to the Christian point of view; hence rejection of Marulić's "medievality" becomes, in a strange way, a defense of Marulić's modernity and an out-of-place defense of Christianity.

Of course Marulić is also a Renaissance author; Rapacka feels no need to justify this at length, it is in a way presupposed. He is a Renaissance author by his marked authorial self-consciousness, by his effort to make the vernacular language fit to be the medium of high artistic literature, but most of all by his basically affirmative attitude toward classical literary culture, even when this is not declared but shown in

13 For criticism of such theses on the strong presence of Petrarchism in Marulić, see my – albeit quite early and terminologically still somewhat imprecise – work Bogdan, 2002 and the later, more concise but conceptually and terminologically much more precise review of the problem in Bogdan, 2012, 67 and 68. How much Tomasović sought to free Marulić from the Middle Ages at any price and as thoroughly as possible can be illustrated by his editorial comments in Marulić, 2000. In these, whenever some long-lasting Christian theme, present in the Middle Ages and in Marulić, is found in the whole history of European literature, that is, also in the time after Marulić's, he claims with relief that we are thus "demedievalizing [Marulić], freeing him from medievality and such a markedness, and promoting his authorial poetic realization" (Marulić, 2000, 157). Here Tomasović is clearly not paying due attention to the narrower context in which Marulić was creating, his orientation toward medieval genres, themes and literary devices, or the way in which he takes them over and modifies them.

practice. This affirmative attitude is expressed, inter alia, in his devotion to the humanistic ideal of education and to various forms of humanistic poetics, and in frequent borrowings from Roman poetry and civilization. Marulić shows himself to be a Renaissance author even in those works that have pronounced medieval characteristics; this is clear in the individualization of his poetic voice/textual subject (particularly as compared with the older anonymous poetry of Croatian medieval literature), in the explicit authorial self-consciousness, in the use of a new, more complex meter for vernacular verses (the double-rhymed 12-syllable line, often with repetition of the final rhyme of a couplet in the middle of the next two lines, as in the scheme… A…B /…A…B /…B…C /…B…C /…C…D /…C…D), in the more complex poetic language, the use of stylistic figures, the more complicated composition of the poems. When he writes in Latin, Marulić holds firmly to ancient literature, to its expression and exemplary writers and genres, particularly in his youth when he found it more difficult to overcome the temptation of classical antiquity; but when he writes in Croatian, which apparently he began to do only in his mature years, about 1500, he turns more strongly toward another literary tradition, that of the literary Middle Ages and religious topics, and in general writes for a less demanding public. Then he reaches for hymnody, liturgical and paraliturgical poetry, Croatian medieval literature, early Christian biblical epic, legends of saints. If we were to nevertheless wish to use the argument of a changed world view, however much it might be simplified, imprecise and subject to greatly differing opinions, we would have to admit that in Marulić there is less of the new Renaissance mentality than is sometimes claimed. On the other hand, there is, as already mentioned, mixing of stylistic registers within individual works, and mixing of phenomena of different status framed by symbolization and allegory; all this is, according to Rapacka, in accord with medieval poetics and also with the medieval world view, but in disaccord with the Renaissance norm of *decorum*. Nor does Marulić's occasional antimonasticism have to be a modern, Renaissance reformist feature; it can be from longer ago (cf. Rapacka, 1998a, 26), with roots in radical medieval moralizing, just as Marulić's religious convictions and moral attitudes are often uncompromising. Likewise, since women are

frequent characters in Marulić's Croatian works, from *Judita* and *Suzana* to *Anka (satira)* and *Nuns' Confession of the Seven Mortal Sins*, it has sometimes been claimed that his attitude to women is one more Renaissance characteristic, a form of positive evaluation of the feminine gender or even connected with Neoplatonism, though it would be more correct to view his attitude as a reflection of mistrust toward the feminine. In fact there are many indications that Marulić looked on women as the weaker half of humanity, in need of cautionary examples and support so as not to succumb to sin or, like our foremother Eve, to entice men into sin. This is most clearly expressed at the beginning and end of the epyllion or shorter epic *Suzana*, where, based on the positive example of a virtuous married woman, messages and warnings are conveyed which border on misogyny.

If we go a step further than Rapacka, whose arguments are mainly about historical poetics and more rarely cultural-historical or taken from the history of ideas, if we head further in the direction of epistemological context, we could say that in Marulić epistemological and ontological monism prevails, while cognitive pluralism is more typical of the Renaissance, even for philology itself. Thorough examination of such problems and epochal concepts goes beyond the ambitions of the present article, but if we take them up briefly, if we define the Renaissance more strictly and precisely as is done in Romance studies in Germany, for instance in the works of Klaus W. Hempfer (cf. for our purposes Hempfer, 1991; 1993; 2001; 2009), the results will confirm that Marulić, at least in his vernacular writings, could only with great difficulty be termed a Renaissance author. The literary Renaissance, for Hempfer, begins with the pluralization of literary authorities; this is only one of the faces of pluralization of the concept of truth, i.e. only one form of epistemological pluralism. The special feature of the Renaissance is this phenomenon of plurality, and in Renaissance literature there is a general tendency to pluralize discourse, which is not found in Marulić, at least not in his mature phase. Hempfer links this feature of the Renaissance with an epistemological change that could be identified as the relativization of the concept of truth. Such an epistemological change results in a series of changes in discourse. In later scholasticism the doctrine had arisen of dual truth, which evoked a crisis in the late medieval system

of knowledge. The system could no longer easily reconcile the truth of Christian revelation with the observation of the natural world; the humanistic movement's discovery of numerous classical texts beginning with the end of the 14th century led to enormous expansion of the knowable, that is, to shifting the boundaries of cognition (cf. Hempfer, 1991, 40). Since the entire culture of the time, the mature and late Middle Ages, was founded on the reading of authoritative, canonical texts, first and foremost in theology and biblical hermeneutics, the basic cognitive principle was the same – it had not yet become empirical observation of reality – and thus the multiplication of the known classical authors had to lead to the pluralization of authority. Given that classical culture was not monolithic, but, like any developed culture, was heterogeneous, the first humanists suddenly began encountering a multiplicity of expressions and discourses which all laid claim to being authoritative. Hence in Renaissance literature highly differing discourses and genres appear, which could not be reduced to one another or to any simple common denominator (about this cf. Hempfer, 1991, 40–41; 1993, 37–39). Such a relativistic *episteme* of plurality, which is characteristic of the Renaissance, appears in literature, with its heteronomy of discrepant discourses, according to Hempfer, only at the time of Petrarch.[14] Thanks to the new status which classical antiquity gained, the Renaissance imitated the constitutive norms of the classical discourse system, as opposed to the Middle Ages when antiquity was generally not received as ideal and worthy of imitation but rather because it was usable for the purposes of a Christian poet. In the Middle Ages discourses were hierarchized: theological-religious discourse was always placed above the literary, it had the status of a-priori truth, approximately as in the vernacular Marulić. Let us cite just one useful example: biblical epic was in the Middle Ages formally oriented toward classical authors, but this was not *imitatio* in the sense of reconstructing an ancient type of discourse. Borrowings from ancient authors on the microstructure level (the level

14 Cf. Hempfer, 2001; 2009. On the epistemological break, it is also useful to consult Regn, 2004. I have already sought to apply these insights to observations on the oscillation of fictional and factual in Renaissance literature, in particular to the long poem by Juraj Baraković *Vila Slovinka*, cf. Bogdan, 2017.

of stylistic and compositional devices) do not, for Hempfer, suffice for us to speak of imitation and the Renaissance; to do so, one would need to reconstruct all the norms of a genre or a discourse system (Hempfer, 1993, 15). What we have said is easily applicable to Marulić, for example to his biblical epics, *Judita* and *Suzana*. I note again that there are complicated and challenging problems, which here can only be touched upon; they concern questions of principle in literary periodization, such as distinguishing literary epochs and historical periods, a methodological tool that has long been used in the field. An epoch is a construct that can be applied to a particular time period, but is not identical with it; it denotes not a chronological segment of some historical time in its entirety, including all that appears therein, but rather the prevailing principle of organization of various social-cultural systems in some period. And it is this distinction of literary epoch from historical period that makes it possible to speak of the simultaneity of the non-simultaneous, about the overlapping of different poetics in the same historical moment, and this is the way the Middle Ages and Renaissance can co-exist in literature, precisely as Rapacka observed in Marulić.

After Rapacka had published her four abovementioned works on Marulić, in the mid-1990s Darko Novaković found a codex in the Glasgow University Library containing previously unknown Latin verses by Marulić. This famous discovery led us to a realization of Marulić's poetic evolution, and changed the way we interpret his entire opus. Was Rapacka able to receive this discovery? Had she had the time to analyze the Glasgow codex texts carefully, how would she have reacted? A brief note in one of her last works shows that she knew of Novaković's find, and perhaps suggests that she realized the challenge that it posed to part of her characterization of Marulić's opus. While summarizing the role of Latin in the Croatian cultural past, with Marulić as one of the Latinists, she mentions in a digression the discovery of an "important and in many respects surprising part of his Latin poetic creative work (inter alia even erotic poetry)"; Marulić figures in her text as "a poet of quite various interests" (Rapacka, 2003, 375). Did Novaković's discovery cast into question her theses from previously published studies? At least the theses on the Latin part of Marulić's opus, such as the text about the epistle from Šolta, since the young Marulić that we see in most of

the Glasgow codex verses left us epigrams on sodomy and Priapus, frank erotica, thematization of sin and the fleshly without Christian moral condemnation, all quite in the tradition of Roman epigrams and with full reliance on well-known classical models. The theses seem in part open to doubt – classical antiquity, to paraphrase the title of the study on the epistle from Nečujam, meant a temptation to be rejected only for the mature Marulić, while it was not yet for the young Marulić, who yielded to it. His distancing from antiquity coincides with the beginning of his writing in the vernacular language; in the youthful Latin works he is an ardent humanist, showing little Christianization. The austere shadow of Savonarola, which Rapacka at the end of the study on the Nečujam epistle sees falling upon Marulić, had then not yet stretched over his literary creation.[15] The turn toward explicit religiosity came only between his fortieth and fiftieth year, as one of Darko Novaković's conclusions from the Glasgow discovery states, and as confirmed by Marulić's most important biographer and close friend Frane Božićević (cf. Novaković, 1997; 1999a; 1999b; Božićević, 2007, 33). The realization is gradually spreading in literary historiography that Marulić toward the end of his life began to struggle within himself more openly against the classical heritage. Previously the fruits of his humanistic education had had a marked secular dimension; the young Marulić was not a moralist in literature but an author fully devoted to the esthetic joys of the pagan ancient inheritance, charmed by pagan versifiers and their literature. Rapacka at the end of her study on the poetic epistle from Šolta claims that Marulić had not dared to cross the boundary of "humanistic orthodoxy" that the early Croatian humanists had, such as Ivan Česmički, or even some of his contemporaries like Ilija Crijević; he had wavered before it. Yet it seems that Marulić had crossed that

15 "For, hovering over Marulić's writing is not only the spirit of St. Bonaventure and St. Bernard of Clairvaux; Savonarola's shadow falls on it as well" (Rapacka, 1998a, 43). Milorad Medini also compared Marulić to Girolamo Savonarola: "Marulić for us is a sort of Savanarola, who scourges evil without regard to whether the scourge is the best means to cure it" (Medini, 1902, 87). The Dominican preacher, an uncompromising, radical and fanatical religious and social reformer, ended his life at the stake, but before then had held all aspects of life in Florence in his hands for several years at the end of the 15th century.

boundary in his youth, not stopping at the sight of it, but later, under the influence of a conversion in world view and of heightened moral and religious viewpoints, retreated from it.

In conclusion, we would stress: if one reads Rapacka carefully, it becomes clear that for her Marko Marulić is in fact the first (and only) great author of Croatian medieval literature. This is not her own formulation, not her own words, but my amplification of her position, perhaps something of a provocation, yet it follows from everything that she has written about Marulić. If we go along with her in this way, the sense of Marulić's (self)comparison with Dante becomes even clearer and can be looked at from further angles. In fact, since the finding of a letter in the Venetian State Archive in the 1990s which Marulić sent to his friend Jerolim Cipiko in Venice in July 1501, it has become clear that both while writing *Judita* and reflecting on it afterwards, Marulić constantly had Dante before his eyes. In the letter Marulić informs Cipiko that he has written *Judita* and invites him to read it, obviously in the manuscript which he had sent or intended to send soon: "It is composed in a poetic manner, come and look at it, you will say that the Slavic language has its Dante too. The boldness that I feel when I am with you makes me exaggerate greatly". (Marulić, 1992, 37). One simply cannot exaggerate the importance of this fascinating, even touching statement. Marulić, of course, does not mean to say he is an equally great or important author, but sets up a functional analogy, claiming that *Judita* in Croatian literature should play the same role that Dante's *Divine Comedy* did in Italian literature: the role of the first great authorial epic in the national language, affirming the vernacular as a medium for the most demanding and valued literary productions, those belonging to elite genres like the epic. The letter to Cipiko came just three months after the dedication to Dujam Balistrilić, thus almost simultaneously, and both these prose texts, each in its own way (one in Croatian, the other in Italian) bear witness that Marulić, while thinking about *Judita* or trying to reflect on his poetics and the intentions of his entire vernacular literary project, constantly turns to Dante. Marulić did not wish, at least at the moment of writing to Cipiko, to be the Croatian or Čakavian Petrarch, he did not wish to be Poggio Bracciolini, Jacopo Sannazaro or Lorenzo Valla, but the Croatian Dante, the domestic analogue to the great man

of the Italian Middle Ages, and this in all probability was not caused merely by the overall relatedness in genre of *Judita* and the *Divine Comedy*. Rapacka observed this orientation toward the Middle Ages, and toward Dante as the crown of Italian and European medieval literature, understood it well and sought to explicate it even before the finding of Marulić's letter to Cipiko.

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