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“DEMYTHOLOGISATION” OF *FIORETTI*
NEW ASPECTS FOR INTERPRETATION

Arguments of the doctoral thesis (PhD)

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I. Preliminaries and reasons for choosing the subject

Though we know of numerous biographies and legends about Saint Francis of Assisi which are considered to be more authentic from a historic point of view, and whose date of origin is closer to the related events, still the most widely known narrative is *Fioretti* from the 14th century. It is also the most emblematic prose on this great saint of the Middle Ages. Its popularity is manifested in the fact that from all of the vulgar Italian language writings, it was the first one to be printed in 1469, shortly after the invention of printing (1440) or the appearance of the first ever printed book (1456). The printed version of *Fioretti* saw at least fifteen editions till the end of the 15th century. The image of Saint Francis transmitted through it had a major impact about the Franciscan order, and even today many plays, novels, and other, Franciscan-related works of art use it as their inspiration. For its effect on the 20th century, we should mention Gabriele D'Annunzio, who, in the contents of his *Opera omnia* (1927) referred to the theatrical play intended to speak about Saint Francis of Assisi as „*nuovi fioretti*”, as well as the movie by Roberto Rossellini, *Francesco, giullare di Dio* (1950), which is in fact the neorealistic adaptation of *Fioretti*. The literature Nobel prize winner Dario Fo' also reached back to this great oeuvre of the Franciscan legend-writing in his play, *I Fioretti apocrifi di San Francesco* (1999).

The effect that Saint Francis of Assisi and the Franciscans had on the European culture, literature, fine arts or theater and performing arts is hard to define. Therefore, an enhanced academic interest is directed to the previous century's research on this religious order, and the biographies written on the founding saint have a major role in this search. Research of a historical criticism nature into the Franciscan texts presented such relevant results, that after the Second Vatican Council (1962 – 1965) even the reestablishing of the order came up as an option. In the background of this issue we can find the turn-over of the hierarchy of sources, that is, a new canon of those written texts which are referred to as Franciscan sources. The Franciscan sources are composed of the own writing of Saint Francis of Assisi or writings attributed to him, biographies on his life (*legendae*), and the collection of testimonies originated in his

time, but outside the religious order. Throughout history, the identity of the Franciscan order was determined by the Saint Francis-image transmitted by the biographies, which – as it turned out later from further research – often differs from the image transmitted by the own writings of the Saint. In regaining the institution history, the critical research of the Saint Francis-image coming through the biographies has a significant role. Historical criticism so far has primarily focused on the early, 13th century legends, which were thought to be historically more reliable while it has not accurately investigated 14th century compilations, such as the *Fioretti*.

International as well as Hungarian analysis on *Fioretti* are in majority of a text-criticism and literary nature, and we have not so far encountered a longer study aiming at understanding the opus within the comprehensive context of its own history. In Hungary, it was Renée Erdős who first commented upon *Fioretti* in the 20th century, who provided a short summary of the life of Saint Francis of Assisi in his study on the Italian Franciscans at the beginning of the century. In the same essay he writes about *Fioretti*, which, for him, is “the book of holy delusions and of the comprehension beyond all comprehensions”, as he confesses in the preface of his translation of *Fioretti* in ca. 1911. The well known *Fioretti*, translated by Kaposy, was published in 1913, providing insight into the Italian adventures of the translator. In his introductory chapter, József Kaposy tells us the life of Saint Francis, then touches upon the critical investigation of the text itself, which, today needs modification, and lastly he introduces the ancient Hungarian Franciscan literature and lists the Hungarian translations of *Fioretti*. “In Nádudvar, 1926, summertime”, Cecília Tormay puts her preface about Saint Francis in a lyrical style before her *Fioretti* translation. László Szörényi mentions *Fioretti* and the results of the latest research concerning it primarily in connection to the Jókai codex, in his study: *La problematica del Codice "Jókai" alla luce degli studi recenti sulle leggende di San Francesco*, in 1995. Zsuzsanna Aczél’s essay is published in 1997, though not in Hungary but in Italy (*Il codice Jókai e la prima letteratura francescana*), and it also mentions *Fioretti* and the *Actus* in connection to the history of origin of the Jókai codex. Fr. Imre Kapisztrán Varga writes the summary of modern Franciscan research on historical criticism concerning

Fioretti (1999), completed with Hungarian references – translations, the Jókai-codex – in the series edited together with Fr. Jakab Várnai in the *Franciscan sources*. In this publication they edited András É. Megyei's earlier translation, who himself also published *Fioretti* in 1978, with a preface and comments.

After studying the Italian and Hungarian papers on *Fioretti* written from a critical, literary, esthetical-stylistic, and spiritual point of view, we searched for new ways of interpretation, mainly focusing on the better understanding of the meaning of the text. Our question was the following: what could *Fioretti* mean in his own time, how could it be a living and influential text seven hundred years ago? We tried a kind of demythologization, that is, we tried to get rid of our modern preconceptions and place it back to its time of origin, in the pursuit of finding new areas of meaning through the otherwise unclosed process of interpretation.

II. Sources, objective and methods of the research

I used Hungarian and foreign sources (historic, literary, Franciscan legends, anthologies, historic documents, pornographies, literary history, essays, studies, etc.) for writing my thesis. I started collecting material seven years ago, first at home, then, in 2004 I had the opportunity to study in the libraries of Rome and get a picture of the present state of Franciscan research and results. Among the Roman libraries I visited the following: *Università Pontificia Antonianum*, the most prestigious one in the Franciscan studies, the *Library Pontificia Università Gregoriana* – though with limited access -, the *Biblioteca Nazionale*, the library of the Italian studies of the *Università degli Studi di Roma „La Sapienza”*, the *Biblioteca Angelica*, the *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*, and last but not least the library of the *École Françias*. Following my scholarship in Rome, I continued my studies in the Hungarian libraries: *Országos Széchényi Könyvtár* (Hungarian National Library), a *Library of the Academy of Sciences*, *Library of the Italian Cultural Institute of Budapest*, the *Hungarian Franciscan Library and Archives*, the *Szabó Ervin Municipal Library*, the library of the *Italian Department of Lóránd Eötvös University* (ELTE BTK), and that of the *University of Szeged*.

Our method lays in the descriptive and comparative analysis of the found sources and relevant literature. We aimed at discovering and introducing the major interpretative and evaluative aspects and tendencies of the *Fioretti*-literature, and to extend the scope of meaning of this literary work by some details of the historical context, so far not yet investigated.

III. The conceptual summary of the thesis

As an overview, let me first present the contents of my thesis:

I. Introduction

II. Saint Francis biographies in the light of historic criticism

1. "The Franciscan question"

1.1. Own writings of Saint Francis of Assisi and textual criticism

1.2. "The Franciscan question" and the biographies

1.3. Compilations of the 14th century

1.3.1. The *Fioretti*

III. *Fioretti* and the Italian literary criticism

1. Franciscan literature and the start of Italian literary history

2. *Fioretti* in Francesco De Sanctis' literary history

3. *Fioretti* and the reception of religious literature at the turn of the century

4. *Fioretti* as religious prose in Croce's aesthetics

5. On *Fioretti* after Croce

6. *Fioretti* and literature in the 20th century

IV. *Fioretti* and hagiography

1. Genre aspects

2. Saint cults in the 14th century

2.1. Preliminaries

2.2. Official saint-ideals in the 14th century

2.3. Cults for saints and the hagiographies of the begging orders

2.3.1. "Domestic" saints of *Fioretti*

3. The *Fioretti* of the spiritualists

4. Mysticism and *Fioretti*

4.1. Engagement mysticism in *Fioretti*

4.2. Bonaventura's influence

5. Typological symbolism and Christ-mysticism in *Fioretti*

6. Folk art and *Fioretti*

6.1. Folklore and hagiography

6.2. The carnival

6.2.1. Grotesque realism

6.2.1.1. The devil's figure and chapter 29 of *Fioretti*

V. Conclusion

Literature

In the 2nd chapter following the introduction we give a special hermeneutical presentation about today's Franciscan order, and the way the order looks at its own literary past in this situation. As an illustration for this, we give a short overview on the present state of Franciscan textual history, we tried to formulate the dilemma raised by the “questione francescana”, which is basically the academic area dealing with the biographical sources. The “Franciscan question” is in search of the types of modifications and distortions the original Saint Francis image had to go through throughout the centuries. To answer the question, it is not enough to read the sources thoroughly and in a philologically adequately way, but also to look behind the lines – to look at cultural, religious, social and historic reasons inside and outside the monastery. This requires the inclusion of the most diverse areas of studies focusing on the Middle Ages. In this chapter we have presented the current results of source investigation, starting from the own writings of Saint Francis of Assisi, the Franciscan legends from the 13th century (including the letter of brother Elias, the *Anonimo perugino*, the *vita* by Tommaso da Celano, the *Legend of the three pals*, and *Legenda maior* by Bonaventura), and the compilations from the 14th century (*Compilatio assisiensis*, *Speculum perfectionis*, *Fioretti*).

In the third chapter we chose a few selections from literary criticism on *Fioretti*, from the beginnings of the Italian literary history up to the end of the last century, to outline a picture on the literary reception and its modification. When discovering this “view”, we had no other chance than to encounter the dilemma on the literary value of religious texts. Can we see a religious text as literature? There have been numerous answers to this question throughout the centuries, and we selected a few of them chronologically, when going through the Italian criticism of *Fioretti*, reading monographs, literary criticism, and literature.

We may conclude that the significance of *Fioretti* is always diminished when the scholar looks at the text as a historian and when the opus is examined as a historic document. When textual criticism discovered at the beginning of the century that the text of the *Fioretti*, thought to be original, follows without major changes the earlier,

Latin legends of *Actus sancti Francisci et sociorum ejus*, the book did lose from its literary prestige. We took a close look at the aesthetics of Benedetto Croce who defended *Fioretti* from those who only considered profane aspects and thus found *Fioretti* rather monotone for its didactic style. Croce at the same time agreed with the critics, who said that it was precisely the religious and moralizing style that limited its literary value and tried to call the critiques' attention to place this oeuvre in literary history in light of these considerations. In today's literary thinking the motive of the text being so different from the original thinking of Saint Francis is all the more important. Its tone is regarded sophisticated and its style to be distant from the radical Franciscan message, the author's literary sense is appreciated. The author tried to surpass the task of only spreading the word, and experimented with the well known (and well traded by him) rhetoric and stylistic components of lay literature. Some literary historians saw the 14th century exhaustion of the Franciscan movement in the sweet-sticky tone, but there are still supporters of *Fioretti*.

The last and most important part of the thesis becomes understandable after presenting the critical aspects of the previous two chapters. Franciscan scholars examine *Fioretti* through the lenses of historical criticism, which, first of all, has its role in the history of the order. Still, literary criticism analyzes the book on the basis of profane literary references: from a historic, aesthetic approach, and look for elements that make it literature according to our concepts, which make it possible to categorize it as literature. In the 4th chapter we tried to place the book at its own age, based on the assumption that it is first of all the product of the hagiography of the Middle Ages and to present that historic, cultural and spiritual context which most influenced the text, in our opinion. Therefore we examined the contemporary tendencies in the genre in hagiography, the major motives of the saint-cults, wider historical and Franciscan connections, the peculiar mode of thinking of the times, the conception about arts (typology, symbolism), as well as the dominant spiritual tendencies together with the folklorist world view.

Though *Fioretti* has a literary and artistic value beyond doubts – that is why we see it on the relevant pages of literary history – we did not find it fair to compare it to the achievements of contemporary profane literature. To make such a comparison

would be like comparing a piece of icon-painting to a masterpiece of the renaissance landscape painting. The motivation of painting one or the other was totally different. With painting icons, it is not originality of experimenting that counts, to the contrary: the artist withdraws, avoids all specific feature which could contour or make the figures lively, exactly because he wants to point behind. It is the same with hagiography: the author denounces individualism, and does not wish to create something individual, avoids everything that would make the actors realistic so as to give space to eternal meaning. Without knowing the peculiarities of the Medieval hagiographies, *Fioretti* today would be only a fancy but superficial tale, where chronological and geographical errors and mistakes could be simply attributable to the carelessness or overheated fantasy of the author. That is why we dedicated a sub-chapter (IV.1.) to the special characteristics of the genre of hagiographies.

As in all ages, in the Trecento there were two sources of hagiographies: court- and folk culture. While the church policy of the Avignon-court had a heavy influence on the religious attitude and thinking of the whole century, including the direction of hagiography as well, we outlined the official ideal of holiness promoted by this court. After listing the most important criteria according to which a Saint in the 14th century had to behave – based on canonization documents – it became clear that the saints of *Fioretti* differ in two points from the contemporary ideals about saints, determined by the Church: in the aspects of poverty and mysticism. To find out the reasons why, we also examined the folklorist ideal of a saint of those times, after having examined official ideals of what makes a saint (IV.2.1., IV.2.2.).

We started from a wider historic and Franciscan perspective here (IV.2.3.). We found it important to outline, though only roughly, the definitive moments of the history of the 14th century (the Avignon capture of the popes, the great Plagues, the hundred years long war, the advance of the Turkish, etc.) since these happenings also had an effect on the religious orders. The begging orders had a great influence on popular religious practices, and on the local reverence of saint, which existed parallel to the official cults. The holiness of a Franciscan or Dominican brother living in the village or in the surroundings of a monastery, was confirmed not only in speech but also in writing, that is, in hagiography. It was a way to enhance the commitment of the

religious people and the members of religious orders as well as a way to strengthen the identity of the orders in the middle of a stormy, decadent century. The biographies of these days did not only commemorate the founders of the orders or major saints, but also the less important locals who were not submitted to canonization at all, but served as a role model to future generations. Based on its characteristic, that in spite of previous Saint Francis legends, *Fioretti* also talks about second generation brothers from Marche besides Saint Francis and his companions, the book is undeniably suitable to this typical autobiographical tendency about the begging orders of the 14th century, related to local saint-cults (IV.2.3.1.).

In the second part of *Fioretti* from chapter 42 we meet such “pious brothers” of the Marche of Ancona “(...) who, like the bright luminaries in heaven, ornamented the Order of St Francis, and enlightened the world by their doctrine and example.” Since one of the epicenter of the radical wing of the Franciscans, the spiritual group, was in the province of Marche, it seemed evident to present in *Fioretti* the values shared by them (IV.3.). The ideal of holiness has a strongly spiritual character, because we meet poverty in many places as a saving, delivering power, for the keeping of which Saint Francis begged to his companions. The first part of *Fioretti*, that is, the chapters about the first generation, witness an even stronger commitment to the values of the spiritualists: even the order of the chapters tells a lot about the view to be transmitted. *Fioretti* – getting rid of the chronological order generally known from biographies – does not start with Francis's childhood or conversion, but with the foundation of the religious order, then continues with five chapters focusing on brother Bernard's virtues. This is not in vain. Bernard stands for the the Franciscan ideal of the spiritualists, in opposition to Elias, the second minister general of the order. For the spiritualist, Elias embodied the betrayal true Franciscan ideals, as he had a huge role in organising the Franciscans into a religious society, in strengthening the conventional direction, while the spiritual wing which insisted on keeping the original poverty, still wanted to live from begging, scattered around as hermits. To emphasize the spiritual character of *Fioretti*, we introduced *Vita prima* (Tommaso da Celano), dating back to the superiority of Elias, touching upon the legacy of Francis. We also introduced this momentum from *Fioretti*, and the two writing arrive at a totally different conclusion.

The figures of the *fraters*, with characteristics known from the desert hermits, also point toward the spiritualist influence. Angelo Clareno, living in exile in Tessalia, an emblematic figure of the radical wing of the Franciscans, read the wisdom of the desert fathers with pleasure, in fact, he translated from Greek into Latin the major work of Johannes Scholasticus, a hermit who lived by the mount Sinai and was later canonized. As it is assumed that the stories of *Fioretti* also come from the spiritual circles of Angelo Clareno, it is not a wonder that they are full with hints to the love of a solitary lifestyle, as Clareno lived like this, as well as his followers. Most of the events in *Fioretti* take place inside the monastery or in the closed world defined by the interactions of the members of the order, the stylized landscape and forest are home to the few brothers the parables speak of, and lay people are mostly presented as an uncharacteristic crowd. The religious monk in *Fioretti*, having little connection to the outside world, but a very intensive prayer life, is formulated on the examples of the desert fathers, the first hermits and the founders of western monasteries.

In the 14th century, hagiographies remaining outside the Curia, those that did not follow the official doctrine of holiness, are characterized by the hegemony of the mystical-visionary, and prophetic elements. One of the basic motives of *Fioretti* is also connected to the miracles, the miraculous, the revelation of the transcendent and most of its figures have the attributes of the mystics, therefore we deemed it important to place *Fioretti* in the context of 14th century mysticism. While hagiography was local in the Trecento, mysticism became more and more private. Due to the promotion of a more personal, feminine religiousness, new aspects of mystical spiritualism became apparent, such as the emotional roundness of mystical experiences, the more frequent and longer visions, auditions, ecstasies, the relation with the human-Christ, the *humanitas Christi* (eg. Angela Foligno). The person of Saint Margaret from the House of Arpad gained the stigma at that time as well. We intended to trace the typical 14th century mysticism in *Fioretti* (IV.4), but we took a closer look at the indirect influence of Bonaventura who was an emblematic figure of engagement mysticism (IV.4.1.) and Franciscan mysticism (IV.4.2.).

The similarity between Francis and Christ came to the foreground in the 14th

century Franciscan hagiography. The resemblance of Saint Francis to Christ is mentioned in almost all biographies, but Francis as “second Christ” (*quasi alter Cristus*) first appears in *Fioretti* (and the *Actus*). The spiritual background of second Christ, second Jacob and Israel, and later the second Francises, new Moseses and Davids, lies in the typological symbolism deeply rooted in Medieval thinking and in the figurative approach of history. This peculiar world view, so strange for the modern, causal historic thinking, is based on Biblical exegesis, which implies that figures of the Old Testament are the archetypes (types) of the figures of the New Testament (anti-type) and events in the Old Testament predict those of the New testament, therefore the New Testament fulfills – and not invalidates – the promises of the Old Testament. According to typology, events of the past are a kind of prophecy for the future, and historic events and characters are generated by the same one power. The Bible describes God formulating history, so we may expect that the patterns and types of the Bible will also appear in the future as well, as traces of God, up until the *Last Judgment*. The motives and topics of hagiography well suit this logic and the eschatology attributed to Francis also becomes understandable in this relation. We aimed to present this in chapter IV.5.

As it is evident from the tone and register of the work – even for its popular language – that it is not the product of “high literature”, we intended to approach it from the folk-art, from the popular culture. We may discover the elements of narratives directed at the “simple folks”, those educated by church frescoes, in the plastic and lively description of some scenes. In this chapter (IV.6., IV.6.1.) we did not regard folklore as the anachronistic compilation of popular traditions but understood it from the Bahtyin-type, wider perspective. Since the Medieval cultural tradition slowly disappeared in the centuries following the Renaissance, it could be less and less effective in providing an understandable background to the symbols of *Fioretti*. We called upon some of these ancient traditions to examine some of the most expressive chapters of *Fioretti* and to find new meaning. A great help lay in folk-humour and the concept of grotesques realism by Bahtyin (IV.6.2.1.). These provided the key to interpreting chapter 29 of *Fioretti*, where Saint Francis gives advice – which seems a bit impolite for today's public taste – to brother Ruffino, suffering from the

temptations of the devil (IV.6.2.1.1.). When decoding this message we gain the best illustration for the distance between today's reader and the reader or audience of the times of contemporaries.

As a conclusion we may state that *Fioretti* has the characteristics of the age it was written and the original message by Saint Francis is transmitted in the style of 14th century spiritualism. The activities of the characters of *Fioretti* are different forms of prayer. The transcendent is quite close: revelations, ecstasies, apparitions, communicating with the celestials and hypostasis are common. In the background of concealing specifics and avoiding characteristics, we may find the hierographic theory aiming not at individualism in depicting a figure, but to approach a character – then already a very popular saint – as a carrier of holiness. All this happened in compliance with the then valid or widespread ideal of holiness, which, in the 14th century, meant the withdrawal of *vita activa* and the coming onto foreground of the awareness of being chosen independent of the merits. In the mysticism of the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century, instead of connecting to and confronting with the outside world, authors of the legends concentrated on inner, spiritual battles fought in the battlefield of sins and virtues, on the passive role of humans and the operation of divine grace.

The authors could reach great masses of people, so in their work they used the popular language of folk culture, either because they themselves were among those people, or because they wanted to capture the believer's attention this way – very thoughtfully. At the same time they had a kind of literary knowledge which they spontaneously planted into the legends about the saints. Such was the intertwining of popular taste and literature in this genre. We assume that in *Fioretti*, we may capture an aspect of popular culture which falls outside the focal point of academic research, but – as the culture of the majority, of folklorist culture – has the same influence as the “high” culture of the elite. While theological discussions or the fruits of goliardic poetry could spread only in a narrow circle, there were no people in the Middle Ages who did not hear sermons about the devil, miracles, and the saints. This mass literature could reach all people in writing or orally, and as such, they tell a lot about these

peoples' thinking and about the world which was not present in the "high" literature.

In this thesis we have examined *Fioretti* from many perspectives of interpretation.

We could see that the Franciscan question seeks first of all historic authenticity with the help of textual criticism, and so *Fioretti*, a compilation written 150 years after the death of Saint Francis, does not weigh the same as an earlier legend. In literature, we quite often meet modernizing judgments that also consider aesthetic and historic aspects. We have concentrated on the content, on the message, and wanted to advance in interpretation by reconstructing some parts of the historic past. By demythologizing *Fioretti* and lifting "the mythological veil", we analyzed the meaning both in an implicit and explicit way, relying on the following: we examined how contemporary legend-writing influence its descriptions, and structure, and how the ideal of holiness, popular saint-cults and the public taste formulated its devices for expression. We also looked at the traces of medieval typological thinking, mysticism and some elements of the folklore. All views may be legitimate in themselves, but in *Fioretti* we find the compact influence of the historic, cultural and spiritual tendencies. Though we could not shed a light on everything, we still think that we succeeded in bringing to the surface new layers of meaning and content by outlining the different opportunities for interpretation.

IV. New scientific result of the discussion

Such detailed investigation of the „Franciscan question” or such comprehensive introduction about Franciscan sources we presented in the 2nd chapter has not been published in Hungary so far. The most well known expert of the field in Hungary is historian Imre Kapisztrán Varga OFM, his relevant work being the preface to *The perugia legend of Saint Francis of Assisi*, but all of his introductory studies written for the series of *Franciscan sources* by Agapé Publishing (legends and biographies) touch upon the results of Franciscan research.

As far as we know it, we are the first in Hungarian literature to provide such a comprehensive literary criticism on *Fioretti*, in such a wide time-span, while

considering the literary value of religious literature.

Though similar discussions about the products of hagiography are not unknown of in Hungary -- the works of Tibor Klaniczay and Gábor Klaniczay are outstanding in the field but Viktória Hedvig Deák O.P.'s PhD Thesis on the legend of Saint Margaret of the House of Arpad, published in 2005, also deals with some aspects the same as ours in this paper – we have not encountered such approach to this topic in the literature on *Fioretti*.

One novelty is definitely the examination of official ideal of holiness from the 14th century, especially the elements of “domestic holiness” in *Fioretti*. The appearance of the spirituals’ influence in the oeuvre might be a commonplace, but such detailed analysis thereof has not been published either in Hungary or in Italy, just as we have not heard about the connection of this movement and the eastern monastery-life and hermits – though Carlo Delcorno refers to the influence the desert fathers inserted on the Franciscans in his essay *Le „Vitae Patrum” nella letteratura religiosa medievale (secc.XIII-XV.)* he also adds that further research is needed on the subject.

The discovery of the peculiar character of mysticism in *Fioretti*, especially the type related to Bonaventure (*Itinerarium mentis ad Deum, De triplici via*), together with the 14th century mysticism (feminine mysticism- Angela da Foligno, German mysticism) is also totally new and independent work. It was inspired by *Kurt Ruh: The history of Western Mysticism II. Female mysticism of 12th and 13th century and the mysticism of the first Franciscans.*

Characteristics of typological mysticism in *Fioretti* are first examined by us both in Hungarian and international literature. Identifying Biblical figures with the characters from *Fioretti* and the transposing of the “great predecessors” (Saint Francis and Saint Anthony of Padua) into the less important, local saints, the analogy between the first and second part of *Fioretti* all become significant within the frames of the special historic awareness of the Middle Ages. It is all the more true to the eschatological Francis-image of the chapter about the stigma: the image of Saint Francis of Assisi as *alter Christus* or *typus Christi* becomes understandable in this

figurative reading.

We are also the first to introduce *Fioretti* in the light of Medieval popular culture, in connection with cultural theory by Bahtyin, more precisely, carnival-literature and the folk culture of laughter. Moreover, we have touched upon the effects of contemporary visual culture, uplifting such scenes from the book which could have easily been the written illustrations or literary forms of church frescoes, codex-drawings or miniatures. Discovering subjects from folk-tales such as for example the theme of the glass-walled palace, the trials of the protagonist for reaching the other world, the three trials, the wandered appearing unexpectedly to test the members of the family, in *Fioretti*, and the matching of them with the *Motif -Index of Folk-Literature* by Thomson has been a most extraordinary adventure for us. Perhaps this last sub-chapter (IV.6.) is the best example of the huge distance between the concepts of our time and the culture inherent in the book, and of what the seven hundred years – that passed after the book was written - did in the process of interpretation.

V. Possibilities for further developing the subject

Further research seems possible in a few subject areas we have touched upon. First, let me mention the iconography of chapter IV.6.1. In the relationship between illustration and the text, the text is mostly regarded as being the primary source, which is the basis for illustration, but in many cases the picture is the first and it influences the text. We may assume that in promoting Saint Margaret of the House of Arpad, as a stigmatized saint, visual models preceded the written ones. The refreshing influence of the Franciscans on Medieval arts – mainly painting – is widely known, and the iconographic sources of depictions of Saint Francis may be many times easily identified (Giotto, for example, followed the *Legenda maior* of Bonaventura when painting the high temple of San Francesco in Assisi). But the influence of painting on Franciscan literature is not that well researched in spite of the fact, that it appears very concretely in some of the stories of *Fioretti*. Such story can be found in chapter XLIV where the pious brother Peter from the monastery of Forano, near Ancona, is meditating on “(...) his Blessed Mother, with St John the Evangelist and St Francis,

were represented at the foot of the cross, as having been crucified with Christ in mental sufferings (...)"'. While Peter is praying in front of the painting, the three saints appear to him from the picture, and reveal secrets to him about the holiness of Saint Francis. The sensitivity of the apparitions described in *Fioretti*, the draperies, palls, the motifs of the golden glow are undoubtedly witness to the 13-14th century church paintings, triptychs, but the figure of the devil from chapter XLV., blowing a list of sins is also familiar to us from Medieval illustrations. The discovery of specific antecedents in the fine arts of picturesque scenes which are so common in *Fioretti* need a great deal of further research.

Finding the literary sources and origin of stories and scenes of *Fioretti* is also a good chance for further investigation. Besides the *Vitae Patrum* other writings dating from the spiritual circles (e.g. Angelo Clareno: *Historia tribulationis ordinis Minorum*; Ubertino da Casale: *Arbor vitae crucifixae*), the author of *Fioretti/Actus* also relied on texts directly or indirectly, such as *Dialogues* or homilies by Saint Gregory the Great, *Vita Anonii*, *Confessions* of Saint Augustus, *Miraculous Stories* by Caesarius Histerbachensis, *Exempla* by Jacques de Vitry, the *Novellino*. Firstly we did not think about a research on the basis of textual criticism or textual historicism, as in these fields there are plenty of essays already written (eg. Giorgio Petrocchi: *Dagli „Actus beati Francisci” al volgarizzamento dei „Fioretti”* in *Ascesi e mistica trecentesca*, Le Monnier, Firenze, 1957), but attempted an investigation on the motifs, which implies the widening of the themes and subjects so far mapped. In this endeavour, the work of Nino Tamassia (Nino Tamassia: *S. Francesco d'Assisi e la sua leggenda*. Ed. Fratelli Drucker. Padova-Verona, 1906) may be a good starting point.

Related to the presentation of typological symbolism (IV.5.) and the theories of the spirituals (IV.3., IV.2.), we emphasized the eschatologic importance of Francis being the "second Christ" together with the intellectual background behind this finding. It was Arnaldo di Sarrant in his *De cognatione beati francisci* (1365) who first worked with this motif, and he counted nine criteria proving the similarity of Francis and Christ. An advance version of this view is found at Bartolomeo da Pisa who listed forty similarities in his *De conformitate vitae beati Francisci ad vitam Domini Jesu* the end of the 14th century. These findings together with the thorough examination of

other opuses of the Franciscan literature may bring to light a few Franciscan peculiarities that could further shape our conception about the meaning of *Fioretti*.

Animal symbolism is another field for further investigation. Though in relation to the episode about the wolf of Gubbio, we touched upon the possible meanings of the wolf-symbol, still, the studying the symbolism of other animals in *Fioretti*, such as the turtle-dove, the swallow, the crow or the mouse raise the possibility of discovering new meanings.

VI. List of Publications

Giovambattista Giralda Cinzio: Mi illik egy nemes és jólnevelt ifjúhoz egy nagy fejedelem szolgálatában? In: Medgyesi Konstantin (szerk.): Kolindárium. A Szent Imre Kollégium Évkönyve. 1998, pp.18-21.

Mariateresa Fumagalli Boenio Brocchieri. Profilo del pensiero medievale. : Helikon Irodalomtudományi Szemle, 2004/3, pp. 466-467.

Dora Faraci. Simbolismo animale e letteratura. Nuova Corvina, 2004/16, pp.106-109.

Dora Faraci. Állatszimbolika és irodalom. Helikon Irodalomtudományi Szemle, 2005/3, pp. 366-368.

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A globalizáció és Assisi Szent Ferenc Virágoskertje in: Dr. Varga Józsefné (szerk.): IX. Apáczai–Napok 2005, Globalizáció és fenntartható fejlődés, Nemzetközi tudományos konferencia, Tanulmánykötet, Győr, 2006, pp. 402-406.

Steven J. Williams: A pseudo-arisztotelészi Secretum secretorum megjelenése Nyugat-Európában: a pápai és a császári udvar (fordítás) in: Vigh Éva: „Természeted az arcodon” A fiziognómia története az ókortól a XVII. századig, Szöveggyűjtemény, JATEPress, Szeged, 2006, pp.365-380.

A középkori vallásos irodalom és az irodalomkritika Itáliában a XV. századtól Crocéig in: Dr. Lőrincz Ildikó (szerk.): XI. Apáczai–Napok 2007, Nemzetközi tudományos konferencia. Értékkörzés és értékteremtés. Tanulmánykötet. Nyugat-Magyarországi Egyetem Apáczai Csere János Kar, Győr, 2008. pp. 353-361.

A Fioretti irodalom és hagiográfia között. In: Pál József, Mátyás Dénes, Róth Márton (szerk.): F fiatal kutatók és Olaszország. Tanulmányok. SZEK Juhász Gyula Felsőoktatási Kiadó, Szeged, 2008. pp. 43-49.