Fabrica Litterarum Polono-Italica
2024, nr 1 (7), s. 1–31

www.fabricalitterarum.com
ISSN 2658-185X
https://doi.org/10.31261/FLPI.2024.07.03

ARTYKUŁY I ROZPRAWY

Péter Pátrovics

Eötvös Loránd University
e-mail: patrovics.peter@btk.elte.hu
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4226-3576

The Linguistic Worldview of Joy in the *Canticle of the Sun* of St. Francis of Assisi

Abstract

In this paper, the author seeks to reconstruct the linguistic worldview of 'joy' appearing in the *Canticle of the Sun* written by St. Francis of Assisi. During the reconstruction, it caused a special difficulty that the word 'joy' did not occur explicitly in the work under investigation, so the contents referring and related to it could only be examined indirectly. The need to place the Canticle in a broader context made it inevitable to outline the era and include certain biographical elements, and the complexity of the analysis required the application of linguistic-historical, textological, translational and theological aspects in addition to the literary ones during the investigation. The analysis of the work was carried out by including the original Italian version of the text and its English translation together, by exploring the psychological and theological deep layers of the poetic images used by St. Francis and by presenting the mythological content associated with them. During the investigation, the author of this paper came to the conclusion that the primary source of joy that fills St. Francis as he sings about creatures in his Canticle is actually not of this world, but transcendent.

Keywords: the LWV of joy, the *Canticle of the Sun*, St. Francis of Assisi

Parole chiave: la Linguistic Worldview (LWV) della gioia, il *Cantico delle creature*, San Francesco d'Assisi

Background

In this part of our study, we do not aim to outline the entire life of St. Francis of Assisi or to present his age in detail. Now we only focus on the few elements of his biography, which, in our view, are of decisive importance of the worldview of the medieval civilization, Francis' personality development, and the work under investigation. In order to give a more accurate impression of the significant differences between the Middle Ages and our modern world, we shall also reflect on the age in which Francis lived from the point of view of our contemporary age in the form of some remarks.

St. Francis of Assisi or *Pater seraphicus*, whom many called "the second Christ," was one of the most influential figures of his age, and in the opinion of many, he was "the most endearing figure of medieval Christianity." The period in which Francis lived (1181 or 1182 /the exact year is uncertain/ – 1226), the turn of the 12–13th century, marks the mid-point of the span which separates our contemporary age from the so-called 'Birth of Europe' amidst the ruins of the Classical World[1] (Davies 1997: 345, 361).

Perhaps the epithet 'theocratic' best suits to medieval civilization. Not only medieval law, but also the entire social system was characterized by a rather complicated hierarchy. On the top of this was God who created and maintained the universe. The concept of the Christian God was all-pervasive. Contemplation of God was considered the highest form of human intellectual endeavor.[2] The service of God was seen as the sole legitimate purpose of all human activity.[3]

Francis, the son of a prosperous silk merchant, grew up in a wealthy family, which can be considered "international" in the sense that his father was an Italian and his mother a French noblewoman from Provence (perhaps this is why she called her beloved son *Francesco*, i.e. 'little Frenchman'). Thanks to this environment, Francis was able to become an educated, open-minded young man who spoke several languages fluently, and who was also an active trader. This may be the source of his personality traits, such as open-mindedness, courtesy and peaceableness from

1 This statement is in line with the recognition that in the Canticle, ancient hymn poetry lives on, and the renewal of the tone of the troubadour lyre can also be discovered in it. (Originally, the *Canticle of the Sun* would have been a paraphrase of Psalm 148., but it goes far beyond that, as it also has new content.)

2 Therefore, theology was the basis of all sciences and medieval philosophy can be also seen as a branch of theology. Be reminded furthermore, that no medieval educational institution was considered a university if it did not have a theological faculty.

3 This is well exemplified by the last line of the *Canticle of the Sun*, in which Francis calls all creatures to glorify God.

which the need to communicate with the Creator and his creatures arises. This need is explicitly expressed in Francis' *Canticle of the Sun*.

Fig. 1. St. Francis talking to the wolf of Gubbio (Carl Weidemeyer, 1911)

The age in which Francis lived cannot be called static. It was characterized by permanent transformation and was not free from the contradictions going along with it. In the nascent cities, a class of self-conscious burghers began to form, and this social group organized itself against artisans and rootless elements. The important thing was that most of the city-dwellers sought to free themselves or had already freed themselves from the feudal bonds to which those living outside walled cities were subjected. Most of the emerging cities like Assisi, which grew rich from trade, attempted to get rid of the feudal tutelage at this time, since freedom, the free movement of goods and services had always been a basic condition for trade. At the age of sixteen, Francis participated with enthusiastic joy in the destruction of the Rocca Maggiore and witnessed the moment when his hometown, Assisi, was declared a free town. This was an important moment. The relations of social superiority and subordination were replaced by co-ordination. It was then that confraternities, that is systems of fraternal relationships organized upon the basis of equality were created. Nonetheless, the movement did not live up to the expectations of its founders. Money, which dominated the social structure of Assisi, became the driver and the destroyer of everything. Francis thus experienced the bitter reality of the idea that Alexandre Dumas the Younger put into words so aptly centuries later.[4] Francis, however, in contrast to the structure of the urban society of Assisi, created a structure based upon a different foundation in the monastic community he founded. He was attempting to achieve exactly what failed in the original confraternity because of money. Barsi notes that the fundamental socio-religious experience nourished by the events outlined above had a deep impact upon Francis' image

4 *L'argent est un bon serviteur et un mauvais maître*. 'Money is a good servant, but a bad master.' An adage from *Forewords* by Alexandre Dumas the Younger.

of God: he did not want to take possession of God. He wanted to build a personal relationship with him instead. Of course, he knew that God is infinitely superior to man, but still a person with whom one can communicate (Barsi 2005: 39. My translation – P.P.).

In addition to trading, Francis also served in the military, since his youth was exactly the period when Assisi began to become independent from Perugia,[5] so Francis took part in battles and experienced suffering. He was wounded and taken prisoner at Collestrada in 1201. He spent a year as a captive, during which he fell seriously ill. His subsequent spiritual crisis had a decisive influence on his further life. It must have been thanks to these experiences that his personality developed sensitivity to the plight of others: the sick, the suffering, those living on the fringes of society, the outcasts. In 1203, Francis returned to Assisi as a different person. And even though he left for Apulia in 1205 to enlist in the army of Walter III, Count of Brienne, he returned to Assisi due to a mystical vision that appeared to him on the way to Spoleto. From then on, he spent his time away from his friends, mainly in lonely places meditating, praying, and nursing lepers. The Legend[6] of Perugia describes in detail the circumstances of the writing of the Canticle and Francis' thoughts on it (Habig 1983, Steiner 1990). Francis composed his joyous, thankful poem dedicated to the great work of creation not at the peak of his life, but on the contrary, at one of the lowest points of his life, during an excess of anguish, when he was seriously ill, which suggests a contradiction.

The Canticle was written in the garden of St. Damian's in a little hut of reeds, which was made for him when he visited Clare of Assisi for the last time.[7] According to hagiographic accounts, the direct inspiration for writing the Canticle was the sight of the rays of the rising sun appearing after a tense, dark night, in which, as a heavenly sign, Francis saw the proof of his own salvation. According to a literary tradition, Francis added the last part about bodily death to his work two years later, shortly before his own death in 1226. The composing of the Canticle was preceded by the fact that Francis received the sacred stigmata on Mount La Verna. The work could therefore have been written in 1224, few years before Francis' death, after he had returned home from the Holy Land. Soon after that, Francis underwent an unsuccessful eye operation at Rieti. He spent the winter of 1225–26 at Siena, where he received further medical treatment, and finally died at Assisi, at Porziuncola, on October 3, 1226, at the age of 44. Eloi Leclerc's novel is about exactly this last phase

5 This was the period when the competing centers of power began to take shape in Italy, those city-states that later flourished during the Renaissance and emerged as strongholds of Italian and universal culture.

6 One should keep in mind that the word *legend* does not mean 'fable' here. It refers to something that was required reading when friars gathered.

7 St. Francis of Assisi, Catholic Encyclopedia, www.newadvent.org.

of Francis' life full of crises. The author does not strive for an objective historical description, but rather attempts to reveal to the reader the essence of Franciscan spirituality and wisdom through the presentation of Francis' behavior before God and people, through simple pictures and dialogues taken from life (Leclerc 2007).

In order to place the Canticle in a broader context, it is also necessary to say a few words about the worldview of medieval civilization, to summarize briefly what can be known about it for contemporary people. The medieval man's relationship with God and his closeness to nature contrasts with the alienation of the contemporary city-dweller from God, from nature, from his environment and fellow human beings, and sometimes even from himself. Leclerc, himself a Franciscan monk, writes in the preface to his book that "people puffed up by science and technology have lost their naivety and openness" adding that "this is the most terrible accusation that could be brought against our age." In the old days, however, "man was part of the world, naively, that is, in an ancient, simple way. Having lost this naivety, man also lost the secret of his happiness" (Leclerc 2007: 7. My translation – P.P.). The loss of happiness and the feeling of alienation can even lead to the complete isolation of the human soul, to mental disintegration, the shockingly visual expression of which is Sylvia Plath's *Bell Jar*.[8] For the medieval man, however, God was far from "being dead" and human existence was not meaningless, as in Beckett's drama *Waiting for Godot*.

At that time there was no anxiety about faceless algorithms regulating our lives and technologies that seem to slip more and more out of our control, or the anxiety about impersonal power being so characteristic of our contemporary age and appearing in some of Asimov's science fiction novels or Kafka's works. Individualism, existentialism, and the idea of aimlessness of human existence were alien to medieval people, especially to Francis, who saw God as the Sustainer of everything,[9] and God becoming a human being in the form of Jesus Christ as "the primary source of creation."[10] As a result, medieval people did not know the anxiety of the nothingness surrounding the world, the notion of cosmic loneliness, and the feeling of "being thrown into existence," which only few people managed to express with such a suggestive poetic image as the great Hungarian poet of the 20th century, János Pilinszky:

> We are tossing in a net of stars.
> Fish hauled up to the beach,
> gasping in nothingness,

8 *The Bell Jar* (1963) Sylvia Plath's autobiographical novel.

9 Cf. "For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible…" (Col. I: 16.).

10 Cf. "Worthy are you, Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, because of your will they came to be and were created" (Rev. 4: 11).

mouths snapping dry void (…)
Our cries conflict but
not even an echo answers…
(János Pilinszky, *Fish in the net*,
translated by Ted Hughes and
János Csokits)

Contrary to what has been said above, the author of the Canticle not only "feels at home" in the world created by God, but also personifies living and inanimate creatures, and even concepts, such as death. He considers them as his brother, sister, mother, that is to say, as the members of his own family and treats them accordingly.

The medieval man saw the age in which he lived as an intermediate period between the first and second coming of Christ, a *medium aevum*. Although he lived in a world full of dangers, but not in a world devoid of purpose and meaning,[11] and without God.

The medieval man existed in the possession of the promise of salvation, hoping for the second coming of Christ.

> Imagining the Middle Ages is, indeed, the problem. (…) There were no factory chimneys, no background traffic noise, no artificial pollutants or deodorants. Tiny isolated settlements existed in an overpowering wilderness of forest and heath, in a stillness where a church bell or the lowing of a cow could carry for miles, amidst a collection of natural but pungent whiffs from the midden and the wood fire. People's perception of those surroundings lacked any strong sense of discrimination between what later times would call the natural and the supernatural, between fact and fiction, between the present and the past. Men and women had few means of verifying the messages of their senses, so all sorts of sensations were given similar credence. Angels, devils, and sprites were as real as one's neighbours. The heroes of yesteryear, or of the Bible, were just as present (or distant) as the kings and queens of one's own country. (…) The medieval awareness of time and space was radically different from our own. Time was measured by irregular motions of day and night, of the seasons, of sowing and reaping. Fixed hours and calendars were in the sacred preserve of the Church.[12] Men travelled so slowly that they possessed no means of test-

11 This sentiment is quite succintly expressed in the well-known lines of Shakespeare's Macbeth, which centuries later inspired the title of Faulkner's famous novel (The Sound and the Fury): *"Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player, (…) It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing."* Macbeth Act V, Scene 5.

12 In addition to the concept of linear time represented by the Church, which progressed toward fulfillment, the second coming of Christ, the cyclical concept of time brought from the pagan

ing conventional geographical wisdom. Jerusalem lay at the centre of the three continents – Asia, Africa, and Europe, allocated respectively to the sons of Noah: Shem, Ham and Iapheth. Beyond the continents lay the encompassing ocean, and beyond the ocean the line where heaven and earth merged imperceptibly into one (…) Medieval interest in the human body was as minimal as the understanding of it.[13] (…) Above all, it has been suggested that medieval people lived in a psychological environment of fear and insecurity that inhibited bold and independent thought. Exposure to the forces of nature, incessant warfare, widespread banditry, raids by Vikings, nomads, and infidels, plague, famine, and anarchy – all contributed to the conviction that man was feeble and God was great"[14] (Davies 1997: 432–433).

On the language of the Canticle and some of its linguistic peculiarities

The work under investigation was written about 300 years after the end of the period (AD 700–900) when the Romance languages began to develop in Italy upon the basis of the spoken version of the vernacular Late Latin. This change, according to Banniard[15] in Central Italy was completed around AD 900–950 (Banniard

world, based upon changes in nature, was also prominently present, which was reflected in the order of the holidays. Although the existence of change and earthly impermanence may have seemed contrary to the timelessness of the transcendental world (cf. *tempus fugit, aeternitas manet*), the two worlds were perceived by medieval man as permeable.

13 Francis called his own body simply 'brother Ass'.

14 In this regard, let us note that if we compare our contemporary age with the Middle Ages in terms of human vulnerability and the psychological environment of fear, there is not much reason to be arrogant. Our vulnerabilty to the forces of nature still exists, and the list of our fears and anxieties from various epidemics and diseases, banditry, famine, and wars has since expanded. What is more, our fears have taken on a new, more menacing dimension than ever before, supplemented by the nightmare of a nuclear war depicting total destruction, but the possibility of communicating bold, independent thoughts is also far from ideal. Nonconformist ideas are censored or outright banned in many countries and on many platforms, and their promoters can expect varying degrees of retorts, while the total control of almost all spheres of human life seems to be realized slowly and stealthily through technology. It seems that we have to agree with Borges, who says that "our world today has become hell for the persecuted."

15 According to the classical philologist Michel Banniard, the periodization of the Latin language can be described as follows: there were two versions of spoken Latin, a more elevated, educated spoken Latin *(latin parlé cultivé)* and a popular spoken Latin *(latin parlé populaire)* Period 1.: Classical Spoken Latin/Spoken Late Latin (2nd century BC – AD 3rd century), Period 2.: Spoken

1992: 42). Other Romanists, however, call the period in which the Canticle was composed the Middle Latin period, and consider a slightly different division to be appropriate. According to this division, the Middle Latin period, toward the end of which the Canticle was written, began after the Late Latin period, which ended around AD 650, and lasted until AD 1400 (Kaiser 2014: 85).

The *Canticle of the Sun* composed by St. Francis of Assisi is among the first works of literature written in Italian, in fact, it is the first significant poem in Italian (Pál 2001: 67). The work poses several difficulties for the philologist. These arise simultaneously from the old nature of the text and from the fact that it is difficult to decipher the original semantic content of some words of the work. The fact that it is a text written in an Umbrian dialect of the Italian language is also a particular problem. Among other difficulties, one can mention, for example, the problem of the meaning of the prefix *per*[16] occurring in the structure of *Laudato sie… per…* 'Be praised (…), through/with…' Apart from the aforementioned difficulties, it should also be noted that the language in which Francis' Canticle was written is relatively easy to understand, given the knowledge of the modern Italian literary language, provided with some textual explanation. This can be illustrated by the examples below:

Late Latin, Spoken Later Latin (AD 4th century – 7th century), Period 3.: Spoken Later Latin, Proto-Romanic (AD 7th century – 9th century) (Banniard 2008: 29–30).

16 First, it must be emphasized that the interpretation of the preposition *per* affects the entire work. According to Pál, when explaining the different meanings of the preposition *per*, it should be taken into account that thanks to his mother, Francis also spoke French (or rather Provençale) at a quasi native level (perhaps it was his first language), not only the Umbrian dialect of Italian. Pál distinguishes three possible interpretations of the preposition *per*: 1) causal, 2) subject-based, 3) instrumental. The first, so-called causal interpretation, means that you are praised Lord, because you created the sun, moon, stars etc. Consequently, God is to be praised for creating his creatures. According to the second, subject-based, grammatical interpretation, *per* identifies the word after it as subject, so the creatures praise God themselves, like Francis. Here, therefore, the preposition *per* has a subject-marking role. In this sense, *per* is the exact equivalent of the French *par* 'by'. According to the third, instrumental interpretation, *per* could actually correspond to the expression 'with the help of'. Consequently, the meaning of the presposition *per* here could be paraphrased with the expression '(to praise God) with the help of creatures, through them, using them as instruments'. The latter can be tracked back to the Latin meaning of the preposition *per* as included in the formula *per Christum Dominum nostrum*. Pál notes that Francis was almost certainly aware of all the three meanings of the preposition *per*, and by including them he wished to emphasize the complex nature of his glorification. According to Pál, "we can really understand the artistic and theological message in the unity of this trinity of meaning" (Pál 2001: 70. My translation – P.P.). In relation to the aforesaid, it should be pointed out that the three meanings of the preposition *per* described above cannot be rendered into English properly.

Umbrian: (…) bon Signore, tue *so'* le laude, la gloria e 'honore *et onne* benedictione.[17]
modern Italian: 'bon Signore, tue *sono* le laude, la gloria e 'honore *ed ogni* benedictione.
'(…) all good Lord! All praise is yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing'

Umbrian: Laudato *si' mi'* Signore
modern Italian: Laudato *sii mio* Signore
'Be praised, my Lord'

Umbrian: Beati quelli che trovará ne le tue santissime voluntati, *ka* la morta secunda no 'l farrá male.
modern Italian: Beati quelli che trovará ne le tue santissime voluntati, *perché* la morta secunda no 'l fará male.
'Happy those she finds doing your most holy will. The second death can do no harm to them.'

Of course, this "understanding" may seem relatively simple only at first sight, since it is actually nothing more than an illusion. Taking a closer look at the matter, more and more questions arise. Do some words have the same semantic content and the same connotation for the reader of our days as they did for the author and his contemporaries? Do we know the original conceptual background of certain words and expressions of the work? What difficulties are encountered in its reconstruction? Since the answer to the first question is obviously negative due to the language changes that occurred between the time the work was written and the present, a real challenge for the specialist is the reconstruction of the original meanings and a thorough examination of the conceptual background of the expressions used in the work.

Due to the aforesaid, the text of the Canticle presents not only philologists, but also translators with a very complicated task. Since translation is always interpretation at the same time, as a prerequisite for this, the translator is forced on the one hand to decipher the original semantic content of the lexical elements constituting the text, to reveal their layers of meaning (which is a rather difficult undertaking in retrospect), and, on the other, to find equivalences in the language to which he/she intends to translate the work. The latter, since a complete meaning equivalence does not exist, also seems a hazardous undertaking.[18]

17 In this paper, we used Bill Barrett's translation from the Umbrian text of the Assisi codex as the English equivalent of the Canticle, see http://www2.webster.edu > ~ barrettb.

18 The critical remarks of Bausch (1980: 797–801) and Koller (1987) led me to accept the thesis of relative translatability. Koller puts forward this moderate thesis, a mere compromise solution, by subjecting the two extreme hypotheses, the thesis of potential translatability and that of

The praise of God

The *Canticle of the Sun* is structured similarly to The Book of Genesis in the Old Testament. In the work, Francis speaks on behalf of all the creatures of the world, and calls on the entire created world to glorify God. While enumerating the creatures, admiring nature, he praises the Creator. His words sound as if he were singing a love song. However, the object of his love is not a girl or a woman, but the Almighty, whom he does not glorify in an abstract way, but worships him through his creatures, because all the beauty in the world is the work of God's hands.

> Altissimu, omnipotente, bon Signore, tue so' le laude, la gloria e 'honore et onne benedictione. Ad te solo, Altissimo, se konfáno et nullu homo éne dignu te mentovare.
>
> 'Most high, all powerful, all good Lord! All praise is yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing. To you, alone, Most High, do they belong. No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce your name.'

In the first lines of the Canticle, Francis expresses his adoration of the Almighty God and the reverence for him. It is illustrated with several biblical references and liturgical passages in Barsi's study[19] (1. Chr 29: 11–12, Rev 4: 11, 5: 12–13, 7: 12) that the above lines of Francis fit perfectly into the biblical and liturgical tradition, in fact they repeat their formulas (Barsi 2005: 38–39). This is also a good example of the fact that some archaic texts or passages can sometimes span centuries or even millennia. In the first verse, Francis uses structures and schemes that are called adjunctive[20] by the textual theory of linguistic anthropology. The so-called adjunction (or rather amplification) increases the redundancy of the text, the publicity value, the extent, and its common means include accumulation and iteration. We usually repeat, say more, paraphrase when we explain something or want to emphasize the importance of something. Francis here uses the imperfect means of human language: the accumulation of positive adjectives (iteration), and the repetition of the

untranslatability based upon the linguistic principle of relativity, to a critical analysis. Be also reminded here of the axiom of translatability, which states that "the same attitudes toward reality are possible in every language, so that in principle the same thing can be expressed in every language – albeit with different categories and linguistic materials (Bausch 1980: 797. My translation – P.P.).

19 The first verse of the *Canticle of the Sun* echoes the opening line of the oration of the Roman mass: *Omnipotens Deus*, and the opening line of the Palm Sunday hymn: *Gloria, laus et honor tibi sit rex Christe*, and St. Augustine's commentary on the 12th line of Psalm 67.

20 Cf. Fónagy 1990: 44, and Balázs 2007: 36.

word *Altissimu* 'Most High' occurring in both lines, in order to express the greatness of the perfect God who surpasses human reason and is infinitely superior to man. At the same time, this also gives rise to a fundamental tension, that is to say, how could man praise God if he is unworthy to even utter his name?[21]

Francis already makes this clear in Rule I: *"We are unworthy and guilty, unworthy to name Thee."* – he writes. The main object of Francis' will is God, his fundamental desire is to reach him, but he is also aware that this goal is completely unattainable for him: he cannot possess God.[22] Barsi notes that adoration should remain silent here, the language of praise condemned itself to silence. All striving toward a transcendent God is doomed to failure and dissatisfaction. And all this is not a simple expression of love poetry. Francis suffers from distance from God. Yet, the praise does not end here. Francis continues to sing, in fact, in the last verse of the Canticle, he summarizes his work by calling everyone to praise God[23] (Barsi 2005: 39).

The resolution of the paradox lies in the incarnation of God, which is Francis' "most fundamental experience." God entered the material world in Jesus Christ: he "bent down" to us and took on material.[24] So we can communicate with God, we can get close to him,[25] but the way is reversed: we do not get to him

21 The ban on pronouncing the name for the God of the Israelites *Yahweh* (known as the tetragrammaton YHWH i.e. Yod-Heh-Waw-Heh) occurring 6,823 times in the Holy Bible, is alive in the Jewish tradition, instead *Adonai* (i.e. My Lord – its Umbrian equivalent is *mi Signore*) is used, which mostly occurs in the meaning of 'merciful God,' although there are several other names in use besides them (Jólesz 1987: 213). According to Jewish religious regulations, the divine name *Yahweh* could only be pronounced once a year: only a member of the priestly order could pronounce it on the holiday of Yom Kippur before entering the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem temple. After the Romans destroyed the temple in AD 70, it became impossible to pronounce God's name.

22 What may be noticed here is that Francis does not use the verb *menzionare*, which means 'to name' but the verb *mentovare* coming from the Latin expression *in mente habere* meaning 'to keep in mind.' The meaning of the line could be paraphrased as saying that 'no human being can possess God intellectually' (Pál 2001: 68). Be reminded furthermore that there is ancient connection between the saying of the name and intellectual possession, which also appears in the Bible (cf. Gn 2: 19).

23 One should not forget that, in order for Francis to do this, he needed at least three things: courage to dare contact God, self-knowledge to be aware of his own real situation as a simple mortal creature but still as a person, but above all, faith that the almighty God would listen to him and answer him. As Balázs points out "The main feature of sacred communication is that the person establishes a relationship with God, and although on the surface this is done in an ordinary, human, usual verbal (or non verbal) way, the understanding and the answer can only be interpreted metaphysically" (Balázs 2007: 28. My translation – P.P.).

24 For the first time in teology, Francis uses the adjective *humilis* 'humble' related to the word *humus* 'earth, soil,' in relation to God (cf. Barsi 2005: 39).

25 Cf. "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jn 14: 6.

(e.g. by using different techniques as taught by some Eastern religions) because this is completely impossible, but *he* "bends down" to us and lifts us up to himself by Jesus Christ. As Francis puts it with the precision of a theologian in his letter to the Chapter: "*ad te Altissime, sola tua gratia pervenire*" 'Almighty God, grant that we follow the footsteps of your Son and come to you by your grace alone, Most High'.

> Laudato sie mi' Signore, cum tucte le tue creature
> 'Be praised, my Lord, through all your creatures.'

The line beginning with the passive phrase *"Laudato sie…"* introduces the cosmic praise that forms the essential part of the Canticle. This passive structure always refers to God and occurs a total of eight times in the work in an unchanged form. For the ninth time, at the end of the Canticle, however, the passive structure becomes active, and, as a 2nd person plural verb, calls the creatures to praise God: *Laudate!* 'Praise'. According to Barsi, this line indicates a turning point in the work: "Francis renounces the gnostic path and chooses the *incarnatio*, the descent into the material world" (Barsi 2005: 40. My translation – P.P.). This is the way of Christ, since Christ became one of us except sin (Heb 4: 15). This descent runs through the work: its stations are the objects and phenomena of the created world (sun, moon, stars, wind, cloud, weather, water, fire etc.), it reaches its deepest point at Mother Earth and Sister Death after which the light reappears in the form of a doxology.

The interpretation of the preposition *cum* 'with' in the line above may create a philological problem. The English translation used in this study interprets the meaning of the preposition *cum* in such a way that the author does not praise God *and* his creatures in the work (which would be illogical, since Francis emphasizes at the beginning of the Canticle that praise belongs only to God alone), but *in association with* his creatures, together with them as if with their participation *(through all your creatures)*. In this sense, the creatures do not share with God in the glory, but rather are the author's partners in praising God. Based on this, the translation of *cum* with the preposition of *through* seems to be more adequate than the literal translation with the preposition *with*, for which there is also an example.[26]

26 "Praised be You, my Lord, with all your creatures…"

The Franciscan Linguistic Worldview of the Sun

> … spetialmente messor lo frate sole, lo quale iorno, et allumini noi per lui. Et ellu è bellu e radiante cum grande splendore, de te, Altissimo, porta significatione.
> '… especially through my lord Brother Sun, who brings the day, and you give light through him. And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness.'

Francis begins his Canticle with the image of the sun, which seems only natural in light of the fact that, according to the Legend of Perugia, he considered the sun to be the most beautiful of all creatures, as the one most comparable to God. This is why Francis put the sun as the title at the beginning of his Canticle of the Creatures (Steiner 1990).

Barsi emphasizes that in the case of the sun appearing in the work, it is a poetic image adding that as such it should never be reduced to merely the material element in it, since the poetic image is "a dream world, an imagination, a vision."[27] He also points out that no single image in the work can be treated by itself, since the work forms an indivisible whole, the order of the elements in it and the structure in which the given image is embedded are essential (Barsi 2005: 41). According to hagiographic accounts, Francis loved light and brightness – in one place he even wrote "every day when we wake up, we should give thanks." And we know that the Canticle was composed at sunrise shortly after Francis had returned home from the Holy Land with sick eyes. Back home, he underwent various treatments: they tried to cure him by burning him with a hot iron, without success (Fortini 1992: 692, Jørgensen 1912: 335–336). St. Bonaventure reports that before his operation, Francis prayed to God and asked Brother Fire to have mercy on him and restore his health (Bonaventura da Bagnoregio 2006: 87, Kelly-Gangi 2010: 75). Francis became physically blind, which was also a great trial for him because he was a visual type: he knew what it meant to have the greedy curiosity of an eye that could not get enough of the beauty of the created world. Based on the above biographical data, it can justly be assumed that Francis is not singing about the sun itself here, but rather about its mental image seen with the inner eye of his mind. The adjective *bellu* 'beautiful' occurs only three times in the work, in each case in connection with objects which give light (sun, moon, fire). So Francis finds the shiny, radiant material beautiful. Barsi also notes that "the Franciscan cult of the sun is a kind of rapture before the substance radiating from within" (Barsi 2005: 41 – My translation P.P., see also Redl 1988: 363–373).

27 It may allow to infer that a specific, individualized version (or rather component) of the general linguistic worldview (LWV) appears in the poetic images.

It is important to point out that Francis does not address the sun as *mi' Signore* 'my Lord' (as he addresses God in the work), but uses the word *messor*[28] instead. The sun in the Canticle is masculine, so it is a man from whom the radiation is directed toward us. On the one hand, because of its inexhaustible radiation, the outpouring of light, Francis calls the sun 'Lord,' since this quality evokes the infinite and free love flowing from God, on the other, in addition to the adjective *radiante*, Francis also uses the expression *cum grande splendore* 'in all his splendor'.

We know from Dante's works that the word *splendore* 'splendor' originally denoted a light that shines in another place after being reflected from an object (Pál 2001: 70). The source and center of the light is therefore God himself (*Altissimu* 'Most High'), and the sun is the first object that encounters this divine light, and from which the light then radiates to finally reflect off the other creatures. The sun is beautiful and radiant, because the light from God pours on it, and with its great brightness it conveys the meaning of the Most High God (i.e. it expresses him). The description of the sun and the adjectives related to it, lead us into the inner world of the author. In this inner world, the sun evokes the image of the father, which seems to be supported by its place in the sequence: Brother Sun's partner is Sister Moon, they are followed by Brother Wind and Sister Water, followed by Brother Fire and our Sister Mother Earth, who is in a grammatically prominent place, as it is not only a *sora* 'sister,' but also a *matre* 'mother'. Barsi points out that in the work only the sun appears as father and the earth as mother *(Madre Terra)*,[29] so that they belong more closely to each other, as if embracing the rest. He adds furthermore that this has indeed nothing to do with the outside world (Barsi 2005: 42).

Here in the Canticle, ancient, mythical images emerge from the depths of what Jung calls the collective subconscious, where the image of the begetting father evokes the heavenly Father: *de te, Altissimo, porta significatione* 'Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness'. We should keep in mind what Francis explicitly says here claiming that the sun is not an allegory of God the Father, but his symbol. Francis calls the sun (and all that it represents, God as well) his brother. Francis' sun shines

28 According to Pál's explanation, *messor* here does not mean 'envoy' (an emissary of God), but can be traced back to a title given mainly to judges in the Middle Ages. Pál sees the reason for this in the late classical and early Christian tradition, in which the personified sun appears as a judge. (Even in the pagan world, this was referred to by the expression *sol iustitiae* 'sun of justice'). Several arguments seem to support the assumption that the sun appearing in the work is a symbol of Christ. Pál notes that Christ is born with the sun on December 25 (the pagan type of this is the veneration of *sol invictus* among the Romans). The Gospels also define Christ as light in several places (cf. Jn 1: 4–5). When describing the Transfiguration of Jesus, the evangelist notes that "his face shone like the sun" (Mt 17: 2). When Francis addresses the sun with the title of judges, the above cultural connection, which also has a rich iconographic tradition, is presumably behind this (Pál 2001: 69).

29 The image of this is also preserved in the Hungarian compound *anyaföld* 'mother earth'.

not only in the sky, but also in his own soul. According to Jung, the image of the sun represents the full energy of the human soul. According to psychoanalysts, images and visions connected to the sun indicate the greatest transformation of the human person. (Compare the defining role of the sun in the painting of one of the greatest Hungarian painters, Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka[30]).

After a dark night (the night of his soul), Francis is now sure of his salvation and celebrates the sun and with it the sacred order of the world. In the image of the sun depicted by Francis, the father is present, who in the Canticle actually merges with the image of the Heavenly Father and Christ (cf. note 22). In connection with this we can recall the words of Jesus Christ according to which "The Father and I are one" (Jn 10: 30)[31] and "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14: 9) (cf. Ratzinger 2005: 101–107). In the ancient solar cults[32] the earthly ruler was considered a relative of the sun, and we know that Francis also wants to be a messenger of a great king. This great king in Francis' worldview is Christ, because when he calls God his brother, he is talking about the incarnation of the Most High. Barsi says that this is not missing, nor can it be missing from the Canticle, because it forms its basis: "mediation is not done by matter as matter, but as God's creation and the being of the incarnated second divine person" (Barsi 2005: 43. My translation – P.P.).

The Franciscan Linguistic Worldview of the Moon

> Laudato si', mi' Signore, per sora luna e le stelle, in celu l'ái formate clarite et pretiose et belle.
>
> 'Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars, in the heavens you have made them clear, and precious, and beautiful.'

30 "The sunlight is raging in the realm of Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka. The ruins of Taormina are on fire, the sky is illumniated by the rays of the setting sun. The six huge pillars of Baalbek's temple shine like the sun." T.K. Csontváry, K.T. Autobiography, Foreword by Gábor Szighethy (Szigethy 2003: 4. My translation – P.P.).

31 The English equivalents of all the biblical texts in this paper are based on *The New American Bible*, Catholic Book Publishing CO. New York, 1991.

32 An essential difference between the ancient natural religions and Francis' *Canticle of the Sun* is that in the former the sun is not only a life-giving power, but also a destructive force. This duality, however, is not present in Francis' work: the sun appears as a brother. The Most High "bends down" to the human, the inner psychic forces of the human are reconciled with the person's concious world. This first image therefore also carries a message about reconciliation.

Here, after describing the image of the sun, Francis turns to the night and the lights of the night: the moon and the stars.[33] In Greek mythology, night usually symbolizes the state before the creation of the universe, chaos (*Nyx* is the daughter of *Chaos*), and at the level of individual life, the darkness before rebirth, death. In antiquity, night is the mother of the gods, death and night embody feminine energies, the latter having a maternal aspect. Examples of their representation as female figures can often be found in the arts.[34] The main attribute of the night is the waxing moon, and in this verse we also find the moon mentioned for the first time. Its place, like that of the stars, is *in cielu* 'in the heavens,' which in a religious poetic language clearly refers to the divine world. The moon is an important symbol: the planet of the night, according to the tradition, the embodiment of the female principle, the counterpart of the sun. Its symbolic properties are also seen as the opposite of the symbolism of the sun: water, North from the four cardinal points, and winter from the seasons are assigned to it. A certain opposition between the sun and the moon is also reflected in Francis' work, since while the sun is a masculine *(frate sole)*, active element, the moon and the stars are feminine *(sora luna e le stelle)* and passive.

In antiquity, the moon is the expression of transition, transformation, growth and fertility, the symbol of movement and time, the path from life to death. But since "it disappears for three nights every lunar month, as if dying, then reappears and grows, it is not only a symbol of death, but also that of rebirth" (Pál – Újvári 2001: 216–217. My translation – P.P.). In Christian symbolism, the beauty of the Virgin Mary was also compared to it (Song (Sg) 6:10). In the depictions of the Immaculate Conception, Virgin Mary often stands on a crescent moon, receiving light from the Sun, her Son.[35]

In the Canticle, turning to the moon, as most specialists claim, means downward movement. (After describing the privileged position of the sun, we move down the chain of creatures, from the level of father and mother (*pater* and *mater*) to the level of the sister and brother (*soror* and *frater*). This downward progression also occurs on a spiritual level. "The moon is the first step down. (…) This song descends to the

33 The act of turning to the night involuntarily recalls the lines of Novalis (1772–1801): *"Aside I turn to the holy, unspeakable, mysterious Night"* Novalis: *Hymns to the Night 1.* However, while in Novalis' hymns we find the intertwining of sleep, death and night, in Francis' Canticle, turning to the night means descending into the depths of human's instinctive world and opening up to his own instinctive world, which for him is actually reconciliation.

34 The words *night* and *death* are feminine in both Latin (cf. *nox*, *mors*) and Italian (cf. *notte*, *morte*). In the paintings of the Polish symbolist painter Jacek Malczewski, Death usually appears as a female figure.

35 Cf. *Immaculate Conception* by Murillo, 1678, Madrid, Prado, and *Madonna and Child on a Crescent Moon* by Albrecht Dürer, 1511.

deepest part of the human world, to Sister Death, but already here, on the first step, it mystically accepts death," Barsi says (Barsi 2005: 43. My translation – P.P.).

Turning to the lights of the night[36] and accepting death in the image of the moon, however, also means that Francis accepts death not as the final state of total annihilation, but as rebirth, as something to which he is related, as if anticipating the addressing of Death as his sister. The lights of the night are clear, precious and beautiful. *Clarite* 'clear'[37] is the first feminine adjective to occur in the Canticle, but *pretiose* 'precious' already refers to sacredness.

The Franciscan Linguistic Worldview of Wind and Water

> Laudato si' mi' Signore, per frate vento et per aere et nubilo et sereno et onne tempo, per lo quale a le tue creature dái sustentamento. Laudato si' mi' Signore, per sor' aqua, la quale é multo utile et humile et pretiosa et casta.
>
> 'Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and clouds and storms, and all the weather, through which you give your creatures sustenance. Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water, she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.'

In this verse, it can be observed that the author of the Canticle is turning more and more to the earthly things which are close to us. Wind is still between heaven and earth, but water is already closely connected to the earth. It cannot be denied, however, that the active, masculine principle of wind and the feminine principle of water, which is the primary matter itself, form an inseparable whole, not only in

36 This is based upon a medieval tradition which can be traced back to the Church Fathers, who considered the moon to be the symbol of the Old Testament and the sun to be the symbol of the New Testament. In this sense, Francis sees the moon as a divine promise shining in the night (even in the night of his own soul).

37 Barsi claims that Francis uses this ephitet (and the subsequent *pretiose*) perhaps not consciously, but subconsciously in reference to Clare of Assisi (1194–1253), who followed his example. He adds furthermore that Brother Thomas of Celano in his work about St. Clare of Assisi also uses the two epithets together (Barsi 2005: 46). We only add the obvious etymological fact to the aforesaid that the first name *Clare* (It. *Clara*) comes from the Latin adjective *clarus* (in the feminine form *clara*) meaning 'bright, shining, clair'. However, Barsi also warns that "one should not think that when Francis calls the moon and the stars 'clarite et pretiose,' he is thinking of Clare, but rather that, by using these adjectives, he is moving in the same direction as Clare's name, the consacration of her virginity, that is toward the sacred world" (Barsi 2005: 44. My translation – P.P.).

mythology and in the poetic world (in the poetic world of Francis), but also in the biblical-liturgical world.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *ruach* 'wind' is usually interpreted as 'spirit': *ruach* is the divine principle of the world (cf. "a mighty wind swept over the waters" Gn. 1: 2). Water, as the primary element of cosmogonic legends, is the womb itself, the *Magna Mater*, the return to the origin, the reintegration. In the case of water, the lack of definite contours, the loss of form includes the possibility of the end of the old life, death, but also the possibility of rebirth: this is the basis of the ritual sprinkling of water and the bath in purification ceremonies. Béla Hamvas, a well-known Hungarian writer and philosopher, summarizes the ancient meanings associated with water in his work *Scientia Sacra* (Hamvas 1995). The liberating, purifying and life-giving role of water lives on in the ancient rite of Easter water consecration performed at night in the Roman Catholic Church. There are many manifestations of this in the Bible: wind and water participate together in the liberation of the people of Israel from Egyptian captivity (cf. Ex 14: 21–22). *"I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you…"* – says Ezekiel (Ez 36: 25–26). "No one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" Jesus says to Nicodemus (Jn 3: 5). These contents, if not all consciously, are certainly living in Francis' mind subconsciously. From the fact that Francis calls the wind, which strangely enough occurs without adjectives in the Canticle, his brother *(frate Vento)*, it naturally follows that he is related to it. After all, what is the wind like? It is the opposite of any kind of settling down: it is constantly in motion, dynamic, free. Jesus also describes the wind to Nicodemus when he talks about the Holy Spirit:[38] "The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes" (Jn 3: 8). The aforementioned qualities of the wind are characteristic of Francis as well: he is full of energy, he is constantly in motion (he lives the life of itinerant, mendicant friars), he is free (only those who live in poverty can be truly free).

Francis rejoices in all forms of Brother Wind. These are *aere* 'air,' *nubilo* which actually comes from the word 'cloud,' but in Italian it also means 'bad weather,' in the work it is associated with the word *sereno* 'clear sky,' together they mean 'good and bad weather'.

The phrase *onne tempo* refers to the weather, the changing of the seasons, which sustains life in Francis' worldview. The preposition *per* here grammatically refers to the weather through which life is sustained. (The same grammatical structure is repeated in the verse about fire). Francis expresses here that all kinds of

38 In the New Testament wind is a common symbol for the Holy Spirit.

weather praise God. According to Barsi, the phrase *onne tempo* also has a figurative meaning here: it denotes all kinds of mental states. What follows from this is that Francis accepts both the opposing external and internal psychic forces, and perceives them as through which God gives life. This attitude is the confirmation of the behavior already discovered above that Francis reconciles with his deeper self (Barsi 2005: 46).

Water, which is essentially a feminine element, and thus is the opposite or rather a complement of the masculine wind, is not dynamic. (There is no action verb in the line about water). As with Sister Moon and the stars, only the mere existence of water is qualified: useful, humble, precious, and pure. The last two adjectives in the original are *pretiosa* and *casta*. Note that the three of the four adjectives have nothing to do with water as a substance: humble and precious (the meaning of *pretiosa* in Francis' language usage is 'sacred'), *casta* means 'sexually pure,' that is 'chaste, maidenly'. (Francis deliberately does not use the word *pura* here, as it would solely mean 'not polluted'). The abstract meaning of the last three adjectives seems to support the assumption that the first one (useful) also may have a more abstract meaning. They emphasize the helpfulness of the useful (together: useful and humble) Sister Water.

According to Barsi, the adjective *useful* underlines the helpful, benevolent female presence, which is at the same time reserved, dedicated to the Lord, sacred, and morally pure *(casta)* (Barsi 2005: 47).[39]

In the ancient legends and in the Bible, the dual nature of wind and water is shown, their characteristic feature is that they are both positive and negative forces at the same time: they cannot only give life, fertilize, create, but also destroy, cf. "See, the storm of the Lord! His wrath breaks forth / In a whirling storm that bursts upon the heads of the wicked" (Jer 23: 19). In the Old Testament, God washes away the sinful world with the Great Flood (Gn 7: 17–24).

Francis, however, does not have this duality: he does not only sing about wind and water in his Canticle, but about the unity of the two, their life-giving marriage. In this we see the manifestation of acceptance, of a great reconciliation, which brings comfort to the human soul, and thanks to which all threatening and destructive features disappear from the primitive elements.

39 This evokes the image of the handmaid of the Lord, which also occurs in one of the fundamental prayers of the Roman Catholic Church, the *Angelus*, cf. *Ecce ancilla Domini…* 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord…'

The Franciscan Linguistic Worldview of Fire

> Laudato si' mi' Signore, per frate focu, per lo quale ennalumini la nocte, et ello é bello et iocundo et robustoso et forte.
> 'Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten the night. He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.'

Although there is a separate verse about fire in the Canticle, fire and water are actually related in the sense that, like water, fire also belongs to the four primary elements: "fire and water are the polar principles of the universe" (Pál – Újvári 2001: 490). As already mentioned above, while water is feminine, passive, fire is a masculine, active element: together they are the sources of life. Like water, fire is also ambivalent: it can appear as a divine, creative, but also as a demonic, destructive force.

According to the ancient philosophers and Jung (Frenyó 2016: 30–34, Jung 2012), fire is a symbol of life, vitality *(élan vital)*, and renewed life. Just as the phoenix that burns to ashes in the fire and then comes back to life is a symbol of rebirth and resurrection, so the practice of consecrating fire at Easter *(lumen Christi)* also symbolizes resurrection. Fire can also be a means of purification, as in Dante's Divine Comedy, in which souls who repented before their death do penance in purgatory. In the Old Testament, fire is a sign of divine revelation: Yahweh appears to Moses in a bush which is on fire but does not burn up (Ex 3: 2) and leads the chosen people in the wilderness in the form of a pillar of fire (Ex 13: 21). It is important to note here that in the eternally burning fire there is God, who wants to communicate to man that timeless existence is his fundamental quality. To Ezekiel, the Lord appears in the form of four seraphim accompanied by fiery wheels (Ez 1: 27). In the New Testament, fire indicates the coming and presence of the Holy Spirit (Mt 3: 11). The "tongues as of fire" appearing above the heads of the apostles in the images depicting Pentecost also refer to him. Nonetheless, fire can also be a destructive force: Jeremiah describes the Lord's anger as fire (Jer 4: 4), and judgement hits sinners in the form of fire (Psalms 21: 10).

In the Book of Revelation, anyone whose name is not found written in the book of life is thrown into the pool of fire (Rev 20: 15). Fire as means of punishment is also presented in medieval depictions of hell. A vivid example of this is the left-hand side of Hans Memling's Last Judgement triptych, on which the damned are cast down into the abyss, where they are engulfed in flames.[40] In myths, the destructive power of fire returns everything to its original state.

40 According to an early theological notion, hell is the place where God's love burns. An interesting addition to this is that the Old Slavic word for hell *(peklo)* is etymologically related to

We do not know how much Francis knew of the ancient myths, but we do know that he was an educated young man, and he certainly knew the Bible well. However, just as water does not have a destructive side in Francis' world, neither does fire, since Francis addresses him as his brother *(frate focu)*.

When Francis sings about water or fire, he not only moves in the realm of poetic imagination, but also accepts them in their everyday reality. From his contemporary and biographer, Brother Thomas of Celano, who was also a friar of the Franciscans, we know that Francis had an almost childlike admiration for fire (Dalarun 2016: 158). He did not allow the wick or the candle that gave light in the darkness of the night to be extinguished, he liked to sit by the fire and meditate, and once his clothes caught fire from the campfire, he only extinguished them on the guardian's instructions. This fraternal attachment[41] remained even when the doctors treated Francis' eyes with the rudimentary medical tools of his time, burning. Francis then said to the fire *"Show yourself polite and good toward me. I have been loving you in the Lord up to this point"* as Brother Thomas of Celano recalls the scene. This love and admiration for fire can be interpreted on a conscious level, even giving a theological explanation that for Francis, fire is a symbol of eternal light. Francis' attraction to fire is, however, deeper, it is instinctive. He admired fire for the same light radiating from within that he admired the Sun, emphasizing this time that fire illuminates the night.

Fire is also the symbol for Eros and libido, the equivalent of a person's inner energies. When Francis talks about it, he is also talking about himself, his deepest instincts, accepting them. So what is the fire like which Francis talks about? In the original order of the Canticle, it is *bello* 'beautiful,' *iocundo* 'cheerful,' *robustoso* 'powerful' and *forte* 'strong'. It is important to note that the adjective *iocondo* (in modern Italian *giocondo* 'cheerful'), which can be directly associated with joy, occurs exclusively in connection with fire in the work. Barsi points out that the fire which Francis calls his brother and about which he talks is already losing its destructive power: "eros and agape are meeting. This is the fire that glows but does not burn" (Barsi 2005: 48. My translation – P.P.).

For a person, fire can also be a symbol of prophetic calling and vocation, when this person becomes the bearer and announcer of the divine message for the community. This is expressed when, in the Old Testament, the prophet Elijah goes up to heaven in a whirlwind with a flaming chariot and flaming horses (2 Kgs 2: 11). We

the Slavic *pektь* meaning 'bake, burn' just as the Old Slavic word for sin *(grěchъ)* is related to the Slavic *grětь* meaning 'warm, bake, burn'. (Although it is a very common concept, it can be somewhat misleading to refer to hell as a specific place, as it is perhaps more correct to think of it as a state of complete and final isolation from God).

41 Pál notes that one of the adjectives used by Francis to describe fire, *robustoso* 'powerful,' would be *robusto* in modern Italian. According to him the *-so* ending of the adjective here "emphasizes trust in fire, attachment to it, and individuality" (Pál 2001: 71).

know about Francis that he was fueled by huge ambitions from his youth: he wanted to serve a great lord or king, and in the end he chose the King of Kings.

Barsi comments about the apparition described in the work of Brother Thomas of Celano: the combined image of the sun and fire also appears in I Cel. 18th: an ancient image of the chariot of fire of the sun. (…) This was the soul of Father Francis, the brethren concluded after the vision. (…) The cult of the sun usually turns into a hero myth. In this small group gathered around Francis, there was great reconciliation, the reconciliation that they knew had already been fulfilled in their father. Thus, the cosmic elements in the Canticle became the expression of a great transformation of the soul, the symbolic language of an inner journey, the language of spiritual ascension (Barsi 2005: 49. My translation – P.P.).

The Franciscan Worldview of Mother Earth

> Laudato si' mi' Signore, per sora nostra matre terra, la quale ne sustenta et governa, et produce diversi fructi con coloriti flori et herba.
> 'Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth, who feeds us and rules us, and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs'.

In this verse, where Francis first refers to 'we' in the form of the possessive pronoun *nostra* 'our,' he reaches down from heaven (sun, moon, stars) to the earth. The *Canticle of the Sun* starts with an upward aspiration, only to move downward, to the earth. The aforementioned journey also takes place on a spiritual level: from the ascent to the sky, down to the great depths of human existence. The earth, which is both mother *(matre)* and sister *(sora)*, occupies a prominent place in the work. It is not referred to by four elements (adjective, noun or verb), like other creatures, but by three verbs, like heavenly things, for example the sun and the moon. These verbs are: *sustenta* 'carries,' here 'feeds,' in a more literal English translation 'sustains,' *governa* 'rules,' and *produce* 'produces'.

Three is also the number of things produced by the earth (e.g. *fructi* 'fruits,' *flori* 'flowers,' *herba* 'herbs'). All of this structurally supports the assumption that Brother Sun and Mother Earth belong together and form a unity. Mother Earth has a prominent place in the Canticle, as it is placed on the same level as Brother Sun "bearing the likeness of the Most High" and also characterized by three lexical elements (cf. Pál 2001: 74). In the case of Mother Earth, we again deal with a primary element. In the sacred union of the heaven (the sun – father) and the earth (mother), the earth is the passive, feminine part of the pair. At the same time, Mother Earth, as

the life-giving and nourishing female principle of the pair, is primarily a mother, and only in its activity does it become a companion, a sister *(sora)* of man in the Canticle. Grammatical arguments can also be presented to support this view: *madre terra* is an independent subordinating structure, and as such a grammatical unit it is only secondarily connected to the element *sora* 'sister'. We should not forget that the earth is a complex ancient symbol: it can symbolize the human world or imperfection, since the Lord created man and other creatures from it (Gen 1: 24), it can be a symbol of fertility: the mother of all creatures, *"who nourishes everything in the world"* (Homer, XXX. *Hymn to the earth, mother of all the living*), it embraces, like a mother protects her child (cf. Lat. *tellus* 'the earth, ground, (mother)land, country'). The earth can symbolize the beginning of life (womb), where the body rests after death, cf. *"A great anxiety has God allotted, / and a heavy yoke, to the sons of men. / From the day one leaves his mother's womb / to the day he returns to the mother of all the living"* (Sir 40: 1). In the hermeneutical tradition, "the trial of the earth" means the descent into hell. In the above sense, the metaphorical equivalent of the earth can also be the cave symbolizing the womb. (Note that the dead body of Jesus was also placed in a cave after being taken down from the cross (Lk 23: 53)).

In Hungarian folk tradition, the earth is also a symbol of life and death. In some Hungarian villages, in the past, both the newborn and the dead were placed on the ground, which had an ancient meaning: only through this threshold could one enter the world of the living and the world of the deceased ancestors (Pál – Újvári 2001: 159). As the opposite pole of the heaven, the earth is also a symbol of the deep, the underworld, and death, but in many cases this death is not final destruction, but a death that also carries the hope of rebirth. Therefore, the contact with the earth, the return to the mother earth also expresses renewal, the promise of rebirth. The following words of Jesus also refer to this: *"Amen, amen I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat, but if it dies, it produces much fruit"* (Jn 12: 24).

We can find the equivalent of many of the meanings of the earth described above in certain episodes of Francis' life, and the role of the earth in Franciscan mysticism is also based upon this. From the biography of St. Francis by Brother Thomas of Celano we know that at the beginning of his conversion, Francis often went to a cave near Assisi to meditate, where he was accompanied by a young friend. Brother Thomas of Celano also mentions (Cel. 1, 5, in Dalarun 2016) that Francis always came out of the cave exhausted, which suggests that this cave was a place to search for and to fight with himself. (Here, therefore, the cave, that is to say, the depth of the earth, appears as the scene of the conflict of human mind, which is well known from psychology). We know that in order to avoid his father's wrath, Francis hid in a cave near the village of San Damiano. He spent about a month in this dark, narrow place. When he came out of the cave and returned to town, though

hungry and dirty, yet reborn, after many further trials he felt able to stand before his father and the bishop of Assisi, and renounce his patrimony. Here, the depth of the earth appears in the role of the protective Mother Earth, who also helps Francis in finding his way, but the motif of descending into the underworld (into his own subconscious), is also present (the cave like a grave). For Francis, this descending also means full acceptance of himself, and carries within it the motif of rebirth. The cave is also included in the story about Francis' receiving the sacred stigmata on Mount Al Verna (1 Cel. 14.3 in Dalarun 2016). And we should not forget about the small cave at Greccio, where Francis wished to celebrate Christmas in a new way by reenacting the Birth of Jesus in Betlehem[42] in order that the locals could spiritually experience the incarnation of God. As St. Bonaventure wrote: *"Fancis became a child with the Child" (factus cum Puero puer)*. The cave appears here as a womb, where new, heavely life is born, and the divine world comes into contact with the earthly world. In his study on the *Canticle of the Sun*, Barsi refers to the ancient image of the tree reaching up to the sky, the axis of the world *(axis mundi)*, which, according to the Brother Thomas of Celano (1. Cel. 1. 13 in Dalarun 2016), also appeared in one of Francis' dreams (Barsi 2005: 50). In his last days, Francis imitated Christ: he blessed the bread, broke it, and then distributed it among his disciples. After that, he had the part about the Last Supper read out from the Gospel of John.

For Franciscans, the celebration of Francis' death is similar to Easter *(pascha)*, and death itself is a transition *(transitus)* in the Franciscan liturgy. Brother Thomas of Celano in his *Second Life of St. Francis*,[43] wrote:

> the dying Francis made this last request: When you see me dying, lay me naked on bare ground, (…) and leave me there even after my last breath, for as long as it takes to walk a thousand meters at slow pace (2 Cel. 162–163. cited by Barsi 2005: 50).

St. Bonaventure emphasizes the resemblance to Christ in this nakedness: Francis wishes to be naked like Christ on the cross. Francis, who sings about Mother Earth, wishes to lie in the lap of the earth. In this regard, we can recall the great Hungarian poet Dezső Kosztolányi and his poem *On the Earth*, whose motto was taken from Byron's *To love the earth*. One cannot fail to notice the similarity between St. Francis of Assisi's relationship with Mother Earth and the message of Kosztolányi's poem, in which the image of Mother Earth giving peace in death also appears. In the poem, Kosztolányi, like Francis in the Canticle, testifies that he is bound to the earth by

42 With this, St. Francis began the custom of the Christmas chrèche, which was spread, for example, in Poland by his followers, the Franciscan friars, in the 13th century.

43 Cf. Dalarun 2016.

a kind of a mother – child relationship. With Francis, however, there is more to it. He is in unity with the earth and through it with God. The promise of renewal, a kind of rebirth, appears in many ancient myths related to the earth. In the depths of the earth, in caves to which he felt an instinctive attraction, Francis experienced a complete acceptance of the depths of his own personality. For Francis, however, reconciliation with oneself and the earth-bound rebirth found in ancient myths can only be realized by linking inseparably to Christ. This is why Francis waited for Sister Death singing, his joy can only be understood from this point of view. What was merely a vague promise in the myths, Francis saw as fulfilled in Christ in relation to his own life.

The Franciscan Linguistic Worldview of a Person Seeking Reconciliation and Peace

> Laudato si' mi' Signore, per quelli ke perdonano per lo tuo amore, et sostengo infirmitate et tribulatione.[44]
> Beati quelli ke 'l sosterrano in pace, ca da te, Altissimo, sirano incoronati.
> 'Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of you, through those who endure sickness and trial. Happy those who endure in peace, for by you, Most High, they will be crowned.'

Most of the specialists dealing with the *Canticle of the Sun* speak of some kind of discrepancy here, although this verse and the one following it are also formally closely connected to the previous verses (Doyle 1981, Paolazzi 2010). The word *Altissimu* 'Most High,' which occurs twice in the first verse of the work as a reference to God, the main object of the praise, occurs again here. On the one hand, this underlines that God is still the object of praise, but Francis does not envision reaching him by bypassing the material world, and on the other, it also indicates that Francis considers this verse an integral part of his work. Coming to this part, it can be concluded that with the part about Mother Earth, the cosmic section of the Canticle, the presentation of the external, created world through nine verses, ends, (in this sense, a caesura really follows), and Francis reaches all way to man. In the

44 Regarding these words, Pál notes that the word *infirmitate* has the meaning not only of 'disease,' but also of 'misfortune, trouble,' so it is similar to the meaning of *tribulatione*, but the latter comes from the Greek word *tribolos* 'thorn,' and thus also refers to Christ's Passion (Pál 2001: 72).

human world, two elements play an important role: *amore* 'love' and *morte* 'death,' and we know that Eros and Thanatos form a special pair in Greek mythology. At the same time, it is important to see the deep-rooted unity between the first two: the cosmos and man, which Francis also sees, and which is why he considers this section to be the final explanation of what he had to say previously. This opinion can also be illustrated by some facts from Francis' biography. As the child of a merchant family, Francis is open to human relations, using a fashionable expression, he has good communication skills. He is able to communicate with people of all kinds and ranks, and even with people of other religions. A very vivid example of this is that in 1219, Francis went to Egypt and crossed over to the Muslim camp in the middle of the Fifth Crusade in an attempt to put an end to the conflict and won the favor of the Egyptian sultan, al-Kamil.

Francis' relationship with people, like his relationship with the created world, can be characterized by two adjectives: personal and peaceful. Barsi says about Francis that it was never Mankind, never Man, but always the specific person in front of him that was important for him, quoting Chesterton's humorous saying regarding the uniqueness principle of Franciscan philosophy, according to which Francis *"could not see the wood for the trees"* (Chesterton 1987: 110–111).

Barsi (2005: 53) points to the contrast between the modern man's worldview and the Franciscan way of thinking. The modern man sees the world in a dualistic way: our relationships with other people are governed by principles of politeness (cf. Leech 1983, Brown & Levinson 1987), while we want to dominate nature, or, in certain ages, outright tame it. Humans, however, are also part of the cosmos and nature. This leads to a tragic disunity. Finally, the aggressiveness shown toward nature affects man and his relationships: thus our world becomes aggressive and threatened.

Nonetheless, there is no trace of this dualistic approach or disruption in Francis. He is both the friend of the cosmos and of Man. And by God, this Man reconciled with the cosmos, his fellow human beings, and with himself is crowned. When Francis calls the things of the created world his brother and sister, he is not speaking in allegories or under the influence of some kind of sentimentality, but he is simply expressing himself. Francis' specific attitude toward the world and his fellow human beings stems from his Christian faith on a conscious level, and his deepest feelings on a subconscious, instinctive level.

The Franciscan Linguistic Worldview of Death

> Laudato si' mi' Signore, per sora nostra morte corporale, da la quale nullu homo vivente pó scappare, guai a quelli che morrano ne le peccata mortali, Beati quelli ke trovará ne le tue santissime voluntati, ka la morta secunda no 'l farrá male.
>
> 'Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Bodily Death, from whose embrace no living person can escape. Woe to those who die in mortal sin! Happy those she finds doing your most holy will. The second death can do no harm to them.'

Like the most verses of the Canticle, this one also begins with glorification: *Laudato si'* 'Be praised'. The glorification, however, is not addressed to death, but to the Lord. Francis calls death his sister (one should not forget that death is a feminine noun in Italian), but this is not some kind of euphemism, since he explicitly states that there is no escape from death for the living. Francis does not talk about what death is like, since he has no experience of it,[45] he simply accepts it and reconciles himself to the prospect of it. This is the same way of thinking with which Francis turns toward the other creatures (e.g. to the four primary elements: fire, water, air, and earth), and fits perfectly in line.

This verse is also organically connected to the previous ones, since the Canticle begins with the praise addressed to the Most High *(Altissimu)*, who exists outside of time and with the presentation of the birth of the earthly light (the sunrise) and continues until death, while there is a continuous connection between the elements occurring in the work. Through the days and nights, and through the alternation of seasons, through good and bad weather until death (the death of the individual) the path leads to perpetual light, to God, for those who live according to his holy will. The 'second death'[46] *(la morta secunda)*, which Francis obviously uses in the sense of 'spiritual death, damnation,' will literally do no harm to those whom the first death 'finds doing God's most holy will' *(ke trovará ne le tue santissime voluntati)*.

Referring to St. Paul, St. Bonaventure notes that the path which Francis takes in the *Canticle of the Sun* is the path of the cycle of love, the spiritual road of the outpouring and return of divine love, a kind of *itinerarium mentis*[47] (Pál 2001: 75, Bonaventure 1993). The biographical fact that this part of the Canticle was written

45 If not of death itself, Francis certainly had experience of the sight of a body mortally wounded in battle, or tormented by disease, or beginning to decompose.

46 Barsi identifies the 'second death' with the complete and final closing of individuals into themselves.

47 This Latin term is a reference to the title of St. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* (Bonaventure 1993).

shortly before Francis' death may allow to infer that Francis is also talking here about his own death and his relationship with it (Le Goff 2006, Doyle 1981). Barsi notes that the part about Sister Death is not an exhortation to Christian acceptance of death, but rather Francis' acceptance of his own death (Barsi 2005: 54).

In one of his letters, Francis writes that the desire to possess,[48] the desire to possess oneself makes death a bitter and painful experience. Francis' relationship to death is somewhat different from the perception of death of his time. For him, death is not some kind of horror, not joining the *danse macabre* led by a pale skeleton as this motif appears in several medieval depictions.[49]

For Francis, death is a peaceful transition, the threshold through which the believing soul enters the heavenly kingdom.[50] According to him, the path of creatures leads to eternity, but it is not the continuation of the individual's life on earth at some higher level, nor is it some perfected version of the life according to the individual's way of being, but the life according to Being exceeding our earth-bound concepts.

> Laudate et benedicete mi' Signore' et ringratiate et serviateli cum grande humilitate
> 'Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks, and serve him with great humility.'

The *Canticle of the Sun* ends with a call to praise God, to serve him humbly and to give thanks to him. Comparing this line with the previous verses, an important difference is that the passive voice has become active here, cf. *Laudato si'* → *Laudate* 'Be praised → Praise'. The subjunctive form *serviateli*[51] deserves here special attention. Its categorical imperative meaning, which is stronger than that of the other simple iterative forms in this verse (cf. *laudate* 'praise,' *benedicete* 'bless,' *ringratiate* 'give thanks'), can hardly be rendered into English by the form 'serve him'.[52] With this verbal form Francis emphasizes the priority of humble service over anything else. This is consistent with the Franciscan way of life, according to which: "love and praise are servitude with humility and in humility."

48 This is supported by the fact that in our modern world, many perceive death as a final annihilation, and the death of a close, loved person is usually experienced as a painful loss. For a person living in the real world, it is truly saddening to see how their loved ones die beside them, how the world changes around them.

49 A fine example of this can be seen in one of the side chapels of St. Bernard's Church in Cracow.

50 Franciscan poet and translator Dénes Szedő (1902–1983) calls death *kapukat táró, hű nénénk* i.e. 'our faithful aunt opening gates' in his free Hungarian translation of the *Canticle of the Sun*.

51 In modern Italian it would simply be *servitelo* (Pál 2001: 73).

52 Be reminded that in the course of the history of the English language, the forms of the former subjunctive coincided with the forms of the declarative.

The *Canticle of the Sun* is a vivid example of the childlike way in which Francis was able to rejoice in the things of the created world, that is in the fact that God, through creation, gifted his creatures with the joy of existence. This passionate admiration for creatures, this direct turning to them, which in the eyes of the world may seem like foolishness,[53] came from the heavenly way of looking at things. In this regard, it is worth quoting a passage from the Gospel of Matthew, where Jesus actually made a childlike spirit the condition for salvation: *"And said: 'Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven'"* (Mt 18: 3).

Francis' joy, which shines through the created world, and about which he sings in his Canticle,[54] is in a certain sense similar to Mozart's music. This joy, though experienced in this world, was not of it.

References

Appleton George (ed.) (1985): *The Oxford Book of Prayer*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Banniard Michel (1992): *Viva voce: Communication écrite et communication orale du IV^e^ au IX^e^ siècle en occident latin*. Institut des études augustiniennes, Paris.

Banniard Michel (2008): *Du latin aux langues romanes*. Armand Colin, Paris.

Balázs Géza (2007): *Szövegantropológia. Szövegek többirányú megközelítése*. Berzsenyi Dániel Főiskola, Szombathely, Inter Kultúra-, Nyelv- és Médiakutató Központ, Budapest.

Barsi Balázs (2005): *A Naphimnusz elemzése*. (Tanulmányrészlet). In: *Napút 2005 július-augusztus*, VII. évf. 6. sz. 38–54.

Bausch Karl-Richard (1980): *Sprachmittlung: Übersetzen und Dolmetschen*. In: *Lexikon der germanistischen Linguistik*, Hrsg. H.P. Althaus, H. Henne, H.E. Wiegand. Bd. 4. Niemeyer, Tübingen, pp. 797–801.

Bonaventura da Bagnoregio (2006): *Vita di san Francesco d'Assisi. Legenda major di san Bonaventura*. Trad. P. Ettore. Porziuncola, Assisi.

53 The Russian Orthodox Church refers to saints with an attitude similar to Francis' with the epithet *yurodivyy* 'holy fool'. (See the story of the life of Blessed Basil (Russian: Vasily Blazhennyy), which contains several motifs in common with the life of St. Francis of Assisi).

54 It should be noted here that Francis does not use the word *gioia* 'joy' even once in the Canticle, in contrast to one of his best-known prayers, the *Preghiera Semplice*, in which the word *gioia* 'joy' occurs (cf. 'Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, / Where there is hatred, let me sow love, / (…) Where there is sadness, *joy* …') (Appleton 1985, no. 217).

Bonaventure (1993): *The Journey of the Mind into God.* (Itinerarium mentis in Deum). Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis.

Brown Penelope, Levinson Stephen C. (1987): *Politeness. Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Chesterton Gilbert K. (1987): *St. Francis of Assisi*. Image Books. Penguin Random House, New York.

Dalarun Jacques (ed.) (2016): *The Rediscovered Life of St. Francis of Assisi* (Thomas of Celano). Franciscan Institute Publications, New York.

Davies Norman (1997): *Europe. A History*. Pimlico, London.

Doyle Eric (1981): *St. Francis and the Song of Brotherhood and Sisterhood*. Seabury Press, New York.

Fónagy Iván (1990): *Gondolatalakzatok, szövegszerkezet, gondolkodási formák*. Linguistica. Series C, Relationes 3. MTA Nyelvtudományi Intézete, Budapest.

Fortini Arnaldo (1992): *Francis of Assisi*. Crossroad Publishing, New York.

Frenyó Zoltán (2016): *A filozófia tankönyve*. Szent István Társulat, Budapest.

Habig Marion A. (1983): *The Legend of the Three Companions and the Legend of Perugia*. In: *St. Francis of Assisi: Writings and Early Biographies. English Omnibus of Sources for the Life of St. Francis*. Ed. M.A. Habig. Franciscan Herald Press, Chicago.

Hamvas Béla (1995): *Scientia sacra I–III*. Medio Kiadó, Szentendre.

Hardick Lothar, Grau Engelbert (1984): *Die Schriften des heiligen Franziskus von Assisi*. Dietrich Coelde Verlag, Werl.

Jólesz Károly (1987): *Zsidó hitéleti kislexikon*. Korona GT, Budapest.

Jørgensen Johannes (1912): *St. Francis of Assisi: A Biography*. Longmans, London.

Jung Carl G. (2012): *Der Mensch und seine Symbole*. Patmos, Düsseldorf.

Kaiser Georg A. (2014): *Romanische Sprachgeschichte*. Wilhelm Fink Verlag, Paderborn.

Kelly-Gangi Carol (ed.) (2010): *Saint Francis of Assisi His Essential Wisdom*. Fall River Press.

Koller Werner (1987): *Einführung in die Übersetzungswissenschaft*. Quelle & Meyer, Heidelberg.

Leclerc Eloi P. (2007): *Sagesse d'un pauvre*. Desclée De Brouwer, Paris.

Le Goff Jacques (2006): *Franz von Assisi*. Übersetzung J. Grube. Klett-Cotta Verlag, Stuttgart.

Leech Geoffrey (1983): *Principles of pragmatics.* Longman Group Ltd., London–New York.

Paolazzi Carlo (2010): *Il Cantico di frate sole*. Edizioni Porzincuola, Assisi.

Pál József (2001): *Assisi Szent Ferenc Istendicsérete: fordítás és értelmezés*. In: Tiszatáj 2001. december, pp. 68–76.

Pál József, Újvári Edit (2001): *Szimbólumtár*. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest.

Ratzinger Joseph (2005): *Wiara w trójosobowego Boga a pokój na świecie.* In: *Europa. Jej podwaliny dzisiaj i jutro*. Tłum. S. Czerwik. Wydawnictwo Jedność, Kielce, pp. 101–107.

Redl Károly (ed.) (1988): *Bonaventura, Szemelvények.* In: *Az égi és a földi szépről – Források a későantik és a középkori esztétika történetéhez*. Gondolat Könyvkiadó, Budapest, pp. 363–373.

Steiner Ágota (1990): *Assisi Szent Ferenc perugiai legendája* (Legenda Perugina). Helikon, Budapest.

Szigethy Gábor (ed.) (2003): *Csontváry Kosztka Tivadar: Önéletrajz*. Neumann Kht., Budapest.

Abstrakt

Językowy obraz radości w *Pieśni słonecznej* św. Franciszka z Asyżu

W artykule autor podejmuje próbę rekonstrukcji językowego obrazu radości występującego w *Pieśni słonecznej* św. Franciszka z Asyżu. Podczas rekonstrukcji szczególną trudność sprawił fakt, że słowo „radość" nie występowało w badanym dziele wprost, zatem treści do niego nawiązujące i z nim związane można było badać jedynie pośrednio. Konieczność umieszczenia „kantyczki" w szerszym kontekście sprawiła, że nieuniknione było zarysowanie epoki i uwzględnienie pewnych elementów biograficznych, a złożoność analizy wymagała, oprócz literackich, zastosowania aspektów językowo-historycznych, tekstologicznych, przekładowych i teologicznych. Analiza dzieła polegała na uwzględnieniu oryginalnej włoskiej wersji tekstu i jej tłumaczenia na język angielski, eksploracji psychologicznych i teologicznych głębszych warstw obrazów poetyckich, którymi posługiwał się św. Franciszek, oraz ukazaniu związanych z nimi treści mitologicznych. W trakcie dociekań autor niniejszego artykułu doszedł do wniosku, że pierwotne źródło radości, jakie przepełnia św. Franciszka, gdy śpiewa w swojej pieśni o stworzeniach, nie jest w istocie z tego świata, ale jest transcendentne.

Słowa kluczowe: radość, *Pieśń słoneczna,* św. Franciszek z Asyżu