Transcending Truths: Exploring Biofictional Portrayals of Francis of Assisi in Zofia Kossak's *Blessed are the Meek* and Nikos Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi*

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the biofictional portrayals of Francis of Assisi by Zofia Kossak in *Blessed are the Meek* and Nikos Kazantzakis in *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi*, exploring how these narratives critique historical, contemporary, and prospective societal and ideological structures. By analysing the dynamic interplay between historical fact and imaginative fiction, this study aims to uncover the deeper philosophical, existential, and sociopolitical themes embedded within these biofictions. The research problem centres on understanding how these narratives use the biographical subject to propose alternative ways of living and being, and how the authors' creative choices reflect broader societal critiques.

The primary objectives of this study include analysing the variations in the portrayal of Francis's character and personality in the two select biofictions, discerning the underlying motives and intentions driving the authors' creative choices, and examining the agential dynamics within these narratives. This involves an exhaustive analysis of the roles played by the agential dynamics of authors, biographical subjects, and readers, highlighting the transformative potential inherent in the biofictional genre. Furthermore, the study delves into the anchored imagination, anchored symbolism and metaphorisation, uncovering how authors elevate Francis into a metaphorical representation of broader themes and ideologies.

Through meticulous narrative analysis, the research reveals how Kossak and Kazantzakis employ historical analogies and metaphors to critique contemporary totalitarian regimes and institutional constraints, respectively. Kossak's portrayal emphasizes peaceful resistance and moral integrity, suggesting that steadfastness and

humility can bring difference in oppressive systems. Kazantzakis, on the other hand, focuses on personal freedom and spiritual liberation, critiquing both religious and political institutions through the metaphor of poverty and advocating for individual integrity against systemic corruption.

The study also explores how these biofictions engage readers, encouraging them to reflect on their own convictions and societal norms. Kossak's narrative prompts readers to consider the role of personal integrity in effecting societal change, while Kazantzakis invites readers to explore existential themes of freedom and personal growth. By analysing the biographical subject's role in critiquing past, present, and future contexts, the research underscores the capacity of biofiction to transcend historical accuracy and offer profound insights into the human condition.

Ultimately, this research illuminates the profound capacity of biofiction to unearth transcending truths, offering a multi-dimensional exploration that goes beyond conventional historical accounts. By blending factual accuracy with imaginative embellishment, Kossak and Kazantzakis breathe life into the character of Francis, providing readers with a rich tapestry of emotional and psychological insight. This study is a step towards legitimising the aesthetic genre of biofiction and specifically highlights the enduring relevance of Francis's ideals, challenging readers to reflect on their own beliefs and actions in light of the transformative power of unwavering conviction and integrity.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Humans are inherently social beings and tend to have a natural interest in the lives and experiences of others. We often find inspiration, motivation, and connection through learning about the lives of individuals who have made an impact on history or society. This keenness is reflected in the enduring fascination for the genres like biography and autobiography. Biographies and autobiographies offer a glimpse into the personal and vocational lives of real individuals, providing insights into their ambitions, inspirations, struggles, achievements, and legacies. Readers are drawn to these narratives because they offer opportunities for self-reflection, empathy, and understanding of human experiences. They allow readers to learn from the successes and failures of others, gain perspective on different cultures and historical periods, and form connections with personalities who share similar experiences or values or have overcome identical barriers. Yet, though biographies and autobiographies serve as attempts to preserve the legacy of a person when viewed as a scientific endeavour, they provide selectively included and interpreted documented facts, influenced by the subjectivity of the biographer. They adhere to historical accuracy and documentary proofs. While doing so due to a lack of proof, it might also cause gaps in the histories and lives they are narrating.

Biographies may offer valuable data about a person, but they often fall short of exploring the deep intricacies of an individual's psyche, their intimate moments, or the deeper reasons for their decisions. This limitation is aggravated by the availability and reliability of historical data, which can vary significantly depending on the individual being studied and the historical context. For instance, if the person is very

famous and from an earlier period in history the data on them would be abundant but it might also blow up this particular person into mythical proportions. Likewise, if the person is relatively unknown, data about them would be scarce. Both these situations provide gaps in history or biography and make space for the creativity of biofictionists. Figures like Francis of Assisi, revered across centuries, who lived in the thirteenth century, often face an abundance of information due to their historical prominence. While historical accuracy and authenticity are crucial in understanding Francis of Assisi's writings and biographical accounts, the interpretation and application of his teachings in different historical periods, the influence of Franciscan spirituality on religious and social movements, and the broader impact of the Franciscan Order on theology, philosophy, and society contribute to the profound understanding of his legacy. However, the abundance of oral and written material has contributed to the formation of the Francis of Assisi we know today.

This thesis engages in exploring the life of Francis of Assisi through the lens of biofiction, it embarks on a journey that transcends traditional biographical constraints, delving into the realm of imagination and interpretation to illuminate the multifaceted dimensions of his legacy. Until a text is thoroughly examined and analyzed, it remains a mere collection of words, devoid of significance. This principle is especially applicable to literary works that delve into the life and teachings of Francis of Assisi. While numerous biographies have been written about Francis, his writings often take a backseat to his legendary status. The man, the founder, the prophet, and the saint in Francis of Assisi keep on evading, extending, and expanding through each narrative. Through this exploration, the thesis seeks to illuminate the multifaceted dimensions of his legacy by delving into the realm of anchored imagination and creative interpretation of biofiction.

Giovanni de Bernardone, known to us as Francis of Assisi, emerged as an influential personality during medieval times. As a social and religious reformer in the thirteenth century, he founded three major religious orders and continues to be a patron figure for many others to this day. In 1979, Pope John Paul II declared him the patron saint of ecology, and Francis is renowned for the Peace Prayer attributed to him. Additionally, he is revered as the patron saint of merchants, needle workers, families, animals, those dying alone, and more. His life and actions led him to be regarded as a saint during his lifetime, earning him the epithet of the "second Christ" due to his unwavering imitation of Christ.

The depiction of Francis of Assisi in art and literature varies, with some works focusing on his historical persona and others incorporating elements of legend, spirituality, and artistic interpretation. Through illustrations of Francis, authors have sought to explore and capture the profound impact of his life, spirituality, and teachings, resonating with readers across different generations and cultures. Among the few known biofictions on Francis of Assisi, this research focuses on two, Zofia Kossak's *Blessed are the Meek*, written in Polish and translated to English by Rulka Langer, first published in Polish in 1937, and Nikos Kazantzakis' *God's Pauper: Francis of Assisi*, originally written in Greek and translated to English by P. A. Bien, published in 1954.

The initial segment of this Introductory chapter delves into the concept of biofiction, tracing its evolution, addressing scholarly scepticism, and exploring key debates surrounding its definition and significance. By examining the features and implications of biofiction, this segment sets the stage for a deeper exploration of its application in portraying the life of Francis of Assisi.

1.1 The Evolution of the Historical Novel

Before delving into the fruition of biofiction, it is essential to trace the origins of its predecessor, the historical novel genre. The rise of historical fiction can be attributed to the profound impact of the French Revolution on the collective psyche of Europe. Scholars argue that this pivotal event gave birth to the study of history as an academic discipline. During the Restoration period, French historians notably focused on exploring how modern bourgeois society emerged from the class struggles between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. These struggles, which spanned the entire Middle Ages, culminated in the French Revolution. This marked a significant shift in historical writing, as scholars sought to systematically analyze the historical nature and origins of the present using rational and scientific methods.

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, scholars and thinkers sought to augment the analytical tools of the Enlightenment era. Their objective was to discern and elucidate the fundamental causes of pivotal historical upheavals. Through the systematic examination of past events, they aimed to furnish individuals with the capacity to anticipate and avert future crises. This push to establish history as a rigorous science played a role in the emergence of the historical novel. This literary form aimed to vividly depict the laws and causes behind human-generated disasters, offering readers a deeper understanding of historical events. Thus, it can be viewed that in 19th-century Europe, Historical fiction rose to prominence, as part of the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment. The influence of the Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott, whose works were immensely popular throughout Europe, was greater.

In 1937, Georg Lukács published The *Historical Novel,* a landmark study that delved into the rise and legitimization of historical fiction. Lukács acknowledged the

existence of historical novels prior to the nineteenth century but argued that the genre truly flourished in the years following the eighteenth century. According to Lukács, the protagonist of a historical novel should be an ordinary, fictional figure. By accurately portraying the social, political, and economic forces that shaped the character, authors could transform them into representative symbols of their specific time and place. For this reason, it was crucial for the main character not to possess exceptional qualities, as their role was to symbolize the broader historical context (Lukács 304-305)

Successful historical novels, according to Lukács, shed light on the formation of contemporary readers. By offering insights into the historical forces that shaped society, these novels provided readers with the necessary information to understand their current circumstances and predict and direct the future. In essence, the historical novel served as a tool for social and political progress, empowering readers to actively shape their world based on a deeper comprehension of historical events. The genre's ability to connect the past, present and future in a meaningful and enlightening way contributed to its enduring popularity and influence.

1.2 Hybrid Narratives Blurring Boundaries

Around those times, certain authors tried their hand at writing a particular kind of historical novel from the point of view of a historical figure. This kind of novel which came to be known as a Biographical novel, though popular faced a lot of criticism. One of the accusations on the biographical form of the historical novel was, as put forth by Lukács, that, the effective historical novel pictures the social, political, economic and intellectual forces that created the great complicities of a particular age. Since the biographical novel centres, the narrative on the life story of a single heroic

figure, it necessarily distorts and misrepresents the historical reality, because "the character is inevitably exaggerated, made to stand on tiptoe, his historical calling unduly emphasized while the real objective causes and factors of the historical mission are inevitably omitted" (Lukács 314). Therefore, according to him, "because of this false distribution of weights, what should be the real centre of these novels- the given historical transformation- cannot make itself felt sufficiently strongly" (Lukács 321). In the case of Lukács, the criticism of the biographical form of the historical novel is due to his consideration that the biographical novel is an offshoot of the historical novel.

There were other notable critiques judging biographical novels to be a failed or distorted aesthetic form. In her 1939 essay "The Art of Biography" although not directly mentioning the biographical novel Virginia Woolf tries to articulate that "fact and fiction refuses to mix" (Woolf 123). Her views were directed to the Stracheyite Biography the new trend of the twentieth-century biographers led by Lytton Stratchy that aimed at using creative imagination and fictional techniques in writing a biography. Contradicting her own statement, Woolf has authored novels like *Orlando* or *Flush* where the storyline largely leans towards a real person's life. But she refuses to name the protagonist after the actual historical person because she could not allow herself to take the liberty of altering facts about an actual person to convert him or her into a literary symbol. For her "novelist is free, the biographer is tied" (120). Simply expressed, according to Woolf, authors must decide whether to pursue the skill of authentically portraying a person's life, which would make their work a biography, or pursue the art of developing a fully realized, living, character, which would turn what they write into a work of fiction. It is not possible to combine the two into a biographical novel.

In his groundbreaking 1995 essay “The Buxom Biographies” American literary critic Carle Bode tries to vindicate the Biographical novel. But his attitude towards the biographical novel is one of pity. In his conception, if a biography is stylized or includes undocumented legends of the biographical subject, then it could be considered a biographical novel. According to him, a biography gives readers “unadorned truth” and a novel gives an embellished truth (Bode 266, 268). In these terms instead of vindicating or legitimizing the biographical novel, it is made to look like a historical novel or a biography gone awry. This is to say that though the readers enjoyed the biographical novel just as the historical novel it was not in the same status as the latter. Key issues in current scholarly debates about narratives involving historical personalities using their biographies include its relationship to or distinctiveness from other generic categories like autobiographies and biographies, historic fiction and historiographic metafiction; the role of the proper name as the signifier of the genre; the level of character agency; the level of authorial agency in creating a fictional truth rather than an accurate historical portrait.

In her article “Fictional biography, factual biography, and their contaminations” Ina Schabert opines that what she meant by fictional biography “engaged in the comprehension of real historical individuals by means of the sophisticated instruments of knowing and articulating knowledge that contemporary fiction offers” (Schabert 4) But then, biofiction is not a biography as this aesthetic form deviates on varied levels from documented truths to imagined, probable truths. In a similar vein, exploring its place between genres Cora Kaplan states that biofiction,

> The term coined to describe the hybrid genre, can be interpreted in various ways, as highlighting the tension between biography and fiction, as well as marking the overlap between them. … But the ‘bio’ in biofiction also

> references a more essentialized and embodied element of identity, a subject less than transcendent but more than merely discourse. It implies that there is something stubbornly insoluble in what separates the two genres and that prevents them from being invisibly sutured; the join will always show. (Kaplan 65)

Frequently, despite the disclaimer of the novelist that the biographical novel is a fiction, authors have been accused of manipulating and twisting facts. As mentioned before even history is not purely an unadorned truth. Historians themselves have biases. Historian like the fiction writer uses imagination to interpret data. The past is always mediated through a specific consciousness, which means that historians use the creative imagination as much as the novelist in order to create the historical subject or the past. The need here is to assess a Biographical novel as something different from a Historical novel and Biography. Unlike a biography, it is to be assessed under fiction using the criteria for fiction. Unlike historical novels, the purpose of a biographical novel is not to illuminate the social-historical reality that shapes and determines the human in a given time and place. Instead, the biographical novel is one that showcases the human ability to defy and evade environmental conditioning.

1.3 Biofiction

In recent decades, there has been extensive scholarship on this particular genre. French critic Alain Buisine calls the biographical novel ‘Biofiction’, a term coined by him in a 1991 issue of the journal *Revue des sciences humaines* on “Le Biographique”. It was used again by German-Austrian Anglicists Martin Middeke and Werner Huber as the title of their 1999 edited work on fictional rewritings of the lives

of British Romantic writers for which they announce that they "suggest the generic term 'biofictions'"(Middekke and Huber 3). The new name calls for a new orientation with which this genre needs to be approached. This is the significance of the present study.

As a burgeoning field in literature, it delves into the realm of utilizing real-life individuals as protagonists while infusing their life stories with fictional elements. David Lodge defines it as the novel 'which takes a real person and their real history as the subject matter for imaginative exploration, using the novel's techniques for representing subjectivity rather than the objective, evidence-based discourse of biography' (Lodge 8). This aesthetic form had become popular in the 1930s. Some of the notable biofictions of this era were, Leonard Ehrlich's *God's Angry Man* (1932), Lion Feuchtwanger's *Josephus* (1932) (the first of the Josephus Flavius novels), Thomas Mann's series of four novels on Joseph (the first of which was published in 1933), Robert Graves's *I Claudius* (1934) (the first of Claudius novels), Irving Stone's *Lust for Life* (1934), Bruno Frank's *A Man Called Cervantes* (1934), Heinrich Mann's King Henry IV novels (the first of which was published in 1935), Arna Bontemps' *Black Thunder* (1936), Robert Graves' *Count Belisarius* (1938), Stone's *Jack London, Sailor on Horseback* (1938), Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (1939), and Thomas Mann's *Lotte in Weimar* (1939). There have been notable biofictions before this but it was rare and cannot be presumed as a part of a movement.

In recent times, there has been a significant shift towards more speculative and interactive experiences, driven by advancements in information technology. This has led to a surge in the creation of derivative identities across different platforms. However, amidst this abundance of information, verifying the authenticity of claims

has become more difficult. In this context, biofiction serves as a tool to navigate this complex terrain, offering insights into our changing reality and helping us make sense of it. Biofiction not only mirrors our dynamic societal context but also offers valuable insights into navigating the complexities of our ever-changing world. However, there are misconceptions about its approach to factual accuracy. While biofiction involves imaginative reinterpretations of biographical lives, it does not undermine the importance of factual integrity. On the contrary, it provides a critical framework for examining our relationship with factual realities and the ethical use of fiction. By engaging with biofiction, we confront the challenges posed by post-truth ideologies, prompting us to reflect on the nature of truth and the responsibilities associated with storytelling.

Historically, our quest for knowledge has often placed undue emphasis on the accumulation of data, overshadowing the importance of discernment, analysis, and judgment in interpreting the significance of such information in lived experiences. While the pursuit of knowledge is undoubtedly valuable, it is equally essential to recognize that meaningful truths extend beyond mere accumulation, they lie in our capacity to comprehend what eludes us. In the context of biofiction, writers frequently underscore the imperative of navigating a world replete with excessive information yet bereft of genuine understanding. By engaging with the uncomfortable and often unsettling truths that elude conventional narratives, biofiction writers strive to expose the limitations of simplistic fiction. At its core, biofiction aims to explore alternate paths and counterfactual scenarios, envisioning how lives could have unfolded differently. These speculative truths not only challenge the existing biographical narratives but also serve as a means of critiquing and unsettling the present by opening up uncharted possibilities.

In the realm of biofiction, the objectives of fiction are pivotal, serving as guiding principles for authors navigating the complexities of representing real-life individuals and events. However, it is crucial to discern between narratives that manipulate biographical facts to suit a particular agenda, often at the expense of truth, and those that employ fiction to explore the depths of human experience and uncover deeper truths. While narratives may vary in their approaches, biofiction aims to engage with the complexities of individual lives empathetically, delving into the nuances of subjective experiences and perspectives. Biofiction challenges traditional notions of truth and reality, blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction to reveal the fluidity and malleability of biographical existence. As readers immerse themselves in these narratives, they confront the uncertainties of exploring the unknown and are presented with opportunities for introspection and self-discovery. Through the transformative power of biofiction, new perspectives emerge, offering fresh insights into the human condition and prompting reflection on our own lives and experiences. Ultimately, biofiction serves as a lens through which one can examine the complexities of human existence, encouraging empathy, understanding, and connecting across diverse perspectives. By engaging with these narratives, readers are invited to expand their understanding of themselves and the world, fostering a deeper appreciation for the richness and diversity of human experience.

1.4 Features of Biofiction

Based on the insights presented in *Biofiction: An Introduction*, which seeks to provide a theoretical framework for understanding biographical novels, several characteristic features of biofictions emerge. These include the following.

1.4.1 Agency in Three Pertinent Forms

Biofiction revolves around the concept of agential living. Three levels of agency can be found in action within Biofictions. One level involves authorial agency, allowing authors the freedom to creatively reinterpret and modify documented histories and biographies. This enables them to address gaps in information and present a narrative that encapsulates a broader truth, beyond mere factual accuracy. Biofiction also explores agency related to the biographical subject, strategically framing narratives to highlight their journey towards self-agency. Through deliberate storytelling choices, the biographical subject's transformation and empowerment take centre stage, offering readers insight into their evolving autonomy and decision-making processes. The third level of agency is pertaining to the reader. By fictionalising a historical person, biofiction writers try to open new ways of looking into situations. In biofiction, reader agency emerges as a transformative force, as fictionalized historical figures invite readers to inhabit different temporal and bodily experiences. This immersive journey fosters alternative perspectives and prompts reconsideration of entrenched ideologies. By inspiring introspection and innovation, biofiction empowers readers to challenge societal constraints and embrace paths toward personal and collective liberation.

1.4.2 Presentation of The Author's Worldview

In biofiction, authors often prioritize their own worldview, conveyed through the lens of the biographical subject, over strict adherence to historical accuracy. They tend to transcend the constraints of documented correctness to infuse their narratives with their own artistic vision. Rather than being bound by the factual details of a biographical subject's life, they use the subject as a canvas upon which to paint their

own worldview. This approach allows authors to explore themes, ideas, and perspectives that may not be fully captured by strict adherence to historical facts. By fictionalizing historical figures, authors can offer readers new ways of understanding the world and themselves, encouraging them to question conventional wisdom and embrace alternative modes of thinking and being. Ultimately, biofiction becomes a medium through which authors can assert their agency as creators, shaping narratives that inspire readers to envision and pursue transformative possibilities in their own lives.

1.4.3 Anchored Symbolism or Anchored Imagination

Colm Toibin in his interview with Bethany Layne expresses his idea that biofictions are anchored imaginations. This is a way for biofictionists to strike a truth pact with the readers. A well-crafted biofiction strives to maintain a sense of authenticity and coherence, ensuring that the narrative remains faithful to the personality and characteristics of the biographical subject being fictionalized. Toibin states,

> …it's that the more I stick within the framework of the facts, the more I get from that, the more I feel that this is real and I have to make it more real, I have to make it seem to matter more on the page. You're anchored, you're getting an anchor from certain facts, and that anchor is not merely factual but emotional, and it brings a great deal with it, it carries you. (Toibin 231)

1.4.4 Metaphorisation or Raising the Biographical Character into A Symbol

In "German Biofiction from Nietzsche to the Present" Lackey thinks that "what readers can and should expect from the biofictional work is a real person whose life has been converted into a metaphor that can be used to illuminate vital realities in

multiple times and places"(Lackey, *German* 2). Biofiction often metaphorizes or raises the biographical subject into a symbol and the character becomes a metaphorical representation of broader concepts or themes. Unlike traditional literary symbols, which authors can manipulate freely within invented settings, biofiction's anchored symbolism is rooted in concrete historical data. This grounding, in reality, imposes constraints on the author's imaginative vision, requiring them to adhere to recorded facts while still exercising artistic license. As a result, biofiction strikes a delicate balance between creative interpretation and historical accuracy, offering readers a nuanced exploration of complex themes through the lens of a real-life figure. "The biofictional symbol is different from the traditional literary symbol in that it is more anchored in fact, more rooted in the historical and the empirical"(Lackey, *Biofiction* 36). This unique approach allows biofiction to harness the power of symbolism to provoke thought and evoke deeper meanings, enriching the reading experience with layers of significance and interpretation.

1.4.5 Presentation of Probable Truths

While biofictions may deviate from strict historical accuracy, they aim to present probable truths rather than absolute facts. Biofictions work into the "Structural obstacles to scholarly certainty" that "opens up space for speculation for writing into the gaps" (Padmore 38). By blending historical research with imaginative storytelling, biofictions offer interpretations of events and characters that resonate with the complexities of human experience, allowing for a nuanced understanding of historical figures and their lives. Biofictions adeptly weave plausible narratives drawn from documented events in biographical subjects' lives, thereby offering a portrayal of events that aligns with the realm of possibility. As Caryl Phillip states, "What makes compelling fiction is the truth of the emotional context in which you are placing the

person" (Ladent and Tunca 459). He explains further about this feature in biofiction stating, "The thing that fiction can do that nonfiction can't do is take you into the heart and soul of the person, take you into the deep interior of a person; in other words, introduce you to their nightmares"(460). This approach fosters an intimate connection with the characters, facilitating a deeper and closer understanding of human experiences. By rendering renowned lives more relatable and accessible, biofictions effectively diminish the perceived distance between greatness and ordinary existence, enabling readers to perceive historical figures in a more familiar light.

1.4.6 Imagination of new ways of living

Biofictions have the capacity to imagine alternative realities and new possibilities for living. Biofiction authors employ the biographical subject's life to illuminate pathways toward novel and purposeful forms of agency. It is a kind of liberation that biofiction provides by suggesting or motivating a new way of life through the biographical subject who is the character within the biofiction. As Chika Unigwe comments,

> Readers don't come to biographical fiction for truth. They come to biographical fiction for possibilities… I think you can go to historical figures for inspiration but not necessarily for new possibilities, for alternate possibilities. And I think that's much more important than inspiration (Unigwe 225).

Biofiction authors draw upon the lives of historical figures, utilizing their experiences to offer contemporary readers guidance towards a more liberated and enriched existence. This renders the lives of these figures as navigational tools for readers, serving as 'existential maps'(Montero 167) towards a fuller and more liberated present. By reimagining the lives of historical figures, biofictions challenge

conventional norms and inspire readers to envision different paths and potentials for themselves and society as a whole. Through this imaginative exploration, biofictions encourage readers to consider the potential for personal and societal transformation.

1.4.7 Implications

The features of biofiction highlight its ability to intricately weave together fact and fiction, presenting readers with alternative interpretations of historical figures and events. Through the exploration of these narrative approaches, it becomes evident that biofictions serve as powerful tools for reimagining the past and interrogating contemporary societal structures. Building upon these insights, this study aims to delve into a specific manifestation of this phenomenon in the portrayal of Francis of Assisi in biofictions. By investigating how authors utilize Francis as a symbol or metaphor to critique historical, contemporary, and prospective societal ideologies, as well as showcasing alternate ways of living or choices that could have been made, this research seeks to uncover the multifaceted role of this biographical subject and the biography within the biofiction in shaping our understanding of the human condition. This study selectively focuses on two specific works within the extensive corpus of fictional and semi-nonfictional literature on Francis of Assisi. The novel *Blessed Are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak was chosen due to its publication in the 1930s a pivotal period marked by the burgeoning popularity of biofictions. This temporal alignment offers a unique opportunity to explore the evolving conventions and thematic nuances characteristic of biofiction during its formative years. Similarly, *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* by Nikos Kazantzakis was selected based on the author's prominence and widespread recognition within the realm of fictional representations of Francis. This examination will provide valuable insights into the complexities of historical representation within biofiction narratives, offering new perspectives on the

enduring relevance of figures like Francis of Assisi in contemporary discourse. This leads to the research problem within this study.

1.5 Research Problem

The research problem addressed in this study focuses on exploring the divergent portrayals of Francis of Assisi in two selected biofictions within the framework of biofiction analysis. This study investigates how the agential dynamics within these biofictions use the fictional portrayals of Francis of Assisi to critique historical, contemporary, and societal structures. Additionally, it aims to understand how these narratives propose alternative ways of living and being. The study will also analyse the role of Francis of Assisi within these fictional works, explore the reasons authors choose to fictionalise him, and examine how they use him as an anchored symbol and metaphor to offer new insights into human experiences.

1.6 Research Hypothesis:

It is hypothesized that biofictions on Francis of Assisi employ creative storytelling techniques to reimagine his life and teachings, utilizing him as a symbol to critique societal norms and ideologies across different temporal contexts. These narratives are expected to engage readers in critical reflection, prompting them to reconsider their own beliefs and values in light of alternative interpretations presented within the texts. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that biofictions will propose alternative ways of living or being, highlighting the role of the biographical subject or biography within the narrative, and elucidating the reasons behind authors' choices to fictionalize Francis. Through this process, biofictions have the potential to reshape perceptions of history, provide possible applicable alternatives, and offer nuanced insights into the past, present, and future.

1.7 Literature Review

The literature review section is structured into several distinct sections, each offering a comprehensive examination of key scholarly works relevant to the study at hand. The first section provides a thorough review of the literature on biofiction, encompassing a wide range of sources that have contributed to shaping the understanding of this genre. This includes scholarly books, collections of interviews with biofiction writers, and research papers that offer valuable insights into the theoretical frameworks and thematic motifs inherent in biofictional narratives. Building upon this foundation, the subsequent sections delve into specific aspects of the study. The second section critically evaluates literature pertaining to Francis of Assisi during the thirteenth century, incorporating analyses of his writings and biographical accounts that are deemed authentic within academic circles. Following this, attention turns to scholarly works examining the writings of Nikos Kazantzakis and Zofia Kossak, two prominent authors whose biofictions on Francis of Assisi form a focal point of this research. Through this structured approach, the literature review seeks to synthesize existing knowledge, identify gaps in research, and provide a comprehensive framework for the ensuing analysis.

1.7.1 Literature on Biofiction

Apart from the biofiction scholars who have already been mentioned earlier Lucia Boldrini in her *Autobiographies of Others: Historical Subjects and Literary Fiction* (2012) engages elaborately in biographical novels narrated as testimonies or in first-person narratives. She names such works as ‘heterobiographies’ where the narrative seems like an autobiography but is written by some other author and is a blend of ‘historical factuality and literary fictionality’ (Boldrini 1). Monica Latham’s

essay “Serving under two masters’: Virginia Woolf’s Afterlives in Contemporary Biofictions”(2012) and *Virginia Woolf’s Afterlives: The Author as Character in Contemporary Fiction and Drama (* 2021) explores the nuances of biofiction with a specific focus on Virginia Woolf’s biofictions. *We Call upon the Author: Contemporary Biofiction and Fyodor Dostoevsky* (2021) is a similar work exploring fictional representations of Dostoevsky. Biofiction Scholars like Catherine Padmore, Kelly Gardiner, Virginia Rademacher, Todd Avery, Katherine Scheil, Stephine Russo, Lance Olsen, Marie- Luise Kohlke, Bethany Lane and the like have made in-depth studies on biofiction and have contributed to the nature and function of this aesthetic form. But it is to be noticed that all these works are related to mainly after lives of authors, artists and also on women who have been in the background. *Authorising Early Modern European Women: From Biography to Biofiction* (2022) is an anthology edited by James Fitzmaurice, Naomi J Miller and Sara Jayne Steen that specifically focuses on biofictions depicting the lives of women who have shaped their own destinies.

Biofiction and Writers’ Afterlives edited by Bethany Layne studies the specific contributions of biofiction. Collections of Interviews with Biofiction Writers *Truthful Fictions: Conversations with American Biographical Novelists* (2014) *American Biographical Novel* (2016), *Conversations with Biographical Novelists: Truthful Fictions Across the Globe* (2019) shed light on what the authors themselves feel about this genre. A huge number of these authors have created biofictions on Authors, artists, and the marginalised like slaves, thieves, murderers, women who lived in the shade of great men, etc., It is found that only very few research from the perspective of biofiction has been done on fictionalised saints’ lives. No scholarly exploration

exists within the theoretical framework of biofiction concerning biographical novels on Francis of Assisi.

1.7.2 Literature on the Thirteenth-century Assisi and Francis

Franciscan studies have made significant strides in scholarly research concerning the writings of Francis of Assisi and literature about him. These studies encompass meticulous scientific scrutiny aimed at verifying the authenticity of various manuscripts. A notable contribution in this regard is the publication of *The Early Documents on Francis of Assisi,* comprising three volumes titled *The Saint*, *The Prophet,* and *The Founder*. These volumes represent a comprehensive compilation of meticulously researched, verified, and authentically translated texts, encompassing the complete writings of Francis and writings about him spanning up to one hundred and fifty years following his demise.

Paul Sabbatier's *The Road to Assisi* (2014) is a pivotal biography of Francis of Assisi, originally published in 1894. This seminal work, marking Sabatier as a pioneer in modern Franciscan studies, sparked a resurgence of interest in Francis during the late 19th century, inspiring scholarly quests to uncover the authentic Francis. *Francis of Assisi* (1981) by Arnaldo Fortini places the Franciscan movement realistically in its historical context.

John of Brienne: King of Jerusalem, Emperor of Constantinople c1175-1237 (2013) by Guy Perry traces the career of this mid-ranking knight through his journey to becoming an emperor. This investigation into social and geographical mobility during the 'Age of the Crusades' delves into the multifaceted factors such as families, dynasticism, politics, intrigue, religion, and warfare that shaped his remarkable

journey. These works of history and biography serve as an anchor to fall back for factuality while assessing the biofictions under study in this research.

1.7.3 Literature on the primary texts

There has been relatively less research conducted on Nikos Kazantzakis' *God's Pauper* compared to his other literary works.

Nick Trakakis's "Kazantzakis's Poor Man of God: Philosophy without Philosophy" is as the name suggests a philosophical thought on the novel without following any systematic theoretical framework.

In "Process Poesis:A Comparison of the Concept of God Found in Whiteheadian Process Theology and in the Narrative Fiction of Nikos Kazantzakis" a doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Glasgow by Darren J N Middleton, he studies *God's Pauper* among three other works by Kazantzakis. Here he studies the work in a consideration of God as evolving Spirit as in process theology. Francis is seen as a process nature -mysticist. He concludes that the novel can be seen a mythopoesis of process thought and portrays the divine transcendence-within-immanence (process panentheism).

In "Ultimate Reality and Meaning in Nikos Kazantzakis", Daniel A Dombrowski explores the view of God developed by Kazantzakis which is different from that of the traditional view and how this could be seen in his novels and other works. Among other works *God's Pauper* also comes in his discussion.

The Selected Letters of Nikos Kazantzakis edited and Translated by Peter Bien gives the thoughts of Kazantzakis about St. Francis and his ideas about him while he was writing the novel.

In "The Cretan Glance: The World and Art of Nikos Kazantzakis" in the *Indiana University Press* Morton P Levitt mentions that St. Francis like most of the other Kazantzakis protagonists is Cretan to the core, though the novel is set in Italy.

Few other Scholars have vaguely mentioned the novel in their research among the rest of the works of Kazantzakis but do not lay any special emphasis on This particular novel.

Zofia Kossak and her works had great significance during her lifetime before the war and during the interwar period. Reviews on the novel *Blessed are the Meek* appeared in Journals and Magazines and declared the novel as an excellent historical novel during those times.

Very recently in 2023, Adam Regiewicz in his "Medievality of Zofia Kossak. The figure of St Francis in *Blessed are the Meek* sheds light on the author's knowledge and ability to view the past and the present through a single lens is presented in the article

The literature review underscores a notable gap in research, particularly within the realm of Christian biofiction, especially those centred on saints. Furthermore, no existing study has approached the selected novels from the perspective of biofiction, highlighting a significant opportunity for exploration and analysis in this area.

1.8 Research Objectives

1. To analyse narrative variations and authorial intent: The central focus of this investigation is to analyse variations in the portrayal of Francis of Assisi's character and personality across different biofictions. Through a comparative study of two prominent novels, this research aims to discern the underlying motives and intentions driving the authors' creative choices. By

examining the divergence in narrative approaches and the implications thereof, it seeks to unravel the complexities of authorial intent and its impact on the portrayal of historical figures within the biofictional genre.

2. To analyse the agential dynamics within the biofictions: This study aims to delve into the multifaceted dynamics of agency within biofictions centred on Francis of Assisi. Through an exhaustive analysis of the roles played by authors, biographical subjects, and readers, it seeks to unravel the intricate web of influences shaping the narrative construction of these works. By examining how authors exercise their creative license to reinterpret historical figures and events, this research endeavours to illuminate the powerful gaps in biography through anchored imagination and accentuate the transformative potential inherent in the biofictional genre.
3. To Uncover the Anchored Symbolism and Metaphorization: The study endeavours an investigation to uncover the symbolic and metaphorical dimensions inherent in biofictions portraying Francis of Assisi. By closely examining the techniques employed by authors to elevate Francis into a metaphorical representation of broader themes and ideologies, this study aims to elucidate the nuanced layers of meaning embedded within these narratives. Furthermore, it seeks to explore the unique aspect of anchored symbolism in biofictions, highlighting its role in enriching the narrative depth and fostering deeper engagement with the text.
4. To examine the biographical subject's role in critiquing past, present, and future contexts.: This research attempts to critically evaluate the portrayal of political and ideological themes within biofictions depicting Francis of Assisi. Through a meticulous analysis of the narrative construction and

thematic elements, it aims to assess how both these biofictions challenge societal norms, critique prevailing ideologies, and offer alternative perspectives on historical and contemporary issues. By unravelling the intricate interplay between fiction and reality within the biofictional genre, this study aims to shed light on the broader socio-political implications of these narratives.

5. To examine the role of biographical subject and biography within the biofiction: The research aims to investigate how these narratives propose alternative ways of living or being while analysing the role of the biographical subject or biography within the biofictions. Additionally, the study seeks to understand the motivations behind authors' choices to fictionalise Francis of Assisi and the methods they employ in crafting these narratives.

1.9 Methodology

This research employs a qualitative approach, utilising literary analysis and comparative study techniques to investigate the depiction of Francis of Assisi in two biofictions: *Blessed are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak and *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* by Kazantzakis. The primary focus is to understand how these novels interpret and depict the historical figure of Francis of Assisi, examining themes, character development, narrative techniques, and symbolic elements within the texts.

The methodology involves a comprehensive examination of the biofictions within their historical and cultural contexts, aiming to contextualise the portrayal of Francis of Assisi and elucidate the socio-political influences shaping the narratives. Close reading techniques are employed to analyse specific passages and scenes,

facilitating a nuanced exploration of the texts' meanings and implications. Additionally, a comparative analysis is conducted to identify similarities and differences in the authors' interpretations of Francis of Assisi, shedding light on the varied perspectives and thematic emphases present in the biofictions.

Drawing on insights from interdisciplinary fields such as literary studies, historical analysis, and philosophical inquiry, this research adopts a multidimensional approach to understanding biofictions and its broader implications. Theoretical frameworks proposed by scholars like Michael Lackey are incorporated to provide theoretical grounding and conceptual frameworks for the analysis. By employing qualitative research methods and theoretical frameworks, this study aims to contribute to the scholarly discourse on biofiction studies and deepen our understanding of the portrayal of historical figures in literary works.

1.10 Relevance of the Research

1. Through its focused analysis of biofictional works, the research contributes to the broader recognition and acceptance of biofiction within literary studies. By highlighting the artistic and intellectual merits of biofiction, especially in portraying religious figures, it challenges traditional genre boundaries and expands the scope of literary criticism.
2. This study delves into the realm of Christian biofictions, particularly those centred on Francis of Assisi, offering a nuanced examination of how religious figures are portrayed in literature. By engaging with biofictions, it explores theological and philosophical dimensions, including questions of faith, virtue, and the human-divine relationship as depicted in literary narratives.

3. By delving into the intricate dynamics of biofiction through the analysis of these biofictions, it contributes to the broader discourse on narrative representation and human agency. The exploration of biofictional techniques in portraying historical figures like Francis of Assisi offers invaluable insights into the intersection of literature, history, and imagination.
4. Biofictions often raise ethical and moral questions, inviting readers to reflect on fundamental human values. Through its analysis of biofictions on Francis of Assisi, the research encourages contemplation of themes such as compassion, humility, social justice, non-possession, the acceptance of hardship, and the importance of stepping out of one's comfort zone, fostering both personal and societal reflection and growth.
5. The research illuminates contemporary attitudes towards spirituality, sustainable peace, poverty, and social activism by scrutinising the portrayal of Francis of Assisi in biofictions. It offers insights into cultural dynamics and ideological currents shaping literary representations of religious figures, serving as a valuable cultural mirror.
6. By analysing how Francis of Assisi is constructed and reimagined in biofictions, the research sheds light on processes of narrative construction and identity formation. It underscores the role of literature in shaping cultural memory and perceptions of historical and religious figures, contributing to discussions on narrative theory and identity studies.
7. Finally, the research underscores the transformative power of storytelling in conveying complex theological and spiritual truths.

> Through imaginative reworking of historical events and figures, biofictional authors engage readers on emotional, intellectual, and existential levels, inviting exploration of profound questions of faith, meaning, and purpose in life.

1.11 Research Gap

Biofiction studies is a rapidly advancing field, and researchers are actively exploring the unique contributions of this genre compared to other forms of literature. The existing body of literature has investigated biofictions concerning writers and other artists. Studies are also done particularly focusing on figures from the Old and New Testaments in the context of Christian biofictions. However, there is a notable dearth of works on biofictions centred around saints, and to the best of my knowledge, no study has been conducted on the fictional representation of Francis through the framework of biofiction. Nikos Kazantzakis and his artistic oeuvre have been extensively examined by various scholars, who have approached his works from different perspectives. Although this particular novel has been the subject of multiple studies, no scholar has yet undertaken an analysis of its agential aesthetic form within the framework of biofiction. Zofia Kossak, a highly esteemed figure and her works, have primarily received appreciation and scholarly attention in Poland. While her activities during World War II and the interpretations of her works within this context have been explored, no scholarly investigation has been conducted to assess the specific novel under examination. The present thesis aims to address these research gaps by exploring the biofictional representation of Francis of Assisi, analysing the agential aesthetic in the two novels and a comparative study on it.

1.12 Motivation for undertaking this work

As the patron saint of the Franciscan Clarist Congregation, Francis of Assisi holds a significant position within the context of spirituality and philosophy. As a member of this congregation, the researcher has actively participated in various courses aimed at exploring the lives and teachings of the saints, including Francis and Clare of Assisi. However, despite these educational endeavours, the researcher found that Francis of Assisi remains elusive and incomprehensible amidst a plethora of colourful legends and dry historical facts.

In her pursuit to truly understand Francis of Assisi, the researcher turned to novels that offer a unique perspective on his life and spirituality. Although she does not intend to supplant the value of authoritative writings and biographies on Francis, she approached these novels with the understanding that stories captivate our interest due to their portrayal of human experiences "Stories interest us because of the humans who make choices, feel torn between competing actions, attach and detach themselves from others, suffer, triumph, and have a good time in between. They do things, but they also are certain kinds of people" (Bergtrand 229).

Inspired by this personal encounter with Francis through novels, she has been motivated to embark on a comprehensive study of these literary works. She aims to examine the role, nature and function of the biography and the biographical subject in the biofiction. And to analyse how the material of biography is used to create an agential being. Rather than focusing solely on Francis of Assisi and his historical context, these novels prioritise the process by which individuals come to know and create meaningful ways of existence in the present and future. The authors of these novels, in the estimation of the researcher, have endeavoured to distil the lived experiences of Francis and transform them into narratives that inspire readers to discover new possibilities and live more liberated and fulfilled lives.

Therefore, further research is needed to delve into the intricacies of biofictions centred around Francis of Assisi and unravel thow they contribute to a deeper understanding of his life and spirituality. Such investigation holds the potential to enrich our knowledge of Francis of Assisi and shed light on the broader phenomenon of how fictionalised accounts of historical figures can shape our perceptions and inspire personal growth.

1.13 Chapterisation:

Thus, the first chapter of the thesis gives an understanding of the evolution of biofiction from historical novels, biographies and autobiographies. This progression is outlined here. Through a detailed literature review discussing the studies, perspectives, theories on Biofiction studies, Franciscan studies, and bodies of work relevant to views on Nikos Kazantzakis, Zofia Kossak and their socio-political milieu, the gap in the existing research is demonstrated. This chapter has tried to elaborate on the need for research in Franciscan Biofiction and also stated the objectives leading to the research questions. The impact such research would have in the area of Christian biofiction is stated. It also describes the methodology taken.

The second chapter embarks on an exploration of the views and portrayal of Francis of Assisi in his own writings, in the biographies and memoires by his contemporaries. It examines his afterlives in the hagiographies or biographies that have been written around the first one and a half centuries after his death. It also includes a survey on his mentions in chronicles and other relevant sources. This provides an opportunity to consider the written trajectory of the saint.

The third chapter is an in-depth analysis of *Blessed are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak, studying the art of agential living, a feature of Biofiction, within this work.

The role of agency in three levels that is the agency of the author, the biographical subject and of the reader is examined here. A thorough scrutiny of how characters evaluate and respond to social situations within the fictional frame of the historic event is done here. The intent of the author in the portrayal of the biographical subject and the modulation in the historical/biographical events in the biofiction is deciphered. An attempt to comprehend the role of the biography within the biofiction is also made here.

The fourth chapter delves into Nikos Kazantzakis's God's Pauper: Francis of Assisi, analysing the agential dynamics of the author, biographical subject, and reader within the biofiction. It explores how Kazantzakis reimagines Francis's spiritual transcendence, contrasting this portrayal with historical accounts.

The fifth chapter delves into the anchored symbolism and metaphor to which the biographical subject is elevated in both the biofictions. We investigate how each author utilizes the biographee to critique both historical and contemporary socio-political and religious contexts. This chapter examines the methods employed by Kazantzakis and Kossak to simultaneously reflect on the past and present, thereby exploring the role, nature, and function of the biographical subject within the genre of biofiction. Through this analysis, we uncover the layered narratives and thematic critiques embedded in their portrayals of St. Francis, highlighting how these biofictions serve as tools for broader social commentary.

Chapter six examines the differing portrayals of Francis of Assisi by Zofia Kossak and Nikos Kazantzakis, unveiling the transformative potential of biofiction. It explores how each author project their world view through the biographical subject they portray. The chapter also investigates what inspired these authors to choose the

biography of Francis to craft their biofictions. This chapter highlights the contrasting dimensions of Francis's character and demonstrates how biofiction can offer a nuanced and transformative understanding of historical figures across different contexts.

The seventh chapter concludes the thesis by summarizing the key findings and interpreting their implications. It reflects on the significance of these findings in understanding the biofictional portrayals of Francis of Assisi in both the works under study. Additionally, this chapter discusses the limitations of the research. Suggestions on areas for future study is enumerated under the head - Recommendation.

Chapter 2: Tracing the Depiction of Francis of Assisi: Insights from His Writings, Contemporaries, and Afterlives

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out to conduct a thorough analysis of how Francis of Assisi is depicted and perceived in a range of sources. The primary goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of his life, influence, and enduring significance in the realm of Christian spirituality and literature. To achieve this, the chapter explores various types of sources that shed light on Francis's character, actions, and legacy.

2.2 Significance of Analysing Francis of Assisi's Depiction and Perception

Examining the depiction and perception of Francis of Assisi holds great importance for multiple reasons. Firstly, by delving into his own writings, we gain direct insight into his thoughts, beliefs, and personal experiences. This allows us to understand how Francis himself intended to present his spirituality and message to others. Additionally, exploring the perspectives of Francis's contemporaries through biographies and memoirs provides valuable insights into his character and the impact he had on those around him. Studying Francis's afterlives, written within 150 years of his death, helps trace the evolution of the narratives surrounding him. This enables us to grasp the changing interpretations and enduring significance of his legacy over time. Additionally, meticulously examining references to Francis in chronicles and other relevant sources situates him within the wider historical context. By doing so, we can better understand his historical presence and the extent of his impact and influence.

Importantly, this analysis extends beyond the exploration of Francis's life and teachings. It engages with broader discussions about the representation of holiness in Christian writings, both past and present, by reflecting on how Francis's portrayal aligns with or challenges prevailing notions of sanctity, we gain insight into his ongoing inspiration and resonance in contemporary Christian literature. This chapter's significance lies in its nuanced and multifaceted exploration of Francis of Assisi's depiction and perception. By weaving together various sources, it constructs a comprehensive understanding of his life, influence, and enduring significance in the realm of Christian spirituality and literature.

2.3 Francis of Assisi from his own writings

Delving into the writings of Francis of Assisi gives firsthand knowledge of his thoughts his nature and the guiding principles of his life. This can help us discover him intimately and know the movement he initiated. Knowing Francis's writing is a personal encounter that reveals in precision his gospel-centred vision, poetic sensibility and simplicity. The writings include his letters, exhortations, prayers and praises, his admonishes and testament and most importantly the rule or the form of life he put together for the pious men and women who wished ardently to follow him.

A close reading of his writings easily discloses the limits of his education and vocabulary. Francis uses rudimentary Latin and he often mixes it up with the Umbrian dialect he would use in everyday life. Thomas of Eccleston, a thirteenth-century chronicler suggests that he did poorly in Latin. For this reason, Francis greatly valued the written word and also those who could read and write. He relied on his brothers to write down his intuitions. Bonizzo of Bologna, Benedict of Pirato, Caesar of Speyer and Leo of Assisi appear among those who took dictation from Francis. (Armstrong et

al., *Saint* 36). As a result, there are occasions when these scribes, for example, in the case of Caesar, embellished Francis's thoughts, in other instances the plain language of Francis has been replaced by studied language or mannerisms. His prayers and praises were often spoken out by him in Umbrian dialect; the scribes would translate it into polished Latin as they were taking notes from him. For this reason, the language or the vocabulary in his writings might seem different depending upon the capability of the scribe. But then these changes have been made with his knowledge. The writings like that of the rule of 1223 have a share of control of the Order. His praises and prayers are the most unhampered by the responsibilities of the order. The few pieces composed in the Umbrian dialect give the best view of the mind of the composer.

2.3.1 Autographs

There exist only two examples of writings that Francis has written with his own hands. The first is a small piece of parchment written on both sides, which was given to Brother Leo on Mount La Verna by Francis. One side of it contains His Praises of God and the other side a Blessing given to Brother Leo. Another of his autographs is a very brief personal letter to Leo written to address some scruples Leo had.

2.3.1.1 Praises to God

Francis wrote this prayer on Mount La Verna, expressing gratitude for receiving the stigmata and praying to endure Jesus' suffering on Calvary. The praise is addressed to the Triune God, as Francis writes, "You are three and one, the Lord *God of gods*" The text describes what God means to him and, in the last stanza, to his followers, ending with "You are our eternal life". Notably, Francis corrected his own spelling, omitted punctuation, and added words, reflecting his limited language skills

but also his passionate desire to convey his sentiments. These changes highlight the intensity of his emotions. For instance, in “Lord, living and true God, you are love, charity,” Francis added “love” before “charity,” feeling that “charity” alone did not fully express his profound feelings (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 109)

2.3.1.2 Blessings Given to Brother Leo

This can be found on the other side of the parchment that contains the praises of God. It is a four-line blessing which is nothing but verses from the book of Numbers, Chapter 6, 25 to 27. Francis might have heard it during the liturgy. Nevertheless, the significance of this excerpt in shedding light on Francis’s character is discerned through an inscription made by Leo in red ink, positioned along the margin of the parchment. Leo, in his notation, notifies us that approximately two years prior to his death, Francis secluded himself for forty days atop Mount La Verna. About the praises he says ‘he wrote them in his own hand, thanking God for the kindness bestowed on him’ after he received the stigmata. ‘And about the blessings he informs ‘the blessed Francis wrote these blessings for me with his own hand’. The stigmata, which Francis endured, constituted a profoundly agonizing event; however, his spirit is teeming with exultation. His fervent love for God compels him to both desire and express gratitude for this divine manifestation. A detailed account recounting the circumstances surrounding the composition of the aforementioned Parchment, bestowed to Brother Leo, is expounded in Celano’s *Remembrance of the Desire of a Soul*, 49 (Armstrong et al., *Founder* 280) and Bonoventure’s *Life* XI, 9 (Armstrong et al., *Founder* 604). According to it, the unnamed companion who had accompanied Francis to La Verna, who kept Francis company by staying in a nearby cell, yearned deeply to get something written by Francis with his own hands. The companion firmly believed that this acquisition would alleviate the spiritual unrest that plagued him.

However, mindful of not disturbing Francis, he refrained from discussing this matter with him directly. Remarkably, Francis, without any verbal communication transpiring between them, intuited the desires of his companion and proceeded to fulfil them accordingly. Despite the torment he endured, Francis painstakingly transcribed the laudatory expressions employing his own hand, thereby demonstrating his remarkable perseverance and his unwavering love towards his companion. This gesture serves as a testament to Francis's empathetic and compassionate nature, encapsulating his sincere aspiration to elevate those around him towards a greater union with the Divine.

2.3.1.3 Letter to Brother Leo

This is the other autograph of Francis. It summarises a previous conversation between Leo and Francis and states that Leo may in obedience follow Christ in poverty 'in whatever way it seems better to you to please the Lord' (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 123). Francis refers to himself as "Francisco," emphasising their close friendship. Despite the letter's brevity and poor Latin, it encapsulates Francis's profound understanding of his own and his followers' calling to imitate the poverty of Christ as depicted in the Gospel. The letter also reveals Francis's nurturing and maternal role towards his followers, as he sees himself responsible for their spiritual nourishment and growth through the word of God. Francis expresses his availability to Leo in his crises. He very sympathetically writes "and if it is necessary for you for your soul for some consolation to you, and you want to come back to me,come"(123).

2.3.2 Letters

Apart from the autographs, all other writings of Francis have come down the history in multiple copies of manuscripts. The manuscripts that preserve a given work

are collectively called its tradition. As every act or copying introduces fresh errors, the extant manuscripts differ among themselves and from the original. But still, these writings shed considerable light on Francis's mind.

Writings that have been titled as 'Letters' in *Francis of Assisi: Early documents* volume one is being discussed under this head. A bunch of three letters which Franciscan scholars have concluded to be authentic and are supposed to have been composed in 1220 show Francis's concern for the Church of the time. Pope Honorius III had urged the Bishops for the implementation of Lateran IV and reform decrees. Among all the concerns of the council Francis picks up only the issue of taking care and giving due reverence to everything pertaining to the Holy Eucharist is evident in these letters. He is very ardent in begging the ministers in his order to ask all the clergy to handle the Body and Blood of Jesus with reverence and see that it is locked up in a precious place. While this piece of advice is part of the council church reform decree, Francis adds to it asking all to revere even the Eucharistic words written on cards. He insists them to see that even those are kept in befitting places. Moreover, he asks his brothers to remind people everywhere to do penance and awaken in them the need to receive the Holy Eucharist and do that with utmost reverence. Interestingly, more than what the council decree asks, Francis insists that the people "praise, glorify and honour on bended knee the Living God" (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 56).

Among these three letters, one is directly addressed to the rulers of the people. Francis encourages them to live in reverence of the Lord with the last judgment in mind. He gives them a similar instruction about reminding the people to revere the Lord in the Holy Eucharist. He also asks them to provide the people under their care some sign or announcement every evening so that they are reminded at that hour to give praise and thanksgiving to God. This seems to be what Francis saw in the Islamic

world when he went to Damietta in 1219, he is ready to adapt ways that would enhance everyone to Honour and glorify God. Francis requests his letters be copied and circulated to people who are responsible and he assures of God's blessings and his on whoever does what he has instructed. Francis writes to the rulers of the people suggesting that he was already considered a spiritual leader by the secular world.

Another interesting letter dated between 1221 and 1223 is addressed to an unnamed minister. The contents of the letter reveal that it is a response to the minister who seems to be having troubles in his relationship with his brothers and wants to retire. Francis refuses his request but supports him spiritually. Francis asks the minister to be merciful to the brothers under his care and bring back the lost through mercy. It is an example of spiritual accompaniment and direction on the part of Francis. Francis's letter to Brother Antony of Padua in 1223 contains just two lines. He addresses Antony as 'my Bishop' out of respect for his great wisdom. The letter grants permission to Brother Antony to teach but at the same time instructs him to take care that such kind of study does not extinguish his spirit of prayer.

The Letter to the Entire Order likely penned during the twilight of his life, Francis urges the General Minister and all future leaders to maintain purity in celebrating the Eucharist and reverence for the Blessed Sacrament. He humbly confesses his own failings and implores his brothers to take his admonitions seriously, emphasizing their importance by requesting the letter's circulation and diligent practice. Despite failing health preventing him from visiting, Francis's letters convey his sense of responsibility and desire for all to walk the path of God with humility and poverty. These letters reflect his leadership and vision for the Order's spiritual growth, emphasizing Christ-like living in poverty and humility.

2.3.3 Exhortations

Writings that have been titled ‘Exhortations’ in *Francis of Assisi: Early Documents Volume One* is being discussed here. The *Earlier* and *Later Exhortations to the Brothers and Sisters of Penance* is an earnest call to all the men and women, from different walks of life, who wished to live a penitential life. He perceives the spirit of the Lord as the dynamic principle of the life of his followers. He appeals to them to sanctify themselves by prayer, by the use of sacraments, by mortification and by the practice of justice, charity, and humility; to establish peace by the forgiveness of enemies and love for them; to revere the Holy Eucharist, to observe the precepts and to live their Christian life to its fullness. He illustrates the harsh punishment that awaits those who do not live according to what they vowed. The two versions of his exhortations to the clergy are specifically meant to remind them about the worthy celebration of the Holy Eucharist, he highlights the sacramental value of the Eucharist and the Word of God, the need to keep the Church and the holy articles clean and in reverence. In essence, it is similar to the letters he wrote instructing the ‘custodians’ and the ‘rulers of the people’. Francis has a clear understanding of his position as the leader of his followers and has the conviction of what he wants and does not want from those who want to follow him.

2.3.4 Profound Writings of Francis

The rules, testament and admonitions of Francis of Assisi comprise the most affluent spiritual document of Franciscan tradition. It is the kernel of Francis’s way of thinking.

2.3.4.1 Rule

2.3.4.1.1 Rule for hermitages

Francis did not envision an eremitical life, that is a life solely spent in prayer and contemplation, but the spirit of such a life was quite strong in the primitive fraternity. His followers were encouraged to actively involve themselves in preaching, begging alms and contemplative prayer simultaneously. Yet he liked and let his brothers live a life of complete solitude. This brief rule was drafted in between 1217 and 1221 for those brothers who wished to live an eremitical life with the desire for intense prayer. Francis is very precise about how this should be. This life required strict separation from external society, and silence among those living inside. No one is allowed entry into the enclosure of the hermitage and as much as possible communication with the outside world is closed. He fixed the maximum number of members to be four and the minimum to be two in such hermitages. He requires them to live like mothers and sons. The term 'Mother' has a functional role here as in his other writings. Mothers are required to protect their sons from outsiders and provide for their daily needs. Nevertheless, both mothers and sons live as contemplatives and are allowed to speak only to the General Minister and their custodians when they make their official visit. The roles of the mother and sons are taken in turn.

2.3.4.1.2 The Earlier and Later Rules

From the time of his conversion, till he received the first brother, Francis was alone and lived according to the gospel. But after he had followers, he realised he needed to get approval from the Holy Father for his way of life. In his Testament he mentions "And after the Lord gave me brothers, no one showed me what I had to do, but the Most High Himself revealed to me that I should live according to the pattern of the Holy Gospel. And I had this written down simply and, in a few words, and the

Lord Pope confirmed it for me." (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 125). This happened in 1209/1210. This simple Rule which got the oral approval of Pope Innocent III was developed in the course of ten years in the light of the life and experiences of the brothers and the teachings of the Church and was drafted into the Earlier Rule of 1221. The rule underwent certain refinement and reworking and by 1223 the Later Rule was approved by the Bull of Pope Honorius III.

The form of life and rule of 1209 was in simple words with verses from the Gospel. Francis did not receive any professional help in drafting it. This infusion of the verses from the gospel that guided Francis and his first brotherhood reappears in the Rule of 1221. Therefore, in a certain way, the primitive Form of Life is not lost at all, but parts of it have certainly been included in the Rule of 1221. By 1220, Francis had stepped back from leading the Order and let go of the direction of the order. One reason was his failing health. But more importantly, it was because as the numbers increased, he was required to lead by power and rule rather than by word and deed. The brotherhood was becoming more and more structured and ecclesiastical in interest. He thought himself incapable of leading such an Order. The Rule of 1223 was drafted based on the initial core ideas of Francis, the directives from the chapters of the friars, the prescriptions of the fourth Lateran council, and the papal decrees. In spite of these other influences, there is no doubt that the rule expresses Francis's gospel vision. Yet, the focus of discussion here will be the rule of 1221 as that would give light to the spirit and mind of Francis in the best possible way.

2.3.4.2 Testament

The testament was dictated by Francis during his last days. It is written in a maturity and climax of his evangelical experience. It is speculated that the testament

developed little by little during the days Francis was severely ill, from six months before his death to the last few days. Awaiting death Francis recalls instances from the past that have made a mark on his heart and he pours it out in childlike simplicity. The Testament presents a perfect picture of Francis, who regarded himself as an "ignorant and uneducated" man, but at the same time, under its simple and unpolished style, we discover the true intentions that lay close to Francis's heart. Each and every word, expression or symbol in the Testament is a reminder of some basic historical fact in the life of St. Francis.

Francis begins with his encounter with the leper. The fact that it is found in the very beginning shows how important Francis feels about it. That experience of twenty years before brought a radical change in Francis. Shortly after he began his new way of life abandoning everything worldly. His life among the lepers and his showing mercy to them is his act of penance. Francis is clear that it is the Lord who led him there and what seemed bitter to him previously became sweet to his soul and body later. He implies that penance is doing the will of God to overcome one's own pride. Francis emphasises his reverence for the churches because the Lord's presence dwells in there. He has reverence for the priests because they receive and administer to others the body and blood of Jesus. He stresses the need to honour and venerate the holy mysteries and reserve them in precious places. He also states the importance of revering the Holy name this is a recurring idea which is seen in his letters too.

In the testament, Francis stresses again the fact he has already stated in the rule that the brothers who come in to join the brotherhood need to distribute their wealth and their possessions among the poor. He reminds again that his ministers should not have anything to do with the distribution of the newcomer's wealth. The idea of not owning anything is illustrated by Francis by the example of his life and the lives of

the early brotherhood that formed around him. He stressed humility nurtured through menial work and begging. He strictly forbade receiving money as wages or owning places as dwellings.

2.3.4.3 Admonitions

The admonitions do not appear to have been written in one sitting. From the references in the lives, it can be understood that Francis had the habit of giving corrections, admonitions and precepts to his brothers at various chapters met at Portiuncula. Scholars opine that these admonitions must have been compiled under the direction of Francis during his last years when he was eager to leave in writing his instructions to the brothers about his understanding of Gospel life. The thought and writing process runs parallel to that of his composing of the rules and exhortatory letters since many ideas are repeated in all of these. Even though the admonitions appear to imitate the style of contemporary writings of other orders, Francis has his uniqueness. His admonitions clearly "offer insights into his Biblical thought and the ways in which he translated them into the ordinary experience of daily life" (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 128).

For Francis, true obedience is in laying down one's life for the love of one's brother. He feels this way because he finds Jesus did so. In the third chapter of the admonitions which is on Perfect Obedience Francis exhorts his brothers that if their superior asks them to do something that they should not do, they are right in not doing that deed but they must not abandon the superior for that. Even if the brother is ostracised by the brotherhood for disobedience if he chooses this persecution rather than wish to be separated from his brothers then he truly is practicing perfect

obedience. This suggests that Francis has absorbed the true spirit of Obedience as shown by Jesus.

The theme of the goodness of God is a leitmotif throughout the admonitions. All of the creation is aware of this goodness and humble themselves before God and exalt Him in their own ways except human beings who boast about the knowledge and skills they have which are only gifts given by God and are not their own. Similarly for Francis poverty is much more than material concerns. He says "That servant of God who does not become angry or disturbed at anyone lives correctly without anything of his own" (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 133). This is a case of brothers not being angry or annoyed at another person's sin. In this way Francis's admonition on poverty goes beyond material things and enters the realm of interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships and also the relationship with God.

A person is a true peacemaker, according to Francis when one can be patient and humble even when people around them behave opposite to their intentions. They have the true spirit of poverty for they can be calm even when they are deprived of their things or their pride. True peacemakers are those people who "regardless of what they suffer in this world, preserve peace of spirit and body out of love of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 134). For Francis a true religious is one who is solely interested in the words of God and cares only to love and adore him. Praises or insults do not affect the true religion because that person is aware that "for what a person is before God, that he is and no more" (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 135). Likewise, a true religious practice more than preaches the revelations God has given them. They lead people to God rather than to themselves.

Francis describes the fundamental Characteristics a religious should have in the twenty-seventh chapter of the admonitions. He says:

Where there is charity and wisdom,

There is neither fear nor ignorance

Where there is patience and humility,

There is neither anger nor disturbance.

Where there is poverty and joy,

there is neither greed nor avarice.

Where there is rest and meditation,

There is neither anxiety nor restlessness.

Where there is fear of the Lord to guard an entrance,

There the enemy cannot have a place to enter.

Where there is a heart full of mercy and discernment,

There is neither excess nor hardness of heart. (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 136-137)

2.3.5 Prayers

Francis gets meaning for his life from God the Father to whom he constantly turns with trust, familiarity, a sense of wonder and excitement and gratitude. In that blissful presence, he is aware of his smallness and unworthiness. His awareness that in spite of this God went to great lengths to come down as low as possible for him consumes him with the passion for God. Francis's Prayers are genuine utterances from the depths of his soul. The *Prayer before the Crucifix* is the first prayer composed by Francis. From the references to it in the lives of Celano and Bonaventure it is assumed to be the prayer he used during the initial stages of his conversion. Therefore, it can be dated in between 1205/1206. He prayed in the common people's ordinary language, the Italian dialect of Umbria. It encapsulates the

sum total of his yearnings, his struggle and the purity of his heart. The manuscript traditions that contain this prayer are Latin and it has been greatly influenced by the liturgical opening prayers and has been embellished, stealing some of its simplicity. Yet the prayer does not fail to reveal the intense fervour and sincerity of intent of Francis's soul. Francis in his disarming simplicity asks God to "enlighten the darkness of my heart and give me true faith, certain hope and perfect charity, sense and knowledge, Lord, that I may carry out your holy and true command.

The prayer inspired by Our Father is among the undated writings of Francis. This form of prayer was quite common during the thirteenth century. Francis taught this to his brothers to be chanted along with the praises of all hours. But again, Francis has his own quintessential style in this prayer. Francis's personal contemplation of the Father is evident in this reflective prayer. The sense that the Father is supreme goodness overflows throughout the prayer. To Francis revering the name of God is not a routine exercise, it is about developing a deep, personal, intimate relationship that gradually leads to complete transformation. Heaven is companionship with God that helps a clarity in vision that shows clearly that all come from God, and that god is nothing but love. Francis's love expands to all directions so much so that it includes all the creation of God out of love for God. His prayer and wish is that people love everybody and everything around them with the love of God. Francis's prayer is to be Christ-like like for he understands that this is the only way a man can respond to God's love for him.

2.3.6 Praises

Written in the Umbrian dialect, *The Canticle of the Creatures* or *The Canticle of the Sun* is the most celebrated masterpiece of Francis and is the oldest lyric in Italian

literature. Firstly, because it is one of the initial pieces during a transition period of the language from Latin to Italian by a known author. But the other reason is it illuminates our knowledge of Francis's relation with God, the way he sees himself and everything around him. The canticle was composed in 1225 when Francis was recuperating from his illness. Francis was already blind, he had received the stigmata and he was in constant pain, the conflicts in the order about the rule preyed on his mind, and he knew that his days were numbered. But even in this state Francis is spurred into action and set on fire when he thinks of God. He reflects on his personal relationship with the Father and experiences his awe-inspiring and persistent goodness in all created elements. Francis is mystified by the fact that the good God became human and lived among his creation. This idea of the indescribable goodness of God is a recurring idea in all of Francis's writings.

The canticle is not a pantheistic praising of God in nature. It is not entirely a thanksgiving to God for the creatures. In the canticle, Francis is praising the almighty Father for his love and nurture that is mirrored in the creation. He is praising God for his majesty that is revealed in His creation. The canticle is the way Francis perceives the creation. He perceives it as God sees it and declares everything good and beautiful. All the creations mentioned, the sun, moon, stars, wind, water, air, fire and earth all are praised and each of their qualities are mentioned. Through his vulnerable body Francis is able to perceive God and the union of God in the creation. For this reason, Francis feels himself connected to the celestial objects and the elements and readily calls them brother and sister.

The lines on reconciliations and human beings were added later by him when he wanted to settle a conflict between the civil and the religious heads. Here again, he

does it as a praise. And just a few hours before his death he adds the lines on death calling it ‘sister death’ which shows his readiness to enter into the next phase of life.

Apart from indicating Francis’s deep and mystical spirituality the canticle also sheds light on the poetic sensibility of Francis. The canticle is arranged as a descending stair from the highest God to the sun then to the moon and coming down to earth and humility. Francis in the structure of the canticle is conveying his affection to the goodness of God who dared to descend to the level of His creation for the love of it. This self-emptying of God is the key fascination of Francis’s life and his life is motivated by the radical poverty he chooses for he feels only that can be a response to such great love of the Father. Francis’s radical poverty is abandoning anything and everything that comes in the way of responding to God’s love. When everything is given away God is closer. That is the very reason that he can see the majesty and splendour of God in God’s creation when he is the most vulnerable.

The Canticle of Exhortation for the Ladies of San Damiano is the only other writing of Francis that has been written and preserved in the Umbrian dialect. Though the manuscript of this piece of writing was found much later, scholars now have confirmed its authenticity and believe that it was composed and is closely associated with the canticle of the sun. As the title suggests the canticle was composed for Clare and her sisters. The reference to it in the Assisi compilation lets us know that it was composed to assure the sisters who were worried for Francis and his health. The canticle has a tone of advice and exhortation. Just like the ‘lesser brothers’ Francis addresses the sisters as ‘little ones called by the Lord’. This is his reminder of the spirit of poverty that all of them have willingly chosen. The canticle which has only 6 verses is abounding with the ideas of practicing poverty and life in the spirit. The idea of suffering gracefully the ailments one has to bear and the preciousness of such pain

in verse 5 and 6 seem to have a corresponding idea in *The Canticle of The Sun* verse 10 and 11. Among the writings of Francis, we may find a few other praises and prayers which Francis composed by simply putting together verses from the Psalms and liturgical texts. These prayers do not have any originality of their own and it is difficult to fix the dates of their compilation. Yet, it suggests the simplicity of Francis's relationship with God and his sincerity to be one with the Church through the prayers and Divine Office recited in the canonical hours.

2.3.7 Conclusion

Francis is fascinated by the humility of the person of Jesus, the Son incarnate.

O wonderful loftiness and stupendous dignity!
O sublime Humility!
O humble sublimity!
The Lord of the Universe,
God and Son of God,
so humbles Himself
that for our salvation
He hides himself
under an ordinary piece of bread! (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 118)

All of Francis's gestures and attitudes are a response to this humility God showed by handing himself to his creatures in the most vulnerable way. His imitation of Christ is not an imitation for imitation or discipleship's sake. It is inspired by his admiration for the utmost humility of incarnation. And Francis feels insufficient in responding to it in a worthy manner. He calls the order he founded as Order of the Lesser Brothers, displaying his desire to be the lowest among all people just as Christ

did. His exhortation to revere the Holy Eucharist and to handle all things pertaining to it in reverence is inspired not just because of the Lateran council church reforms but because of the simplicity he senses in the Creator to be transubstantiated by the pronouncement of unworthy creatures. It is also for this reason he urges all people in all possible ways to give thanks and honour God. He is pained by any irreverence towards the humble and poor Jesus for this reason exhorts all people to live a life of penance. His canticles and praises are also a reflection of his gratitude for the humility of God that he feels that he needs to praise God through His creation for through the goodness of the creation God is doubly good and abundantly be praised.

2.4 Francis in the commissioned/official biographies

The attempt of this subsection is to be introduced to the earliest official biographies and the biographers of Francis Assisi. These biographies are categorised as official for it has been commissioned either by the Pope or by the General minister of the Lesser Brothers. These works take up a vital role in understanding Francis as his early biographers perceived him. These sources are mainly spiritual. Their principal objective is to capture the ideals and intentions that animated Francis throughout his life and which he ardently advocates to his followers. Nonetheless, the influence of the time and its thought can be felt within these writings that shape the image of Francis.

2.4.1 Pioneering the Hagiographic portrayal: Thomas of Celano

Shortly before the canonization ceremony of St. Francis on 16th July 1228 by Pope Gregory IX, the pope entrusted the assignment of writing the life of the new saint to Thomas of Celano. The objective of this work was to exalt the life and legacy of Francis of Assisi and to herald his sanctity. Thomas was a learned man and most

likely he joined the Lesser Brothers in 1214. He was one among those who went to the German mission in 1221. Thomas returned to Assisi in 1224. But it is very unlikely that he would have lived in close proximity to Francis. He crafted his monumental work relying on “trustworthy and esteemed witnesses” as he claims in the prologue of the biography. The eyewitness account of the canonization ceremony in the book suggests his presence during the occasion. Thomas Celano’s *The Life St. Francis* [1C] unfolds as a chronological narrative in three books. The first book speaks of the early life, conversion, the beginnings of the brotherhood up to the Christmas at Greccio in 1223. The second book illustrates the last two years of the saint’s earthly sojourn, chronicling key moments like the stigmatisation and his eventual transit. The third book offers vivid descriptions of the canonization ceremony and catalogues an array of miracles attributed to the intercession of the saint. Thomas of Celano adhered to the conventional hagiographic approach prevalent in medieval times while writing about the life of Francis.

In 1230 Thomas composed a condensed version of the biography of Francis for liturgical purposes, titled *The Legend for use in the Choir.* This is the earliest stage of how the memory of Francis was incorporated into the life of the church. Their Liturgical sequences speak more about the stigmata, about Francis’s victory over worldly desires, and about Francis’s influence in renewing the Church. It is in this work the precise date and time of Francis passing away is given. Thomas’s portrait has the theme of renewal. He presents Francis as one who came to renew things. He also presents him as a mirror of perfection.

Fifteen years later Thomas of Celano is again commissioned to write another Biography on Francis. It was the Order’s desire conveyed by its General Minister Crescentius in 1246. Thomas named this book *The Remembrance of the Desire of the*

Soul [2C] It appears to be a collaborative work as Thomas depends largely on the documentary material collected by Crescentius. The narrative episodes in this book are a collage of memories collected from the first companions of Francis entwined in Thomas's inimitable style. Thomas has omitted several episodes from his first book and added many of them into this new work. It resonates with an attempt to define the spirituality of Francis of Assisi. Thomas has gained material that gives specific details about the events that he narrated in his earlier work. He adds them in such a way that the reader can easily sense the power of God, who has a purpose for each soul and begins His work at baptism and progressively develops through life. Francis's birth, baptism, parents, his change of heart, and every other incident are presented in greater clarity. The work of God, Francis's response and the mutual growth of the brothers and their call are vivid in this book.

Yet another work from Thomas's quill named *Treaties of the Miracles of St. Francis [*3C] was completed in 1252. It was commissioned by the General Minister John of Parma. The medieval allure of miracles as indicators of sanctity echoes in this work. This treatise on miracles gives a detailed account of 198 miracles. Almost one-third of it is repeated from his previous works. Celano fulfils his aim to propagate the sainthood of Francis through his choice of miracles and wonders.

2.4.2 Julian of Speyer

Julian of Speyer wrote his *Life of St. Francis* [JLF] after composing liturgical texts for the feast of St. Francis. He relied on Thomas's *Life of St. Francis* to do this. From his accounts in the book, it is certain that he was present during the translation of Francis's remains from the church of St. George in Assisi to the new Basilica of St. Francis on May 25, 1230. Julian has never met Francis and he is not a native of Italy. Neither does he have any firsthand experience of the early brotherhood. Therefore,

this biography does not detail Italy's rural geography or the Roman ecclesiastical personalities nor the companions or associates of Francis. The biography is shorter than that of Thomas's. It is evident that his main interest was to write an account of Francis's life that is concise, distinct, direct, and instructive for the use of his brothers. Julian's Francis is pragmatic. His readers can find a Francis who lives the gospel way of life to perfection and has concrete experience of Christ he meets in the gospel.

2.4.3 Henery of Averanches

Henri of Avranches, a Norman poet, put the biography of Francis in Verse. It was penned between 1232 and 1239 under the patronage of Pope Gregory IX and was dedicated to him. Henri was not a Lesser brother. His attempt was to put into verse *the life of St. Francis* written by Thomas of Celano according to the trend of those times. Henri had by then put into verse many texts. His poetry was wide-ranging and assorted depending on the interests of his patrons. In Henri's *Verified Life of St. Francis,* [VL] the image of Francis is rendered excessively charming. Unlike Thomas of Celano and Julian of Speyer, his intention was not to draw an accurate portrait of the saint but to exhibit his own talent of putting prose into a verse of dramatic poetic recitation. Francis was not his principal concern, poetry was. From the perspective of knowing Francis this work is of lesser value. Henri's portrait focuses on Francis's miracles and wonders and thus makes him a hero of epic proportions.

2.4.4 Bonaventure of Bagnoregio

Bonaventure was the General Minister of the Order when he was commissioned by the General Chapter of the Lesser Brothers to compile a good biography of Francis from all the existing ones. He was perfectly diligent in compiling the documentary material a hand. He presented a very structured work the *Major Legend* [LM]

describing his chapterisation in the prologue of the work. His work had an appeal to the mystical theology of his time. There is no new information in this biography. Yet, just a cursory reading of the work can bring to notice that Bonaventure has raised Francis from a person to a symbol of God's functional grace. He is projected as an exemplary model for a soul journeying into God. Every virtue of Francis is exaggerated to its perfection. He also takes a moderate and flexible ground with the practice of these virtues. He amicably acknowledges and praises the life of Francis and advocates the spirit of poverty and zeal of the early brothers but at the same time presents it as an example rather than a reproach. Thus, the biography is an attempt to pacify the conflict between the 'Spirituals' and the 'Conventuals' in the Order. He crafted a condensed version: the *Minor Legend* [LMi]for liturgical purpose. Both these works were completed and presented for use in 1263. Bonaventure embeds Francis thoroughly into the theological and spiritual traditions of medieval times. Both these texts had great influence in propagating the image of Francis as a model soul, as a prophet who bore the mystical marks the of consummate love of Christ on his body. This reservoir of spirituality points out the significant role of Francis and his brothers in the salvation history. Three years later the general chapter of 1266, established both the works by Bonaventure as the definitive portrait of Francis and under obedience ordered all other legends to be removed and deleted.

2.4.5 Bernard of Besse

A Book of the Praises of Blessed Francis was written in 1276 as a biographical introduction to the chronicles of General Ministers he was entrusted to write by the Order. Bernard was a native of Besse in France. He was the secretary and travel companion of Bonaventure. As the name suggests a laudatory mood prevails the work. Bernard's focus is on highlighting the exemplary life aspects of Francis life. He

believes, Franis is the model one should imitate on failing to imitate perfectly at least one should revere him perfectly. He illustrates Francis as a model setting the ideals of the Rule before his followers and living it out as an example. The first chapter detailing the early companions the names, activities, and burial places of hitherto unmentioned early brothers, of Francis and the 7th chapter concerning the growth of the Orders is new information in this book. Bernard's portrayal of Francis does not conceal the oddly sublime yet practical idealism of Bernard.

2.5 Writings of people who knew Francis personally

A closer look at Francis is gained from the memories of his companions and people who personally knew him. While the biographies present a saint-like stature of Francis, the more human aspects are found in the memories of his companions. This subsection deals with some of the texts that give a deeper understanding of Francis as an ordinary person who had an extraordinary vision. The subdivisions in this section each are about a particular text and its supposed author and how they knew Francis in person.

2.5.1 The Testament of Clare of Assisi

Clare of Assisi is the Feminine version of the Franciscan spirituality. Her life is the evidence of how fully she grasped the soul and spirit of Francis. Her testament is the only written document that illustrates her thoughts about him. Clare wrote her testament in 1253. From this text, we know that Clare sees Francis as a true lover and imitator of Christ and therefore fit to be their model. Clare considers herself as the Little Plant of Francis. She repeatedly urges her sisters to observe the holy poverty in the example of Francis as promised to God. In the testament, she acknowledges Francis as the pillar and strength of herself and her sisters. Francis is conceded as the

founder, planter and helper in the service of Christ for the Poor Ladies. He gave them their Rule and Structure of Life. Francis took care of them as his little plants. Clare writes " I admire and exhort all my sisters, both these present and those to come, to strive always to imitate the way of Holy simplicity, Humility, and poverty, and to preserve the integrity of our holy manner of life, as we were taught by our blessed father Francis from the beginning of our conversion to Christ. (Testament of Clare. 17)

2.5.2 The *Sacred Exchange* [Sac Ex]

Composed between 1237-39, the sacred exchange is a brilliant text in the Franciscan tradition. Brilliant for its simple but highly crafted allegory. Recent research attributes the work to Caesar of Speyer. He led the first mission to Germany in 1219. It was this Caesar whom Francis had entrusted to fill in scripture quotes within the Earlier Rule in 1221. Caesar knew Francis's mind and imbibed deeply from his master the spirit of Poverty. After the passing away of Francis, Caesar was caught in the crisis of authentic observance of the Rule. The Sacred Exchange though an allegory echoes Francis's bond with Poverty and Caesar's longing to imitate Francis in following the poor and humble Christ. Even though the allegory cannot be taken literally, it gives the core and essence of Francis's love for poverty and his desire for his brothers to accept poverty.

2.5.3 Anonymous of Perugia [AP]

This is a text written by John of Perugia, who was the disciple and companion of Giles one of the earliest brothers to join Francis. It suggests a sincere desire to convey the early days of the fraternity. John of Perugia had access to these events through Brother Giles and Brother Bernard Quintavalle who was the first person to

join Francis. Almost sixty per cent of the material was new from what was written about Francis till then. It curiously begins by giving the date Francis receives enlightenment. The text gives many incidents from the day-to-day life of the primitive fraternity. The focus of this text is on the fraternity that Francis created rather than on Francis himself.

2.5.4 Legend of the Three Companions: Accounts of 'we who were with him'

The Legend of the Three Companions [L3C] is considered to be written in between 1241and 1247. The letter attached to it identifies the three companions to be Brother Leo, Brother Angelo, and Brother Ruffino. But the anecdotes they tell come also from other early brothers, Philip, Illuminato, Masseo, and John. This text gives deep insight into Francis which was not known till then. It adds detail to the events recorded by Thomas of Celano in his *Life of Francis.* Unlike the *Anonymous of Perugia*, the focus of this work is Francis. It has a tone of setting the records right for Francis and it seems very personal. At times the companions with the authority of being 'we who were with him' (a phrase that frequently appears in this text and the one that follows) try to inform the younger generation of followers of Francis about the way of life Francis lived and taught them to live.

2.5.5 *Assisi compilation* [AC]

This is a collection of memories and anecdotes. The name compilation suits it well because the events do not follow any order. Some of the passages in this text were written between 1244 and 1246. A few others have been added in 1260 and yet some others in a much later date. It is supposed to have been written by the three close companions of Francis; Leo, Angelo and Ruffino. It renders a vivid and authentic eyewitness account of Francis, the knowledge of which only day-to-day association

with him could give. It has the quality of a memoir with random memories just piled up. It lacks the professional style of the learned writers. It quite simply but elegantly gives minute details of Francis and life with him. Each passage gives the sense of the author's reliving the actual moment. Not only Francis's thoughts and words but his gestures and movements are remembered here. The text might have been compiled at the behest of General Minister Cresentius in an attempt to gather everything about Francis. This text was previously known as *Legend of Perugia.*

2.6 Unofficial compilations on Francis

The texts under this subsection are categorised as unofficial as these are works that were never assigned or formally approved by the Pope or by a General Chapter. These texts reveal the struggle of the Order to reform itself. Though its focus is Francis, as he is the model of perfection to imitate Christ, the texts contribute more to the way of life of the primitive brotherhood. Some of these texts lack the systematic, theological delineation of virtues of Francis, instead, they present these virtues repeatedly in its practice. Some of them are soaked in the theology of the times but gives a different understanding of Franciscan history.

2.6.1 Ubertino de Casale

Ubertino de Casale, was known for his critical views of the papacy and he was banished to La Verna in 1305. There he authored *Tree of the Crucified Life of Jesus* presenting a mystical and allegorical account of St. Francis of Assisi's life and spirituality. In his work, Ubertino portrays Francis as an exemplar of Christ-like suffering and devotion. He emphasises Francis's mystical experiences, particularly his reception of the stigmata, as evidence of his deep union with Christ. Ubertino's portrayal of Francis underscores the Spiritual Franciscan belief in the importance of

poverty, simplicity, and imitation of Christ's suffering as central tenets of Franciscan spirituality. Through his vivid imagery and theological insights, Ubertino elevates Francis as a model for Christian living, inspiring readers to emulate his radical devotion to Christ and his embrace of the cross.

2.6.2 Mirror of Perfection

This medieval text believed to have been written from what was recounted by Brother Leo. It provides a firsthand account of Francis's life and teachings, offering valuable insights into the early Franciscan movement. The text portrays Francis as a model of piety, humility, and radical devotion to poverty. Through anecdotes and reflections, it captures the essence of Francis's spirituality and his dedication to imitating the life of Christ. The work is meant more as a lesson to those who want to follow the saint rather than as a record of his actions.

2.6.3 Angelo Clareno

Angelo Clareno's *The Book of Chronicles or of the Tribulations of the Order of Lesser Ones* offers a controversial yet invaluable historical perspective on the struggles of the Spiritual Franciscans or the *Zelanti against* persecution by the Church hierarchy. During the turbulent 13th and 14th centuries, Clareno played a pivotal role in the movement's history, navigating the division within the Franciscan Order over matters of poverty. His writings provide profound insights into the arduous challenges confronted by those striving to uphold the purity of Franciscan ideals amidst political and ecclesiastical pressures. Clareno portrays Francis of Assisi as a visionary leader dedicated to poverty, humility, and fervent devotion to Christ, presenting him as an inspirational figure whose life and teachings inspired a movement committed to embodying the Gospel in its most pristine form.

2.6.5 Ugolino Boniscambi of Montegiorgio

Written between 1328 and 1337 *The Deeds of Blessed Francis and His Companions* and its Italian translation *Little Flowers of St. Francis* might well be a writing that shaped the greatest impression about Francis and his brotherhood. The former is divided into four parts. The first part is about the origins of the fraternity focused on Francis. The second delves into individuals in the primitive fraternity. The third part deals with small narratives, but the action is limited to Umbria and Marches. The fourth tells stories, particularly on the observance of poverty. Though Ugolino's name is seen within the text and perceived as the person writing these incidents, it is clear that there are many others whose names do not appear within the text but have contributed. The objective of these writers seems to be to collect interesting stories about Francis and his companions in the Provence of Umbria and marches. They are not interested in compiling the history of the Order or the biography of Francis. The work reveals great narrative skills. But out of the sixty-eight Chapters, only Sixty per cent could be considered as historically reliable. Though the tone of the work is sunny, the retelling of the actions, the embellishments, changes and inaccuracies are purposeful and heighten those Franciscan values the writers think are neglected in their times. "Regardless of its defects both chronologically and historically, *The Deeds of Blessed Francis and His Companions* and its Italian translation *Little Flowers Saint Francis* have had an enormous impact on the shaping of the Franciscan tradition of spirituality." (Armstrong et al., *Prophet* 432). The work is simple and not acrimonious in its catechizing. It imparts a devotional attachment to the central focus, Francis. *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis*, instead of being a direct translation involves some reediting and rearrangement of chapters. This gives a different undertone to the same stories. The line "To the praise of Jesus Christ and the little poor man Francis." is added at the end of every chapter. The *Little Flowers* goes far

further than any text in the Franciscan tradition in disseminating the Franciscan devotion among the common folk of all times.

2.6.6 Arnald of Sarrant

The Kinship of Saint Francis authored by Arnald of Sarrant presumably around 1365 is a much-neglected text. The significance of the text is in the fact that it records the family line of the saint from the 1220s to the. It also details the earliest brothers individually. Only a little of the entire text is preserved, but in what exists it presents nine parallels in the lives of Christ and Francis. Arnald goes to great lengths to draw these similarities.

2.7 Portrayal of Francis of Assisi

This section endeavours to put together the picture of Francis of Assisi formed from the acumen of biographical texts produced during the first one and a half centuries after his death. A portrait of Francis from his own writings has already been discussed in section 2.3 of this chapter. In this section, the comparison of various biographies employs abbreviated forms of the texts, along with corresponding paragraph numbers within those texts, a common convention in Franciscan studies when referencing these works. This approach is taken by the researcher to emphasise the number of texts dealing with a particular event in Francis of Assisi's life and also to avoid repeating long names of these works. For quotations alone the usual MLA 9th edition intext citation is used.

2.7.1 Representation of Holiness

While writing about a saint the earliest biographers imitated the biographies on other saints that were accepted during the time. Francis's first biographer Thomas of

Celano was greatly influenced by the accounts of the life of St. Martin of Tours by Sulpicious Sevurus which had become a norm of Christian Piety. (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 14).

2.7.1.1 Initial circumstances and spiritual awakening

2.7.1.1.1 Family and Upbringings

Thomas of Celano in the *Life of Saint Francis* portrays Francis as a flamboyant young man enjoying the luxuries of life. He accuses the evil in him to the parenting trend of the wealthy families of the time that involved pampering children and indulging them. This is in keeping with the literary tradition of medieval hagiography to describe the saint as being involuntarily involved in evil before conversion. Following the same tradition Thomas sketches him to be inherently good. Francis a young rich merchant in his father Pietro Bernadone's shop is a person who is admired by all, has charming ways, kind and fun-loving, leader of his age group, engaged in singing and partying with his friends, has excellent business tactics, but is allowed to be a lavish spendthrift by his rich parents. (1C2) This portrait of Francis remains consistent throughout all the works on him.

Francis had very little training in reading and writing. The limits of his academic capability is dwelt on in the introductory part of section two in this chapter. He also spoke French. L3C notes him responding to a ridicule by his brother in French while repairing the San Damiano Church. (L3C23) Likewise he prophesies in French that San Damiano would house in future the Poor Ladies. (L3C 24, 2C13) Saint Clare recounts the same in her Testament. Although like in 2C there are texts that interprets his speaking of French to a state of ecstasy. The Assisi Compilation

(AC 38) is one such instance where Francis sings in French. It is found in 2C 126 also.

The only text that gives a detail on his physical appearance is the very first biography. It depicts Francis at the end of his life as

> He was very eloquent, with a cheerful appearance and a kind face; free of laziness and arrogance. He was of medium height, closer to short, his head was of medium size round. His face was somewhat long and drawn, his forehead small and smooth, with medium eyes black and clear. His hair was dark; his eyebrows were straight, and his nose even and thin; his ears small and upright, and his temples smooth. His tongue was peaceable, fiery and sharp; his voice was powerful but pleasing, clear and musical. His teeth were white, well set and even; his lips were small and thin; his beard was black and sparse; his neck was slender, his shoulders straight; his arms were short, his hands slight, his fingers long and his nails tapered. He had thin legs, small feet, fine skin and little flesh. His clothing was rough, his sleep was short, and his hand was generous. (1C83) (Armstrong et al., *Saint 253*)

Though Thomas of Celano uses vocabulary similar to other hagiographies he defines Francis differently. Francis might not have been considered as handsome by his contemporaries. *The Deeds of Brother Francis* and its translation *Little Flowers of Francis* quotes Brother Masseo asking Francis, “You are not a handsome man; you are not a man of great wisdom; you are not of noble birth! Why does the whole world come to you? (DBF X, LFl X)

About his parents, L3C records that, his mother named him John at his birth. The father was on a business trip at the time of birth. When he returned, he changed

his son's name to Francis. The parents as mentioned before were tolerant of Francis's extravagance. 2C3 exults his mother comparing her to St. Elizabeth. This again is in keeping with the pattern of hagiographies of presenting the mother of a saint as a saintly person. She is picturized as predicting that, her son would be a saint. (L3C2, 2C3). She is shown as a kind mother in 1C13, L3C 9, L3C18. Francis's father on the other hand is portrayed as a hard-hearted person in 1C 12, 13, AP 8, L3C 16, L3C 23, and 2C12.

Again, in accordance to hagiographical tradition illness and physical ailment is described as the occasion for Francis's spiritual awakening in 1C3. But the detail to this event could be found in L3C. It narrates that Francis was captured in war between Assisi and Perugia. He was allowed to be ransomed by his father only after a year. (L3C4). The very next occurrence in L3C is of Francis planning to join another war. 1C recounts this event of joining another war soon after Francis's recovery from illness. So, placing both narratives together it might be concluded that the prolonged and perilous captivity could have been the reason for the serious illness Francis had. Rather than, as 1C attributes his illness to the dissipation of his life. However, in all the texts that follows Francis is pictured as having an interior change after his illness. Stories of the happenings in the prison is given by L3C 4. But no other text that came before or later than this text records this military adventure early in the life of Francis. From the pen of those 'who were with him', the narrative re-counts Francis as being of noble manners, kind, cheerful, jovial, patient and tolerant even in the adversity of the enemy prison, when the spirits of those captured with him had already waned away. According to Arnold Fortini, the historian, the war between Assisi and Perugia occurred erratically between 1202 and 1209. This was a period of transformation in the socio-political and economic set-up of Italy. It was the war between Assisi's neo-

rich and the nobles. Francis belonged to the neo-rich. His captivity might have been in 1202 and released in 1203 (Fortini 148-173).

2.7.1.1.2 Stages of transformation and relationship with God

The *Anonymous of Perugia* (AP) begins with a date -16th April 1208. The author goes on to explain that God "enlightened a man who was in the city of Assisi, Francis by name," (AP 3) (Armstrong et al., *Founder* 34). Thomas of Celano mentions that Francis left for his eternal rest on 4th October 1226, twenty years after completely embracing Christ. If we consider the date mentioned by *Anonymous* to be the time he embraced God completely, then there would be a difference of two years. The year 1206 would make twenty years and also it corresponds almost with the composition of the Prayer before the Crucifix made by Francis during his early years to find God. If so then the date mentioned earlier is mostly the date when Francis confirmed his way of life. All put together, it is clear that Francis's spiritual awakening was a gradual evolution in stages and took him a couple of years.

On close reading of the texts that deal with Francis's transformation parallelly, that is, the two works by Celano (1&2C), one text by Julian of Speyer (LJS), Anonymous *of Perugia (AP)*, *Legend of the Three Companions(L3C)*, and the *Major Legend (LMa)* by Bonaventure, we find these stages. In all the texts there is a dream Francis has of a very grand armory. He interprets it to be a sign for him to pursue his ambition of being a knight and enrol himself for upcoming warfare for which he needs to go to Apulia. (1C4, LJS 3, Ap5, L3C5, 2C4, LMa 3) In the first two biographies, Francis is pictured as going for intense prayers in caves and wilderness, sometimes sharing his experiences with a friend whose name is not mentioned. He never sets out to Apulia. He is pictured to have just cancelled his plans in the light of

his experiences with God. Following this he sells his possessions and arrives at the church of San Damiano. Unlike this, the rest of the parallel texts speak of his travelling to Apulia dressed in knightly attire. On the way, he stops at Spoleto. He has another vision where he hears a voice which asks him to go back to Assisi and pray for the will of God regarding his life. The vision leads to an understanding in him that he needs to serve the master (God) and not waste his time serving the slave (the world). Most probably, the early biographers did not want the new saint to look like a coward or a deserter, who backed off his decision.

The most detailed and personal of these texts is that of the three companions, because, as mentioned earlier in 4.4, it comes from those 'who were with him', at some points the language used in this text also seems to be like that of Francis. After returning from Spolleto, Francis becomes increasingly withdrawn from the usual hustle and bustle of his life. He escapes into lonely places for deeper communion with God, and his compassion towards the poor and the marginalized intensifies. Bonaventure and Thomas of Celano do not dwell on these aspects much but they intersperse the Francis transition with scriptural paradigms.

Next detail painted is about Francis's pilgrimage to Rome. There he exchanges his clothes with beggars and begs in that attire. This underscores Francis's inclination to practice humility and poverty very early in his spiritual journey. (L3C10)(2C8). In prayer Francis receives answers, and his purpose is revealed gradually to him. The texts depict him as receiving consolation from God forming a deep connection with the Almighty. It is in this context he meets the leper one day and gives him a kiss of peace. This is a significant event in the life of Francis. For he carries its memories to his death bed and has it written in his testament. L3C is the first source for this narrative. It interprets this action as a result of the insights he received during prayer.

(L3C11) While Thomas of Celano describes it as a difficult task accomplished by Francis willingly (2C9) Bonaventure presents it as Francis's action to persevere in his decision. In the last case, the author does not show Francis as having any divine enlightenment or help. (LMa 1:4). In the stories of Thomas as well as Bonaventure the leper disappears after receiving the kiss. An element of miracle is added. On the other hand, the highlight of L3C has been the intensity of inner transformation.

The next three stages could be named as the Prayer before the Crucifix at San Damiano, the Renunciation at the Bishops Court, and the revelation of the way of life from the Gospel. All the narratives recount these three phases although with their own variances. The crucifix spoke to him in a tender voice and revealed his will for Francis which was to repair his Church. Francis takes its literal meaning. (L3C13, 2C10). Though Bonaventure mentions this vision, his narrative presents it as a vision Francis has during his prayer, the place or the detail is not given importance. He highlights it as a mystical experience. It is after this event Francis trades his possessions and comes to stay at the church of San Damiano and repair it. Repairing or rebuilding churches was yet another act of piety and penance during medieval times. Enraged by his son's actions, Francis's father persecutes him. Finally, he is taken by his father before the bishop to put an end to the foolishness he is involved in. But Francis in a determined frame of mind renounces everything striping himself of his clothes and his relationships. This picture of the naked Francis renouncing everything and embracing God as his Father is a consistent image shaping the repute of Francis as the poor man of God from the very beginning.

The final stage in his spiritual awakening is his confirmation towards a new way of life perfectly adhering to the gospel. 1C22, LJS 15, L3C25, and LMa 3:1present this as Francis attending mass and being inspired by the passage in the Gospel where

Jesus is sending his apostles to preach repentance and announce the Kingdom of God. The instruction given to them was to possess no bag or belt, no money, nor two coats or shoes, nor a staff. Francis is stirred in spirit and recognises immediately that this is what he wants and has to do. On close reading, it could be understood that these instructions of Jesus do not come from a single passage in the gospel. AP 11, 2C15, DBF 1:26-35, and LFl 2 present this incident differently. Here Francis and his first disciple Bernard go to the church and open the gospel thrice to find the will of God and know the way of life God wants them to live. The day of this revelation is the date that *Anonymous of Perugia* gives at the very beginning. All three verses put together give the picture of the Franciscan way of life which is nothing but Complete poverty, life of Penance and apostolate of preaching repentance and the coming of the Kingdom of God.

2.7.1.2 Virtues

The Christians of the Medieval church venerated a large number of saints. Every locality had its own set of saints. It was only after 1172 when Pope Alexander III stated that canonization was an exclusively papal prerogative there was some control over the number of saints. As saints are venerated for their heroic virtues their lives were professionally written in conventional terms to present their virtues to the faithful. This makes virtues a component to heighten holiness and thus increase the efficacy and popularity of the saint. Francis's holiness is usually attached to the following virtues.

2.7.1.2.1 Poverty

From the moment of his renunciation in the Bisho's court, Francis's holiness is indelibly linked with his poverty. His radical poverty became a controversy within the

order he formed. Precisely due to this reason there are more stories on Francis's practice of poverty. All biographers unanimously drew the picture of a Francis who wore very poor clothes and a cord for a belt. 1C6 portrays vividly his hard work at a cloister to keep himself fed and get some old clothes to wear. The allegorical work *Sacred Exchanges* depicts Francis as the second person to take poverty as his bride after Jesus. A century later when *the Little Flowers of Francis* was written, the portrait of Francis as the little poor man was already deeply engraved in the minds of the people. Writings about him show in varying degrees how Francis was particular of having nothing. "He zealously and carefully safeguarded Lady Holy Poverty… he would not even permit a small plate to remain in the house if, without it, he could avoid dire need" (1C51). Francis did not want himself or his brothers to touch money (AP 30). Bonaventure paints a Francis who teaches his brothers, "You know brothers, that poverty is the special way to salvation, …for this is the hidden treasure of the gospel field" (L Ma 7:1). Putting it in this way Bonaventure makes Francis a person who has found the kingdom of God, and engraves in the medieval minds the sanctity and worthiness of Francis.

2.7.1.2.2 Humility or Lowliness

'Little' and 'lesser' are the adjectives that could be found attached to Francis and his brothers. 1C2 pictures a Francis who led by the Holy Spirit is keen on instructing his new sons in the ways of poverty and simplicity. To learn lowliness and meekness Francis had made it a norm to serve at the leper hospitals and taught the brothers also to do so. Even nobles who joined the brotherhood humbly practised serving the lepers. (MP 44). He was very simple in the way he spoke. He "did not speak in the learned words of human wisdom, but in everything was quite simple (L3C21). Francis, "in order to preserve the virtue of holy humility" thus recounts the

author of AC and again in MP, that he stepped down from his position as General minister. He requested to be placed under a guardian so that he too can observe obedience like the rest of the brothers. (AC 39, MP 39, 2C143). The basis of his humility was his awareness that all good came from God. “A servant of God is a painting of God, in whom God is honoured because of his goodness, but he must not attribute anything to himself, because, in comparison with God, he is less than wood and paint (MP45). The MP projects Francis as a model of humility, simplicity and lowliness. In L3C 24 describes an event of fancies feeling embarrassed to beg in the vicinities of his home, but he gets over his pride and humbles himself sufficiently to go and beg in front of people familiar to him. The same incident when recounted by Thomas he portrays Francis’s feat as “to lead his unruly body back to its natural goodness” (2C13) implying that the natural goodness or holiness of the soul is humility. The stories in the LFl exaggerate Francis’s humility to the extent of eccentricity and fixes a reward from God for such humility. An example for this can be the event where once Francis asks Brother Rufino, who is not good with his preaching, to go and preach in the church at Assisi. Rufino, requests Francis not to send him. As Rufino was not humble enough to obey instantly, Francis requires to do the bidding stripping himself. Rufino Strips himself and proceeds to speak at the church in Assisi. Meanwhile, Francis is struck by remorse at his harsh command. As a penance, he too humbles himself and strips himself and goes to the church. The crowd who were already jeering at the naked Rufino’s words are in a fit of laughter when Francis comes. But then, both of them preach, their words touched their listeners hearts and bring tears of repentance. LFl ends the story by saying that they glorified God for strengthening them to conquer themselves. It also says that the people’s devotion for them increased.

2.7.1.2.3 Prayer and mysticism

Francis is shown to be spending long hours in prayer and seclusion. during his conversion and all the time after that. 1C71 describes Francis prayerful moment as "he made himself insensible to all outside noise, gathering his external senses into his inner being and checking the impetus of his spirit he emptied himself for God alone." the picture of Francis in prayer loses its grandiose and spectacle when it is put in the three companion's words. It becomes much more down to earth. L3C 28, 29 portrays Francis as an ordinary man who with his first followers go to the church to discern their way. "They entered for prayer, but, because they were simple, they did not know how to find the passage in the gospel about renunciation. They prayed devoutly that the Lord would show them his will on opening the book first time." Francis's zeal in prayer is depicted as "He laboured greatly in vigils, in prayers and fasting, in supplications, in sermons, in journeys… He had given his whole heart to God, his creator, and loved him with all his heart and his whole being. For he carried God in his heart, praised Him with his lips and glorified Him with his deeds." (AP 46) (Armstrong et al., *Founder*57-58) The prayer of saints is characterised by extensive durations, night vigils and battle with Satan/demons in hagiographical tradition. AC 117 shows an event when the saint was beaten by demons. AC 118 has the picture of the saint who has the mystical experience of Stigmata and soon after he has a series of trials by the demons. The MP portrays Francis's prayer life as a model to be imitated. It recounts his zeal to pray for the divine office even when he is sick. (MP 94). It recounts his teaching that a person should strive to obtain and preserve a joyful spirit outwardly and inwardly and that such a spiritual joy can spring only form purity of heart and devout prayer (MP 95)

The greatest of Francis's mystic experience is his reception of stigmata. Bonaventure in his work presents all of Francis's prayer in epic proportions.

> Christ looked upon him under the appearance of the seraph, but the fact that He was fastened to a cross pierced his soul with a sword of compassionate sorrow…Eventually, he understood from this, through the Lord revealing it, that divine providence had shown him a vision of this sort so that the friend of Christ might learn in advance that he was to be totally transformed into the likeness of Christ crucified, not by the martyrdom of his flesh, but by the enkindling of his soul. As the vision was disappearing, it left in his heart a marvelous fire and imprinted in his flesh a likeness of signs no less marvellous. (LMa 13 :3) (Armstrong et al., *Founder* 632)

Bonaventure's portrayal is blended with his own spirituality. When this same happening is narrated in LFl, it drops out scriptural references and allusions, a trace of wonder and magic is added and the tone becomes simple like that of a fabula. The final outcome of all these various portrayal of Francis leaves a blended image of him which is carried down the ages. A Francis who is simple yet ardently in love with God, who has deep prayer experiences with tangible manifestations is the final picture.

2.7.2 Evolving Perceptions in Francis Narratives

The portrait of Francis changes from one generation to other. Franciscan tradition is testimony to a perpetual and persistent attempt to capture in words his uniqueness. Different ages contingent upon the situations perceived and presented in the thirteenth-century mind of Francis which was paradoxically enigmatic due to its

implausible simplicity and sheer transparency to others around him even during his time.

During the first ten years of his death and canonization, the period between 1228-1238 the main focus of those who thought and wrote of Francis was to propagate his sanctity. Jubilation over the son of the soil being added to the saint's catalogue is the general mood that can be seen in the writings of this period. The earliest commissioned biographers had the responsibility to instruct their readers on the significance of the life of Francis and his way to holiness. Their agenda was to edify and encourage those who wished to follow Francis and those who admired him. They tried to cast an image of Francis using the prevalent religious traditions of the time in which his distinctiveness definitely did not fit in.

In the next fifty years that is in between 1240 and 1290 the charm of the celebration of the saint waned off. The small brotherhood of Francis that had multiplied into an enormous number even during his life time, had blown up into gigantic proportions. The fraternity with changing leaderships and increasing number started becoming institutionalised. The entry of a large number of clerical brothers into the order brought in an unseen distinction among them. The fraternity's tendency to adopt the existing monastic ways increased. The Lesser Brothers found themselves in various conflicts regarding the Rule and perfect imitation of Francis in living the gospel. This might have disturbed the earliest brothers who knew Francis's mind and were well acquainted with a way of life that was very different from any existing orders of their time. A need for the introduction to the founder from those who experienced the movement he initiated while it was still being made, the experiences of discerning, practicing and living out a vision firsthand was felt to be shared. Those who knew him personally, who belonged to the primitive fraternity and who

experienced Francis's thoughts in action were becoming older. This was a time when attempts were being made to collect as much details about the founder of the Order and also to preserve the life and way of the earlier brotherhood. This brought out new works.

As attempt was to collect documentary material about Francis from those who lived with him, the writings of this period give closer look at the thoughts and actions of Francis. It gives an eyewitness perspective of the lives of the first brothers. At times this material tends to a subtle adoration and admiration and longing for the founder father. Though the presentation looks like a collection of events at random its tone is more instructional in a way of an attempt to handover a tradition to the new generation of Lesser Brothers. These works give a closer view of Francis practice of virtue, his day-to-day life with the brothers, his thoughts and pains especially with his own who find it difficult to digest his gospel way of life. The endeavour of the brothers in recording a complete portrayal of their companion's virtues to safeguard his ideals is evident in these writings. Yet this was a time when though subtle polemic presentation could be read between the lines of these works. The brotherhood needed a consistent interpretation of the founder's pattern of holiness to such an extent that one of the General chapters of the brothers ordered a complete compilation of the founder's life and deeds and delete the rest of it. As ordered a complete work was presented. The mandate to supress or delete the previous biographies was an attempt to reconcile the growing tensions between the brothers. For by then there were those who were for more idealistic and strict following of Francis's Gospel vision and those of progressive ideas and went for moderate imitation of the founder. The one final compilation of the life written by Bonaventure and the liturgical text he composed was retained and suggested as the official interpretation of the founder's vision.

During the fourteenth century Bonaventure painted a portrait of Francis as the prophet of the time, A prophet who founded an order calling his followers to an authentic way of life. His image was accentuated to an apocalyptic status. The interiority of the spirit of virtues rather than its external rigor and radicality was promoted by the commissioned works of the time. The attempt to bring the radical practice of virtues, especially of poverty of the founder to a middle ground was not received well by everyone. The order was divided into conflicting groups known as the spirituals and the moderates. The majority of brotherhood with the support of the pope and the papal protectors were moderates. Therefore, several overtly conspicuous polemic works budded during this period. These works pedagogical in tone tried to present a face of Francis paralleling with the Rule he made. The objective of these works was to proclaim that the rule was to be followed to the word and as required by Francis in his Testament. A majority of the works written about Francis in this period were non-commissioned and unofficial. Each author of this period made an attempt to rectify 'history' and purify the order of the flaws that crept in.

Though the situation within the Order was in turmoil due to the dispute on ideology of the vision of Francis, the friars were very popular among the common folk. During the late fourteenth century, the geographical area where the influence of Francis and the Lesser Brothers was felt, was infested with a number of crises. The wars, plague, famine, and the eroding social structure created in the ordinary people a void that found closure and healing in the preachings of the lesser brothers. The brothers found place in the hearts of the poor people due to their simplicity and poverty. This fame and curiosity made way to many popular stories written in such a way as to edify simple people. Works in the ordinary people's language led to fast popularity of stories that presented Francis in a very dramatic setting. In these popular

stories almost all the miracles, virtues prophesies of St. Francis were enhanced and embellished. The prophetic role of Francis was accentuated. This in extension raised the worth of his followers among common folk and the prophetic role rendered to the father needed to be fulfilled by the son's in turbulent times. The characteristic feature of the works on Francis in the later fourteenth century highlighted his conformity with Christ. He was casted as 'alter Christus' a unique status rendered only to Francis so far. These works took pain staking efforts to bring parallels between the life of Christ and Francis.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has undertaken a comprehensive and multifaceted analysis of the depiction and perception of Francis of Assisi. This meticulous examination of his own writings, references to Francis in biographies, memoires, chronicles and other historical sources effectively situates him within the broader historical landscape, fostering a more profound comprehension of his presence and extensive influence. Hence this chapter will form a base work for the knowledge of the historical Francis who lived in the 13th century.

In essence, the significance of this chapter lies in its multifaceted and nuanced approach to unravelling the depiction and perception of Francis of Assisi. By interweaving a myriad of sources, it not only provides a comprehensive understanding of his life, influence, and significance but also sheds light on the timeless relevance of his spiritual legacy in the ever-evolving domain of Christian literature. The understanding from this chapter will facilitate the analysis of the biofictions *Blessed are the meek* and *God's pauper*. It will help unveil how much of history is applied, modified, exaggerated or reverted to create a character out of the historical personality and thereby uncover each author's motive in doing so.

Chapter 3

Art of Agential Living in Zofia Kossak's *Blessed are the Meek*

3.1. Introduction

Through a diverse range of sources, the previous chapter has deconstructed the intricate layers of Francis of Assisi's character, actions, and enduring legacy, thereby facilitating a holistic understanding of his life and influence within the domain of Christian spirituality and literature. The examination of his original writings has afforded direct access to his innermost thoughts and beliefs, providing a profound insight into his intent in conveying his spirituality and message. Concurrently, the exploration of the perspectives of his contemporaries, as documented in biographies and memoirs, renders an understanding of his character and the profound impact he exerted on those who surrounded him. The analysis of narratives produced within one hundred and fifty years of Francis's passing has yielded valuable insights into the evolving interpretations and lasting significance of his legacy throughout history.

This chapter embarks on an exploration of how Francis of Assisi's biography is utilised by Kossak, and more crucially, how the author breathes life into the character of Francis within the novel. It delves into the methods through which the author integrates historical facets of Francis's life, while also venturing into creative deviations that enrich the fictional tapestry. Moreover, this chapter also attempts to uncover how the novel hinges greatly on the presence of agency. In the sphere of biofiction, agency assumes a position of paramount importance. Biofiction, as a genre, inherently embodies agency in three pertinent dimensions; namely, authorial agency, agency concerning the biographical subject and agency as perceived by the reader. Hence, the primary objective of this chapter is to delve deeply into the

intricate dynamics of these agency facets, ultimately unveiling the distinctive features that categorize *Blessed are the Meek* as a typical biofiction within the context of scholarly research. As it navigates this literary landscape, the chapter also seeks to unveil the author's intentions and motivations, deciphering why the biography of Francis of Assisi was chosen as a foundation for the narrative. In the pages that follow, this chapter endeavours to unravel the enigmatic and multi-dimensional figure of Francis of Assisi, one meticulously woven into the fabric of *Blessed are the Meek.*

3.2 Genre and literary choices

Blessed are the Meek, first published in Polish in 1937, was part of a trilogy on crusades and it features the fifth crusade. While its prequel *Angels in the Dust*, alternatively, referred to as *The Crusade* emerged as a significant literary work in 1935. The four volumes in it serve as a comprehensive account of the historical period that unfolded in the wake of Pope Urban's momentous proclamation at the council of Claremont in the year 1095 calling to regain the Holyland. The narrative in these volumes extends to encapsulate the events and transformations of this epoch, ultimately concluding with the triumphant events at Legnica. Kossak builds up a story using the first crusade in the four volumes of the novel. The story of the knights in the holy land is continued in the second novel of the trilogy *The Leper King*, published in Polish in 1936. It tells the story of Baldwin IV, the king of Jerusalem. Finally, the last book of the trilogy tells the tale of the fifth crusade most importantly the story of Francis of Assisi.

War has served as a constant backdrop in the life of Zofia Kossak. Emerging as Poland's historical novelist during the Interwar period, she hailed from a distinguished and cultured military family in the Polish Ukraine. Her contributions

were acknowledged with the prestigious gold laurel from the Polish Academy of Literature. She experienced firsthand the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and 1918 that devastated her homeland Volhynia (Zechenter 93,97). The terrors and sufferings of these violent years became material for her very first novel *Pozoga* published in 1922 (Translated as *The Conflagration* or *The Blaze*). Successful historical novels flowed from her pen in all of which Kossak infused her views generously.

Historical novels gained popularity from the eighteenth century onwards, aiming to provide a comprehensive view of past societies. These novels depict the settings of real historical events and their impact on individual lives, often portrayed through fictional characters. They offer readers a journey back in time. Kossak's novels were classified as Historical novels by her contemporaries. In *The Atlantic*'s April 1944 issue, Leo Lerman in his review on *Blessed are the Meek* opines, "Zofia Kossak is a historical novelist of distinction. She distils the essence of elaborate and careful historical research into a fanciful and reflective novel which revivifies the early thirteenth century with all its religious wars and spiritual conflicts" (Lerman 133).

Blessed are the Meek was written during the interwar period but it received much attention, especially outside Poland, during World War II and after, so much so that it was translated into various languages. It was the Book-of-the-month Club's choice for March 1944, and the reviewer Henry Seidel Canby writes, "This superb historical novel restores in all its brilliance…one of the critical periods of Christian history", tagging the work as a historical novel he further writes, "Zofia Kossak, successor to a great polish tradition of the writing of historical novels, has made this fine book a story of a quarter century as well as a novel of the interplay of human emotions"(Canby) labelling the author as a historical novelist. This classification is

not unwarranted, as the work undeniably exhibits the distinctive attributes of a historical novel. Despite bearing the subtitle, “a novel about St. Francis”, it was not recognised as a biographical novel or biofiction, largely due to the absence of formal acknowledgement of this genre during the period. Furthermore, it is worth noting that novels that did not neatly fit into the established categories of biography or historical fiction were often viewed as anomalies or unconventional creations until relatively recently. The process of vindicating this genre, or reevaluating its place within the literary landscape, is an ongoing and evolving endeavour.

Zofia Kossak’s work, *Blessed are the Meek* aligns with the genre of biofiction, as per the definition provided by biofiction theorist Michael Lackey. Lackey characterises biofiction as “literature that names its protagonist after an actual biographical figure” (Lackey, *Locating* 3). Kossak has taken Francis of Assisi, and his contemporaries, and effectively used their real histories and attainable biographies as material for this creative exploration. Unlike a historical novel that usually illustrates the social- historical reality that shapes and determines the person in a given time and place, Zofia Kossak, like an efficient biofiction writer, showcases in Francis of Assisi the human ability to defy or evade environmental conditioning. The reviewer in *The Atlantic*, though he doesn’t identify the novel as biofiction, he does appraise that, Kossak in this work “deftly mingles fact and fancy, never once forgetting that she is writing a novel and not a history. Her characters act according to their historical traditions, but they also move easily in paths ordained for them by the exigencies of fiction”(Lerman 133) . On close reading of the work, it can be seen that while reimagining Francis, Kossak’s goal has been in using his biography rather than to portray the life of the saint with precision and historical accuracy. She uses the

biographical details and creative license to illustrate how he was able to rise above the conditioning forces of the age.

3.3 Authorial Agency

Authorial agency or agency pertaining to author is the freedom the author uses to alter facts, "…in service to the larger truths in the present and for future, authors feel free to make changes to the historical and biographical record" (Lackey, *Biofiction*13,14). This section aims to investigate various aspects, including identifying the timeline employed in the novel, analysing the constructed sequence of events, examining narrative techniques, and critically studying the alterations made by the author to the historical and biographical source material.

3.3.1 Shaping the Historical Figure

3.3.1.1Time line chosen

While Zofia Kossak utilises creative license to manipulate the chronology of events in this biofiction, this subsection focuses on identifying the years deemed most reliable to establish the timeline. Kossak initiates this work by contextualising the temporal setting. The opening line of the book highlights this temporal anchoring: "Although two hundred years had passed since at the turn of the millennium…". (Kossak 1) Consequently, the events within the narrative unfold in the 1200s. The novel commences with Francis and his small entourage embarking on a journey to Rome to meet the Pope. This event can be historically placed in 1209/10 (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 63) (Fortini 293). The next mention of time in the novel, "Sabina's question was being repeated in those early months of AD 1211 by nearly all parents of Campagnaia, Umbria, Tuscany, Lombardy, in the Alpine ravines in the French Valleys and even on the distant banks of the Rhine." (Kossak 115). This refers to the

legendary Children's Crusade which is considered to have taken place in 1212. (Russell 14,15). The demise of Pope Innocent III is another significant event that is mentioned which takes place in 1216. The last part of the biofiction dwells upon the siege of Damietta, Francis visit to the Holyland which happened in 1219 and Francis returns to Italy in 1220. The deliberate choice to span a decade in the life of Francis within the biofiction is a strategic decision rooted in the narrative's central focus on the events encompassing the fifth-crusade. This specific temporal framework serves as a canvas upon which the agential living of Francis is intricately woven, transcending mere historical chronicles. Unlike a passive product of his era, Francis emerges as an architect of alternative choices, rising above the historical milieu that seeks to shape him. The nuanced exploration of his character against the backdrop of significant historical events underscores the biofiction's intent to showcase Francis as a transformative force.

3.3.1.2 Selecting Phases: Strategical Selection of Francis Events

Zofia Kossak employs a deliberate and discerning approach in the fictionalisation of specific episodes from the life of Saint Francis in *Blessed Are the Meek*. The narrative opens with Francis embarking on a pilgrimage to Rome, seeking papal approval for his rule—an expositional entry point into the daily dynamics governed by the rule among Francis and his brethren. Aspects such as his conversion, relationship with Clare, and the formation of followers are touched upon in the narrative but are treated with a lighter emphasis compared to the prominently highlighted events. This intentional focus on select phases underscores Kossak's nuanced storytelling strategy, prioritising certain episodes that align with her thematic objectives and framing the protagonist, Francis, as a channel for conveying her own ideological perspectives amid the historical tapestry.

3.3.2 Creative Liberties and Artistic License

3.3.2.1 Crafting Francis of Assisi

The Francis depicted in the novel already has a few followers. He has overcome his phase of spiritual conversion. Kossak refrains from elaborate deviations from the main line of his biography. Instead, she utilises authorial agency to delve into the day-to-day life of Francis, creating an intimate portrayal that distinguishes this biofiction from factual nonfiction. Kossak employs creative imagination in crafting scenes, for instance, Francis and his brothers stay in the courtyard at an inn on their journey to Rome. Despite the alignment with the historical Francis, the details of interactions with the innkeeper, concerns about their daily worries, and depictions of appearances are outcomes of the author's creative flair. These occurrences, though credible, remain beyond verification, enriching the depth of the novel's narrative. The vibrant discussion among the brothers concerning the rule is intricately woven into the narrative, where Francis's principles, particularly those found in his Rule, seamlessly merge with anecdotes from the legends of Francis. But the uneasiness regarding the Rule and the conflicts about how to govern a large brotherhood with the rule does not actually arise at this point in the history of the Order but in a later time. The episode of Francis travel to Rome is mentioned thus in the *Anonymous of Perugia*,

> They made their way rejoicing and spoke about the words of the Lord. No one dared to say anything unless it pertained to the Lord's praise and glory or to the benefit of their souls, and they spent time in prayer. The Lord, on the other hand, prepared lodging and food for them as the need arose. (Armstrong et al., *Founder* 48)

The *Legend of The Three Companions* repeats the same, with an inclusion. It records, "…the proposal of their father pleased the other brothers, and they embarked together with him on the journey to the Curia," (Armstrong et al., *Founder* 95) This amalgamation of fact and fiction serves as a vehicle through which the author articulates her own worldview. By employing Francis as a conduit, the author skilfully reveals the psychological and/or cultural malaise that operates in both the historical subject's era and the author's contemporary period.

As a biofiction writer Kossak knits events that probably might have occurred in the same period into a meaningful plot. Kossak creates a chance encounter of Francis with Jean de Brienne. According to historical documents, Francis got oral approval of his earlier rule in around 1209/ 10 and Jean de Brienne is chosen to be king of Jerusalem and has met the pope around the same time. "Having acquired the French king's backing, maybe in mid-to late 1208, John could well have gone to the papal Curia in 1209" (Perry 47). Kossak uses this material and creates a chance encounter between them. Francis might have met him once when he was at Acre during his visit to the crusading camps. "During Francis's brief period in the crusader camp, he may well have had his first and only face-to-face meeting with John" (102). Jean de Brienne was quite familiar with the friars' minors and in the end of his life he had entered the third order. But there is no historical evidence to support their further meeting beyond that one-time face to face meeting at the Crusader camp.

A similar alteration of facts is seen in the illustration of Francis's involvement with the children involved in the children's crusade. Kossak takes the liberty to have Francis speak with the youngsters. She takes an opportunity to give us Francis take on the children's crusade and its perpetrators. It is crucial to note that there is no historical foundation for such an account. None of Francis's biographies, writings, or

legends indicates any involvement or awareness of such a crusade. In reality, the Children's Crusade remains a sparsely documented historical event. Yet other examples of implementation of authorial agency are the fabrication of the gathering at the Frangipani household wherein a feast is organised in honour of Jean de Brianne. Here the troubadour William Divini, who later becomes the friar minor, brother Pacifico and Donna Giacobbe Setteoli the wife of Sir Gracianni Frangipani, who later becomes a follower of Francis, are introduced. Though they are historical personalities their stories undergo significant changes in the hands of Kossak. She uses Francis's conversation with them to weave in the story of his conversion and enlightenment, similarly his thoughts on Clare and her embracing of the new way of life of poverty and freedom. Intricately blending historical basis with creative panache, Kossak introduces entirely new and conceivable events, such as Francis's dialogues with heretics and his endeavours to free innocent prisoners. The narrative also features partially fabricated stories derived from historical material but extended at times beyond historical proportions. Examples include the conversation of the Roman Curia with Brother Sylvester about the rule of the Friars minor. This is a departure from historical accuracy. Francis himself had humbly yet confidently elaborated on the way of life and Rule he had made with the Cardinals and bishops at Rome. His first biographer, Thomas of Celano, has recorded this moment thus,

> The bishop of Sabina, a farsighted and discerning man, questioned him about many things, urging him to turn to the monastic or ermetical life. But Saint Francis, as much as he could humbly refused his urging. He did not despise what was urged on him, but he was intently seeking other things, moved by a loftier desire…Finally won over by his perseverance, the bishop agreed to his

> pleas and from then on strove to promote his interests before the Lord Pope. (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 214)

Julian of Speyer in his work on St. Francis echoes the same thing. But with an addition, it says, "At that time he saw a vision that promised the Lord Pope's assent to his plan" (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 383) The dream of the Pope about the falling Lateran church is placed and used in a very different way in the novel. Francis's conversations in the crusader camp, the gathering of a handsome number of new friar minors to worship the Lord's sepulchre, his dialogue with the Sultan and the Sultan's reactions to him, his conversation with Jean de Bienne, Pelagius and his journey and conversations with various people are all authorial agency in the creation of the character Francis. Francis's meeting with the Sultan is recorded in various chronicles and histories. In almost all of them Francis is accompanied by his brothers. But Kossak in her biofiction depicts a Francis who enters the enemy camp alone. Each of these instances punctuates the biofiction, demonstrating the nuanced implementation of authorial agency in crafting a compelling and imaginative narrative.

3.3.2.2 Creative Weavings in Historical Biographies

While the novel is explicitly subtitled as being about St. Francis of Assisi, Kossak intricately weaves equal importance into the narrative for the biographical subject of Jean de Brienne. And unlike in the case of Francis major authorial alterations can be seen in the use of his biography. Jean de Brienne is portrayed as an old man of sixty and yet having burning passions. Kossak makes frequent mentions of his age and of the fact that he is old. He is introduced by the narrator as,

> Sir Jean de Brienne was sixty and grey. But both his years and his greyness – those two proofs of advanced age- fitted ill his looks and temperament. He still

> was a comely man, and women looked upon him more gladly than upon a youth. His vitality seemed inexhaustible, his strength unimpaired, (Kossak 20)

Until recent scholarships the age of Jean de Brienne at the time of his coronation as the King Consort of Jerusalem has been miscalculated. The latest biographical work on Jean de Brienne states that "John was not, therefore, about sixty but, instead, just over the age of thirty when his career took off with his elevation to the crown of Jerusalem."(Perry 17) The discrepancy in Jean de Brianne's age portrayed in the biofiction is unlikely to be an intentional creative choice by Kossak. It appears more reasonable that this deviation is a result of historical miscalculations. However, despite the unintentional nature of this discrepancy, Kossak effectively incorporates this aspect into the narrative. Kossak's depiction of Jean's hesitancy to accept the crown of Jerusalem and his reluctance towards a strategic marriage is a product of her creative imagination. Contrary to this portrayal, historical evidence suggests that Jean was enthusiastic and pragmatically inclined to fulfil the requirements to secure his position as the King of Jerusalem. Perry records that according to Ernoul-Bernard's account, "when John heard, in due course, that the council had agreed upon him, he gave the appropriate, humble response that he would seek 'counsel' about it. He took the matter to the king of France, and proceeded to secure his assent." (42) There is a notable departure from historical accuracy in the character portrayal of Jean de Brienne in Kossak's narrative. In the biofiction, Jean expresses reluctance to journey to Jerusalem due to his intense romantic feelings towards Blanche, depicted as the wife of Thiboult, the count of Champagne. While historical records affirm Jean's association with the court of Champagne and his support for Blanche, Kossak introduces a heightened romantic entanglement not explicitly documented. In truth the transactions between Blanche and Jean might be political, because,

> The regent, Countess Blanche, was anxiously trying to consolidate her own and her son's status and authority within Champagne. This could well explain why she approved of, or at least acquiesced in, John's assumption of the title and county of Brienne. It may well have seemed, to her, as an easy way of securing his support. John, for his part, would not have wanted challenges to the position and rights of effective regents in Champagne, any more than she did. A closer alliance, of convenience, was easily forged (37)

While historical sources do acknowledge tensions between Jean and King Philip concerning Blanche, (39) the extent of the narrative divergence surpasses the historical accounts. Jean de Brienne is portrayed employing William Divini, referred to as 'the king of the Troubadours,' as an intermediary to entice Blanche to Acre. The novel situates Blanche's arrival in Acre around the time of the fifth crusade, specifically in 1219. During this period, Jean and Blanche engage in numerous romantic encounters. Notably, Jean is depicted as neglectful of his pregnant wife, Marie de Montferrat. Kossak skilfully delineates these developments, portraying the internal conflicts and complexities within Jean's character. The trajectory of Jean's narrative reaches its zenith with a profound sense of guilt stemming from his unwise decisions and neglect, resulting in adverse consequences. This includes the loss of his influential position in the fifth-crusade, a pivotal element in the novel depicting the primary cause of the crusade's defeat. Additionally, there is a subdued conflict with his wife, compounded by the tragic outcome of her demise during childbirth. The persistent inner turmoil is exacerbated by his tumultuous relationship with Blanche, ultimately culminating in her tragic suicide. None of these have any historical basis and are completely devices of authorial agency.

In conjunction with Jean's character, notable modifications are introduced in the biographies of Blanche, Marie, and William Divini. Blanche emerges as a formidable female figure characterised by her intense passion, particularly in her affection for Jean. Her spouse is portrayed as prematurely aged, feigning ignorance of Blanche's actions. Thiboult, their young son, shares his father's lack of vigour, displaying an interest in art and music that is met with disapproval from both parents. Blanche is depicted as a noblewoman engaging in an adulterous affair, rationalising her actions in the name of love. The historical Blanche might have been an authoritative and commanding woman who was already a widow when she met Jean. Colbert-Fountainbleau, as cited by Perry, analyses the circumstances leading to John's kingship in Jerusalem. According to Colbert-Fountainbleau, King Philip's desire to remove John from France stemmed from a seemingly simplistic love triangle involving the widowed countess. Colbert-Fountainbleau oversimplifies the intricate political dynamics between John, Philip, and the countess into a banal love story. While acknowledging the potential for an emotional dimension in the relationship, Perry argues that the evidence suggests a more pragmatic, politically motivated collaboration between Blanche and John. The assertion is that their cooperation was likely driven by mutual benefits, and the emotional closeness between John and Blanche appears dubious. (Perry 39) As it is not really known how close Blanche and Jean were, Kossak builds on this lacuna in history.

Kossak's Blanche is vehemently against Jeans going to Jerusalem and marrying Marie de Montferrat. Blanche is depicted as consumed by jealousy and driven to extreme measures, including obtaining poison from a witch to eliminate her perceived rival. Throughout the narrative, Blanche remains unrepentant for her actions, culminating in a tragic decision to end her own life. This depiction adds layers of

complexity to Blanche's character, highlighting the intense emotions and internal conflicts within the narrative.

Blanche, the countess of champagne, who lived during the 1200s and was Jean de Brienne's contemporary was a widow by 1201. During her prolonged regency, she earnestly sought to strengthen both her own and her son's standing and influence within Champagne. She strategised wars, paid bribes and used many other means to secure her authority during her regency for her son. Prompting the election of Jean de Brienne to be consort king of Jerusalem was again part of an elaborate scheme to secure her position, because "Although John had served her well in Champagne, he could now be still more useful to her in the Holy Land" (41) There are no recorded evidence for her visit to the Holy land. Unlike the Blanche whose death occurs during the fifth crusade that is in 1219/20, the historical Blanche dies a natural death in 1229. Kossak, through her creative narrative, delves into the life of Marie de Montferrat, the queen of Jerusalem, adding layers of complexity to her character. While historical records indicate that Jean lost his wife in 1212 during childbirth (68) and remarried in 1214 (79), the biofiction takes artistic liberties, portraying Marie's demise around 1217/18.

Beyond the above-mentioned historical figures, Kossak ventures into the imaginative reconstruction of the lives of William Divini and Nicholas in her biofiction. Drawing inspiration from historical references, the novel weaves intricate and divergent narratives, presenting these characters with elaborate, albeit plausible, storylines. The children's crusade added as a narrative in the biofiction is another event in history which has a lot of gaps in it. Kossak blends in this story along with that of Francis's and Jean's. From the existing scholarship on Children's Crusade, it is known that the Children's Crusade of 1212, was not a papal approved crusade, and

though the name suggests children it might also have been a movement of young people and of people belonging to the lower strata of the society. Recent research suggests two separate movements in Germany and France, with later chroniclers combining and embellishing these narratives. Led by young boys Nicholas of Cologne and Stephen of Cloyes from Germany and France, respectively, the crusade included elements of mythical visions, peaceful conversion aspirations, and tragic outcomes such as children being sold into slavery in Tunis or perishing in a shipwreck off Sardinia (Russel 14, 15). Kossak picks her cue from this bit of history and creates her own version. In the biofiction, Nicholas is not a young boy but an adult with bad intentions luring the children to be sold. Moreover, the narrator gives the idea that he is a fraud and a coward.

3.3.3 Crafting Meaning Through Authorial Agency

In *Blessed are the Meek: a Novel about St. Francis* Kossak deliberately tailors the events in history in such a way that the person of Francis is read directly in contrast with the other characters in the novel. Instead of plunging into the personality of Francis directly, the essence and uniqueness of his motives and choices are brought out in contrast to that of his contemporaries. In spite of the alterations, additions and inaccuracies knit into the biographical and historical material in Kossak's hands her characters feel believable and real than the real. And particularly with respect to the character of Francis. She succeeded in her intention, "In these instances, the goal of biography is not to portray a life of a representational figure with as much precision and accuracy as possible. It is to use the life of a particular person in order to illustrate how he or she was able to rise above the conditioning forces of the age"(Lackey, *Biofiction* 11).

3.3.3.1 Creating Dichotomies

Kossak uses a third-person unlimited perspective which helps her to precisely illustrate the internal conflict of every character and also how these situations are viewed by the other. In this way, she is able to give a first-hand experience or a direct outlet to the character's mindset, choices, principles and views. Kossak paints her Francis to be one among the twelve of his followers, "dressed in dingy grey" (15). Someone who needed to be "pushed to the front" (16). The third-person omniscient narrator describes him as, "He seemed to be less than thirty, short, slight, with a small head set upon a thin aristocratic neck emerging from the loose collar of the garb. Nothing much to look at, decided Sabina. Still, she could not help liking his eyes. They were nice eyes, both kind and merry" (16). He does not appear to be assertive. When he is asked what his little band is called his first reaction is "the man rubbed his cheek with an embarrassed smile" (16) Within the very next pages she introduces Jean de Brienne who is old but still handsome and a delight for the eye. He is strong and powerful "and women looked upon him more gladly than upon a youth" (20). This is how he is presented. There is a streak of aggressiveness in the exposition of the character of Jean. His unwillingness to go to Acre and accept the marriage and the status of King and his conflict in leaving behind his forbidden love is combined with his discomfort of the room he is given in the Inn. Which again is contrasted with Francis's calm acceptance of the cold court yard. Kossak diligently uses this moment of exposition to present their views about each other. Jean pacing in his room, sees Francis and his brothers huddled by the fire they built in the courtyard. They looked ragged and unkempt and the voice of their carefree chatter came to his ears. The omniscient narrator interjects "this enraged the knight. Here he was torn by passion and there that rabble engaged in useless prattle" (26). It also gives a peek into his

thoughts which said “What could that herd have to laugh about or talk of? …what could they know of the wild passions which tear at a nobleman’s heart?” (27). In contrast to these thoughts of Jean, Kossak’s Francis says about the chilly courtyard they got to rest and about Jean thus,

> Truly better, the trees listen to our conversation and brother fire warms us nicely. The air is sweet. It is stifling inside. Just look; You can see the knight from here. See you how he restlessly paces the room and throws his head and arms about? No doubt he is suffering. It fairly wrings one’s heart to see him struggle and bridle so. May God grant him Peace!” (27)

This attitude of Francis is not a foil only to Jean but likewise a contrast to the other lodgers who were thrown out into the cold courtyard to make space for the knight and his retinue and were grumbling at the knight. Throughout the biofiction, Kossak has developed and presented the character of Francis as meek and seeking the interests of others in contrast with others especially that of Jean who show varying degrees of assertiveness. The alterations in the biographies made by Kossak do not render these characters into extreme ends of very wicked and very good. She paints human beings who are caught in the clutches of their choices. Most of them succumb to the trends of their time. However, within the narrative structure crafted by Kossak, a distinct evolution unfolds, particularly evident through the character of Francis. Through her deliberate arrangement of sequences in the biofiction, Kossak brings forth a tangible manifestation of an alternative and potential order or way of life. This strategic sequencing highlights the contrast between the prevailing norms and the transformative path embodied by Francis, underscoring the nuanced exploration of human choices and the possibilities of an alternative existence.

3.3.3.2 Decoding Narrative Arcs and Storytelling Fractals

Upon meticulous examination of the work, it becomes evident that the biofiction crafted by Kossak comprises not merely a singular narrative arc but rather intricate patterns that propel the narrative across distinct stages. Applying Todorov's Equilibrium Theory, the biofiction seamlessly unfolds through five well-defined stages, with the initial stage characterised as Equilibrium. Within this stage, Kossak delves into the landscape of Europe at the turn of the millennium, navigating the inner conflicts within the church through the focused lens of Pope Innocent III. Simultaneously, she sheds light on the intricate dynamics prevalent in the "Mohamet's countries"( ).

The disruption unfolds as Jean, with reluctance, accedes to marrying the Queen of Jerusalem to manage the tumultuous situation in the Holy Land. Francis embarks on a corrective way of life, addressing the inner conflicts within the church, and journeys to Rome seeking the Pope's approval. Amidst the indifference of adults towards the plight of the church and the sepulchre of Jesus in the Holy Land, a clandestine and secretive gathering of children for a crusade gains momentum, injecting an air of intrigue and secrecy.

Recognition of the Disruption becomes apparent as Jean attempts to influence Blanche, the wife of Count of Champagne whom he loves, through William Divini. Internal conflicts arise among Sylvester, Elias, and Francis concerning the rule. Meanwhile a view of the nobility of Assisi about Francis is presented through Sir Sciffio in his irritated observations on Francis's way of life, and his interactions with Clare, Sir Sciffio's daughter. While she, like many other young nobles, is revealed to have a fascination with Francis's lifestyle. Francis as usual takes an interest in

releasing Pietro, a stranger imprisoned for heresy. These incidents altogether make a turning point in the story line in respective minor stories too.

An attempt to repair the disruption could be seen in Francis facing or answering the questions regarding his way of life, not through arguments but through his life model. He is anxious about how he would present his cause before the Pope just before the night of meeting him. But finally, he is successful in gaining the approval for his rule. On the other side Kossak through Francis narrates the tale of Clare's joining the Order and living the Rule. An attempt to repair the disruption could be seen in the life of William Divini who ponders on his way of living and renounces his life as a troubadour to join Francis's brotherhood. He tries to repair the harm he did in enticing Blanche to go to Jean. Blanche on her part to repair the separation with her lover, has devised a way to escape from her husband's castle and go to Jean on the pretext of a Pilgrimage. She manages to procure poison in case she has to get rid of Marrie, Jean's wedded wife. After reaching Acre, Jean and Blanche have secret and passionate reunions, causing Jean to be distracted from his duties and commitment to Marie. The Elite at Acre and Marie try to motivate Jean to write to Rome and gain command over the Fifth Crusade but this falls on deaf ears. Marie's insecurities lead to her delivering her baby prematurely and her suspicions of being poisoned end in her death. Due to the delay made by Jean, Cardinal Pelagius is given the commandership of the crusade. Which is followed by the Siege of Damietta, and the proposal of peace by the Sultan being refused by the proud Pelagius. In the meantime, Francis tries to help the wounded in both camps and he tries a dialogue with Pelagius and the Sultan to stop the war.

In the re-establishment of a new equilibrium, the Sultan gets the upper hand in the war and Pelagius's pride is crushed. Jean grapples with guilt and has inner

conflicts related to his love for Blanche and the failures in his duties. Marie's tragic death profoundly impacts Jean's perspective. Blanche commits suicide unable to accept the distance between her and Jean. The Sultan resolves for a peace treaty due to Francis's dialogue with him. Jean and Francis meet, Jean expresses concern about the lost opportunity for the Holy Land. Francis convinces him that he has set a group of his followers to worship and revere Jesus at his sepulcher and that would be more than enough. Francis's understanding of the situation within his order and his acceptance of the new circumstances signifies the establishment of a new equilibrium. Upon further examination, the principal narrative arc in Kossak's work reveals intricate smaller narrative arcs within each stage which in turn is made of similar fractals. Within these smaller arcs, a pattern emerges, marked by a succession of conflicts and resolutions. Kossak employs a deft touch in interweaving these repeated segments, highlighting the nuanced differences in Francis's actions compared to others.

3.3.3.3 Conflict Dynamics and Resolution Modes

The conflict-resolution modes chosen by each individual can be widely categorised based on the varying degree of other- centeredness or co- cooperativeness and self-centeredness or aggressiveness in each action. Based on these degrees these actions could be classified to five modes namely collaboration, compromise, competition, accommodation and avoidance. This idea of categorisation is an adaptation from the observations made by Thomas and Kilmann wherein these five core methods were distilled down after studying the routine conflict-tackling modes of people at work place. (Thomas 900) (Thomas and Ralph Kilmann 743)

3.3.3.3.1 Competition or Defeat

Analysing the peaks of the numerous arcs in the biofiction, it can be found that, in most of the events the characters resolved conflicts in competition or the attitude of defeating the other. Competition or defeat is when individual engages in a power-centric approach, prioritising personal interests even at the detriment of others. Here, the individual has high priority to one's own needs and concerns and is least bothered about the other's concerns and needs. This mode functions within power dynamics, employing diverse sources of influence like persuasive argumentation, hierarchical standing, or economic leverage to establish and fortify one's position. Engaging in competition involves championing individual rights, defending a perceived correct stance, or actively pursuing victory within a specific context (Kilmann 310). In the very exposition of the biofiction, a landscape emerges with warring factions within the church and conflicts within and among European and Arab countries, characterised by a prevailing atmosphere of conquest. The omniscient narrator details the Church's efforts to annihilate heretics, while these labelled groups, the Albigenses, the Waldenses, the poor from Lyon, the Apostolic Brothers, the Aymerites, the Carnonensis, and the Humiliants, adopt an aggressive stance, promoting their extreme interpretation of the Gospel in response to perceived shortcomings in the church and clergy's way of life. The leaders of the Church are apprehensive about heretics or individuals introducing a new way of life that seeks a return to the teachings of the Gospel. "Those were dangerous precepts in the mouth of an irresponsible simpleton! Every day one heard of new sects. And what would become finally of the unity of the Church?" (Kossak 7) This mutual misinterpretation fuels a contentious competition, with all parties vehemently asserting the righteousness of their beliefs. The conflicts or inconveniences experienced are not addressed through dialogue or peaceful means but are rather confronted through

aggressive combat, assertiveness, and a determination to uphold one's own stance at any cost.

In Kossak's portrayal, Pope Innocent III emerges as a character with a distinct focus on acquiring and wielding power. While historical accounts position the real Innocent III as the most powerful pope of medieval times, reinstating the significance of the papal role, Kossak's biofiction doesn't delve into historical intricacies. Nevertheless, the narrative presents a pope who is conspicuously driven by an ardent desire for power. Kossak gives a taste of his musings,

> with the passion of a political genius, he dreamed of converting the constantly warring European nations into one body of great Christian States living in peace…To attain this aim he craved power, greedily, rapaciously. Power and Strength. In his eyes, secular independence was the indispensable basis for the spiritual freedom of the Church. (3).

The views of the cardinals were not much different either. While discussing a way of life that Christ had shown as a model, Cardinal Pelagius comments, "Where would the Church be, were she to act on this principle! In the world nothing but force avails, and in order to be mighty one must be rich." (73). Power and the ability to be mighty, to dominate, and the ability to defeat become the key goal of each person irrespective of their status. It is intertwined between these events Kossak places Francis's principles. She has clearly brought out Francis's dictum of possessing nothing and being meek, portraying him as consistently less assertive in all instances. His rule is indeed a corrective way of life just like what the heretics preach. But unlike them, he is not challenging the Church "to show themselves more righteous, wiser than the Church!". (72) He is trying to be accommodating. He wants to have the

approval of the Pope for his way of life. And for his part, he calls himself and his brothers, “We are Christians, though mean ones, unworthy of Our Lord.” (16) And when he is asked what he would do if the Pope were to refuse his Rule, he answers confidently, “We shall do whatever he bids”. For him, obedience transforms into the affirmation of freedom, a perspective that contrasts with the belief of other characters who perceive it as its negation. (28) While historically the Earlier Rule was only orally approved by Innocent III, in the biofiction, we witness the influence of authorial agency as Kossak portrays the rule being formally signed and sealed. This narrative choice suggests that a way of meekness, as depicted by Kossak, holds greater durability and significance.

Having dispatched Jean to Acer, King Philip’s expression reveals a subtle satisfaction, seemingly conveying the unspoken message: “See how I’ve disposed of you?” (28) This action stems from Philip’s perception of Jean as a romantic rival, particularly for the affections of Blanche. The narrative unfolds a significant conflict involving the illicit romantic entanglement between Jean and Blanche. Despite their respective social statuses and duties, Jean’s infatuation with Blanche blinds him to ethical considerations. Aware of Blanche’s marital status and familial responsibilities, as well as his imminent marriage, Jean remains unswervingly passionate. In a confession to William Divini he says, “the last mortal passion. I care nothing for the Kingdom which has been thrust upon my shoulders; I care nothing even for fame…It is an infamy for a knight even to admit it.” (78). The interesting fact here is love itself is presented as a competition. Divini remarks, “Love is true only when it conquers wisdom”. (78) In this conflict of passion Jean chooses what he desires the most. His need is to be with Blanche. He is concerned more about what he wants rather than the

correctness of the action. He is not concerned about how it will impact others who are involved. So, in these terms, his passion for Blanche is a competition.

Blanche mirrors Jean's intensity in passion, exhibiting a heightened vehemence. Her eagerness to ascertain Jean's affections, whether directed towards her or his wife, underscores a sense of rivalry. This competitive dynamic persists throughout the remainder of the biofiction, masterfully crafted by Kossak, evolving into an unending contest where Blanche's desires and terms emerge triumphant, temporarily, even if at the cost of another's life. The narrative portrays Blanche as driven by an unyielding pursuit of her own needs and objectives, illustrating the lengths to which she is willing to go to secure victory in the ongoing conflicts within the story.

Kossak places exactly in between these two sequences the sequence about Francis's relationship with Clara. The conversation is begun by Brother Elias who in fact intended to embarrass Francis about his fascination for Clara. When asked about whether Francis loved Clara. He openly admits it. He answers,

> Indeed, I do. Who would not? Have you ever seen a more winsome sight? So fair, so pure! Fragrant as a flower! Her cheeks are smooth and when the shadow of her lashes fall upon them – She has such long lashes hasn't she? -The shadow flutters like a butterfly. She is always so grave; When she smiles, it is like an unexpected gift. Like sunshine! And her eyes …they are clear, yet dark… forever gazing far yonder…Her soul is so beautiful, it is because of it that her body is a marvel…Aye, Clara has no peer…one can sing of her…one can praise our Lord through her…" (104)

However, his love is centred on the well-being of the other; he doesn't have the desire to possess her for himself. Instead, his love for her is focused on her ultimate good, encouraging her to pursue what is right and beautiful for her own sake.

Francis's gaiety, piety and simplicity are likened to that of a child in more than one instance by Kossak. When Jean de Brienne and the Frangipanis want to hear Francis and reach the town square, in great pomp, each displaying their power and might Francis is illustrated as playing sea-saw with Brother Juniper. He doesn't have the grandeur or demeanour of a preacher. He's meek as a child. In fact, in comparison to Francis, Kossak's child characters are of a much more competitive mentality. Tina, Beppo, Robert and all the other children secretly meet. None of them speak a word about this to their guardians. they are challenging their elders. "'The elders have no thought for a Lord", declared Beppo gloomily… 'It is up to us to take their place.'" (42) Francis consistently refrains from challenging or passing judgment on anyone. When Sabina the children's mother learns of the tempter who is luring the children her choice of action is "Wait until I rouse the village! It is with sticks we'll be after him." (43) Francis embodies a way of meekness forgiveness and love that is centred on others. A mindset focused on overcoming conflicting situations and adversaries by triumphing over opposition is seen in almost all minor and major characters.

3.3.3.3.2 Avoidance

Avoidance, as a conflict resolution mode, involves refraining from addressing personal concerns or those of the other party. This approach includes diplomatically sidestepping the issue, postponing discussions, or withdrawing from a potentially threatening situation (Thomas 900) It can also manifest as a form of escapism from the conflict at hand, or in some way of not taking up responsibility. Kossak has

Nicholas, cower and hide when the children have boarded the ships. He lured the children with lies about miracles and fighting a crusade. When the merchants started treating children like cattle, he hid himself. Jean de Brienne avoided and delayed his going to Acre for a long time. In a similar fashion, he delayed reporting to Rome at the right time requesting commandership of the Fifth Crusade. The avoidance of these characters brought a negative impact. Unlike these characters, we find Kossak's Francis taking up risks for other's sake, even when he does not have to. One such instance is Francis visiting the prison to rescue Pietro Canni who was a stranger to him.

3.3.3.3.3 Accommodative

In this biofiction, Kossak portrays Francis as a character who predominantly navigates conflicts through compromise, collaboration, and, above all, accommodation. In the context of conflict resolution, accommodating occurs when an individual prioritises the concerns of others over their own, often involving an element of self-sacrifice. This mode manifests as acts of selfless generosity, complying with someone else's directives despite personal preferences, or embracing another person's perspective (Kilmann 312). In most instances, this mode is functional in Francis. Francis is very accommodating of the different behavioural traits of his brothers. He acknowledges them as different from each other, but he respects differences.

3.3.3.3.4 Collaboration

Collaborating, on the other hand, entails a cooperative effort to discover a solution that fully addresses the concerns of all involved parties. It involves delving into the heart of an issue to identify the underlying needs and desires of each

individual. Collaboration can be exemplified by exploring disagreements to gain insights from each other or working together to devise a creative resolution to interpersonal challenges. (Kilmann) His collaborative skills are highlighted the most in the conversation with the Sultan. They part with Francis gaining a place in the Sultan's heart.

3.3.3.3.5 Compromise

In the compromise mode, the objective is to discern a practical solution that is mutually agreeable to both parties, even if it only addresses their concerns partially. Notably, the only situation where Francis displays assertiveness is in the context of his Rule. Francis remains unwavering in his commitment to possessing nothing, making no concessions in this regard. Kossak provides insight into Francis's resolute stance through Brother Sylvester's discussions with the bishops, and highlights Francis's uncompromising attitude regarding his Rule.

3.3.4 Impact of Authorial Agency

In scrutinising Zofia Kossak's biofiction, the profound impact of authorial agency surfaces as a dominant force in shaping both narrative structure and character dynamics. Kossak, adeptly weaves a complex tapestry of narrative arcs, each unveiling a succession of conflicts and resolutions. This nuanced storytelling strategy extends beyond a mere historical reiteration, presenting Francis as a symbol of meekness and selflessness. The deliberate alterations to character biographies emerge as a poignant tool for emphasising a stark contrast between Francis's humility and the assertiveness exhibited by other prominent characters, notably Jean de Brienne, Blanche, and others. This intentional crafting of characters accentuates the thematic exploration of meekness and its transformative role in navigating the intricate

historical events presented in the narrative. Moreover, the exploration of power dynamics, centred around the religious and secular leaders, serves as a subtle nod to historical struggles for authority. The biofiction unfolds with characters engaging in various conflict-resolution modes, with Francis emerging as an advocate for compromise, collaboration, and accommodation. This thematic emphasis on meekness becomes enduring, signifying the author's intentional narrative choices. In essence, Kossak's authorial agency navigates the complexities of historical events, underscoring the transformative potential of meekness in the face of conflict.

3.4 Agency Related to the Biographical Subject

Biofiction transfigures a historical figure into a literary character, providing a nuanced perspective beyond the factual recounting of events prevalent in historical narratives. Unlike history, which delineates pivotal occurrences and external impacts, biofiction delves into the intricate realm of an individual's inner thoughts and conflicts during the ordinary course of their life. The genre endeavours to imaginatively bridge the gap in historical records, offering a creative interpretation of the unrecorded complexities that transpired within the minds of individuals during significant moments. The agency related to the biographical subject means the process within a biofiction which "portrays the process whereby the protagonist seizes agential control over" their own life. "In other words, the life narrative is strategically and intentionally structured in order to foreground the protagonist's journey to agency," (Lackey 14)

The central focus of the narrative in *Blessed are the Meek* revolves around Francis of Assisi, as indicated by the biofiction's subtitle 'A novel about St. Francis'. Here, Francis is portrayed as an ordinary individual, distinct from the saintly figure

remembered in history. His character is nuanced with both weaknesses and strengths. The pivotal moment in the Order's history, the approval of the Rule by the Pope, is depicted with intricate detail. Francis expresses genuine concern about his ability to articulate the Rule effectively before the Holy College. Brother Elias ridicules him for resorting to a parable for his explanation, yet some of his fellow brothers appreciate the parable. Kossak captures a sleepless Francis on the night preceding the meeting with the Pope, confiding his worries to Brother Bernard. Amidst his uncertainties, Francis reflects on the speaking abilities of his brothers, expressing a sense of inadequacy: "...I am all mixed up...Perhaps Brother Masseo could do it...He is such a splendid speaker...What am I to do when I know not how?" The conversation ends with, ""Why should I worry? Surely the Lord will help me…" He stretched out his arms in the dark, hugged his companion with feeling and fell asleep, peaceful and trusting as a child." (92). Francis's anxieties, as depicted in the novel, reflect those of an ordinary person. However, his sole strength lies in his surrender to the will of God. The character of Francis, as portrayed, does not convey the impression of a powerful protagonist.

3.4.1 Absence of Agency and Dynamics in the Character Francis

While conventional protagonists are often dynamic characters, experiencing significant changes throughout a novel, Francis remains consistent and undergoes no major transformation from the beginning to the end of the novel. At the core of Francis's character lies his humble yet unwavering commitment to the gospel, embodied in his Rule. This set of principles serves as the guiding force that directs his actions and decisions. Francis's primary need and motive revolve around the steadfast pursuit of a life aligned with the gospel's teachings. His commitment to living by the

principles of the Rule reflects his persistence in possessing nothing, embracing a life of humility and simplicity.

Francis is gratified of not having any possessions. While explaining that they work, and wouldn't accept anything for free, he also makes it clear that, "we also accept naught that is worthless. Poverty is a sacred thing" (17). Francis's actions make it clear that possessions do not give power. They keep people bound in one way or the other. In one of his preachings on the streets, he tells the crowd, "While loving money none can be free or happy. This one, because he craves it, that one because he has already won it and fears that others might take it away." (169). For Francis, genuine freedom, leading to peace, held greater worth than the illusion of power derived from material possession. His perspective about his small band and their way of life was that "they possessed nothing, literally nothing. They were independent and free, like birds nothing bound them…they looked with kindness upon all that surrounded them but they themselves belonged to a different, a distant world. They were ready for whatever their Lord might bid them to do. Free…"(35) Kossak's Francis is quite convinced of the fact that, "only that man is free who owes nought and cares for none but God"(28). Francis lives freely without binding anyone or being bound by anything. His explanation for a life like this is, "were I to possess anything, I must likewise possess weapons to defend it." Francis possesses a profound awareness of the hollowness inherent in actions driven by the fear of power. For he says, "Brother, would you like them to bow and hate you at heart? Because anyone who bows to a man must hate him for that very reason." (28)

Furthermore, Francis embraces another motive integral to his character – a profound desire for the inclusive embrace of all individuals into the love of God. This selfless motive propels him to create an environment where everyone can experience

the freedom associated with this divine love. His actions on these lines have already been discussed in section (3.3.3) Therefore for these reasons the actions of Francis are consistent and his thoughts, attitudes and way of life does not change throughout the Biofiction. This makes him a static character who does not undergo significant internal changes or personal growth throughout the story.

Francis's agency within the narrative is notably limited, characterised by a lack of transformative decisions or impactful choices. Even in pivotal moments, such as the deliberation of the Rule before the Holy College, Kossak defers to Brother Sylvester as the spokesperson for Francis's principles, minimising Francis's direct involvement in articulating his life's work. Moreover, during his conversation with the Pope, the dream experienced by the pontiff becomes the decisive factor, diminishing the need for an animated presentation from Francis himself and reinforcing the narrative's portrayal of Francis as a character whose agency is limited. This isn't to suggest that events merely happen to Francis without his active participation. On the contrary, Francis consistently makes individual choices and takes deliberate actions throughout the narrative. However, the crucial distinction lies in the impact or transformative power of these choices. While Francis exercises agency in his decisions, the narrative portrays them as having minimal influence on altering the overall course of events.

3.4.2 Agency and Dynamics in Other Characters

In contrast to Francis, the other characters in the novel exhibit dynamic qualities and possess agency. A notable example is Jean de Brienne, whose journey unfolds across the narrative, showcasing a gradual evolution in character. Jean's choices and actions influence the story's trajectory, with his initial rebellious nature giving way to

a pursuit of forbidden pleasures through questionable means. Subsequently, he faces the consequences of his decisions, leading to a repentant acceptance of the outcomes and a commitment to fulfilling his duties. As the novel progresses, Jean undergoes a significant transformation, transitioning from an impulsive and passionate knight to a mature and reliable king by the conclusion. Similarly, Blanche's decision to go to Acere introduces conflict within the Jean-Marie and Blanche trio. Despite being aware of her surroundings, Blanche remains unrepentant, asserting control over her desires and actions. Cardinal Pelagius, initially portrayed as an extremely proud figure, embarks on ambitious endeavours, disregarding others' opinions. However, as the narrative unfolds, Pelagius experiences repentance, humbling himself and relinquishing the power positions he had vigorously pursued. These characters actively propel the plot forward through their choices and behaviours, contributing to the narrative's development and resolution. Even minor characters like William Divini, Pietro Canni, and John Capella demonstrate a degree of agency, undergoing inner changes and character development to varying extents.

3.4.3 Francis as Change Agent

Francis lacks the typical attributes of a powerful or dynamic protagonist and exhibits limited agency. His importance lies in his role as a change agent, not through personal transformation but through his influence on other characters in the novel. While Francis himself remains relatively static, the impact of his interactions sparks significant changes in the development of other characters, contributing to their dynamism within the narrative. Although these changes may not result in major shifts in the overall story, they bear significance in the evolution of individual characters.

Throughout the narrative, Kossak skilfully illustrates instances where crowds are drawn to listen to Francis speak. They engage with rapt attention, becoming deeply influenced by his words, and undergo transformative experiences, emerging as renewed individuals. This action of Francis not only influences the listeners but also onlookers. It is one such occasion that attracted William Divini to him the first time. He recounts, “There really was scarcely aught to see. A slip of a man, bedraggled, skinny, stood there and spoke to the people. And they listened…” (49). Upon hearing William Divini speak about Francis, one of the listeners, Lady Giacobbe, was notably influenced. She later comes for Francis and asks him “Brother, I want to talk to you of the salvation of my husbands and my own soul. Would you come to our house?” (172). Sir Sciffio vehemently reports to Bishop Guido that a large group of young individuals eagerly wait for Francis, captivated by his exemplary lifestyle. These individuals are renouncing their routine ways, forgetting family feuds, and embracing reconciliation. Remarkably, Kossak characterises Sir Sciffio as an individual devoid of fear, capable of instilling fear in others through his knightly entourage. However, Sir Sciffio is now perturbed and uneasy witnessing Francis’s influential impact on the youth in his town, within his kinship, and even his own daughter. Regrettably, he finds himself powerless to counteract this transformative influence.(95) Again, Francis’s influence on the soldiers gathered and camped to leave for the fifth crusade might be understood from this conversation between two knights, “ I have noticed many times some bedraggled fellow addressing the soldiers while they listened to him with gaping mouths…must have been one of the monks…Does your Grace truly believe they can exercise such influence?” “I was repeating only what the centurions say. Only a while ago one told me: ‘we could never hold anyone in camp, not a single house would escape looting, were it not for the Minor Brethren!’“ (229)

Kossak uses different occasions to narrate Francis's influence on his followers. Angelo di Tancredi, who was in pursuit of becoming a knight; Bernard de Quintavalle, who was a learned and wealthy lawyer; Brother Sylvester, who was a parson greedy of worldly goods; Brother John Parenti who was a learned professor of the University of Bologna and a judge and Clara, the daughter of a wealthy noble man are a few of them. In each of these cases, Kossak makes a subtle reference as to how they were in a much higher state of power before they opted for this life and how influenced by Francis, they chose the life according to the Gospel. While choosing that they indeed each face their own trials but overcome them and live a freer life which is other-centred and in reconciliation with oneself.

Kossak in a like manner shows how Francis influenced the members of the church. A conversation about Francis and his way of poverty makes Bishop Guido ponder over the interminable lawsuit over some piece of land between the Benedictine brethren and the Bishopric. He muses, "Yes, Yes, were one but free of the burden of possessions – of the duty to watch over anybody's property!" (58). Pope Innocent III was influenced more by a dream about Francis. But this forced him to change his mind about Francis Rule and he readily approved it. The influence of Francis on Cardinal Pelagius is noteworthy given the stark disparity in their respective principles. Although fundamentally at odds with Francis's approach, he struggles to disengage from the compelling influence of Francis's thoughts. "When speaking of Francis, he deliberately emphasised his lack of knowledge, his simple-mindedness and at the same time he could not rid himself of the feeling that there was something important he must discuss with him and ask him about. For some inexplicable reason, it suddenly seemed to him that the argument as to whether the end justified all means or not was a problem of paramount importance which must be settled; more important

than anything that was happening around him" (322). This thought, as to whether the end justified all means or not, drove Pelagius to repentance as he had not acted upon this thought that Francis had stirred up in him at the right moment.

Kossak meticulously delineates the profound impact that Francis has on William Divini, providing a comprehensive account of the transformation. The narrative explicates how Francis's words prompt Divini to contemplate his life and actions, leading to a heightened sense of conscience. The detailed portrayal captures Divini's transition from a highly esteemed king of verses to a ragged beggar. After the transformation the way he sings his verses and the topic of his cantos change Subsequently, Divini ardently endeavours to rectify past transgressions, ultimately achieving reconciliation and attaining a state of inner peace that enables him to impart it to others.

Similarly, Kossak illustrates Francis's encounter with Pietro Canni, emphasising the profound influence of Francis's noble gesture. Francis's willingness to risk his life to extricate Pietro from unjust imprisonment speeds up a significant transformation. Beyond mere liberation from incarceration, Pietro undergoes a comprehensive liberation from worldly attachments. Motivated by this transformative experience, Pietro expresses a fervent desire to join Francis's brotherhood, signifying a profound commitment to the values espoused by Francis. Numerous minor characters within the narrative undergo similar influences, with a noteworthy instance being Francis's impact on the Sultan, marking a particularly remarkable transformation in this biofictional account.

Francis goes to the enemy camp unaccompanied, with childlike freedom. He is unaware or not worried about the fact that he could be killed for entering the camp.

He enters the camp with the specific objective of converting the Sultan. Remarkably, Francis succeeds in securing an audience with the Sultan, and the encounter leaves a profound impact on the latter. The Sultan is notably moved by Francis's simplicity and fervent dedication to his faith, expressing "if I meet more Christians like yourself, if I meet a hundred - nay, ten, hear you? - if I meet ten, I shall change my opinion of your Christians…" (307). This positive impression induced by Francis plays a pivotal role in motivating the Sultan to accept the peace treaty offered by the vanquished crusader camp. This decision is noteworthy, especially considering Cardinal Pelagius's prior rejection of the Sultan's peace overtures during a more favourable juncture for the Crusaders. He conveys to Jean de Brienne, who had arrived for negotiations, "Anyway remember, king, that only for his sake, for the sake of the one and only Christian whose deeds do not belie his faith, I am ready to spare your lives. Only because of him! I want him to remember me well. Therefore, I shall let go free not only you but all my Christian prisoners. You can take them all with you. I have enough slaves here." (348)

Kossak's narrative delves extensively into the pervasive influence of power consciousness and the relentless pursuit of power across diverse segments of society. She portrays vividly how this sense of power and the desperation of lack of it has actually seeped into every stratum of society and every age group. Amid this predominant theme, the character of Francis emerges as a powerful embodiment of powerlessness. Kossak strategically employs the lack of agency in Francis as an aesthetic choice, presenting him as a universal enigma that compels readers to contemplate the potency inherent in powerlessness. This deliberate narrative choice prompts a nuanced exploration of the dynamics between power and powerlessness,

making Francis a thought-provoking character within the broader societal context portrayed in the biofiction.

3.5 Agency of the Reader

The dimension concerning the agency of the reader in biofiction lies in its ability to immerse readers in a realm of potential actions, enabling them to craft a distinct, innovative, and novel identity for themselves. In contrast to historical fiction, where readers are exposed to predetermined truths about the origins of society, regions, cultures, or other elements shaping our present reality, biofiction offers a space for exploration and possibilities. Unlike historical fiction, which tends to provide fixed narratives, biofiction encourages readers to envision various paths and potential outcomes, fostering a sense of agency in shaping their understanding of the world and their own identities. Michael Lackey explains Agency related to the reader as the ability of biofiction "to use the life story of the historical figure to make the reader" come alive in a different body, in a different time" "Biographical and, or historical truth – these are subordinate to the more important goal of liberating the reader into the embodied wakefulness of a creating and creative consciousness, a consciousness that leads to new possibilities in seeing and being. (Lackey 15)

3.5.1 Provoking Reader Agency for Peace Through Non -possession

Francis stands as an unconventional figure within the historical context of his era, characterised not by conformity to societal norms but by a distinct extraordinariness. His deliberate and purposeful choice of a unique lifestyle prompts profound inquiries, both from the characters within the fictional world and the readers. In the milieu of his time, Francis's divergence from the ordinary, sparks contemplation regarding the viability and implications of such a distinctive way of

life. Central to Francis's distinctiveness is his principle of possessing nothing, a cornerstone of his character. This particular choice not only garners a considerable following but also raises critical questions regarding the intrinsic nature of possession. The biofiction delves into societal attitudes toward possession, emphasising the prevailing notion that the removal of the instinct of possession would lead to the collapse of essential elements such as art and civilization. This assertion prompts a crucial inquiry into the validity of such a claim, challenging the conventional wisdom that posits possession as a foundational element of societal stability. The narrative meticulously illustrates the challenges arising from the pervasive desire for possession, encapsulating the societal inclination to acquire more and claim ownership even over that which does not inherently belong to individuals. Within this context, Francis's unique approach to sharing and distributing resources emerges as a novel and thought-provoking possibility. The biofiction encourages readers to reflect on the transformative potential of alternative models of living, disrupting conventional beliefs about possession and its role in societal structures.

A central theme explored through Francis is the concept of power derived from non-possession, an enviable quality that captivates followers and stimulates contemplation. The biofiction presents Francis as an embodiment of this power, offering readers a glimpse into the liberating experience of living without the burden of ownership. Through his unconventional lifestyle, Francis provides a unique perspective on the possibility of existing simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, challenging conventional notions of rootedness and territorial belonging. Through this, his power lies in the fact of not curtailing himself to any boundary or ethnicity. This is a power that is gained through the reconciliation with everything. Another pivotal aspect intricately connected to the notion of possession is the potential

acquisition of power and the hollow sense of importance associated with it. The competitive nature that often drives assertiveness in individuals is deeply intertwined with the possession of material wealth. In stark contrast to this prevailing paradigm, Kossak's Francis consciously chooses a path of meekness, submission, and other-centeredness, eschewing the competitive ethos.

Francis's world is characterised by a conspicuous absence of pretence, marked by childlike simplicity and originality. This authenticity is vividly portrayed in the narrative, akin to the sentiments expressed by Brother Pacifico, the transformed William Divini. The latter attests that in Francis's presence, falsehood dissipates, and the need for deception becomes obsolete (Kossak 181). This transparency resonates throughout Francis's world, inviting readers to contemplate the profound implications of embracing genuine authenticity in their own lives. Within the context of the biofiction, these elements serve as provocations for the reader to explore novel possibilities in embodying truthfulness and authenticity while concurrently embracing responsibility for others. Kossak undertakes these creative interventions not merely to portray the life of a historical figure from the past but with the broader objective of cultivating novel perspectives for the present and future.

3.5.2 Provoking Reflection and Action through Francis's Conflict Resolution

Within the context of Zofia Kossak's biofiction *Blessed Are the Meek*, the portrayal of Francis of Assisi serves as a powerful provocation for readers to explore novel possibilities for resolving conflicts through meekness and humility. Francis's unwavering commitment to non-violence, dialogue, and cooperation challenges readers to reconsider the efficacy and morality of traditional conflict resolution methods. His ethical leadership, characterized by transparency, honesty, and

prioritizing the common good, provides a compelling model for addressing disputes in personal, communal, and global contexts.

This biofiction does more than merely present an idealized figure; it actively inspires readers to positive action by demonstrating the profound impact of living according to one's principles. As Marion Coleman eloquently observes in her article in The Polish Review,

> Blessed Are the Meek is a timely and a timeless novel. How well does its author know, how strikingly does she point out, the peculiar dangers of protracted war!... Is there not a parallel here, and a warning for ourselves? Have we not, in our four short years, forgotten the bombs falling on Warsaw, the cry of doomed women and children, and the ecstasy with which we first espoused their cause? How changeless is human history and how unvarying human motive! (M Coleman 14)

This reflection underscores the enduring relevance of Kossak's work, reminding readers of the recurring patterns of human conflict and the urgent need for alternative approaches to peace.

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter meticulously scrutinises the intricate dynamics of agency within Zofia Kossak biofiction, *Blessed are the Meek* emphasising authorial agency, the biographical subject's agency, and reader agency. The exploration of Kossak's authorial agency reveals a deliberate construction of narrative arcs and character dynamics, positioning Francis of Assisi as an embodiment of meekness and selflessness. Intentional alterations to character biographies serve as a poignant tool, accentuating the stark contrast between Francis's humility and the assertiveness of

other prominent characters. This thematic exploration extends to power dynamics within society, portraying Francis as a powerful embodiment of powerlessness. Kossak's novel extensively examines how power consciousness pervades individuals' minds, depicting vividly how this sense of power and the desperation of its lack permeates every stratum of society. Amidst this overarching theme, Francis's character embodies a unique brand of powerlessness that is paradoxically powerful. The aesthetic choice of portraying Francis without agency strategically positions him as a universal question, prompting reflection on the potency of powerlessness. Within the biofiction, the biographical subject, Francis, is portrayed with an absence of agency and transformative power, in stark contrast to other characters. This portrayal vividly illustrates the principles of meekness and powerlessness embodied by Francis.

Regarding reader agency in biofiction, the narrative engages readers in a realm of potential actions, allowing them to craft a distinct, innovative identity. The introspective journey prompted by the narrative encourages readers to reassess prevailing norms and consider alternative paradigms prioritising sincerity over material possession and its associated power dynamics. The biofiction aligns with the broader theme of reader agency, inviting active engagement with the transformative potential of genuine selfhood and ethical responsibility toward others. In the context of biofiction's emphasis on human agency over biographical or historical facts, Kossak deliberately utilises alterations in biography and history to underscore the significance of meekness displayed by historical Francis. The strategic use of agential living in the biographical subject serves as Kossak's tool to propose an alternative, life-promoting way of thinking and being.

Chapter 4

The Art of Agential Living in Nikos Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi*

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter dwelt on the agential dynamics within the biofiction *Blessed are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak. The study successfully unearthed the direction in which Kossak customised the biographies of Francis and his contemporaries and knitted a plausible tale. It was evident from the investigation that the intentional alterations made in the biofiction heightened the attitude of meekness emanating from Francis in contrast to the aggressive assertiveness of the others. The portrayal of Francis as a static character proved to be an aesthetic choice that emphasised the paradox of power in powerlessness that radiated through Francis's personality. The chapter also concluded that Kossak diligently took the facts from the historical past and biography and created a new understanding of the life of Francis prompting a way through which readers can imagine a way of agential being in their context.

This chapter endeavours to explore in detail *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* and the unique way Nikos Kazantzakis customises Francis's biography in his biofiction. Here again, the focus is to study the agential dynamics of the author, biographical subject and the reader. Even though the main biographical subject in both the biofictions is the same, the divergence is in the unique manner in which each author handles the biographical material. This chapter aims to make a scholarly inquiry to deepen the comprehension of the varied dimensions inherent in this biofiction. The chapter will unravel the narrative choices made by Kazantzakis, which

he brings to life his characters, especially Francis, bringing the reader an intimacy through which the life of the saint can be seen from an alternate perspective.

4.2 Kazantzakis and Biofiction

Sprouted in the Cretan soil during a tumultuous time Nikos Kazantzakis had imbibed the essence of true Greek passion of the old. One of the prominent figures in the modern Greek literary landscape Kazantzakis wrote in Demotic Greek and produced a wide variety of literary works. He and his works were critically looked upon without reserves in his lifetime. His vast oeuvre of writing is a distinctive scrutiny of intellectual and existential complexities within the context of contemporary civilization. The growth and evolution of his thoughts are marked by a dynamic exploration into various beliefs and philosophies with lasting influences from Henri Bergson and Frederich Nietzsche. Ultimately his quest culminates with him developing his idiosyncratic worldview. He interpreted life as a perennial struggle between conflicting forces and simultaneously, through this, a confirmation of a progressive evolution of the human person. Employing biographical and autobiographical material in creating his work has been his stylistic approach to putting forward his philosophical convictions.

It is with the publication of the novel *Zorba the Greek* (1946) that he rose to renown as a novelist. This is not his first novel but the first that brought him international acclaim. This novel could be argued to be a biofiction as it has one of its main characters named (partly) after a real person George Zorbas and the other character is caricatured after Kazantzakis himself. His novel *Captain Mihalis* (1953), caricatured his father. This work epitomises or rather reviews the Greek notion of heroism which as seen in this novel is a mixture of honour, terror and passion. His

most controversial work is arguably *The Last Temptation* (1955), a brilliant biofiction on Jesus. The work propounds his nonconformist Christian ideas and critiques the church for its perceived deviation from the teachings of Christ. It probes into the hidden psychological landscape of Jesus as a character. Through this portrayal, Kazantzakis tried to project Jesus as an ordinary man caught in a complicated web of choices. He created the character with human flaws, doubts and confusion. It is amidst these that the character rises above to grow to the calling he chooses in the fictional world.

Despite acknowledging the work as fictional, the publication of the book stirred up a hornet's nest. Kazantzakis faced strong criticism from both the Catholic and the Orthodox churches and conventional Christian groups. The conflict about biofictions arises when biofiction is approached as life and not as fiction. Biofiction does not intend to make its way into a section of life writing. It gives a close but imaginary encounter of the biographical person. It is engaging, as it dwells on the possible facts of intimate and hidden moments of the person's life, but those moments are only fragments of imagination and do not have evidence to be truths. In a biofiction, the biographical person is a character and so the character can portray what the writer wanted. The reader should thoroughly understand the implicit need to suspend oneself to disbelief while engaging in biofictions. It is the reader's choice to believe in the creativity of the author but it should not be considered as a proven truth of the historic person. Neither should the author be accused of portraying the historical person in a different light as they have already acknowledged that their work is fiction.

Like the works mentioned above and most of his other works, Kazantzakis's writing has an aura of unpredictability, and mysticism and exudes a fragrance of raw, rebellious passion. Soon after the *Last Temptation* Kazantzakis authored *God's*

Pauper: Saint Francis Assisi continuing the biofictional style. This is his last novel, given the fact that *Report to Greko* completed just before his death is considered a semi-autobiography. Kazantzakis chanced to read a biography on Saint Francis of Assisi written by Johannes Jorgensen. He writes his thoughts about Francis to his first wife Galatea in his letters written in 1924. Even though the seeds for this novel were sown much earlier the ideas conceived were birthed as biofiction twenty years later (Kazantzakis, *Selected* 229). It is with a sense of admiration for the person of Francis, Kazantzakis endeavours to write this biofiction and he has a thorough knowledge of what he is doing as a writer of biofiction. In the prologue he declares,

> If I have omitted many of Francis's sayings and deeds and if I have altered others, and added still others which did not take place but which might have taken place, I have done so not out of ignorance or impudence or irreverence, but from a need to match the Saint's life with the myth, bringing that life as fully into accord with its essence as possible.
>
> Art has this right, and not only the right but the duty to subject everything to the essence. (Kazantzakis, *God's* Prologue)

This is absolutely in alignment with what most biofiction writers claim about biofiction. "If biofiction is not history, it is also not a biography. While biographers seek to create accurate representations of their subject's lives, bio-novelists seek to convey the essence of their subjects' personalities which may require them to modify or twist facts." (Mujica 26)

4.3 Authorial Agency

As elaborated in the previous chapter, biofiction centres on agential dynamics and the authorial agency is the conscious and deliberate modifications made by the

author in the historical facts and biographical data. It refers to the strategical and creative decisions the author takes to shape the narrative and the biographical subject often deviating from historical or factual accuracy for the sake of thematic emphasis, aesthetic goals, or conveying a particular message. This emphasises the author's influence and control over the storytelling process, characters, and fictional world showcasing their inimitable vision and artistic expression. This subsection examines Kazantzakis's creative ingenuity in reinventing Francis. It analyses the stylistic choices in the narration and their benefits on the biofiction. An effort is made to offer insight into the selection of phases from the life of Francis. It tries to pick out the changes and variations made and attempts to make sense through these alterations to know to what extent and why the biography has been used in this biofiction.

4.3.1 Sculpting the Biographical Subject

4.3.1.1 Choice of Narrative Lens

God's Pauper has a homodiegetic, overt narration and Kazantzakis focalizes the story of Francis through Brother Leo. Employing such a technique Kazantzakis is able to provide commentary, clarification and views on the affairs witnessed by the narrator. Introducing such a character also enables the author the freedom to interpret historical and biographical material without any pretence of objectivity or accuracy. The narrative is nonlinear and inconsistent in the beginning. It is from the memories of Leo that the story of Francis is recreated in the work. Kazantzakis has his first-person narrator strike a truth pact; he says "I swear I shall tell the truth. Lord, aid my memory, enlighten my mind, do not permit me to utter a single word I might later regret." (Kazantzakis, *God's* 22) He uses the analepsis to unfold the tales of Francis and his time.

Kazantzakis also uses intradiegetic narration, that is conversation between characters within a narration, recapping certain events, in places where he needs. He uses this technique when he needs to present an event which is not witnessed by Leo but is essential to the plot. For instance, the life of Francis before Leo meets him is introduced to Leo, and like wise to the reader through a conversation. The initial erratic and nonlinear narrative, forms a narrative frame where the narratee is the spirit of Francis whom Leo sees everywhere. Leo addresses him directly, "Father Francis, I who take up my pen today to write your life and times, unworthy that I am: when you first met me, remember, I was a humble beggar…" (9), but then the narratee shifts to the implied reader. Suddenly there is a shift in the listener and Francis becomes someone about whom Leo is speaking, rather than to whom he is speaking. On the very nearest page, we see, "At that point, an ugly, gawky giant jumped forward. He had a mouselike face, and a jaundiced complexion, and was called Sabbatino. We met again a few years later when he too became one of Francis's disciples;" (11). This instability and fluctuation create a sense of hallucinated mumblings of an old man and give a touch of unreliability and distance to the narration.

Leo poses as a reflector character. It is through his eyes the reader sees and it is through his perspective Francis is presented. Leo might as well be a tool who arouses affinity towards Francis. Being an embodied, first-person narrator and at times reflector character, the life of Francis is filtered through the consciousness and perceptions of Leo. He has a subjective standpoint on several issues. It renders a sense of immediacy and intimacy towards the biographical subject. The narration unfolding through Leo does not describe the inner workings of Francis's mind as he does not have access to it. But Leo gives a detailed observation of every external gesture of Francis and his conclusions about it from his unique vantage point.

On the whole the narrative tactic used by Nikos Kazantzakis gives insight into the ambiguities of the transforming paths of Francis and at the same time intensifies it. There is a trace of concurrent proximity and distance created through the narration which justifies its intense subjectivity and reduced objectivity of facts. Thus, transcending mere stylistic preferences these narrative choices made by Kazantzakis embody a conscious authorial agency.

4.3.1.2 Strategic Choices of the Segments from the life of Francis

Kazantzakis opts to chronicle the tale of an evolving saint. He is interested in the process rather than the result. For this reason, he strategically selects the moment Francis felt a major shift in his way of thinking as the starting point of this biofiction. Steering back the narrative time within the fictional world, the embodied narrator ruminates and evokes his memories to reinvent Francis, "Memories rise up, time rolls back its wheel, and these, brought back to life are the sacred hours…Do you remember where we first met?" (10). When begun from the beginning, Kazantzakis is able to dismantle the aura of sainthood shrouding Francis and delineates him amidst his doubts, confusions and personal fears. The story thus takes us through every major event in the life of Francis up to his death, through the memory of an aging comrade. This choice, though it omits the birth and boyhood of Francis, focuses in detail on his spiritual transformation and the development of his philosophy, thus making the biofiction attain the characteristics of a bildungsroman.

4.3.2 Artful Alterations and Imaginative Inclusions

Kazantzakis transcends the boundaries of conventional storytelling and moulds and augments the lives of Francis and those intertwined with him.

4.3.2.1 Employing Authorial Agency in Francis's Biography

In the biofiction, Francis is introduced as a young and perplexed individual, serenading below his beloved's window, a depiction that lacks historical substantiation yet it is not entirely implausible. Kazantzakis through this description is situating Francis in the initial phase of his spiritual awakening where he too is like the ordinary majority of the city of Assisi, or as a matter of fact, anyone in the world. He is an ordinary person yearning for material pleasures and leading a domestic life. Desiring everything that the world understands as good and prosperous. This narrative choice by Kazantzakis aligns with his intention to emphasise Francis's transitional state. The authorial agency becomes evident in the rearrangement of events in the presentation of Francis's illness. While historical records place his illness before his departure to Spoleto, and probably during his captivity at Perugia (Fortini 169), a significant event in Francis's life, which Kazantzakis omits, he decisively situates the illness after Francis's return from Spoleto. This deliberate alteration serves multiple purposes. Kazantzakis employs the episode of Francis's illness as a pivotal starting point for Francis's transformative journey. While biographical material depicts Francis's oscillation between a temporary attraction to God during his illness and a subsequent return to worldly ambitions, Kazantzakis deviates from this. In the biofiction, Francis's transformative journey unfolds as a continuous progression, with each phase building upon the preceding one. Furthermore, the description conveys an impression that Francis's illness is a result of the psychospiritual stress due to his quest for God, contrary to the original biographical implication of the illness as a divine method to draw Francis closer to God (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 184). Another benefit of this alteration lies in its narrative utility, as Kazantzakis employs Francis's illness to facilitate Leo's care and observation. Through the lens of Leo, the overt

narrator, readers gain insights into the physical, mental, and spiritual changes that Francis undergoes during this pivotal period.

The distinctive feature of Kazantzakis's authorial approach lies in his profound interest in delving into Francis's mental state during moments of his sickness. Unlike traditional biographers who maintain a general description of Francis's detachment from the world during illness, Kazantzakis, through the perspective of Leo, provides an intricate day-to-day account of Francis's health and thoughts. This meticulous exploration of Francis's psyche is exemplified in Leo's narration, where Kazantzakis vividly portrays the protagonist's experiences: "As I bent over him, I saw flashes of light and shadow cross his pale face; his eyelids kept fluttering as though being wounded by intense brightness, I had a premonition that some terrifying, visible presence was above him" (Kazantzakis 29). The inclusion of such detailed observations serves as a manifestation of the creative liberty exercised by Kazantzakis. Francis's discussion with Leo about Leo's search for God is an addition made by Kazantzakis. This conversation is intentional as it underscores the usual things of life as the mediocrity of life that keeps man away from God. Leo opines, "Piety requires laziness, … The labourer who lives from hand to mouth returns home each night exhausted and famished… Where can he find time for God? But the man who is without work, Children and wife thinks about God," (31). The biofiction unfolds with Francis sharing with Leo the unsettling visions he experienced. In this context, Leo assumes a crucial role, providing spiritual support, guidance, and comfort to Francis. Leo is found to assure Francis saying, "You're not alone anymore, Francis. You know that! A mighty companion is within you; you heard His voice. What are you afraid of?" (37) The elaborate narrative of these intimate moments, absent in traditional biographies, accentuates Kazantzakis's intentional departure from

historical records and his commitment to creating an emotionally rich portrayal of Francis's internal struggles.

Kazantzakis illustrates the repairing of San Damiano in great detail. According to *The Legends of the Three Companions* and *Remembrance of the Soul* Francis received instruction from the crucifix at San Damiano to renew the church. Almost all the biographical material document this event as happening at the church of San Damiano. But Kazantzakis makes an alteration, his Francis dreams of Saint Damiano in his room during his illness. Saint Damiano, is in rags, barefooted and weeping. He reproaches Francis saying,

'Why do you sleep, Francis! Shame on you! The church is in danger.'

'The Church in danger? But what can I do? What do you expect me to do?'

'Reach out your hands; place your shoulder against it. Do not let it fall!'

'I? I, Bernardone's son?'

'…it is a tottering ruin. Build it up!' (52)

Francis conveys his vision to Leo and says that at the end of the dream, the saint had placed his hands on his shoulders and had given him a jolt. The conversation passionately arouses Francis's zeal. He feels the fingers of the saint on his body even after waking. And Kazantzakis's Leo testifies to it. Kazantzakis, with masterful authorial agency, effectively renders the dream's impact palpable even in waking reality. The surreal nature of the dream, where the divine leaves a tangible mark, speaks to the author's reinvention of the event. This narrative choice not only underscores the beginning of the mystical dimensions of Francis's experiences but also exemplifies Kazantzakis's adeptness at infusing a dreamlike quality into the biofiction, challenging the boundaries between the tangible and the transcendent.

Likewise, Kazantzakis weaves a tale of the ambiguity in the relationship between Francis and Clara. He assumes a pre-existing familiarity between them. A chance encounter between them with Leo as a witness is devised. Leo observes, "Apparently, they knew Francis, because the oldest of the three blushed. As for Francis, he leaned against the doorpost and started to wipe the sweat from his face." (58) Kazantzakis's Francis and Clara are lovers. Francis here is trying to avoid her from his life as a result of his new purpose in life. In an almost forced conversation between them, Francis comments on his state as "I was ill before I fell ill" (59) and finally, he declares the end of his feelings for her stating, "You heard me every midnight, Clara. But you won't hear me again." (59) This deliberate alteration allows Kazantzakis to explore the complexities of Francis's relationships, offering a unique perspective on his transformative journey. Francis's sensitive farewell to Clara underscores the author's creative reinterpretation and contributes to the probabilities of the character of Francis. In a departure from the historical narrative, Kazantzakis exercises pronounced authorial agency in depicting the relationship between Francis and his father, Pietro Bernardone. While conventional biographers primarily underscore Pietro's disapproval, the author extends it infusing a detailed and dramatic confrontation into the narrative during the repair of San Damiano. This departure amplifies the emotional dynamics between the characters. The heightened tension reaches its climax as Bernardone attempts to slap his son, only for his hand, adorned with a cane, to mysteriously freeze mid-air. This surreal moment, a product of Kazantzakis's creative reinterpretation, underscores the author's deliberate reshaping of historical events to achieve thematic and dramatic impact.

In the biographical accounts of Francis, considerable emphasis is placed on his engagement in prayer, extending from his period of discernment to the post-

conversion phase. While the outcomes of these dialogues with God are documented, the intricate details of the actual occurrences during these intense prayer moments are frequently omitted or not expounded upon. One such instance recreated by Kazantzakis is worth mentioning. Soon after completing the repair on San Damiano, Francis enters into a cave to pray alone. Francis's conversation with God is narrated by Leo as something that Leo gathers from Francis at the hour of Francis's death. The detail of this conversation which does not have much description or detail in the biographies is given great detail here. While the time, sequencing, and content of this experience of Francis has been altered a similar event is seen in L3C 22, 24 and 2C13. Kazantzakis adds drama and depth to this event. Kazantzakis's Francis realises that God expects something more from him after the completion of the repair. God's command is harsh and Francis finds it very hard on him. Francis hears God's requirements clearly. God wants him to humiliate himself before his parents and townspeople to gain victory over himself. Francis bargains with God for a change of location or at the least he asks for some time. God refuses all these. Francis's suffering and pain are conveyed through Leo's narration. His fears as he neared the city intensified. As Francis approaches the city, his apprehensions intensify, and despite resolving to fulfil God's will, he hesitates multiple times before arriving at the town square to perform the unconventional act required by God. Authorial agency is in the detail rendered to the mental agony endured by Francis. Kazantzakis effectively humanises the saint in the biofiction.

The ensuing alteration involves modifications in both the chronological order and the nuanced depiction of the event depicting Francis's renunciation at the Bishop's Palace. Historical accounts narrate that Francis was summoned to the bishop's court to address the conflict arising from his father's complaint. The primary

grievance revolved around the financial resources that his father believed Francis was extravagantly expending on seemingly purposeless pursuits one being the repair of the churches. As a departure from the conventional biographical sequence, Kazantzakis positions this event immediately following the episode where Francis publicly humiliates himself in the town square. In this version, the bishop witnesses the ruckus caused by Francis's actions in the square, coupled with the vehement reaction from his father. As a result, the bishop intervenes, summoning both Francis and his father to the bishop's palace to address and mediate the escalating conflict. Kazantzakis's Peter Bernardone disowns his son Francis before people and Bishop which is a major shift from the traditional, historical rendering of this event which stresses Francis's renunciation of familial ties. The biofiction has Francis's acceptance of God as his Father only after his Father disowns him.

Another deviation from historical accounts is the portrayal of the encounter with the leper. This particular event etched deeply in Francis's memory and recounted even on his deathbed, traditionally occurs in the early stages of his awakening, before his complete renunciation, according to early biographers. However, in Kazantzakis's narrative, this poignant episode transpires shortly after the renunciation at the bishop's palace. The alteration in the sequencing of events is a deliberate choice by the author, introducing a heightened emotional impact. Kazantzakis emphasizes God's directive for Francis to embrace a leper, a task Francis dreads intensely. This deliberate push in the narrative, coupled with the nuanced depiction of Francis's fear and anxiety, resonates through Leo's perspective, further emphasizing the authorial agency at play in shaping the emotional dynamics of the scene.

Kazantzakis artfully integrates the allegory of Lady Poverty from "Sacrum Commercium" into a specific incident within the Biofiction (Kazantzakis, *God's* 50).

Similarly, he introduces entirely new narratives, anecdotes, parables, and sayings, exemplified by the story of Pachomius of Thebes (191). Noteworthy is the distinct reinterpretation of various events, such as Francis's visit to Clare, fulfilling her long-standing desire to meet him (253). Furthermore, the portrayal of the divine experience shared by Francis and Leo at Monte Alvernia (305-315) represents a novel and imaginative addition. Kazantzakis's adept utilisation of these elements underscores his authorial agency, showcasing a unique and creative approach to storytelling.

In this biofiction, Kazantzakis strategically deviates from historical records in his portrayal of Francis's leadership succession within the Franciscan order. Unlike documented history, whereSior Pietro assumes leadership immediately after Francis (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 204), Kazantzakis introduces a narrative twist where Francis, compelled by divine guidance, appoints Elias as the next leader, despite personal discomfort. Francis is shown as experiencing a profound sense of distress as he observes a faction of his fellow brothers finding contentment in seeking leniency and relaxation from the rules he had established. This poignant moment is depicted in the Biofiction, emphasizing the sensitive turmoil Francis undergoes as his envisioned way of life faces resistance and divergence among his followers (Kazantzakis, *God's* 242-243). This deviation reflects Kazantzakis's focus on delving into the emotional and psychological intricacies of his characters.

The historical uncertainty surrounding the succession timeline provides Kazantzakis with a creative canvas to craft a subtly gradient and emotionally charged narrative. Within this framework, the Biofiction delves into the intricate dynamics between Francis and Elias, painting a vivid picture of their strained relationship. The authorial agency comes to the forefront as Kazantzakis leverages the historical gaps to depict Francis's discontent with Elias's proposed alterations to the Rule. To heighten

the narrative tension, Kazantzakis introduces a hunger strike initiated by Francis as a poignant protest against Elias's reforms. This dramatic device serves to amplify the internal conflict within the Order and underscores the emotional and human turmoil experienced by Francis. Importantly, the role of Leo emerges as a crucial element, advocating for Francis within the narrative and adding depth to the characters. He comes to Elias, crying,

> "Help!" I cried. "Brother Francis is dying. For the love of God: help!"
>
> Elias lifted his head from the parchment on which he was writing. "You say he's dying?" he asked…
>
> "We, how can we save him?" asked Elias, putting down his quill. If God has decided to take him, we mustn't stand in the way- nor can we."
>
> "You can, you can," I cried in desperation. "He's deliberately advancing towards the grave; he wants to die, Brother Elias, because you wrote a new Rule which departs from the route he first laid out. Since that time a knife has been in his heart: he wants to die, and if he does, Brother Elias - I say this in front of all the brothers - you will have to answer for it." (271)

The history around the lost Earlier Rule of Francis is ambiguous but Francis's hunger strike is an incident unheard of anywhere in the writings about him. Kazantzakis employs his creative liberties strategically, using historical uncertainties to construct a compelling narrative that explores the emotional and human landscape of Francis and his interactions with Elias. The hunger strike, coupled with Leo's involvement, exemplifies Kazantzakis's authorial agency in infusing intensity and drama into the portrayal of the human dynamics exposing Francis not just as a saintly figure but as a complex and sensitive human being with a steadfast commitment to the gospel way of life. In meticulously crafting the narrative of Francis's life, Kazantzakis has

judiciously wielded his authorial agency to reshape and reimagine every facet of the saint's journey. Each instance of Francis's struggles, conflicts, and triumphs, as well as the moments of spiritual ecstasy, undergoes a transformative process through the skilful pen of Kazantzakis. This artful reconstruction serves a distinct purpose: to intimately portray the saint as inherently human. Kazantzakis's creative intervention shapes not only the reception of new followers, the intricacies of Francis's thoughts, and the specifics of his actions and reactions but also fosters a narrative woven with probable truths.

4.3.2.2 Biographical Alterations and Creative Revisions in Subordinate Characters

Kazantzakis has introduced significant alterations to the biographies of subordinate characters, enhancing the overall narrative coherence. The novel opens in conversation mode and the yet unnamed narrator is speaking to probably the memory of Francis. The narrator is ruminating about their first meeting, remembering, "My eyes were frightened and naïve; I stuttered, bleated like a lamb- and you, in order to ridicule my ugliness and abasement, you named me Brother Leo…" (9) Kazantzakis choreographs a critical encounter between the characters Leo and Francis, in a calculated variation from the biographical material, at a pivotal stage in the path of Francis's spiritual renovation. This being, the return of Francis from Spoleto, where he decides not to continue his pursuit to be a knight. Kazantzakis makes a deliberate choice of having Leo hear about Francis before meeting him. He employs an intradiegetic narrative frame to convey the events that transpired until that point. To Leo's query about who would give him alms, the youngster making merry in the tavern at night answers, "Pietro Bernadone's son Francis, old 'Leaky Palms': he's the one who'll give you alms. And you're in luck. Yesterday he returned from Spoleto

with his tail between his legs." (11). By implementing this technique, Kazantzakis intricately intertwines the narrative with the narrator's perspective, offering readers a firsthand account of a character situated within the fictional realm.

The stages of Francis's transformation and the moments of his initial conversion as recorded in various early documents have been expounded in detail in the second chapter in section 2.7.1.1. Consequently, it is evident that Francis had begun to experience spiritual change before his return from Spoleto. It is imperative to note that according to these biographical documents, this was Francis's third encounter with God and he was mostly alone during his period of spiritual crisis. Kazantzakis has deviated from facts by making the return from Spoleto the starting point of Francis's transformation. This phase is characterised by a profound shift in Francis's priorities and these details are conveyed to the reader from this point on through Leo. Though almost all of the early writings about Francis document him being alone in his spiritual quest, his first biographer Thomas of Celano mentions that there was a special companion, who was almost his age with whom he shared the state of his spirit occasionally and that too in allegories (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 187). This anonymous friend had been speculated by Paul Sabatier, to be Bombarone da Beviglia who later became Brother Elias (Sabatier 37). Regarding this Fortini comments that many biographers including Sabatier, Pennachi, Jorgensen, and Attal, have believed this companion to be Brother Elias. However, there is no historical evidence of any kind to support this belief. In fact, Sabatier in time changed his mind and suggested that Brother Leo must have been this friend. But in truth, the identity of this friend remains unknown. (Fortini 198)

Kazantzakis takes artistic liberty to diverge from history and contrive an encounter between Leo and Francis thus making Leo a participant in everything that

defines Francis. There is no clear documentation as to when Leo joined the Brotherhood. In the details given by early biographers regarding the brothers who joined Francis in the initial years Leo's name is not mentioned. The early companions in the order of their joining were Bernard Quintavalle, Peter di Guiduccio, Giles, Sabbatino, Morico, John of Capella, and Philip the Long (Armstrong et al., *Saint* 204, *Founder* 41). Fortini speculates that the other members were, Barbaro, Giovanni (John) di San Costanzo, Bernardo and Angelo Tancredi (Fortini 286). These members joined Francis in the years 1208 and 1209. They were with him when he went to Rome to receive approval for his Rule (Armstrong et al., *Founder* 95). This gives a conclusion that Leo might have known Francis only after 1209. Kazantzakis has consciously made this alteration, for, after reading a biography on St. Francis by Johannes Jorgensen he writes to his wife, "Three years later he acquired his first disciple, Bernardo, and two or three others little by little." (Kazantzakis, *Selected* 203)

Similarly, there is a lack of documentation about the early life of Leo. It is presumed that Leo was a priest from Assisi. (Fortini 324f) He is recognised as being the confessor of Francis by Bernard of Besse (Armstrong et al., *Prophet* 35). The incidents related to Leo in the early documents portray Leo as simple and docile. Whereas Kazantzakis's Leo is a beggar, a searcher of God and a glutton. At times he is impulsive and many a times finds it very difficult to resist temptations. In this way, Kazantzakis adeptly capitalises on uncertainties and historical ambiguities in fashioning the character of Leo suiting his ideas. By tacitly introducing Leo much earlier into the intricate happenings of Francis's life, Kazantzakis deploys the possibility of availing the vantage point of Leo to witness and interpret these happenings. This contrived meeting between these two characters acts as a narrative

fulcrum putting Leo in the position of eyewitness in all the subsequent events in Francis's life. Kazantzakis exhibits pronounced authorial agency by deftly filling gaps in historical records with creative interpretations. The deliberate blending of speculation and artistic alterations adds depth to Leo's portrayal, emphasising Kazantzakis's skilful management of historical ambiguities.

Another character enveloped in historical ambiguity is Lady Pica, the mother of Francis of Assisi. Kazantzakis strategically navigates the lacunae in her biographical details, showcasing a deliberate exercise of authorial agency to shape the narrative. Historical records offer meagre insights into Lady Pica's origins, attributing her lineage to Picardy in France. It also suggests that Francis's father Pietro Bernardone might have met her during one of his business trips and married her (Fortini 88). The biographical gaps surrounding Pica's maidenhood become a canvas for Kazantzakis to craft an exclusive version of this character. He employs an artistic license, allowing Lady Pica to narrate a unique tale about herself. This intradiegetic narrative reveals her potential affiliation with "Peter, the wild, barefooted monk…. The heresiarch of Lyons" (Kazantzakis, *God's* 41), during her maiden days. The narrative unfolds with Pica encountering Peter in her French hometown. It continues following her through her inspired journey alongside him in his mission, traversing villages and cities, to preach his interpretation of radical Christian life.

Kazantzakis introduces the character Peter the Wild in Pica's tale, depicting a figure with striking similarities to the historical Peter Waldo, founder of the Waldensian movement (Schulman 432). The alignment of Peter the Wild's radical Christian teachings with Waldensian ideals, his origins from Lyon, his pursuit by a hostile mob, strongly echo the historical Peter Waldo. While the historicity of Peter Waldo, adds authenticity to the narrative, Kazantzakis skilfully exploits the historical

uncertainties surrounding Pica's background, particularly her potential connection to France, enabling him to weave a narrative suggesting her association with Peter Waldo, bestowing a thematic richness to the overall story. Furthermore, Pica's journey mirrors Francis's own quest for God, showcasing a shared spiritual trajectory. It is a parallel between Francis and Peter Waldo who are both merchants who renounce materialism in pursuit of the purity and perfection espoused by their respective interpretations of the scriptures. Through the authorial agency manifested in the intentional reinterpretation and creative embellishments, Kazantzakis, elevates Pica beyond historical obscurity, presenting her as a character whose potentially radical past aligns with the theme trajectory of the narrative.

Numerous deviations from historical records are evident in the biographical depictions of Clare and other followers of Francis, reflecting Kazantzakis's deliberate creative choices. The ambiguity surrounding the relationship between Clare and Francis serves Kazantzakis's aesthetic objectives, adding depth and complexity to the narrative. Similarly, the introduction of Captain Wolf, possibly symbolising a humanized version of the wolf tamed by Francis in legends, further underscores Kazantzakis's artistic motives and thematic exploration.

4.3.3 Making Meaning of Authorial Dynamics

4.3.3.1 Kazantzakis's Übermensch Journey in Francis's Transubstantiation

In the prologue of "*God's Pauper*," Nikos Kazantzakis articulates his profound admiration for Francis, portraying him as an individual who fulfils the duty of transubstantiating the earthly into the spiritual. He writes,

> …because for me Saint Francis is the model of the dutiful man, the man who by means of ceaseless, supremely cruel struggle succeeds in fulfilling our highest obligation, something higher even than morality or truth or beauty: the

> obligation to transubstantiate the matter which God entrusted to us and turn into spirit. (Kazantzakis, *God's* Prologue)

A sentiment that serves as a foundational perspective guiding the narrative. In the conventional theological sense, transubstantiation refers to the transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ during the Eucharistic prayers. However, within Kazantzakis's narrative framework, the term takes on a broader meaning, signifying a profound and unique transformation. Nietzsche has profoundly influenced Kazantzakis. On a closer look at Kazantzakis's idea of transubstantiation of matter into spirit, it might look like a variant of the concept of Übermensch or Overman proposed by Nietzsche in his book *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This book is a philosophical biofiction by Nietzsche with the protagonist being the Persian prophet Zarathustra. Nietzsche's Übermensch or Overman, while lacking a precise definition, encourages individuals to surpass mundane and stagnant existence, emphasizing self-overcoming and rejecting conformity. This concept serves as the antithesis of mediocrity and stagnation. He says,

> "*I teach you the overman*. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him?
>
> "All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is the ape to man? A laughing stock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now, too, man is more ape than any ape. (Nietzsche 12)

In the context of Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis, the notion of transubstantiation aligns with Nietzsche's ideas, suggesting an evolution akin to the Übermensch—a transformative journey marked by self-overcoming and the rejection of mediocrity. The Übermensch is envisioned as a creator of values, engaging in self-creation by transcending impulses and passions, demonstrating a willingness to risk all for the betterment of humanity. In contrast to the 'last man' who seeks personal comfort, the Übermensch establishes independent values that can impact and influence the lives of others. Essentially, the Übermensch embodies a life with a purpose beyond immediate pleasures, contributing to the broader well-being of humanity. Kazantzakis's Francis in *God's Pauper,* and likewise his Jesus in *The Last Temptation* are Übermensch who exhibit superhuman effort to transform themselves to something beyond. In his biofiction *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche suggests that a person reaches the state of overman or Übermensch going through a three-stage metamorphosis. Nietzsche says, "Of three metamorphoses of the spirit I tell you: how the spirit becomes a camel; and the camel, a lion; and the lion, finally, a child" (Nietzsche 25). Authorial agency becomes evident in Kazantzakis's narrative, tailoring the transubstantiation of Francis to parallel the three stages of metamorphosis.

4.3.3.2 Three Stages of Francis's Metamorphosis

In examining the transformative journey of Francis in *God's Pauper,* Kazantzakis masterfully aligns his narrative with Nietzschean philosophy, particularly the concept of the Übermensch. This exploration unfolds in three distinct stages, echoing Nietzsche's three metamorphoses of the spirit: the camel, the lion, and the child. In this section, we delve into how Kazantzakis utilises authorial agency to depict

Francis's evolution through these stages, infusing depth, symbolism, and a profound sense of self-overcoming into the narrative.

4.3.3.2.1 The Camel Phase

The first of the three stages is that of a Camel. This phase marks the practice of self-denial and humility. The individual engages in self-discipline, willingly subjecting oneself to humiliation while gaining mastery over the ego. This stage also involves pushing beyond one's comfort zone, compelling oneself to confront challenges and discomfort for personal growth. About the Camel Nietzsche says,

> What is difficult? asks the spirit that would bear much, and kneels down like a camel wanting to be well loaded. What is most difficult, O heroes, asks the spirit that would bear much, that I may take it upon myself and exult in my strength? Is it not humbling oneself to wound one's haughtiness? Letting one's folly shine to mock one's wisdom? (Nietzsche 26)

Kazantzakis crafts the chance meeting with Clara as more than a mere alteration; it serves as a moment in Francis's spiritual transformation. This modification stresses the discipline and self-imposed changes that Francis undergoes to manifest a transformed self. The earlier Francis was presented as a confident and well-dressed young man engaged in serenading Clara. Kazantzakis transforms the chance encounter with Clara at San Damiano into a symbolic representation of Francis shedding his former worldly pursuits. In this instance he is described as "his voice was not playful, not laughing" (Kazantzakis, *God's* 59). This change symbolises Francis's camel phase wherein he subjects himself to the pains of severing himself from things he delights, things that comfort him and embraces that would give him discomfort, emphasising the disciplined path Francis undertakes to cultivate a different, more spiritually aligned self. Kazantzakis Francis knows that he is

extending himself and striving for more than what he can. As he works with Leo repairing the church he says, “You see, Brother Leo, we are going to go further than we can. Right now, we are using the ruins of San Damiano’s to give us momentum” (61). This is in perfect alignment with what Nietzsche says of the camel stage taking up what is difficult. It says, “Climbing high mountains to tempt the tempter?” (Nietszche 26)

The next and the most poignant event here is Kazantzakis’s modification of the unconventional act required by God for Francis to undertake. Kazantzakis exhibits authorial agency by crafting a narrative in which God instructs Francis to journey to Assisi and undergo an act of humiliation. Francis hears,

> Francis, can you go to Assisi – the place where you were born and where everyone knows you – can you go there, stand in front of your father’s house and begin to sing, dance and clap your hands, crying out My name?... Can you trample this Francis underfoot; can you humiliate him? This Francis is preventing our union (Kazantzakis, *God’s* 72)

This act requiring an extraordinary capacity to endure, becomes the burden of the camel, a symbolic representation of Francis at this stage. Kazantzakis’s artistry lies in introducing such a tale at this specific juncture. The deliberate arrangement of this event underscores Kazantzakis’s intention to illustrate the saint’s evolution along the paths of the Übermensch. Despite the lack of historical documentation, the series of events artfully woven together by Kazantzakis accentuates the key aspect of self-transformation. The hardships encountered along this path evoke empathy for Francis, as reflected in Leo’s observation, “the uphill road is indeed severe” (70).

4.3.3.2.2 The Lion phase

According to Nietzsche, the camel carrying its burden speeds into the desert, and the spirit speeds into the next phase of the metamorphosis. This is the Lion phase. "…here the spirit becomes a lion who would conquer his freedom and be master in his own desert." (Nietzsche 26). The camel that renounces everything and overpowers self is not enough. The trait of the lion is to create freedom for oneself. It is a hardship to break the shackles of conventional norms and free oneself. This is what the lion strives to do, to utter the sacred "No" and eventually hunt down the freedom for itself. Kazantzakis Francis goes through a similar phase where in his struggles transcend various realms, such as the fight against usual perceptions and expectations of society, normal trends, toxic cultures, segregation, and inequality. Similarly, in personal life, he is depicted as grappling with the challenge of authenticity, resisting societal pressures and fighting personal insecurities. Even in the realm of inner spirituality, this stage involves questioning his core beliefs and nourishing the soul.

The event at the bishop's palace marks the beginning of the Lion phase in Kazantzakis's Francis. It is indicated by Francis's statement to Leo, "The ascent has begun" (Kazantzakis, *God's* 80). At the bishop's palace Francis accepts his father's abandonment and rejects familial ties. It is a 'sacred no' he utters to the usual duties of filial piety. By breaking himself free valiantly from the existing norms he masters a new freedom. Being naked before all is given a connotation of shattering the existing sense of propriety by Kazantzakis. Francis is asked by the bishop, "Why did you do it, my child?" "Weren't you ashamed before these people?" (82) to which a free Francis answers he is ashamed only before God. Further Francis declares his freedom before the people saying, "…I am breaking the links which bound me to earth"(82).

Kazantzakis's Francis has metamorphosised into a free and fearless lion. This is the reason he has no fears of what comes next. When Leo is apprehensive of the bandits in the forest that lay in their way, Francis is a free spirit. His freedom is in the fact that "How can you be lost when you have nothing to lose?" (84) Kazantzakis strategically places the encounter with the leper in the Lion phase of Francis's metamorphosis. This instance gives the 'scared "No"' (Nietzsche 27) uttered by Francis to the natural sense of disgust he has towards the lepers. It is also a freedom from Societal conventions of distancing oneself from the lepers. Francis's teaching about 'Perfect Joy' is given an altered presentation by Kazantzakis. This instance in the biofiction is used to emphasise that Francis had already overcome himself from the basic needs of securities. He had, in Leo's observation, turned "…need inside out. For him hunger took the place of bread, thirst the place of water and wine" (Kazantzakis, *God's*105). Very much in alignment with the phase Kazantzakis's Francis says, "The great Yes is formed only by these many No's"(109).

The second encounter between Francis and Clara unfolds as another fragment of creative interpretation. At this juncture, Clara, now a mature woman, passionately interrogates Francis about his unconventional pursuits. Her inquiries are laden to steer Francis back towards a conventional way of life. Clara persistently advocates for conformity, urging Francis to assimilate rather than stand out (111-112). This imaginative narrative choice by Kazantzakis accentuates the struggle within the Lion phase, where Francis confronts societal expectations and grapples with the dichotomy of fitting in versus standing out. Francis's response to this situation is his breaking free from the conventional expectations about a man's life revolving around marriage, children, home and so on. Francis strives to exceed these. He says, "A true human being is someone who has surpassed what is human" (113). Despite its prowess, the

lion has limitations—it cannot generate entirely new values. However, it can carve out freedom and create space for innovative developments.

4.3.3.2.3 The Child or the Übermensch

The next phase of metamorphosis is the child or the becoming of the Übermensch. Nietzsche through Zarathustra says, “The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred ‘Yes.’” (Nietzsche 27) This stage represents the pinnacle of spiritual liberation. While the lion, embodying the stage of self-assertion and rejection of societal norms, holds substantial prowess, it encounters it has its limitations in the inability to create innovative rules. The essence of creating new perspectives and embracing a positive affirmation, the 'yes,' is uniquely attributed to the child and its innocence. The metamorphosis from the lion to the child phase is essential, as it signifies a return to a state of openness and unblemished perception. In this phase, the spirit sheds the constraints of established norms and adopts a childlike stance, enabling the formulation of innovative values and the pronouncement of a new 'yes.'

Kazantzakis positions a pivotal phase in Francis’s journey by describing his visit to the Portiuncula. Within the realm of the biofiction, God directs Francis to this small church for further divine instructions. An instance of significant alteration by Kazantzakis is found in Francis’s prayer within the cave, where God instructs him to proceed to the Portiuncula. While lacking clear historical documentation, the plausible sequence of events suggests Kazantzakis’s deliberate arrangement to depict Francis as a leader, crafting a new way of life through a series of divinely guided experiences. From this point onwards Kazantzakis copiously adds a sense of wonder into the character of Francis. The number of wonder instances and descriptions that Francis admires increases, like him admiring the daisy on the road, the rabbit, the almond tree

in front of Portiuncula and so on. Each of them is seen to raise his heart to God. This is the shift in Francis's perception. He has become more open like a child. His freedom and carefree attitude are a result of this. Along with this Kazantzakis has modified the biographical material and has his Francis discern and formulate his way of life alone as he enters the Portiuncula. This is unlike the traditional rendering of this incident. Being in the child phase of his metamorphosis, Francis has taken charge of making a new system of living. Kazantzakis's Francis feels that he has to "mobilise as many brothers" (Kazantzakis, *God's*121). In the conventional biographies, Francis did not initially harbour intentions of gathering followers or establishing a new religious Order. It was only after acquiring six disciples that he made a prophetic statement about a significant number of people following him.

From this part of the biofiction onward until the conclusion, Kazantzakis meticulously crafts alterations in Francis's thoughts, words, and actions. These modifications serve a singular purpose – to underscore Francis's strenuous endeavour to evolve into an Übermensch or Overman. Central to this transformation is Francis's profound shift in perspective, a transformative journey that allows him to perceive the world in a wholly new light. One notable manifestation of this transformation lies in Francis's Rule, which subtly opposes the prevailing norms and practices of the contemporary church. This divergence serves as a testament to Francis's commitment to a different path, diverging from conventional structures. The historical Francis is definitely a person who embraced a new challenging way. Yet Kazantzakis's portrayal of the biographical character Francis emphasises this aspect beyond proportion. His way of life, characterised as his 'New madness,' becomes a rallying cry that he passionately shares with others. Kazantzakis strategically weaves these alterations into the fabric of the narrative, portraying Francis's evolution into an

Übermensch by drawing variants from the biographical narrative of a Francis who historically did take a deliberate departure from the ordinary and embraced a higher, more challenging path. Through these decisive and distinctive changes, the author accentuates the overarching theme of Francis's metamorphosis into an Übermensch.

4.3.3.3 Kazantzakis's Abyss Beyond the Übermensch

For Nietzsche, the point of sublimity is the Übermensch. But Kazantzakis goes beyond this and deviates from Nietzsche's thought here. For him, the ultimate stage is the Abyss. Peter Bien interprets Kazantzakis's abyss as,

> If life was continually striving to realise itself more perfectly, and if pure motion, pure freedom was at its very heart, then this perfection could only be accomplished paradoxically when all embodied (and thus compromised) forms of motion and freedom had been surpassed. Life's fulfilment would come not in the Übermensch, but in the abyss of pure disembodied spirituality. (Bien, *Kazantzakis* 263)

That is to say that, true perfection lies in transcending material existence and attaining a state of pure spirituality. In this state, Kazantzakis envisions freedom even from all hope. According to him, Nietzsche shunned the weak, that is, those who conform to existing norms. He shunned them as 'last man' because they clung to certain hopes. Nietzsche's Übermensch was his philosophy of a person who grows breaking such norms or hopes. But Kazantzakis observes that even Nietzsche himself clings to the hope of becoming the Übermensch. "Kazantzakis considered Nietzsche's Superman to be a Postulation deriving from cowardice…Kazantzakis insists that life culminates not in the Superman but in the abyss" (263).

In Kazantzakis's narrative of *God's Pauper*, the transformation of Francis extends beyond the Nietzschean concept of the Übermensch, delving into a realm of

existential exploration that leads Francis into the abyss. Kazantzakis gives a marker of this transition within the biofiction when Leo states, “I held my tongue and followed. The abyss is beginning, I was thinking to myself, and I clung to Francis’ robe.” (Kazantzakis, *God’s* 122) This stage represents a profound evolution beyond conventional notions of self-overcoming, where Francis endures even when it seems nothing can be received. His transitioning and enlightenment occur while he is travelling to Rome to meet the Pope to receive the Pope’s approval for the way of life Francis has formulated. Francis’s way of life centres on Perfect Poverty. Kazantzakis introduces a surreal experience, partly real partly dream, wherein a fat monk jolts Francis’s perception of Poverty. It is here that Francis is enlightened in his journey towards the disembodied spirituality or the abyss. He realises that,

> Our poverty is opulent—opulent, because it keeps heaven concealed deep down at the bottom of its coffer. True Poverty, Brother Leo, means that the coffer is entirely empty right down to the bottom; it contains nothing, not even heaven, not even immortality. Nothing, nothing, nothing!
>
> He continues in ever greater clarity,
>
> ‘Lord,’ he whispered, ‘give me the strength to enable me one day to renounce hope, the hope, O Lord, of seeing Thee. Who knows: perhaps this, and only this, constitutes absolute Poverty’(Kazantzakis, *God’s* 163).

He then immediately explains it to a bewildered Leo that, “it is asking to surpass the strength allotted to man. But that is precisely why God expects this from us.” (164). This is the essence of the abyss as perceived by Kazantzakis, a state where one endeavours relentlessly, devoid of any expectation or hope of fulfilment. In this state, true freedom is found in the absence of being attached to anything.

The word abyss is used in multiple sense within the biofiction. As the Pope leans to have a closer look at Francis, he exclaims, “The designs of the Most High are an abyss, an abyss.” (176). Here the word abyss conveys a sense of profound meaning. Francis asks the Pope the privilege to preach. Here the reason he gives for his intention is “Because I feel that we have reached the edge of the abyss. Give me permission to cry, ‘We are hurling downward!’ That is all I ask of you: to be allowed to cry, ‘We are hurling downward!’” (178). In another instance, Francis laments at the plight of his brotherhood. He cries, “What is going to become of us, Brother Leo? Where are we headed? For the abyss!” (234). When Francis is about to die, he has Leo write down instructions for all his brothers and sisters. Regarding people who amass wealth he admonishes, “they all go to waste, plunging down with him into the abyss.” (364). All three instances might suggest a meaning of ultimate damnation to the word abyss. But there are other instances like, Bernard’s statement while he meets Francis, “‘Sior Francis,’ he said, looking up, ‘the whole time I heard you speak, this world vanished and nothing remained but the soul over the abyss, the abyss of God—singing’” (124), the dream Francis has during his convalescence, he describes, “On my right is God’s abyss, on my left Satan’s. Unless I grow wings, I’m doomed. I shall fall!” (47), The advice Leo receives from the saint in the cave, “'Yes, the abyss. All roads lead to the earth; the abyss leads to God. Jump!’ (32). The word abyss takes different meanings within the biofiction including spiritual decadence, moral failure, hell, profound knowledge, spiritual struggle and a phase in spiritual growth.

In the intricate narrative crafted by Kazantzakis in *God’s Pauper,* the depiction of Francis’s transformation unfolds as a seamless and integrated process, where each stage transcends and incorporates elements of the preceding ones rather than being a linear and distinct progression from one stage to another. This portrayal serves as a

canvas for Kazantzakis's profound authorial intent—to illuminate Francis's profound journey of self-transformation. Kazantzakis exercises a multifaceted approach to wield his authorial agency in this biographical masterpiece. He deftly interweaves alterations not only in the biographical elements of Francis's life but also in the broader narrative structure. These deliberate deviations from historical records and conventional hagiography pave the way for a deep exploration of the emotional and psychological depths of the characters, offering an exhaustive understanding of their motivations and struggles.

Francis's passage towards the abyss or the strive towards absolute nothingness can be found in his being portrayed by Kazantzakis as an absolute failure. The life of absolute poverty led by the brothers is criticised by the people in Assisi. The bishop questions Francis's vision of the life of Poverty. He asks, "Who can guarantee it was God who spoke to you?" (147) Francis is treated as a mad man and pelted with stones in a village he chose on purpose because he knew the people there were difficult (149). He is pictured to be constantly at cruel war with his flesh (224, 261), with his personal perplexities (228,238,266,). Francis's own brothers under the leadership of Elias are seen to rebel against the rule he wrote (184,241,243,270). His mission to the holy land is perceived by Leo as a failure. He saw how ungodly the Crusaders had become and could not do anything about anyone. (206-216) The people back at Assisi thought it was a grand success. Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis in *God's Pauper* depicts a persistent struggle in his quest to draw closer to God, with limited success at the time. Throughout the narrative, Kazantzakis employs various parables and natural imagery to illustrate Francis's enduring struggle. These literary devices serve to accentuate the theme of struggle in Francis's journey, emphasising his ability to overcome obstacles and find fulfilment in the process itself, rather than solely

focusing on achieving a desired outcome. Francis appears to derive satisfaction from the act of struggling itself, suggesting a deeper understanding of the true essence of the abyss – a state where one experiences true freedom by embracing the journey rather than fixating on the end result. This perspective highlights the transformative power of enduring struggle and the intrinsic value found in the pursuit of spiritual growth.

Kazantzakis employs authorial agency in the portrayal of characters, particularly Francis, he navigates the intricate intersections of history, philosophy, and spirituality. The transformative journey of Francis, intricately woven with Nietzschean concepts and Kazantzakis's own philosophical inquiries, transcends the boundaries of conventional biographical narratives. Rather than presenting Francis's metamorphosis as a rigid progression, Kazantzakis orchestrates it as a dynamic, interconnected journey, echoing the fluidity of life's evolution. At the thematic core of the narrative lies Francis's profound evolution, symbolized by his traversal through the stages of metamorphosis – from the camel's burden to the lion's conquest, the sublimity of the Übermensch and ultimately to the abyss of spiritual transcendence. Kazantzakis's deliberate deviations from historical records and conventional hagiography serve as a deliberate means to underscore the characters' inclination toward self-transformation. Through meticulous alterations and thematic exploration, Kazantzakis breathes life into the characters, infusing the narrative with philosophical depth and existential inquiry. In essence, Kazantzakis's authorial agency in *God's Pauper* reflects his profound intent to probe the complexities of human existence and the eternal quest for self-betterment. The inclusion of the abyss as the culmination of Francis's journey adds a dimension of existential depth,

emphasising the transformative power of enduring struggle and the ultimate pursuit of spiritual fulfilment.

4.4 Agency Related to the Biographical Subject

Biofiction reshapes historical figures into literary characters, elevating narratives beyond the mere chronicles of factual events presented in conventional historical accounts. Unlike the rigid constraints of historical narratives, which typically emphasise external impacts and significant events, biofiction navigates the intricate terrain of an individual's internal musings and conflicts throughout the mundane moments of life. It not only seeks to imaginatively bridge historical gaps but also strives to provide a creative interpretation of the undocumented intricacies that unfolded within individuals' minds during pivotal moments.

This section will delve into the nuanced ways in which agency is depicted and explored in the biographical subject within the context of God's Pauper. The agency inherent in the biographical subject within the realm of biofiction refers to the dynamic process by which the protagonist consciously takes control of their own narrative. In essence, this entails a purposeful and strategic construction of the life story, with the explicit intention of highlighting the protagonist's transformative journey towards agency. This section will examine how Kazantzakis, through deliberate narrative choices, navigates the intricate landscape of the protagonist's self-transformative process.

4.4.1 Agent of His own Transformation

God's Pauper focusses primarily on the journey of transformation, particularly focusing on Francis's transformative journey. Unlike conventional narratives where individuals may passively accept their roles or destinies, Francis in God's Pauper emphasises the active process of self-transformation. In this version, Francis is not

merely a recipient of divine guidance but actively engages in shaping his own destiny. Francis becomes the architect of his saintliness, engaging in a ceaseless and often cruel struggle to fulfil a higher obligation. The character's agency is manifested not only in adherence to external guidance but also in the active, creative process of self-improvement. Francis emerges as a dynamic character whose journey propels the narrative forward. Kazantzakis's deliberate portrayal of Francis as a central figure underscores the character-driven nature of the story. Throughout the novel, Francis's actions and decisions serve as the primary driving force behind the unfolding narrative, highlighting his agency in shaping his own destiny. At the heart of Francis's agency lies his relentless pursuit of personal transformation, a transformation of material to spirit. The protagonist's deliberate efforts to transcend his limitations and embrace a higher purpose are effectively presented in the biofiction. Francis's motives, intricately woven into the fabric of the narrative, serve as catalysts for change, propelling him towards self-betterment and spiritual enlightenment. His transformative journey forms the thematic backbone of the biofiction, with each decision and action contributing to his evolution as a character. This encapsulates the role of his agency within the biofiction.

Francis's initial identity as an affluent young merchant is deeply ingrained in the societal expectations of his time, representing the confirmed role he is expected to fulfil within his era's social hierarchy. However, beneath this surface conformity, Francis harbours a profound longing for a life oriented toward God, diverging from the predetermined path laid out for him by society. This inner yearning for spiritual fulfilment becomes increasingly palpable during a moment of psychological and physical distress, prompting Francis to experience a visionary revelation of his true calling. In this transformative vision, Francis perceives a figure symbolic of his

desired spiritual identity who, “entered, groping like a blind man, his arms stretched out in front of him. He was dressed in rags, thousands of patches; and the smelt of rotting flesh” (Kazantzakis, *God’s* 48). His portrayal of this figure as “truer than truth itself” (47) underscores the depth of Francis’s spiritual longing and the authenticity of his inner yearning for a life aligned with divine purpose. The imagery of the figure, depicted as a blind man clad in tattered rags and emanating the scent of decay, evokes a powerful contrast with Francis’s previous life of material comfort and societal conformity.

Driven by this transformative vision, Francis gradually assumes agential control over his life, embarking on a journey of self-transformation guided by his inner conviction and spiritual aspirations. By aligning his actions and identity with the vision of the spiritually awakened figure, Francis endeavours to transcend the limitations of his societal role and material existence, striving toward a way of life characterised by spiritual authenticity and divine alignment. In envisioning a path that transcends existing norms and societal expectations, Francis emerges as a pioneering figure who seeks to manifest a reality that has yet to be realised, embodying the transformative power of agential self-determination in shaping one’s destiny.

Francis emerges as the architect of his own transformation, guided by this steadfast vision of his desired self from the outset of his journey. Even before taking the first step towards his spiritual evolution, Francis possesses a clear and unwavering image of the person he aspires to become. This vision serves as a guiding light, driving Francis forward on his path of self-discovery and transformation. As a young merchant, Francis glimpses a version of himself that transcends his current state, envisioning a higher, more spiritually aligned existence. This initial vision ignites a transformative process within Francis, compelling him to mould his substance and

character into alignment with this idealised image. Through his unwavering determination and commitment to the transubstantiation of his flesh into the spirit, Francis gradually shapes himself into the embodiment of his envisioned self. Throughout the biofiction, Francis demonstrates a remarkable ability to manifest his inner vision into tangible reality, effectively becoming the architect of his own transformation. The process culminates with Francis fully embodying the image he had envisioned for himself, having undergone a profound metamorphosis that transcends mere physical or superficial change.

Francis encounters the beggar with holes in his hands in his vision, a recurring figure who symbolises a profound spiritual presence, though the narrative does not explicitly identify him as Christ. Despite this ambiguity, Francis undergoes a profound transformation as he internalises and embodies the essence of this enigmatic figure. The beggar's appearance serves as a catalyst for Francis's spiritual awakening, prompting him to confront his deepest fears and desires with newfound clarity and purpose. As the beggar with holes in his hands continues to manifest in Francis's life, the encounters become increasingly transformative, compelling Francis to delve deeper into his own psyche and confront the inner turmoil that inhibits his spiritual growth. Rather than passively accepting the presence of this figure, Francis actively engages with the symbolism it represents, recognising the profound significance of the beggar's message and its implications for his own journey of self-discovery. After identifying the beggar as St. Damiano, Francis assumes the initiative to repair the church, believing it to be the intended task. Despite completing the restoration, the beggar with holes in his hands continues to appear. Although reminiscent of Christ, Kazantzakis refrains from explicitly naming him as such.

Through his ongoing interactions with the beggar, Francis begins to internalise and integrate the qualities embodied by this mysterious figure, gradually aligning his thoughts, actions, and identity with the spiritual essence it represents. This process of identification marks a pivotal moment in Francis's transformation, as he assumes agency over his own spiritual evolution and embraces the path of self-realisation with newfound determination and conviction. Francis's identification with the beggar symbolises the culmination of his own efforts and self-discovery, as he transcends the limitations of his former self and embraces a higher, more authentic expression of his spiritual potential. By internalising the qualities embodied by the beggar, Francis demonstrates his agency in shaping his own destiny and forging a path toward spiritual enlightenment and fulfilment.

The crux of Francis's journey of transformation lies in the concept of the abyss, which signifies the significance of actions that are not driven by the expectation of reward or the fear of punishment. In the narrative, Francis's supplication reflects this sentiment deeply, as he expresses a profound desire to love and serve God for God's sake alone, devoid of any ulterior motives. His prayer encapsulates this sentiment, as he implores the Lord to test the purity of his love.

> Lord, if I love Thee because I want Thee to place me in Paradise, send Thine angel with his scimitar and have him close the gates against me. If I love Thee because I fear the Inferno, hurl me down into the everlasting flames. But if I love Thee for Thine own sake, for Thy sake alone, then open wide Thine arms and receive me (133).

This prayer underscores Francis's deep commitment to a love that transcends the desire for reward or the avoidance of punishment. This does not mean that Francis within the biofiction is opposed to the concepts of hell or heaven. Instead, it only

means that Francis's devotion is driven by an authentic desire to connect with and serve God purely for the sake of love itself. In this way, the transformative agency in Francis's journey is not rooted in fear or hope, but rather in his own intentional choices and actions. Throughout the narrative, Francis grapples with the challenges of navigating his spiritual path without relying on external motivations. He confronts his own inner doubts, struggles, and temptations, all while striving to maintain a steadfast commitment to his faith. His journey is marked by moments of profound introspection, self-examination, and spiritual growth, as he gradually learns to cultivate a love for God that is free from attachment to worldly outcomes.

The abyss symbolises Francis's willingness to embrace the uncertainty and ambiguity of his spiritual journey, trusting in the transformative power of love and devotion to guide him forward. By relinquishing the need for external validation or assurance, or eternal or spiritual consolations Francis empowers himself to become the primary agent of his own transformation.

4.4.2 Francis's transformative agency

The character of Francis emerges not only as a central figure on his own transformative journey but also as a beacon of inspiration and catalyst for change in the lives of those around him. In this subsection, we delve into the nuanced exploration of Francis's agency in influencing and transforming other characters within the biofiction. Through his radical commitment to his spiritual quest and his embodiment of a life dedicated to God, Francis exerts a profound influence that reshapes the beliefs, actions, and destinies of those he encounters. As we navigate through the intricacies of Francis's transformative agency, we uncover the depth of his impact on the lives of others and the ripple effects of his radical vision in challenging societal norms and fostering spiritual awakening in those around him.

These characters, comprising the followers of Francis, undergo significant transformations under his influence. Each of them represents a different stage of spiritual evolution, ranging from the Lion Phase to the Übermensch phase. Leo, Bernard, Giles, Sylvester,Sior Pietro, Masseo, Angelo, Ruffino, Pacifico, and Clare are emblematic of individuals who have been profoundly impacted by Francis's teachings and example. Leo, for instance, initially embarked on his spiritual journey already inclined towards seeking God. However, his encounter with Francis though it elevates his pursuit to new heights his growth is in the lion phase of the transformation within the biofiction. Bernard, too, experiences a profound shift in perception after encountering Francis, as evidenced by his description of the world fading away during Francis's speech, indicating a transcendental experience. Giles, Sylvester,Sior Pietro, Masseo, Angelo, Ruffino, Pacifico, and Clare exemplify transformative journeys through their affiliation with Francis. Their profound commitment to Francis's teachings and their readiness to emulate his example by relinquishing worldly possessions and embracing absolute poverty signify the depth of their transformation. Transformation in these characters illustrates Francis's agency in catalysing spiritual growth in others. Francis serves as a beacon of inspiration, guiding his followers along the path towards spiritual liberation and self-realisation. His profound influence extends beyond his own spiritual journey, shaping the destinies of those who choose to follow in his footsteps.

In addition to his direct followers, Francis leaves a lasting impact on a diverse array of individuals encountered throughout his journey. One such example is Captain Wolf. Francis meets Captain Wolf who lives on top of Mount Alvernia. He was dreaded by all. His encounter with Francis, the acceptance Francis gives him, motivates him to reevaluate his priorities and actions, leading him to reconsider the

consequences of his cruel pursuits. The wolf gradually transforms into a lamb due to his interaction with Francis. Similarly, the people in different villages and towns touched by Francis's presence experience a shift in perspective. Through his teachings and way of life, Francis challenges their preconceived notions and inspires them to adopt a more God-centred life. While their transformation may not be as dramatic as that of Francis's disciples, they nonetheless undergo a meaningful evolution towards a greater understanding of spirituality and humanity. The prostitute brought to Francis in Jerusalem is an example of his agency in initiating change. Despite her marginalised status in society, Francis treats her with dignity and respect, offering her a glimpse of unconditional love and acceptance. This encounter prompts her to reconsider her life choices and strive for a better future, illustrating the transformative power of Francis's compassion and empathy. Even Francis's own father experiences a shift in perspective at least by the end of his life as a result of his connection with him. Though their transformations may not be as overt as those of his disciples, Francis's presence challenges their worldview and prompts them to reevaluate their priorities and beliefs.

The vast majority of people populating the world of the biofiction without any change in spite of listening and seeing Francis chose to live life clinging to very transient hopes. Among them are Kazantzakis's Elias. He aims at increasing the number of brothers, equipping them with learning, building more buildings and for all these he is in a tireless endeavour to make changes in the rule and gain supporters on his side. His hope is attached on things that are material. And as it is material the probability of its disappearing very soon is more. Almost under the same category are the clergy, and the other leaders appearing in the biofiction. They are too focused on accumulating things and maintaining order by controlling them rather than being able

to let it go and attain a freer liberated life. They live a life of orthodoxies like the 'last man' (Nietzsche 19).

In delving into the agency of the biographical subject of Francis in *God's Pauper*, the narrative vividly portrays Francis's remarkable agency in shaping not only his own destiny but also influencing the lives of those around him. Throughout the biofiction, Francis emerges as a dynamic force, actively charting his transformative journey from an affluent merchant to a spiritual beacon. His unwavering vision, rooted in a deep connection to God, propels him forward despite numerous trials and tribulations. As Francis navigates the complexities of his own existence, his agency shines through in every decision, and every action he undertakes. Through Kazantzakis's masterful storytelling, we witness the profound impact of Francis's agency, illuminating the transformative power of individual will and determination. Thus, the section underscores Francis's pivotal role in creating a self that was not there yet.

4.5 Agency in Relation to the Reader

In the exploration of the agency of the reader within the realm of biofiction, the narrative transcends mere storytelling to become an immersive experience that invites readers to inhabit a different reality. Through the intricate weaving of historical figures and fictional elements, biofiction serves as a bridge between past and present, fact and fiction, offering readers a unique opportunity to embody the lives of others and gain new perspectives. In this section, we delve into how biofictional works, particularly *God's Pauper*, engage readers in a process of self-discovery and introspection, prompting them to awaken to new possibilities and insights beyond the confines of their own time and circumstances. Through the agency of the reader, biofiction becomes a transformative journey of exploration and enlightenment,

inviting individuals to reimagine their own lives in light of the rich tapestry of human experience presented within the biofiction.

In the previous section, while examining the biographical subject's agency, it becomes evident that characters have the capacity to exert control over their own lives within the narrative framework. However, this agency is not easily achieved by all, as societal norms often dictate and constrain individual consciousness. Biofictionists, through their literary works, actively challenge these societal constraints, portraying them as flawed, limiting, and ultimately unacceptable (Lackey, *Biofiction* 15). Kazantzakis, in his biofictional portrayal of Francis, exemplifies this rejection of societal determinism. Through Francis's transformative journey, readers are confronted with the possibility of transcending the constraints imposed by their respective societies. By evading the determinism of his time and embracing a new way of life rooted in spiritual awakening, Francis serves as a catalyst for readers to contemplate their own capacity for agency and liberation. The biofictionist's goal, therefore, is not merely to recount historical events or replicate societal norms, but to awaken readers to the inherent potential for innovative and probable ways of being. Through engaging with the biofictional narrative readers are invited to envision alternative paths and possibilities for their own lives, thereby challenging and redefining the boundaries of their own consciousness.

4.5.1 Exploring New Possibilities Through the Francis Saga

Francis, through his chosen path of life, serves as a living example for those around him, illustrating the transformative journey towards a freer and more liberated existence. Within the narrative crafted by Kazantzakis, Francis becomes a channel for the author's aesthetic objectives, elucidating Kazantzakis's philosophical principles through his own lived experiences. Francis's life emerges as a model of endurance,

resilience, innovation, and the unencumbered freedom reminiscent of a child. In Kazantzakis's portrayal, Francis's unwavering commitment to his chosen path renders him impervious to the usual hardships and tribulations that often lead others into despair. Pain, failure, deprivation, hunger, cold, and rejection—while undoubtedly present in Francis's journey—fail to dominate his spirit or diminish his resolve. Instead, they serve as opportunities for growth, transformation, and the realisation of his deepest convictions. Through Francis's narrative arc, readers are invited to contemplate their own capacity for resilience and self-transformation. By witnessing Francis's unwavering commitment to his chosen ideals despite the challenges he faces, readers are inspired to envision new possibilities for their own lives. Francis's life story thus becomes a source of inspiration and empowerment, encouraging readers to embark on their own journeys of self-discovery and liberation.

Francis's journey serves as a gateway for readers to explore the realm of agential possibilities, inviting them to embark on their own journeys of self-discovery and transformation. Francis's odyssey is marked by numerous obstacles and challenges, yet he navigates through them with a sense of relish and determination. His ability to find satisfaction in the process of overcoming difficulties underscores his active engagement with life's trials, inspiring readers to adopt a similar mindset in their own endeavours. Central to Francis's quest is his pursuit of a deeper connection with God, a journey that transcends the mere attainment of a predetermined goal. Rather than fixating solely on the end result of achieving closeness with the divine, Francis finds fulfilment in embracing the path laid out before him by the will of God. His willingness to wholeheartedly embrace the challenges and tribulations inherent in this journey reflects his agency in shaping his own spiritual destiny.

For readers, Francis's approach offers a valuable lesson in navigating life's challenges with resilience and purpose. By embracing the process of growth and transformation, even in the face of adversity, readers are encouraged to cultivate a similar sense of agency in their own lives. Francis's story thus becomes a source of inspiration and guidance, empowering readers to embark on their own transformative journeys with courage and conviction. Francis in *God's Pauper* transports readers into the world of agential possibilities so that they can create themselves into something unique, original, and new. Francis's transformation journey is full of hurdles. But the passage of Francis from one difficulty level to the other itself is relished by him. This keeps him active even in the face of difficulty. For Francis in his attempts to attain a closer relationship with God, his focus is not the end goal of attaining God. Going through the difficult path that God willed for God's sake itself is satisfying. This method of relishing the process without denying the end can be a way the reader can look out for to make major transformations in their own settings. In embracing the challenges of his journey with a sense of relish and determination, Francis demonstrates that true fulfilment lies not solely in achieving predetermined goals, but in the joy of experiencing growth and transformation along the way

Francis's journey serves as motivation, illuminating the path towards self-discovery and transformation for both himself and readers alike. Through his unwavering commitment to his chosen path and his ability to find fulfilment in the process of overcoming challenges, Francis exemplifies the power of agency in shaping one's destiny. As readers accompany Francis on his transformative saga, they are encouraged to embrace their own capacity for resilience and growth, forging their own paths towards liberation and self-realisation. In the realm of agential possibilities

crafted by Kazantzakis, Francis's narrative becomes a catalyst for readers to embark on their own journeys of exploration, empowerment, and spiritual enlightenment.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has elaborately discussed the intricate dynamics of authorial agency, the agency of the biographical subject, and the agency related to the reader within the biofiction, *God's Pauper* by Nikos Kazantzakis. Through an exploration of these layers of agency, we have uncovered the deliberate modifications made by Kazantzakis in shaping the narrative, characters, and themes of the biofiction. Kazantzakis's creative ingenuity shines through in his reinvention of Francis, portraying a dynamic character actively shaping his own destiny and influencing those around him. By weaving together history, philosophy, and spirituality, Kazantzakis transcends the boundaries of conventional biographical narratives, offering readers a profound exploration of the human condition and the eternal quest for self-betterment.

At the heart of *God's Pauper* lies Francis's transformative journey, symbolised by his traversal through various stages of metamorphosis. From the camel's burden to the abyss of spiritual transcendence, Francis's evolution serves as a testament to the power of individual agency in shaping one's destiny. Through meticulous alterations and thematic exploration, Kazantzakis breathes life into the characters, infusing the narrative with philosophical depth and existential inquiry. Moreover, Francis's pivotal role in creating a self that was not there yet underscores the transformative power of individual will and determination. His unwavering vision and deep connection to God propel him forward despite numerous trials and tribulations, inspiring readers to embrace their own journeys of self-discovery and growth. This chapter underscores the profound impact of agency in this biofiction, highlighting the

transformative power of individual will and determination in shaping one's destiny and navigating the complexities of the human condition. Through Kazantzakis's masterful storytelling, readers are reminded of the richness of life's experiences and the potential for growth and fulfilment inherent in the continuous pursuit of self-discovery. Kazantzakis Francis is an emphasis to the fact that holiness is not in the pursuit of something beyond life but rather it is in the persistence and perseverance of right way of living. He does it so without conspicuously denying the former.

Chapter 5

Anchored Symbolism and Metaphorisation

5.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, a comprehensive analysis of the agential dynamics within Zofia Kossak's *Blessed are the Meek* and Nikos Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper: Saint Francis of Assisi* was undertaken. Each narrative presented a distinct fictionalization of Francis of Assisi, with deliberate modifications made to his biography aimed at accentuating various facets of his character and journey.

Kossak portrayed Francis as a static character, emphasizing his humility and meekness as enduring virtues amidst a backdrop of assertive individuals. Through Kossak's authorial agency, Francis emerged as a transformative figure, influencing the narrative trajectory without undergoing significant personal change. The strategic alterations to Francis's biography served to highlight his unique approach to conflict resolution, characterized by compromise, collaboration, and accommodation. This portrayal underscored the enduring themes of meekness and resilience, positioning Francis as a symbol of steadfastness and ethical fortitude.

On the other hand, Kazantzakis presented a dynamic reinterpretation of Francis, wherein the protagonist's journey symbolized the transformative power of individual agency and spiritual transcendence. Through Kazantzakis' narrative craftsmanship, Francis evolved from a burdened soul to a beacon of spiritual enlightenment, traversing various stages of metamorphosis along the way. The deliberate modifications to Francis's biography underscored his unwavering vision and deep spiritual connection, portraying him as a catalyst for personal and societal transformation. Kazantzakis' portrayal highlighted the existential quest for self-

betterment and the enduring pursuit of genuine freedom, resonating with readers profoundly.

In both biofictions, alterations to Francis's biography serve as deliberate tools to enrich various dimensions of his character and trajectory. Through intricate characterizations and thematic exploration, Kossak and Kazantzakis infuse their narratives with profound layers of depth and complexity. This approach provides readers with a multifaceted depiction of Francis of Assisi, encouraging them to reflect on enduring themes such as agency, spirituality, and moral fortitude that go beyond ethical resilience.

The fifth chapter focuses on examining how Zofia Kossak and Nikos Kazantzakis employ the characters especially Francis of Assisi and the documented events of the thirteenth century as an anchored symbol or metaphor in their biofictions. The aim of analysing these symbolic and metaphorical representations is to uncover the deeper layers of meaning embedded within these narratives. The chapter seeks to explore how the character of Francis transcends his historical context to embody broader themes and concepts that resonate with contemporary issues and concerns. Both Kossak and Kazantzakis utilize Francis as a symbolic figure to convey profound philosophical, spiritual, and social messages. Through their imaginative reinterpretation of Francis, they imbue the character with symbolic significance, allowing him to represent ideals, values, and struggles that extend beyond his own life and time period. This symbolic portrayal serves to illuminate universal truths and timeless themes, inviting readers to reflect on the relevance of Francis's story to their own lives and experiences.

Furthermore, in both biofictions, the depiction of Francis as a symbol or metaphor is juxtaposed with the authorial present, highlighting the relevance of his story to contemporary issues and challenges. Kossak and Kazantzakis use Francis as a lens through which to explore complex social, political, and existential concerns, drawing parallels between the past, the authorial present and the present of the reader. This juxtaposition adds depth and richness to the narratives, enabling readers to engage with Francis's story in a meaningful and thought-provoking way.

5.2 Anchored symbolism in biofiction

In the realm of biofiction, anchored symbolism takes on a unique significance, distinct from traditional literary symbolism. While both forms of symbolism convey deeper meanings and themes, anchored symbolism in biofiction is more firmly rooted in historical reality and empirical evidence. Unlike traditional literary symbols, which may be arbitrary, anchored symbols in biofiction draw upon concrete facts and events from the life of the biographical subject. Anchored symbols serve as vehicles for exploring complex themes and ideas within the framework of historical accuracy. They provide readers with a nuanced understanding of the biographical subject and its significance within a particular historical context. By grounding symbolism in factual evidence, biofictional authors are able to create a sense of authenticity and coherence, ensuring that the narrative remains faithful to the personality and characteristics of the biographical subject.

Furthermore, anchored symbolism in biofiction offers a critique of established norms and values, challenging readers to reconsider their perceptions of history and the human experience. When discussing conventional literary symbols and their arbitrariness, authors possess the unrestricted capacity to craft every element of the

narrative to suit their intentions and objectives. This freedom extends to the creation of settings, characters, and plotlines, allowing authors to manipulate these components to convey desired messages or themes. In other words, the setting and characters are invented, and authors can easily manipulate them to express whatever their creators want. However, in biofiction, the author's imaginative vision is anchored in and defined by the concrete, thus eliminating, at least to some degree, the charge of having invented from whole cloth a fictional world that conveniently serves the author's political and ideological agenda. (Lackey, *Biofiction* 37)

Along with all the above, the choice of the biographical subject and their times might be in direct connection to what situation the authorial present is and as to what main aspect the author wants to symbolize. By carefully selecting the biographical subject and their historical context, biofictional authors can shed light on contemporary concerns and provoke thought about the nature of identity, agency, and the human condition. In essence, anchored symbolism in biofiction serves as a bridge between past and present, illuminating timeless truths while shedding light on contemporary concerns. By weaving together history, literature, and imagination, biofictional authors craft narratives that resonate with readers, provoking thought.

5.3 Central Events in Focus Analysed

To narrow down or heighten the focus, the analysis of only the events that are presented in both novels is specifically selected. Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper*, when looked upon closely satisfies the requisites of a bildungsroman. It elaborates on the progress of Francis and the development of his life philosophy and spirituality. Therefore, it consists of most events from the life of Francis. Whereas Kossak's *Blessed are the Meek* focuses basically on the crusade. Therefore, the only events

from the life of Francis presented in both works are, one, Francis meeting the Pope for the approval of his rule and, the other, Francis's meeting with the Sultan. Analysis of these two events and the variations, modifications and additions attached to these events may shed light in the direction of the authors' intent and explore the anchored imagery or anchored symbolism made in the biofictions and also analyse the social critique intended through the works. It would help to get a clear picture of the multivalent symbol the biographical character is transformed into in each work.

5.3.1 The Meeting with the Pope

5.3.1.1 The Humble Path to the Papal Audience

In Kossak's book, Francis and his companions arrive and set up camp in the courtyard of Bishop Guido, the Bishop of Assisi, choosing to forgo the comfort of a room. This decision underscores their commitment to humility and simplicity. The narrative indicates that it is only after several days that Francis is granted an audience with the Pope. During this interim period, Kossak intricately weaves together multiple concurrent events, enriching the portrayal of the broader socio-political and religious context of the time. Kossak meticulously details the circumstances leading up to the audience, highlighting the interactions and developments that occur in and around the bishop's residence. The simultaneous events depicted in Kossak's narrative contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the environment in which Francis operated. They reflect the multifaceted nature of medieval ecclesiastical and societal dynamics, showcasing the various forces at play.

Two days before the scheduled meeting, Father Sylvester is summoned by Bishop Guido and Cardinal John of Colona for a discussion on the rule of Francis. Initially, it was arranged that the Pope would meet Francis the next day, but this was

delayed. During the discussion, the Bishop and the Cardinal interrogate Father Sylvester and scrutinize the content of the Rule, examining whether Francis and his followers live by it in practice. They also inquire whether there is anyone among them who is dissatisfied with their way of life. Sylvester is somewhat unsure of this. The Cardinal remarks that it was "understandable enough... I can guess what irks you most: this vagrant existence, living from alms, uncertain tomorrow so contrary to human nature..." (Kossak 55). Both the Bishop and the Cardinal oppose Francis's rule that upholds absolute poverty. The Cardinal further remarks, "Take away from men their instinct of possession and all will crumble down; art, civilisation ...all" (57).

In the course of the discussion, Sylvester conveys Francis's simple explanation for his preference for absolute poverty. Sylvester reports, "Francis wants to live like the Apostles. 'Were I to possess anything,' he says, 'I must likewise possess weapons to defend it. Had I a house, I would have to surround it with a fence and cut myself off from my neighbours lest one of them might want to take my house from me'" (58). At this moment, there is a silent reflection in Bishop Guido's mind about the fierce land dispute between him and his neighbouring Benedictines. Nevertheless, both the Cardinal and the Bishop believe that Francis should make some compromises in his Rule of absolute poverty. Sylvester is crestfallen, and the other two tell him, "His Holiness will do whatever he considers best for the good of the church" (60).

That night the Pope has the dream of the falling Lateran church and some ordinary-looking beggar helps it from not falling. When the Pope meets Francis later the day after he realises it was him. The next morning the Pope discusses with his College of Cardinals about the crusade, about his dream and about the new sect the leader of which would meet him that day. The Pope and his College of Cardinals have already decided not to approve Francis his rule. The Pope meets Jean de Briene and

discusses the necessity to go to Jerusalem immediately and try his best to recover the holy Land. (71)

In the meantime, Francis goes and searches inside the dungeons for Pietro Cani. He finds him in a thickly packed dungeon which Francis equates to be worse than hell. From Pietro, he understands that someone had set him up as a heretic to get him out of their way. Through his search in the prison, Francis realises that,

> The regular prisons of Rome were overflowing. Indiscriminately huddled together, those whose interpretation of Christ's divinity differed from the teaching of the church…all those who assisted the previous anti-pope, those suspected of conniving with the German invaders of Sicily…Among the prisoners some were rebellious, strong, seething with an inner smouldering rage. Never did they stop thinking of revenge… (82)

He also came to know from Pietro Cani that, there were people like himself in the prison who were "incarcerated as heretics though it never occurred to them to befoul their souls with heresy…One was accused by his kinsmen who wanted his land; another by a man who secured his wife…"(86) Francis is overcome by horror and is sorry to realise and acknowledge that, "the Church State, just as any other state, must have its stern laws and jails, to punish and imprison those who oppose it".(82)

And finally, the moment of meeting the Pope comes. It is a very short meeting. The Pope is overwhelmed with joy in recognising Francis as the man whom he saw in his dreams. He was grateful to God for being with him. Without a word and refuting all his previous decisions of not approving the rule, he affixes his seal of approval on the rule.

5.3.1.2 The Climactic Encounter with the Holy See

In Kazantzakis's depiction of the life of Francis of Assisi, the meeting with the Pope is a pivotal event. Unlike other accounts, Kazantzakis describes Francis visiting the Holy City accompanied only by Leo to seek papal approval for his rule. This event occurs well into the novel, nearly at its midpoint. Before this journey, Francis leaves his brothers in Assisi under the care of Sylvester and embarks on his mission to Rome due to rising doubts about their way of life. Francis has endured numerous hardships before reaching this critical juncture, where the approval of his rule becomes necessary. The people of Assisi have begun to express discontent with young men begging, which compels Francis to clarify his instructions to his followers. He insists that his brothers work for their livelihood but must not accept any money, adhering strictly to the principles of absolute poverty. Several other directives are given to ensure that their way of life remains aligned with their spiritual commitments.

The decision to travel to Rome is made after a significant discussion with the Bishop of Assisi. The bishop, showing concern and wisdom, advises Francis to reflect deeply on whether his inspiration to live a life of absolute poverty, perfect love, and obedience is truly from God or the devil. This counsel prompts Francis to seek the Pope's validation, hoping to solidify the legitimacy of his vision and dispel any doubts about the divine nature of his calling. This journey to Rome marks a crucial step in Francis's spiritual mission, as he seeks to reconcile his radical vision with the broader framework of the Church.

The narrator Leo then moves into a flash forward where he muses,

> How many years have elapsed since that night when we crossed ourselves and set out on our journey!... Francis must be seated now at God's feet: he is

> probably leaning over and gazing at the earth, searching everywhere for the Portiuncula – but he will not find it. A gigantic church sits on top of it and crushes it with a profusion of towers, bells statues, chandeliers and gold! And the friars, they no longer march barefooted, but wear sandals and warm robes… (Kazantzakis, *God's* 159)

Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis includes a series of observations made during his journey to Rome. The non-linear narration by Leo interweaves future events into the present narrative, creating a layered storytelling approach. The journey to Rome spans several days, during which they traverse various towns. In one such town, they observe young men and women celebrating the winter solstice. Francis surmises, "We saw the other face of the man who struggles. May it too be blessed!" (161). Francis engages in profound reflection on all that he observes throughout his journey. He exclaims with great joy that "we are the freest men in the world because we are the poorest" (161). He equalises poverty, simplicity and freedom.

In another place, the duo come across a strange monk. Leo is not very clear about whether this was a real meeting or an aberration. The monk is described as "a fat, jovial monk with red sandals and a wide, red hat. He was clean shaven, perfumed – a handsome specimen." (162) When Francis informs him that he was going to Rome to acquire the privilege of absolute poverty, the monk laughs and replies, "I can see arrogance peeping through the holes in your robes". (162) The challenge of the monk is whether Francis could go on the same way renouncing even the hope that one day he will see God. It is challenging Francis to the ultimate test of faith.

At last, they enter the city of Rome which Francis tells Leo is a place where "The vices and virtues promenade here in the same way" (167). Kazantzakis through

Leo gives a flash of Rome. “Merchants were hawking their wares at the top of their lungs; bishops passed us inside silk lined litters, their escort running in front to clear the way. Prostitutes walked by, and the whole street smelled of musk and jasmine…” (167) Along with it a pageant calling forth people to secure the Holy sepulchre also passes by and Francis ponders that he has still much work to do.

Francis and Leo are offered food and a place to rest by a Cathari. Unlike the one seen in Kossak’s work, this man is a “tiny, barefooted old man with a small wedge-shaped beard” (168) The Cathari, who is scornful of the world and believes that death is salvation, seems to introduce his way of life as a better choice to Francis. Kazantzakis’s Francis is not silent or evasive of his views. He argues, “Forgive me old man, but it seems to me that you scorn the world far too much. The world is an arena where we have come to wrestle in order to turn our flesh into spirit.” The old man is very calm and steadfast about his ideas. Francis says, “...your words are seductive, dangerous. This is the way the tempter speaks” (170) Francis is anguished by the road the old man has chosen to reach God. But he realises that there are indeed many ways. The old man as he parts from them says, “My words have entered your ears, now like it or not, they will travel inside you, slowly but surely, until they reach your hearts.” (171)

Francis and Leo meet the Pope after three days of waiting. Leo remembers, “I can still see Francis seated on a low stool in the Pope’s ante chamber waiting to be allowed to go in. From morning till night we waited, both of us together: one day, two days, three.” (172). The encounter with the Pope is climatic and quite different from the scenario in the *Blessed.* The Pope is repulsed by Francis’s shabby appearance. He remarks, “What pigsty did you come from? I suppose you think you’re duplicating the aroma of Paradise – is that it? Couldn’t you have washed and dressed yourself for

your appearance before me?" (172) Francis is unable to speak with ease out of reverence. He blurts out that he had come to ask for the privilege to live and preach "Perfect Poverty, perfect Obedience, perfect Love". The Pope answers, "We have no need of you, seeing that we preach all those things ourselves" (173)

Francis's conversation with the Pope is not a practised logical one. It is intuitive. Francis forgetting all decorum claps and dances before the Pope. And he considerably irritates the pontiff. One last time Francis speaks again. He says that he had a dream. He conveys that in his dream he had seen the Lateran Church tottering and that he heard a voice in the air: 'Franci's help!'(176). This shakes the Pope. It is revealed that the pope too had the same dream and, in the dream, he had seen 'a monk with an ugly face, dressed all in rags' (177) had saved it. The Pope even though he realises that it might be a sign that Francis would save the church with his way of life finds it very disagreeable and hard to accept. His indignation is very obvious. The discussion goes on and Francis speaks in his own poetic parables which further annoys the Pope. In the end, the Pope sends both Francis and Leo away saying that he would speak to God and come to a decision about their rule. (179)

Francis and Leo, walk about in the Holy City pensively. Finally, Francis remarks about the Pope to Leo, "…Whoever follows him will never be damned to perdition, but neither will he ever leap above the mud which is man. As for us, Brother Leo, our purpose is to leap above the mud which is man!" (180). Just a few moments later Brother Sylvester comes running. He has come to Rome to tell Francis about the plight of the Brotherhood. According to him, the brothers have scattered. Brother Elias is trying to make changes to the Rule. Brother Sylvester reports about Elias "It seems too strict to him, too inhuman. He says absolute Poverty is oppressive, and that human nature is incapable of reaching perfect love or perfect Chastity either.

He comes and goes, talks with the brothers both openly and in secret, and spends his nights writing the new Rule…" (182). He also reports of new members joining the order in abundance and they are educated people who are coming in. Brothers don't adhere to the simple life as earlier. Only some of the brothers kept to themselves in the simple life and did not get into the compromised way of life of others. There were quarrels arguments and discontent among the brothers. Brother Sylvester urged Francis to return soon. Francis is heartbroken. yet he bears the news. He sends Sylvester off, convincing him of his speedy return.

Next, the duo is met by a monk from Spain who introduces himself as Dominic. He tells Francis that he had a dream in which he and Francis would save the world from evil. Here again, another discussion ensues about the way of life or rather 'the road' to be chosen. Dominic is against Francis's gentle ways of brotherly love. He says, "The gentleness you talk about is not enough; what's needed is force." (186) "…strike evildoers squarely on the head if you expect to do away with evil; and when you die, take along a hatchet to break down the door of paradise if you want to go inside…Scripture itself says the same: 'Men of violence have taken the kingdom of heaven by force'"(187) But Francis amicably declines that way. He says that his way is the way of love and not of force and that, may all opposing ways meet in God's time.

5.3.2 The Meeting with the Sultan

5.3.2.1 Dialogue with the sultan at the cusp of the crusade in Kossak

Kossak's Francis comes to meet the Sultan alone. He was mistaken to be a dervish. The guards take him to be some poor pilgrim, coming perhaps from Mecca, craving to see the Sultan. But the sultan easily recognises him to be from the Christian

camp. He communicated with Francis in Latin, which many of the members of his court did not understand at all. The sultan seemed to be kind and reasonable and ready to listen. Francis conveys that he intends to make peace and the war but he is not sent by the Christian camp and that he came because God sent him. There is a reasonable dialogue between Francis and the Sultan. Francis's discussion with the sultan leads to a challenge to discover the true faith. Francis puts forth a challenge to be thrown into a bonfire along with one of the dervishes sent by the sultan. The one who comes out unscathed is the one whose God is the true God. As none of the dervishes came forward for this challenge no one entered the bonfire. But the elders in the Sultan's camp told him that as Francis might be a magician who might have put a spell on the flames their true faith may be dishonoured. After a lengthy conversation, the Sultan concludes the dialogue by saying, "If I met more Christians like yourself, if I meet a hundred- nay, ten, hear you? - if I meet ten, I shall change my opinion of your Christians…" (Kossak 307) Francis is sent off unharmed. The Sultan also gave him a token by which he could visit the Holy places under the sultan without being harmed.

5.3.2.2 The Pauper's Encounter with the Sultan in Kazantzakis

In Kazantzakis's narrative, Francis and Leo reach the Sultan's land aboard a vessel carrying crusaders. Leo recounts a fierce tempest encountered at Cape Malea, during which the passengers were desperate. Amidst the chaos, Francis reassures the passengers by speaking to them about God and then implores the sea to calm down with deep, heartfelt prayers, resulting in the storm's miraculous abatement. The encounter with the Sultan, though brief compared to Kossak's account, portrays the Sultan in a positive light. Leo describes him as "A beautiful person, he had a curly black beard, slender hooked nose, and a large, deep black eyes." (Kazantzakis, *God's* 208). During their conversation, the Sultan regards Francis as eccentric but listens to

him attentively. The Sultan expresses contentment with his own vision of heaven, stating, “Our heaven is a thousand times better. Mountains of pilaf, rivers of milk and honey, and beautiful girls who never fail to become virgins again the moment after you’ve slept with them. I’d have to be insane, monk, to go to your heaven…leave me in peace.” (210) Francis is angry with this response. He passionately, preaches about Christ’s passion, resurrection, second coming, and the concept of hell. Despite the fervour and intensity with which Francis delivers his message, the Sultan remains steadfast in his beliefs and ultimately dismisses Francis and Leo without harming them. Following this encounter, Francis is led to the Christian crusaders, whose ungodly behaviour deeply troubles him. He attempts to speak to them about the love of God, but they mock him and ignore his message. Francis’s concern extends to all around him, as he remains committed to bringing the love of God to everyone he encounters.

5.3.3 Social Critique in Biofiction: Analysing Overlapping Narratives

The depiction of Francis’s meeting with the Pope and the Sultan is significantly distinct in Zofia Kossak’s *Blessed Are the Meek* and Nikos Kazantzakis’s *God’s Pauper*. Both authors use these encounters to explore broader themes, but their approaches and implications differ markedly. Kossak suggests a totalitarian environment surrounding Francis, whereas Kazantzakis implies a context of self-aggrandizement and a retreat into mediocrity among those around Francis.

Kossak’s narrative portrays the Church and its leaders as embodying a totalitarian regime. This is evident in several ways. Francis’s interactions with the Catharist present an alternative Gospel view, illustrating the diverse religious landscape and the Church’s intolerance towards differing beliefs. Kossak uses these

interactions to subtly critique the Church's zealous efforts to eradicate heretical movements. The pope and his College of Cardinals frequently discuss other movements, like that of Arnold of Brescia, underscoring the Church's strategic positioning against any form of opposition. These movements, much like Francis's ideals of poverty and a Gospel-centric life, are seen as threats. The Church's vehement rejection of movements advocating poverty and a return to the Gospel, despite their similarities to Francis's own Rule, highlights its intolerance. Francis's exceptionality lies in his approach to seeking approval from the Holy See, thereby avoiding the Church's wrath. Kossak delves into the conditions of Roman prisons, where dissenters are held without valid charges or trials. Through Pietro's narrative, it becomes clear that those who oppose the Church's views are systematically oppressed. The narrative also touches on events like the Children's Crusade and the Pope's anxiety to regain the Holy Land, reinforcing the theme of an oppressive Church willing to use extreme measures to maintain control. The Church's actions and strategies are depicted as a means to suppress opposition and maintain doctrinal purity. Kossak subtly critiques this totalitarian mindset, suggesting that the Church's approach is not just about faith but also about power and control.

Kazantzakis, on the other hand, focuses on the internal dynamics of movements and the personal struggles of individuals within them. His narrative suggests that the initial fervour of such movements often succumbs to self-aggrandizement and mediocrity. Francis's journey to Rome includes encounters with various individuals who represent different life choices, such as young men and women celebrating the winter solstice, symbolizing ordinary life and mediocrity. The conversation with the Sultan, who chooses pleasure and luxury over spiritual asceticism, further illustrates this theme. The Sultan's charismatic description "a beautiful person, he had a curly

black beard, slender hooked nose, and large, deep black eyes" (208) emphasizes his allure and the superficiality of his choice. The encounter with a monk who does not conform to the traditional ascetic ideal prompts Francis to deeply reflect on the essence of poverty and spiritual commitment. This interaction enlightens Francis, revealing that true radical poverty might encompass the relinquishment of all expectations, including the hope of divine reward or the promise of heaven. This profound realization challenges Francis to reconsider the depth and implications of his vow of poverty, suggesting that ultimate spiritual commitment requires the abandonment of even the most fundamental religious hopes and assurances. The climax with the Pope underscores the disparity between the institutional Church's grandeur and Francis's simplicity. The Pope's initial repulsion and subsequent scepticism towards Francis reflect the Church's failure to embrace radical reform. The narrative repeatedly highlights the pompous and self-aggrandizing nature of the clergy, contrasting it with Francis's humble and fervent approach. Even before the Rule is approved, the discontent among Francis's brothers is reported, indicating the movement's susceptibility to internal strife and the eventual retreat into mediocrity. Brother Sylvester's report about the dilution of the brotherhood's ideals underscores this theme. Kazantzakis critiques the tendency of any movement to devolve into mediocrity. He suggests that without constant vigilance, these movements lose their initial fervour and become futile. This narrative serves as a commentary on the broader human tendency to compromise and settle for less, highlighting the spiritual peril of such a path.

Kossak and Kazantzakis offer contrasting depictions of overlapping events in Francis's journey and meetings, each focusing their social criticism in distinct directions. For research purposes, only these overlapping events have been analysed

to narrow down the scope of comparison, although similar themes and symbolic instances are found throughout both works. Kossak presents a narrative imbued with themes of totalitarianism and oppression by the Church, critiquing its intolerance and strategic positioning against dissent. Her depiction symbolises the systemic suppression and imprisonment of those with differing views, illustrating a rigid ecclesiastical power structure. Kazantzakis, on the other hand, emphasizes the internal dynamics of spiritual movements, highlighting the risks of self-aggrandizement and the gradual decline into mediocrity. His narrative uses symbolic encounters to reflect the challenges of maintaining spiritual purity and commitment. Through their distinct approaches, both authors provide a profound exploration of the complexities faced by Francis and his mission, offering valuable insights into the socio-religious landscape of their respective narratives.

5.4 Anchored Symbolism, Historical Contexts and Authorial Intent

This section intends to analyse how specific events in Kossak's *Blessed Are the Meek* (1937) and Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper: St Francis of Assisi* (1954) function as anchored symbols, reflecting not only the medieval 13th century but also the sociopolitical climates of the authors' own times. By focusing on overlapping events in both texts, we narrow our analysis to illuminate the distinct directions in which each author directs their social critique. These events are not mere historical recreations but are imbued with symbolic meanings that resonate with the conditions of 1930s Poland and 1950s Greece.

This symbolism extends beyond the historical context, shedding light on similar situations in the reader's present. Biofictions like these alter facts or present selective events about the actual biographical subject or their time to convert the life story into

a multivalent symbol. This symbol represents not just one individual or period, but also the authorial present and the reader's contemporary world, highlighting different social issues with the same underlying cultural or social maladies. Consequently, these works achieve significant global and universalizing meanings and values, offering profound insights into both historical and modern societal challenges. This exploration will uncover how Kossak and Kazantzakis utilize the life of Francis as a medium to comment on and critique the societal and political issues of their contemporary worlds at the same time of the past which is the era of the biographical character and also the reader's present.

5.4.1 Anchored Imagination on Totalitarian Regimes and Moral Decay in Kossak's Biofiction

In 1937, Zofia Kossak published *Blessed are the Meek*, a novel that emerged amidst the backdrop of Poland's tumultuous historical context. During this period, Poland was grappling with various challenges, including political instability, territorial disputes, and the looming threat of war. Kossak herself had experienced the ravages of the Bolshevik revolution between 1917 and 1918, as documented in her book *Pozoga (Translated* to *Blaze* or *Conflagration* in 1922*)*, where she vividly recorded her thoughts and experiences. About Kossak's narrative about Italy of the thirteenth century in *Blessed are the Meek,* Adam Regiwicz opines that it is

> a way of commenting on modern times. She sees Europe in a huge crisis, preoccupied with consuming its goods while the next generation looks for invigorating ideas. Communism seemed to be like that at one point, as Alexander War mentions in an interview with Czeslaw Milosz. Kossak, having

> experienced this ‘revolution of the spirit’ appears to warn against the consequences of believing in false prophets. (Regiwicz 125)

Kossak’s perspective on war can be understood through her broader critique of the moral crisis of her time. She viewed the catastrophic accumulation of evil in the world as a direct consequence of the systematic removal of God from philosophy, ethics, literature, art, education, and politics. Stefan Jonczyk notes that Kossak attributed this moral decline to the rise of non-ideological, practical materialism and, more critically, to atheistic totalitarian regimes like Bolshevism and Hitlerism. These regimes, she argued, replaced God with ideology, party, nation, or leader, fostering environments where moral and ethical considerations were subordinated to ideological imperatives (Jonczyk 19).

From Kossak’s perspective, the abandonment of religious and moral foundations led to the rise of ideologies that justified atrocities and cruelty. In this context, war can be seen as a symptom of the deeper moral and ethical collapse caused by the eradication of divine influence from public and private life. She believed that the pervasive violence and cruelty of the early 20th century were closely linked to the rise of atheistic totalitarianism and the resulting moral vacuum. (19) Thus, Kossak’s views suggest a deep concern about the moral failures of her era. Her critique underscores the importance she placed on reintegrating religious and moral principles into society to restore peace and ethical integrity. This perspective aligns with her broader worldview, where the moral and ethical decay of society is intimately connected to the loss of religious and spiritual values.

Kossak lived through one of the most turbulent periods in Polish history. In her time the Poles had no Poland. “In August 1914 when Europe entered the ordeal of the

Great War, Poland did not exist in any practical sense. ‘Poland’ could not be found on the map of Europe: between twenty and thirty million people who might have called themselves Poles lived as subjects of the Russian Tsar, the German Kaiser, or the Emperor-King of Austria; and there was no one alive who could remember the time when Poland had been an independent state” (Davies 95)

Born into a family that had maintained its status and landholdings in Volhynia for centuries, Kossak witnessed firsthand the dramatic upheavals brought about by the bloody peasant demonstrations in 1917-1919, Bolshevism, the Great War, and the subsequent political realignments of Eastern Europe. Her homestead was geographically located in the western part of the Russian empire in Nowosielica in Volhynia (Czajkowska 89). During World War I, Galicia and the neighbouring Volhynia became a significant battleground between the Russian Empire and the Central Powers, particularly Austria-Hungary and Germany. The region saw heavy positional fighting from 1915 to 1916, with the Polish Legions participating in key battles. These conflicts led to extensive destruction and displacement, exacerbating the already tense ethnic relations among Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, and Germans in the area (Watt 46-52). The Russian Revolution of 1917 further destabilized the region. The collapse of the Russian Empire and the ensuing power vacuum allowed for the rise of Bolshevik influence, which incited peasant revolts against the traditional landowning class. Encouraged by Bolshevik propaganda and the lack of centralized authority, peasants attacked estates, including those of the Polish gentry. This period of violence, known as the bloody peasant revolts, saw widespread looting, arson, and murder, targeting the landowners who had previously held significant social and economic power (Subtelny 348-358).

In the wake of these upheavals, Poland re-emerged as an independent state on November 11, 1918, following over a century of partitions by Austria-Hungary, Prussia, and Russia (Biskupski 51, Davies, *Heart*100-101, Wandycz 368). However, the nascent Second Polish Republic faced immediate challenges, including the Polish-Soviet War (1919-1921), which defined its eastern borders (Davies, *God's* 292). The Treaty of Riga in 1921 secured significant eastern territories for Poland but also sowed the seeds of future conflicts by dividing regions like Volhynia between Poland and Soviet Ukraine (Snyder 140-142)

The interwar period in Poland was marked by significant political instability. Initially adopting a parliamentary system, Poland experienced frequent government changes and political fragmentation. Dissatisfied with this system, Marshal Józef Piłsudski led a military coup in May 1926, establishing the Sanation regime, which sought to stabilize Polish politics through authoritarian measures. (Davies, *Heart* 108-110)

However, his regime is often characterized by its authoritarian tendencies, which led to his semi-dictatorial rule. The government's Polonization policies in regions like Volhynia led to friction with the Ukrainian and other minority populations, further complicating the social landscape. According to the Polish census of 1931, in Eastern Galicia, the Ukrainian language was spoken by 52% of the inhabitants, Polish by 40% and Yiddish by 7%, In Volhynia, the Ukrainian language was spoken by 68% of the inhabitants, Polish by 17%, Yiddish by 10%, German by 2%, Czech by 2% and Russian by 1% (Rudling 165, Davies, *God's* 301)

Zofia Kossak's experiences during the tumultuous years of 1930s Poland profoundly influenced her writing, particularly her exploration of social justice issues.

The complex social tensions she witnessed, including land disputes, boundary crises, and questions of national identity and ethnicity, are central to the "Polish Question" of having Poland as an independent state. Amidst these geopolitical and societal challenges, Kossak deliberately chose Francis of Assisi as the central figure in *Blessed Are the Meek*. Francis symbolizes an alternative attitude that starkly contrasts with the prevailing militaristic ethos. By portraying Francis as a beacon of unarmed resistance, Kossak conveys a powerful message about the futility of armed conflict and the enduring strength of pacifism.

In *Blessed Are the Meek*, the portrayal of the Church—armed to the teeth in the name of a just cause against heresy and the retrieval of the Holy Land—serves as an anchored symbol reflecting the totalitarian attitudes of both the Bolshevik regime and, to a significant extent, the Piłsudski regime. This parallel can be understood through Hannah Arendt's theory of totalitarianism, as presented in her seminal work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). Arendt's theory provides a framework for understanding how totalitarian regimes justify extreme actions, including the annihilation of opposition and the use of intimidation to enforce conformity.

Arendt identifies several key elements of totalitarian regimes, starting with an all-encompassing ideology that claims to explain everything about the past, present, and future. This ideology legitimizes the regime's actions and policies, portraying them as necessary steps toward a grand historical destiny. In Kossak's narrative, the Church's militant actions against heretics and its efforts to reclaim the Holy Land reflect this ideological justification.

Another crucial element in Arendt's theory is the use of propaganda to shape public perception and maintain the regime's control over society. Totalitarian regimes

manipulate the masses into accepting and supporting their objectives through the relentless dissemination of ideology and the demonization of opponents. Kossak subtly highlights the Church's role in shaping public perception and justifying its crusades as divine missions, mirroring the propaganda efforts of totalitarian states. The Church's campaigns are portrayed as divinely sanctioned missions, rallying support and suppressing dissent, much like the propaganda of totalitarian regimes. Additionally, the Church demonizes heretics and non-Christians, presenting them as threats to the faith and social order, which further solidifies its control and justifies its militant actions.

Yet another key component of totalitarian regimes, according to Arendt, is the use of terror. These regimes employ terror to eliminate opposition and enforce conformity, using secret police, arbitrary arrests, and widespread surveillance to instil fear. In *Blessed Are the Meek*, the Church's harsh measures against heretics and dissenters are analogous to the terror tactics used by totalitarian states to maintain their grip on power. The portrayal of the Church's repressive actions underscores a systematic effort to eliminate resistance, reflecting the terror mechanisms described by Arendt.

By drawing these parallels, Kossak's depiction of the Church in the 13th century is not merely a historical recounting but serves as a symbolic critique of contemporary totalitarian regimes. This narrative strategy highlights how institutions and authorities can exploit ideology, propaganda, and terror to consolidate power and suppress opposition, whether in medieval times or 20th-century political regimes.

The Church in the 13th century used Just War principles to legitimize and morally sanitize military actions, often leading to the persecution of heretics and non-

Christians. This practice mirrors how totalitarian regimes manipulate ethical norms to justify their actions. While Piłsudski's regime in Poland was authoritarian, it did not reach the totalitarian extremes of Nazi Germany or the Stalinist Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the mechanisms of power and control employed by Piłsudski's regime are relevant for understanding the symbolic representations in Kossak's work.

During Piłsudski's era, Polish policy emphasized "state assimilation" rather than "national assimilation," judging citizens by their loyalty to the state rather than their nationality. As Timothy Snyder notes, "Polish policy aimed to keep the 'bad' Galicians from influencing the 'good' Volhynians" (Snyder 144). This approach highlights how the regime used ideological justifications to maintain control and suppress dissent. Similarly, the 13th-century Church's actions against heretics and non-Christians can be seen as efforts to maintain religious and political conformity through the manipulation of Just War principles.

In Kossak's narrative, the Church stands as a symbol of oppression and suppression, representing the authoritarian use of power to eliminate opposition and enforce conformity. Kossak through the experience of Pietro Cani in prison, which he conveys to Francis, presents the conditions of prisons in Rome and the unjust treatment of prisoners who are often held without trial. Cani's narrative reveals that many prisoners are detained due to their dissenting opinions, which conflict with the Church's doctrines, or because they pose a threat to powerful individuals' vested interests. Pietro Cani is an anchored symbol to all those who have fallen victim to unjust regimes throughout history. Through his story, Kossak elucidates how systems of marginalization, exclusion, and oppression devastate various groups, including heretics and pagans in the thirteenth-century Church, as well as ethnic Poles, ethnic Ukrainians, Jews, and political dissidents in the inter-war Polland and under

contemporary authoritarian regimes. Kossak not only illuminates the historical injustices of the thirteenth century but also draws parallels to similar modern situations, highlighting the enduring nature of these oppressive structures. This dual focus serves to critique both historical and contemporary instances of systemic injustice and to underscore the persistent struggle against such regimes. The Church's justification of its actions through religious ideology parallels modern regimes' use of ideology to legitimize unjust practices. By portraying the Church in this light, Kossak offers a universal symbol of anchored imagination, drawing attention to similar conditions in the authorial present.

Kossak's depiction of the Church thus serves as an anchored symbol, reflecting not only the historical reality of the 13th century but also the sociopolitical dynamics of 1930s Poland. The Church's actions, justified through ideological frameworks, mirror the methods used by contemporary regimes to pacify and control populations. Kossak's work uses this historical analogy to critique the mechanisms of power and control in her own time, emphasizing how institutions exploit ideologies to justify their actions and suppress dissent.

By illustrating the Church's role in persecuting heretics and non-Christians, Kossak highlights a broader critique of how power structures—whether religious or political—use ideology to maintain dominance. This analysis of Kossak's portrayal of the Church underscores the concept of anchored symbolism, where historical events are used to reflect and critique contemporary political conditions. Through this anchored symbolism, Kossak's work not only reflects the historical context of the 13th century but also serves as a critique of contemporary political conditions, illustrating the enduring relevance of these themes in understanding the dynamics of power and control.

Kossak's narrative uses the Church as an anchored symbol to draw parallels between historical and contemporary forms of oppression and control. This approach allows Kossak to comment on the sociopolitical climate of her own time, demonstrating how historical events can serve as powerful symbols for ongoing issues in society. This anchored symbolism provides a universal framework for understanding how power structures perpetuate their dominance, making Kossak's work relevant across different historical and cultural contexts.

The title of the novel, "Bez oręża" in Polish, translates to "without weapons" or "unarmed," encapsulating the central theme of Francis's philosophy of peace. In this narrative, Francis becomes more than just a historical figure; he transforms into a potent metaphor for the triumph of unarmed resistance over armed aggression. The novel presents a paradoxical juxtaposition of victory and failure, highlighting the inherent strength of the unarmed in the face of overwhelming odds. Through Francis's journey, Kossak invites readers to reconsider their notions of power and success, challenging the prevailing glorification of violence and militarism in society.

Overall, *Blessed Are the Meek* emerging as a poignant commentary on the human condition, offers profound insights into the nature of conflict, courage, and compassion. Through her masterful storytelling, Kossak not only transports readers to a specific historical moment but also prompts them to reflect on timeless themes of peace, justice, and the enduring power of the human spirit.

5.4.2 Anchored Symbolism in Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper*: The Francis Metaphor

In *God's Pauper*, the figure of Francis serves as a profound symbol of spiritual and ideological struggle, reflecting not only Kazantzakis's complex relationship with

faith but also the political turmoil of his time. Looking back into the biography of the author this point can be elaborated more clearly. Kazantzakis, a believer perpetually at odds with his faith, grappled throughout his life with the concept of God as presented by the church. Initially influenced by socialist ideas, Kazantzakis's philosophical outlook was deeply shaped by his studies in Paris, where he encountered the works of Friedrich Nietzsche and Henri Bergson. Nietzsche's concept of the Übermensch, the superman who transcends societal norms and religious doctrines, alongside Bergson's élan vital, profoundly influenced Kazantzakis's philosophical and literary endeavours.

Kazantzakis's political experiences were equally remarkable and varied. As a child, he was exposed to the Cretan insurrection against the Ottoman Empire. During the Balkan Wars, he briefly served in Macedonia. He played a significant role in repatriating Greeks from the Caucasus, where they faced persecution by the Russians. His time in Vienna and Berlin during the post-World War I period exposed him to extraordinary inflation and social unrest. Kazantzakis was the only Greek invited to Moscow for the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, and he served as a foreign correspondent in Spain during the Spanish Civil War. He also witnessed firsthand the Axis occupation of Greece during World War II and the subsequent Greek Civil War. Kazantzakis held several governmental positions, including serving as the Director General of the Ministry of Welfare under Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos from 1919 to 1920. He also led a failed attempt to resettle Greek refugees from Asia Minor following the Greco-Turkish War. These experiences provided him with a profound understanding of the socio-political dynamics of his time, deeply influencing his literary works. (Bien, *Introduction* x)

In the early 20th century, Kazantzakis participated in various political movements and was briefly associated with the Greek Socialist Workers' Party

(SEKE), which later became the Communist Party of Greece. Despite his initial flirtation with socialism, Kazantzakis never fully aligned himself with any single ideology. His critical views on Soviet communism eventually alienated him from the Greek left. His writings often critiqued the political status quo in Greece, leading to friction with various political factions. Kazantzakis was perceived as a maverick who did not fit neatly into the political landscape.

Kazantzakis arrived in Athens in December 1944, during the height of the Greek Civil War. His experiences during the final months of the Nazi occupation had convinced him that the liberation of Greece would usher in a painful new chapter in the country's history. Resistance during the occupation had come from two main groups: the communist EAM-ELAS and the non-communist EDES. While these groups occasionally cooperated, their conflicting goals led to tensions. After the German withdrawal in October 1944, a British-brokered coalition government in Athens quickly disintegrated due to these conflicting interests (Nachmani 490). The refusal of the communists to disband their guerrilla forces led to the outbreak of civil war in December 1944. British military intervention was necessary to defeat the communists, who controlled nearly all of Greece except Athens and Thessaloniki by early 1945(Iatrides 94).

Following their defeat, the communists boycotted the March 1946 elections, resulting in a royalist victory and the king's restoration. The communists resumed guerrilla warfare supported mostly by the Yugoslavian communists, prompting U.S. intervention with military and economic aid under the Truman Doctrine. The conflict continued until 1949 when the U.S.-supported Greek army defeated the communists, who then fled to Albania. The communists faced bitter defeat due to the Stalin- Tito rift (Marantzidis 44,52). The civil war left countless combatants dead and displaced

thousands of Greeks. The competing agendas of the communists, royalists, and powers like Britain and the U.S. overshadowed the needs of the Greek populace, leading to significant hardship and a lasting legacy of bitterness and division.

Kazantzakis's works often challenged orthodox religious beliefs, reflecting his ongoing struggle with faith and the church. His novel *The Last Temptation of Christ* depicted a humanized Christ who experiences doubt and temptation, sparking outrage from the Greek Orthodox Church, which excommunicated Kazantzakis for perceived blasphemy and heresy. His existential and humanistic interpretations of religious figures were seen as deeply subversive. The combination of his controversial religious views and political independence made Kazantzakis a target for both political authorities and religious leaders. His works were censored, and he faced constant criticism and ostracism in his homeland. Feeling increasingly unwelcome and isolated in Greece, Kazantzakis chose to live abroad in his later years, spending time in several countries, including France, where he completed some of his most significant works.

Despite his voluntary exile, Kazantzakis continued to engage with Greek culture and politics through his writing, maintaining a critical perspective on the issues of his time. Kazantzakis's works exhibit a profound political inclination, intricately intertwined with his unique spiritual philosophy. This dual focus creates a rich tapestry in which political critique and spiritual exploration are inextricably linked, offering a nuanced perspective on both the external world of political turmoil and the internal world of personal faith and philosophical inquiry. According to him,

> A true novelist cannot but live the reality of his own times, and in doing so become aware of his responsibilities. He thus attempts to help his fellow men to face up to and solve the pressing problems of his day to the greatest possible

> extent. In as far as a contemporary work of literature reflects the times in which we live, it is necessarily one of the most subtle and effective forms of action. Or rather it itself can become the seed of action. Provided that a novelist is aware of his mission, he tries to push reality to adopt the form he judges to be most fitting for man. In other more balanced, self-confident times, beauty could suffice to fulfil the author's ideal. The writer of today, if he is truly alive, is someone who suffers and worries at the sight of reality. He is led to co-operate with all the still-surviving powers of light to advance man's burdensome destiny a little. The modern writer, if he is true to his mission, is a fighter ("Excerpt from Pierre Sipriot's Interview")

Kazantzakis's disillusionment with the political ideologies of his time is mirrored in his portrayal of Saint Francis in *God's Pauper*. Written during his self-imposed exile, the novel reflects his ongoing struggle with faith and his critique of institutionalized religion. Kazantzakis had deeply contemplated Francis's life as early as 1924, and again in 1926 when he visited Italy as a journalist to cover the seven-hundredth death anniversary of the saint and also to interview Benito Mussolini. His translator, Peter Bien, notes that Kazantzakis was fascinated by Francis, viewing him as a figure who combined theology and politics and considered him an "idealistic communist" who rejected private ownership as the root of all evil (Bien, *Kazantzakis* 1:82). During this time, he writes to his wife as about how fierce Saint Francis is, when it comes to upholding his ideals of Poverty unlike how he is made to look usually (Kazantzakis, *Selected* 203).

Kazantzakis's political journey is marked by his initial fascination with, and later disillusionment towards, communism and socialism. Early in his career, Kazantzakis was drawn to the ideals of socialism and was briefly associated with the

Greek Socialist Workers' Party (SEKE), which later became the Communist Party of Greece. His exposure to the communist regime in the Soviet Union further influenced his initial political leanings. In 1927, he was invited to Moscow to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution, where he observed the Soviet attempt to create a new social order. This experience, however, soon led to a critical reassessment. Kazantzakis was disillusioned by the totalitarian nature of Soviet communism, recognizing that the regime's methods involved the ruthless suppression of individual liberties and the imposition of strict control over both economic and social life. The rigid, authoritarian structure of Soviet communism contrasted sharply with his ideals of personal freedom and spiritual transcendence.

Kazantzakis's earlier admiration for Mussolini in 1924, despite his later disillusionment, exemplifies his critical approach to political leaders. He recognized that Mussolini's disciplined fascist regime followed a pitiless rhythm, subjugating individuals through systematic suppression of personal liberties and strict control over economic, political, and social expression. Kazantzakis distinguished between the genius who overcomes others and the genius who overcomes self, a distinction that resonates with his portrayal of Francis (Bein, *Kazantzakis* 1:115, 2:473) Overcoming oneself, according to Kazantzakis, is the ultimate power that leads to true freedom.

In *God's Pauper*, the character of Francis transcends his historical context to become a metaphor for spiritual transcendence and a critique of institutionalized religion. Francis's life of extreme poverty and unwavering devotion starkly contrasts with the established church's attitudes, highlighting the spiritual impoverishment of religious leaders who fail to emulate Christ's teachings. This disparity mirrors the broader existential and spiritual questions Kazantzakis faced, using Francis's probable inner conflicts and contemplations to pose deeper questions about faith, righteousness,

and hypocrisy. The narrative also reflects the political disillusionment of post-war Greece. Just as Francis's commitment to the Gospel exposes the church's hypocrisy, Kazantzakis critiques the political leaders of his time who failed to live up to their promises. The Greek Civil War saw leaders from various factions pursuing power and personal gain, often at the expense of the common people. This political scenario is paralleled by the church's failure to live by Christ's teachings, symbolizing the broader crises of leadership and integrity.

Kazantzakis's use of Francis as *God's Pauper* extends to the political realm, symbolizing the poverty of true leadership and integrity amidst political opportunism and betrayal. The failure of political parties to uphold their ideals and the resulting suffering of the people is mirrored in the church's failure to embody Christ's teachings. This parallel, draws a poignant analogy between spiritual and political crises, emphasizing how institutions can become corrupt and self-serving. Through this anchored symbolism, Kazantzakis's work transcends its historical setting, offering a timeless critique of how power can corrupt and ideals can be betrayed. The portrayal of monks who do not live ascetic lives and instances of alternative ways of reaching God in the narrative echo the situation in Greece, where political leaders fall back to mediocrity and fail to keep their promises. Brother Elias, in particular, exemplifies this fall back to mediocrity.

Ultimately, *God's Pauper* becomes a powerful narrative that addresses both spiritual and political disillusionment, urging readers to reflect on the nature of true leadership, integrity, and the quest for justice and truth in an imperfect world. Kazantzakis's depiction of Francis as both a devout follower and a subtle critic mirrors his own existential inquiries and critiques of faith and political ideologies,

making the novel a profound exploration of the human condition in the face of institutional failures.

5.5 Conclusion

In examining the biofictions *Blessed Are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak and *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* by Nikos Kazantzakis, we have explored how these works serve as powerful vehicles for social critique and anchored symbolism. Through their respective portrayals of Francis of Assisi, both authors engage with broader socio-political contexts, drawing parallels between historical events and contemporary issues.

Kossak's *Blessed Are the Meek* offers a critique of totalitarianism, using the medieval Church as a symbol of oppressive power and control. By highlighting the Church's actions against heretics and dissenters, Kossak exposes the hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy of authoritarian regimes, drawing parallels with the socio-political climate of 1930s Poland. Through anchored symbolism, Kossak's work transcends its historical setting, offering a timeless critique of the ways in which power can corrupt and ideals can be betrayed.

Similarly, Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper* uses the figure of Francis to explore themes of spiritual transcendence and critique of institutionalized religion. Kazantzakis's Francis embodies a life dedicated to living the Gospel, challenging the practicality and sincerity of religious leaders who find such a lifestyle unattainable. Through anchored symbolism, Kazantzakis extends this critique to the political realm, symbolizing the poverty of true leadership and integrity in the face of political opportunism and betrayal.

In both biofictions, the use of anchored symbolism allows the authors to engage with complex socio-political issues, drawing connections between past and present, and challenging readers to reflect on timeless themes of power, corruption, and the quest for justice and truth. Through their nuanced explorations of social critique and anchored imagery, Kossak and Kazantzakis offer profound insights into the human condition, prompting readers to reconsider their perceptions of history, society, and the individual's role within it.

Chapter 6

Unveiling Possibilities Through Transformative Power of Biofiction

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined *Blessed are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak and *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* by Nikos Kazantzakis, the study has highlighted how these works serve as powerful vehicles for social critique and anchored symbolism. Through their respective portrayals of Francis of Assisi, both authors engage with broader socio-political contexts, drawing parallels between historical events and contemporary issues. Kossak's novel offers a critique of totalitarianism, using the medieval Church as a symbol of oppressive power and control. By highlighting the Church's actions against heretics and dissenters, Kossak exposes the hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy of authoritarian regimes, drawing parallels with the socio-political climate of 1930s Poland. Through anchored symbolism, Kossak's work transcends its historical setting, offering a timeless critique of how power can corrupt and ideals can be betrayed. Similarly, Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* uses the figure of Francis to explore themes of spiritual transcendence and critique institutionalised religion. Kazantzakis's Francis embodies a life dedicated to living the Gospel, challenging the practicality and sincerity of religious leaders who find such a lifestyle unattainable. Through anchored symbolism, Kazantzakis extends this critique to the political realm, symbolising the poverty of true leadership and integrity in the face of political opportunism and betrayal.

Biofiction, the genre that fictionalises real-life figures, offers a unique and powerful tool for engaging readers' critical and creative capacities. By blending historical accuracy with imaginative narrative, biofiction can transcend mere

storytelling to become a medium through which readers explore new ways of thinking, seeing, and being. This genre not only illuminates the lives of its subjects but also provides readers with existential maps—guides for crafting meaningful, autonomous lives in an ever-changing world.

This chapter delves into the transformative ability of biofiction by examining how authors Zofia Kossak and Nikos Kazantzakis reimagine the life of Saint Francis of Assisi. Both authors, inspired by different facets of Francis's life and teachings, create distinct yet profoundly impactful portrayals of him. By examining these portrayals, this chapter aims to demonstrate how biofiction can serve as a powerful medium for exploring broader existential themes and offering new perspectives on living. Through the lives of historical figures like Saint Francis, biofiction invites readers to reflect on their own lives, ethical choices, and the values that guide them. The chapter will first discuss what inspired Kossak and Kazantzakis to choose Francis as their subject, followed by an analysis of their distinct interpretations of his life and teachings. Through this exploration, we will uncover how these narratives provide readers with an 'existential map' (Montero 167), inspiring them to navigate life with greater autonomy, purpose, and ethical awareness.

6.2 Choosing Saint Francis: Contextual Influences on Kossak and Kazantzakis

In the realm of biofiction, authors often draw inspiration from historical characters, reimagining and reconstructing their lives to suit specific socio-cultural and personal contexts (Lackey, *Biofiction* 93). This section delves into the distinct motivations and influences that shaped the biofictional narratives of Saint Francis by Zofia Kossak and Nikos Kazantzakis. By examining the unique circumstances and

philosophical inclinations of each author, we gain a deeper understanding of their differing portrayals of Francis and the transcending truths they sought to convey.

6.2.1 Polish national identity crisis and Kossak's choice

During the interbellum period, Zofia Kossak lived at Gorki Wilkie, haunted by the memories of atrocities she faced in Volhynia during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917-1919. Like many members of the landed gentry, Kossak experienced profound upheaval and loss during this tumultuous time. The newly formed Poland of the 1930s was grappling with the challenges of establishing its national identity and cultural heritage, amid a backdrop of ethnic tensions involving Poles, Ukrainians, Jews, and Ruthenians. Each group struggled with their own crises of identity and nationality, echoing the historical struggles of the Polish people.

In this context, the figure of Saint Francis might have represented a source of solace and inspiration for Kossak. Francis's joy in renouncing material possessions and temporal concerns, along with his unconventional lifestyle, offered a unique perspective on the possibility of existing simultaneously everywhere and nowhere, challenging conventional notions of rootedness and territorial belonging. Together, these aspects could have provided a symbolic antidote to the societal crises of Kossak's time. The 'meek' Francis served as a model of inner peace and ethical living that transcended the material and political turmoil of the era. Through her narrative, Kossak used the biography of Francis to explore themes of humility, endurance, and the transformative power of spiritual simplicity. In doing so, she presented an alternative way of living that resonated deeply with the socio-political landscape of 1930s Poland, addressing the contemporary struggles with identity, culture, and morality through the timeless example of Francis's life and philosophy.

6.2.2 Cretan influence on Kazantzakis's choice of Francis

In contrast, Nikos Kazantzakis was deeply influenced by the existential and philosophical dimensions of Saint Francis's life, particularly his radical approach to material possessions and extreme asceticism. Kazantzakis viewed Francis's severe self-discipline and quest for spiritual purity as emblematic of ultimate freedom – the freedom from all fears, desires, and the tyranny of the self. This vision aligned with Kazantzakis's own philosophical beliefs, as he famously stated, "If I wrote this life of Saint Francis, it is because our age needs heroes who are also saints" (H. Kazantzakis 546).

Kazantzakis, a passionate Greek even in self-imposed exile, carried within him the Greek motto 'freedom or death.' As he aged and matured, his understanding of freedom evolved. Whereas in his youth, this motto might have reflected a more external struggle for national or political liberation, by the time he wrote about Saint Francis, Kazantzakis had come to see freedom as something attained through the overpowering of oneself. This personal evolution is poignantly reflected in the epitaph he chose for himself: 'I hope for nothing. I fear nothing. I am free.'

Kazantzakis was struck by Francis's relentless pursuit of spiritual freedom and his ability to transcend earthly attachments, seeing in him a heroic figure capable of overcoming the inherent limitations of human existence. His narrative emphasises the transformative journey of Francis, portraying him as an agent of his own metamorphosis, striving towards an ideal of self-overcoming and divine union. This interpretation reflects Kazantzakis's broader philosophical quest for meaning and his exploration of the boundaries of human potential and spiritual fulfilment. In Francis, Kazantzakis found a kindred spirit whose life exemplified the ultimate form of

freedom he had come to revere – a freedom rooted in self-mastery and the transcendence of material and existential constraints.

Kossak and Kazantzakis, influenced by their differing contexts and philosophies, offer distinct portrayals of Saint Francis that reveal transcending truths extending beyond historical biography. Kossak, rooted in the socio-political turmoil of her time, presents Francis as a static figure providing stability amidst chaos, addressing crises of identity and morality. Conversely, Kazantzakis's Francis is dynamic and evolving, embodying a personal quest for ultimate freedom and self-transformation, reflecting Kazantzakis's existential and philosophical pursuits. Both authors illuminate diverse aspects of the human condition, using Francis to offer insights and guidance relevant to their eras and beyond. These narratives pave the way for exploring how both works present an existential map through Francis, guiding readers toward new ways of living and understanding.

6.3 An Alternative Way of Thinking, Seeing and Being Through Biofiction

Biofiction fictionalizes real-life figures to activate the reader's critical-creative capacity, fostering new ways of thinking and being beyond the text. This genre empowers readers by providing them with templates for autonomous action, essentially offering an 'existential map' for crafting a meaningful and unique life. Biofiction presents a dynamic process where the biographical figure actively creates new meanings of life. Through this imaginative exercise, biographical novelists use historical personages to explore broader existential themes, envisioning new modes of living that resonate with contemporary and future readers.

In the following section, an attempt to explore how Kossak and Kazantzakis employ the figure of Saint Francis to propose transformative models for modern

existence. Kossak, ahead of her time, presents Francis as an emblem of sustainable peace. Kazantzakis, on the other hand, portrays Francis as an epitome of true freedom, illustrating a journey of self-overcoming and spiritual liberation. Through their narratives, both authors offer profound insights and guidance, crafting existential maps that inspire readers to navigate life with autonomy and purpose.

6.3.1 Re- envisioning Francis presenting a probability for Sustainable Peace

Zofia Kossak's *Blessed Are the Meek* exemplifies the transformative potential of biofiction by reimagining the historical figure of Saint Francis of Assisi. Through her creative narrative, Kossak not only makes sense of contemporary life but also imagines new ways of living that promote a unique and sustainable peace. Her fictionalization of Francis serves as an existential map for autonomous living, guiding readers toward ethical choices and lasting peace.

On the 55th World Day of Peace, Pope Francis emphasized the need for individuals to become artisans of peace through humility and courage (Pope Francis 8). Peace requires proactive efforts, as highlighted by Johan Galtung's distinction between positive peace, which encompasses social justice and integration, and negative peace, defined by the absence of violence (Galtung 183).

Peace and justice are intrinsically linked, with conflicts often arising from a lack of fairness. Throughout history, various strategies have been employed to sustain peace, from ancient Greek leagues to modern diplomatic efforts. Contemporary discourse focuses on "sustainable peace," prioritizing cooperative problem-solving and social justice over destructive conflict. Lasting peace results from positive, ethical choices, whereas conflict stems from unethical decisions.

6.3.1.1 Kossak's Reinterpretation of Evangelical Peace Leader

Kossak's novel draws its title from the Sermon on the Mount, one of the most articulate passages on Christ's radical teachings on peacebuilding and social justice. This passage promotes attitudes of humility, righteousness, moderation, and gentleness as foundational to achieving harmony and well-being. The title, *Blessed Are the Meek*, reflects this philosophy, foreshadowing the novel's alignment with peacebuilding and just peace.

Set against the backdrop of the thirteenth century in locations such as Italy, Acre, Jerusalem, and Egypt, the novel opens with Pope Innocent III's anguish over the decaying Christian society, warring European nations, and the failure of the Fourth Crusade. The book vividly portrays the legendary Children's Crusade, highlighting the manipulation and tragedy that followed, ultimately prompting the Fifth Crusade.

Kossak subtly critiques the just war theory, advocated by St. Augustine and St. Aquinas, through her portrayal of both European and Arab camps. The novel juxtaposes warrior knights and religious commanders with the figure of Francis, who seeks to achieve through peace what others attempt through violence. His approach embodies the novel's central message: true peace cannot be won by war but through ethical, non-violent means.

6.3.1.2 Lessons from Kossak's Francis on Leadership for Sustaining Peace

The novel presents a diverse array of leaders, each demonstrating the impact of their choices on peacebuilding. Kossak contrasts the titular king of Jerusalem, Jean de Brienne, with Francis to highlight the consequences of ethical and unethical decisions. Jean's passionate, yet misguided choices lead to personal and collective tragedy, illustrating the destructive potential of failing to prioritize ethical actions. His

decisions, driven by personal desires and short-term goals, result in lost battles, needless deaths, and a ripple effect of suffering and conflict. This narrative thread underscores the profound implications of leadership decisions on the broader quest for peace. Jean de Brienne's loveless marriage, affair with Blanche, and delayed responsibilities culminate in a series of unfortunate events that exacerbate the crusade's failure and lead to widespread devastation. His initial neglect of duty, driven by personal passion, directly contributes to military and moral collapse, highlighting the critical need for ethical leadership that considers the long-term welfare of all.

In contrast, Francis emerges as a true peace leader without holding any formal political or religious authority. His unwavering commitment to peace, compassion for the marginalized, and ethical decision-making set him apart. Francis's interactions with various characters, including Pope Honorius, Cardinal Pelagius, and Sultan Malik al Kamil, further underscore his unique approach to peacebuilding. He advocates for dialogue, cooperation, and non-violence, exemplifying a leadership style rooted in inclusivity, transparency, and accountability. His transparent dealings and consistent accountability build trust, while his inclusive and empathetic nature fosters unity and respect. Through these qualities, Francis not only navigates the complex socio-political landscape of his time but also offers a timeless blueprint for sustainable peace.

6.3.1.3 Cooperation, Dialogue, and Collaborative Problem-Solving for Sustaining Peace

Francis's leadership is marked by his exceptional ability to foster cooperation, dialogue and collaborative problem-solving abilities. According to Peter Coleman

these abilities are the key requisites to promote sustainable peace (P Coleman). Francis's leadership style is not characterized by conventional power or authority but by his commitment to humble service and the principles of the Gospel. This distinctive approach is central to his ability to lead a diverse community of minor brothers, each bringing their own ideas and personalities, toward a unified goal of living a life based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Francis's community of minor brothers is composed of individuals with varied backgrounds and perspectives. Despite these differences, Francis successfully nurtures a spirit of cooperation and collective purpose. His leadership is characterized by a transparent and inclusive approach, where every member feels valued and heard. This inclusive method fosters a strong sense of belonging and unity within the group, essential for their shared mission. Francis's efforts to sustain peace extend beyond his immediate community. He demonstrates a profound belief in the power of non-violent solutions and dialogue through his interactions with both Christian and Muslim leaders. Kossak vividly depicts Francis's attempts to bridge divides and find common ground, even in the most challenging circumstances. His negotiations with leaders from different faiths exemplify his commitment to peace and his respect for all human beings, regardless of their religious affiliations. Kossak portrays Francis as a leader who believes deeply in non-violence and the power of peaceful resolution. His philosophy is encapsulated in his interactions with the new Pope, where he articulates that conversions brought by the sword are not genuine, as they are born out of fear rather than true belief. This conviction is evident in his statement, "...it is no conversion, whatever is brought by sword… it's fear. And Our Lord wants none to be afraid and forced" (Kossak 230). Francis's rejection of violence as a means to an end is a cornerstone of his leadership and his broader mission to foster peace and understanding.

6.3.1.4 Inclusivity, Transparency, and Accountability: Elements of a Peace Culture

Inclusivity, transparency, and accountability are essential elements of a peace culture, as emphasized by contemporary peacebuilders (Mahamoud and Anupah 3). Kossak's depiction of Francis highlights these qualities, illustrating how they contribute to achieving and maintaining peace. Francis's inclusive attitude, transparent dealings, and sense of accountability make him a quintessence of ethical leadership and a model for future generations. Kossak illustrates this through various instances where Francis's openness and honesty in his interactions earn him widespread respect and trust. For instance, in his conversation with Pietro, he highlights the emptiness of power derived from material possessions and emphasizes the true freedom that comes from living a life unbound by such attachments. He says, "While loving money none can be free or happy. This one, because he craves it, that one because he has already won it and fears that others might take it away" (Kossak 169).

His consistent adherence to these principles is further exemplified when he explains that true freedom and peace are of greater worth than the false sense of power that comes from possessions. This perspective is not only theoretical but is also practically demonstrated in his and his follower's way of life, "they possessed nothing, literally nothing. They were independent and free, like birds nothing bound them… they looked with kindness upon all that surrounded them but they themselves belonged to a different, a distant world" (35).

Francis's ethical leadership is evident in his prioritization of the common good over individual gain. His actions are guided by a deep sense of responsibility and a

commitment to ethical choices. This is poignantly illustrated in his response to the potential use of force or coercion to achieve goals, as he firmly believes that genuine leadership does not compel but inspires. Moreover, Francis's leadership extends to the political and social realms, where he engages in meaningful dialogue with leaders of different faiths. His efforts to negotiate peace during the Crusades, for instance, showcase his belief in dialogue and mutual respect as pathways to sustainable peace. This is evident in his meeting with the Sultan of Egypt, where he seeks to understand and be understood rather than to conquer or convert by force.

In the novel's concluding chapters, Francis offers a peaceful solution to Jean de Brienne to the problem of the Holy Sepulchre, suggesting that the presence of his brothers in Jerusalem, devoted to love and prayer, would outlast any military conquest. His belief that "only a weapon challenges a weapon, and might challenges might" (374) underscores the novel's central thesis, which is that, true and lasting peace can only be achieved through non-violence and ethical choices.

Kossak's reimagining of Saint Francis in *Blessed are the Meek* serves as a powerful example of how historical figures can be transformed to offer new perspectives on contemporary issues. Through her narrative, Kossak provides an existential map for autonomous living, advocating for a peace that is built on ethical choices, inclusivity, and non-violence. Her portrayal of Francis as a peace leader without formal authority challenges traditional notions of leadership and offers a vision of a world where sustainable peace is achieved through compassion, cooperation, and ethical action.

6.3.2 The Multifaceted Freedoms of St. Francis in Kazantzakis's Reimagined Biography

Nikos Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* reimagines the life of St. Francis, presenting a nuanced exploration of various dimensions of freedom. By fictionalizing this historical figure, Kazantzakis transcends the conventional image of the saint, highlighting different forms of liberation that Francis achieves. This reimagined biography not only deepens the understanding of Francis's character but also provides readers with a framework to navigate their own paths toward agency and self-transformation. By offering templates for autonomous action, Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis serves as an existential map for crafting meaningful and unique lives.

Through the lens of Kazantzakis's Francis, the narrative explores several forms of freedom: liberation from bourgeois conventions, stagnation, the need to conform, the fear of struggle, pain, and death, and the hope of reward and fear of punishment. These freedoms collectively illustrate a profound transcendence of societal norms and a move toward authenticity and personal growth. Kazantzakis uses this reimagined biography to delve into broader existential themes, proposing new modes of living that resonate with contemporary and future readers. By presenting Francis's journey of liberation from material possessions, social conventions, institutional authority, suffering, restrictive thoughts, and the self, Kazantzakis not only offers a fresh perspective on the saint but also inspires readers to pursue their own paths toward freedom and self-realization. This portrayal underscores the transformative power of biofiction, demonstrating how historical narratives can be reinterpreted to inspire modern audiences.

6.3.2.1 Freedom from the Bourgeoise Way of Life

Francis undergoes a profound transformation, marked by a series of renunciations, which Kazantzakis portrays as fundamental to Francis's quest for liberation. Initially, Francis's aversion to the superficial pride associated with material possessions is the first freedom Kazantzakis emphasizes. Francis distances himself from the indulgent lifestyle of the wealthy, abandoning the lavish parties, luxurious clothing, and the accumulation of surplus that typified the affluent class. This rejection of materialism reflects a deeper liberation from the societal expectations placed upon him as the son of a prosperous merchant. Kazantzakis presents this renunciation as a courageous act of defiance against the social and economic structures that sought to define his identity and future.

Francis's renunciation extends beyond material wealth. He forsakes his aspirations of knighthood and relinquishes the prospect of inheriting and expanding his father's lucrative business. By doing so, he rejects the conventional path of social advancement and economic success. Kazantzakis depicts this act as a deliberate disengagement from the societal role he was expected to fulfil, choosing instead to align himself with the poor and marginalized. This shift signifies a profound freedom from the predetermined roles imposed by the dominant social, political, and economic forces of his time.

Kazantzakis underscores that the freedom Francis attains is not merely the absence of material possessions but a deeper liberation from the constraints of fortune, comfort, and habit. This is encapsulated in Kazantzakis's own reflections, particularly in a 1922 letter to his wife, where he asserts the bravery required to discard material wealth and societal norms. He writes, "We are cowards, patchers-up, hypocrites. There is only one brave act: to toss away whatever one has—fortune, comfort, habit—and to go out into the streets and shout! How are great souls

distinguished from mediocre ones? ... ‘Undress,’ as did Saint Francis. Private property is the source of every degradation” (Kazantzakis, *Selected* 129).

Kazantzakis views this act of discarding material and social attachments as the quintessence of true freedom. He argues that only through such radical renunciation can one attain spiritual and existential liberation. This perspective is vividly embodied in his portrayal of St. Francis, whose life becomes a testament to the freedom achieved through the courageous rejection of societal norms and material wealth. Francis’s journey, as depicted by Kazantzakis, illustrates the transformative power of relinquishing attachments and the profound sense of meaning and purpose that can be found in such liberation.

6.3.2.2 Freedom from Mediocrity and Stagnation

Kazantzakis’s portrayal of Francis depicts a character in a perpetual state of transition, continually advancing through different phases of his spiritual journey. This dynamic progression reflects Francis’s unwavering commitment to obeying a divine mandate that persistently challenges him to strive for more. As Francis recounts to Leo, “‘I can’t go further!’ whines man. ‘You can!’ the Lord replies” (Kazantzakis, *God’s* 118). This dialogue encapsulates the relentless drive that defines Francis’s spiritual odyssey, where complacency is never an option. Throughout the narrative, Francis is characterized by a refusal to remain stationary, both physically and spiritually. He is depicted as a figure constantly pushing the boundaries of his capabilities, engaged in an ongoing internal struggle to surpass his own limits. This perpetual motion signifies the freedom he attains over stagnation—a crucial aspect of his character development. Francis’s resistance to settling down or slackening in his

spiritual quest underscores his dedication to a life of continuous growth and transformation.

Kazantzakis illustrates this freedom over stagnation vividly when Francis confronts the challenges within his own religious order. As the order becomes established, many brothers, led by Brother Elias, begin to resist the stringent ideal of absolute poverty that Francis advocates. This inclination towards relaxation of the rule reflects a common human tendency to seek security and certainty, which Francis derides as ‘affluence.’ In contrast, Francis embraces uncertainty and remains steadfast in his vision, illustrating his commitment to a higher ideal. The tension between Francis and Brother Elias highlights the fundamental divergence in their approaches to faith and life. Elias argues that “the duty of the man who is truly alive is to conform to the times in which he lives,” advocating for adaptability and conformity to societal norms. Francis, however, asserts that “to oppose the times in which you live is the duty of the free man” (269). This exchange underscores a critical theme in Kazantzakis’s depiction of Francis: true freedom lies in resisting the conforming pressures of the era and maintaining a steadfast commitment to one’s ideals.

Kazantzakis uses Francis’s journey to explore the notion that genuine freedom involves overcoming the forces of stagnation, mediocrity, and compromise. Francis’s ability to persist in his rigorous standards, despite the inclination of his followers to seek comfort and security, exemplifies this concept. The true freedom that Francis attains is thus portrayed as the courage to oppose societal norms and the prevailing attitudes of his time, thereby embodying a higher spiritual ideal. Kazantzakis’s Francis is a figure who exemplifies the relentless pursuit of spiritual and existential freedom. His journey is marked by continuous movement and growth, both physically and spiritually, as he resists the forces of stagnation and conformity. This portrayal

highlights the essence of true freedom as envisioned by Kazantzakis: the bravery to transcend societal expectations, embrace uncertainty, and remain committed to higher ideals, even in the face of opposition. By illustrating the courage required to transcend societal norms and embrace continuous self-improvement, the narrative encourages readers to challenge their own limits and resist the complacency of mediocrity. This transformative message invites individuals to pursue higher ideals and live authentically, despite external pressures and uncertainties.

6.3.2.3 Freedom from the Need to be Normal

Another significant aspect of Kazantzakis's portrayal of St. Francis is his freedom from the need to conform to societal norms. This theme is deeply rooted in Kazantzakis's own philosophy, as reflected in his letters. In one letter, he asserts, "nothing can happen without faith," and expresses his commitment to follow the path of St. Francis, which he describes as "this road that renews life. During his stay in Italy, in 1924, Kazantzakis became profoundly influenced by St. Francis, inspiring him to use the power of faith "to create a soul different from the bourgeois one" and to "act entirely differently from the bourgeois" (Kazantzakis, *Suffering* 107).

Francis is depicted as a person of unwavering conviction, willing to forsake normalcy to pursue his spiritual goals. His actions often defy conventional expectations, demonstrating his freedom from the need to be perceived as normal. For instance, he does not hesitate to dance like a fool in front of his home, his parents, and his acquaintances, fully aware of the ridicule he might face. Similarly, he boldly kisses a leper and repairs ruined churches, acts that could easily invite mockery. These instances illustrate Francis's ability to transcend the natural human instinct for social acceptance and normalcy.

Kazantzakis's Francis is also portrayed as a revolutionary figure, preaching love—described as the "new madness" (Kazantzakis, *God's*132) throughout the streets of Assisi and nearby villages. The movement he founded, the Order of Friars Minor, was radically different from both the established clergy and contemporary heretical movements. The way of life he proposed for his followers was unprecedented, further highlighting his detachment from conventional norms. He breaks away from the institutionalised Church and is firmly rooted in his conviction of the Gospel values. The parable of the almond tree, as told by Francis to the Pope, encapsulates this theme.

> When an almond tree became covered with blossoms in the heart of winter, all the trees around it began to jeer. 'What vanity', they screamed, what insolence! Just think, it believes it can bring spring in this way!' The flowers of the almond tree blushed with shame. 'Forgive me, my sisters,' said the tree. 'I swear I did not want to blossom, but suddenly I felt a warm springtime breeze in my heart.' (179)

This allegory underscores Francis's actions: he dares to be different not for the sake of being different, but because he follows an inner conviction.

Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis as someone who embraces his unique path, despite societal ridicule, can have a profound impact on readers across generations. This depiction encourages individuals to remain true to their convictions and to pursue their beliefs, even when these lead them away from societal norms. It inspires readers to find and follow their inner truths, fostering a sense of authenticity and personal freedom. This timeless message resonates with anyone who has ever felt the

pressure to conform, offering a powerful reminder of the strength and fulfilment that come from living in accordance with one's deepest convictions.

6.3.2.4 Freedom from the fear of struggle and pain and ultimately death

The greatest of freedoms attained by Kazantzakis's Francis might be his freedom from fear of struggle, pain and ultimately death. When the thought to write a novel on St. Francis arises in his mind Kazantzakis writes to his friend Borje Knos "Always as you know, the struggle within me between man and God, between substance and spirit, is the stable leitmotif of my life and work." (H. Kazantzakis 514) Kazantzakis creates his Francis amidst his personal struggles. He is at odds with the Church and political leaders during this time. In his own words, he describes the situation as "A tempest has arisen over *The Last Temptation*. The German Catholics don't want it… (Kazantzakis, *Selected* 741). He finds a model in Francis to overcome struggle and pain.

Kazantzakis's Francis is portrayed as someone who actively embraces struggle as an integral part of his spiritual journey. Francis's struggles are accentuated by the comments of Leo. Often time it is Leo's commentary that lets the reader know the hunger, cold and pain they were bearing. For instance, Leo narrates 'One night when we were drenched to the bone and nearly dropping from hunger and cold…we ran, fell into potholes…I cursed the rain, the darkness, the cold, but Francis, ahead of me, was composing lyrics in his head and singing them. (Kazantzakis, *God's* 104)

Through the parable of the snail in paradise, Francis elucidates to Leo the necessity of embracing struggles and pains. He narrates,

> The very first animal to appear at the gate of heaven was the snail. Peter bent forward, patted it with his staff, and asked, 'What are you looking for here, my

fine little snail?' 'Immortality,' the snail answered. Peter howled with laughter. 'Immortality! And what do you plan to do with immortality?'

'Don't laugh. Aren't I one of God's creatures? Aren't I a son of God just like Archangel Michael? Archangel Snail, that's who I am!'

'Where are your wings of gold, your scimitar, the scarlet sandals betokening your regality?'

'Inside me, asleep and waiting.'

'Waiting for what?'

'The great Moment,' answered the snail… And before he had finished speaking, he took a great leap, as though he had sprouted wings and entered Paradise. (179)

Francis then elucidates to Leo that, similar to the snail, achieving entrance into paradise requires taking a significant leap, which he equates to accepting struggles as a means of self-realization. This allegory serves to illustrate that spiritual and existential growth necessitates a willingness to endure and transcend suffering. The snail's bold leap symbolizes the transformative power of embracing life's hardships, signifying that true enlightenment and ultimate reward are attained not through avoidance, but through courageous confrontation and acceptance of life's inherent struggles.

In the broader context of Kazantzakis's narrative, this parable reinforces the theme that personal and spiritual evolution is a product of enduring and overcoming adversity. By embracing struggles, individuals can transcend their limitations and achieve a deeper connection with the divine. This philosophical perspective

challenges readers to reframe their understanding of suffering, viewing it not as a mere obstacle, but as a necessary component of the journey towards self-discovery and spiritual fulfilment. Kazantzakis's use of this parable underscores his belief in the redemptive and transformative potential of embracing life's inherent struggles.

Unlike many who seek to avoid hardship and conflict, Francis perceives struggle as a means of purification and growth. He understands that spiritual enlightenment and moral fortitude are often forged in the crucible of adversity. Francis instructs his brothers,

> But God is with you, so do not be afraid. Each time you are persecuted you shall say: 'We come to this world to suffer, to be killed and to conquer!' What do you have to fear? Nothing. Whom do you have to fear? No one. Why- because whoever has joined forces with God obtains three great privileges: omnipotence without power, intoxication without wine, and life without death. (277)

By accepting struggle as a necessary and even desirable aspect of life, Francis liberates himself from the paralyzing fear that prevents many from fully engaging with their own challenges. This acceptance transforms struggle from a source of fear into an opportunity for a deeper connection with the divine and a more authentic expression of his faith.

Many events in the biofiction clearly depict Francis's physical, mental and spiritual struggles. Kazantzakis portrays his Francis as acquiring this freedom after enduring a lot of struggles. Leo gives a clear picture of how each event had been unbearable to Francis and how he gained victory over it. By facing pain head-on, Francis transcends the natural human aversion to discomfort. This freedom from the

fear of pain enables him to live with unparalleled intensity and authenticity, unburdened by the avoidance strategies that often limit human potential.

The climax of his freedom from the fear of pain and struggle could be seen in the depiction of the receiving of the Stigmata. Francis prepares earnestly for the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. He abstains from even food and water and earnestly prays, “Let me feel Thy sufferings and holy Passion in my body and soul, let me feel them as intensely as is possible for a sinful mortal…” (325) Though this may be in alignment with the documented legends of Francis of Assisi, Kazantzakis’s Francis starts to experience the pain in his hands and feet much before the vision of the Seraph. Moreover, Leo testifies to Francis acknowledging to be in pain. This means that the already weak Francis whose body has melted away by excessive fasting and penance asks for more pain. On the day of the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, Kazantzakis portrays his Francis as receiving the wounds and the pain of the crucified Christ who has appeared before him. But it does not end there. The homodiegetic narrator Leo testifies,

I distinctly heard Francis shout ‘More! More! I want more!’ and after that, the divine voice replying, ‘Do not ask to go further. Here, at the Crucifixion, man’s ascent comes to an end.’ Then Francis cried again, desperately: ‘I want more, more – the Resurrection!’ And the voice of Christ replied from amidst the Seraph’s wings, ‘Beloved Francis, open your eyes and look! Crucifixion and Resurrection are Identical.’ ‘And Paradise?’ cried Francis. ‘Crucifixion, Resurrection and Paradise are identical… (326-327)

This vision marks Francis’s ultimate liberation from the fears of suffering and pain. He receives divine validation that the pain of Crucifixion, the glory of

Resurrection, and the bliss of Paradise are identical. This profound realization transforms his response to pain into an experience akin to the bliss of Paradise. Such liberation signifies definitive freedom from the fear of death, which, in many ways, encapsulates and transcends all other fears. Francis's approach to death becomes characterized by a serene acceptance; he even composes poetry to welcome death as his sister.

Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis's vision of the stigmata profoundly impacts readers by illustrating a path to spiritual freedom through the acceptance of suffering. This depiction encourages readers to confront their own fears of pain and death, promoting a perspective where suffering is not merely to be endured but embraced as a transformative process. This narrative encourages a profound reflection on one's relationship with pain and mortality. It provides an existential guide for finding peace and meaning amid life's inevitable hardships. By witnessing Francis's serene acceptance and ultimate transcendence, readers are inspired to seek their own liberation from fear, thereby leading more authentic and fulfilling lives. Kazantzakis's portrayal of this spiritual journey emphasizes the transformative potential of embracing suffering, prompting readers to view their struggles as essential components of their spiritual and personal growth.

6.3.2.5 Freedom from the Hope of Reward and Fear of Punishment

For Kazantzakis's Francis, everything he undertakes is intrinsically justified by his actions themselves. His spiritual journey and the ascension through various stages of enlightenment are driven by an internal necessity rather than the anticipation of an external reward. This depiction of Francis presents a figure who is not motivated by

the traditional Christian promise of an afterlife filled with eternal bliss. According to Kazantzakis,

> ...death is invincible, but a human being's worth comes not from victory but rather from the struggle for victory. And in addition, you know this, the most difficult of all: It is not even the struggle for victory. A human being's worth lies in one thing only—that he or she live and die bravely, without deigning to desire a reward (Kazantzakis, *Journeying* 6).

Francis's journey is self-fulfilling; the pursuit of spiritual growth and the quest for a deeper understanding of life constitute their own form of paradise. Francis in *God's Pauper* defines paradise not as a distant, otherworldly realm to be attained after death but is found within the continuous, unrelenting search for meaning and truth in the present life. The act of seeking becomes a sacred process, imbued with its own intrinsic value.

Kazantzakis's portrayal of Saint Francis is characterized by an intense immersion in the spiritual process, unclouded by the anticipation of rewards or the fear of punishments. This intrinsic motivation renders his actions pure and the process itself inherently perfect. Francis's journey is a testament to the transformative power of unwavering commitment to one's path, driven solely by the inner compulsion to seek truth and fulfilment. Francis's engagement in the process without the lure of rewards or the deterrent of punishments embodies a form of existential authenticity. This approach aligns with existentialist philosophy, where the meaning and value of life are derived from authentic experiences and actions rather than external validations. For Francis, the act of seeking, striving, and overcoming self is an end in itself. This relentless pursuit of spiritual and existential truths transforms every

moment of his journey into a sacred act, imbued with its own significance and completeness.

This portrayal of Francis challenges conventional notions of motivation and reward in any endeavour. By presenting a figure who is entirely dedicated to his path without any external incentives, Kazantzakis encourages readers to reflect on their own motivations. This can lead to a deeper understanding of the value of intrinsic motivation and the pursuit of personal growth for its own sake. Moreover, the depiction of Francis as a figure who transcends the traditional reward-punishment paradigm offers a powerful alternative model of spirituality. It suggests that true fulfilment and enlightenment come from within and are achieved through a sincere and continuous engagement with one's inner journey. This perspective can inspire readers to embrace their own paths with similar dedication and authenticity, fostering a sense of purpose and meaning that is self-generated and resilient to external circumstances.

Kazantzakis's Francis also serves as a beacon of transformative potential in the broader context of human existence. His journey exemplifies the idea that the search for meaning and truth is an ongoing process, one that is inherently valuable regardless of its outcomes. This can be particularly empowering, as it shifts the focus from achieving specific goals to appreciating and valuing the journey itself. It encourages a mindset where the present moment and the actions taken within it are seen as intrinsically meaningful.

By presenting a saint who is driven solely by an inner calling, Kazantzakis underscores the importance of personal integrity and the courage to follow one's convictions. This can inspire readers to cultivate their own inner strength and

resilience, and to pursue their aspirations with unwavering commitment, irrespective of external rewards or consequences. In essence, Kazantzakis's depiction of Francis as a figure immersed in the process for its own sake offers a transformative vision that challenges conventional motivations and highlights the intrinsic value of the spiritual journey. This portrayal can profoundly impact readers, encouraging them to find meaning and fulfilment through their own authentic paths and to appreciate the inherent perfection of their journeys.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the choice of Saint Francis as the central figure for biofictional narratives by Zofia Kossak and Nikos Kazantzakis was driven by distinct inspirations rooted in their respective contexts and philosophical inclinations. For Kossak, the interwar period in Poland marked by socio-political upheaval and identity crises provided the backdrop for her exploration of Francis's life. His renunciation of materialism and steadfast commitment to ethical living served as a beacon of hope and resilience amidst the chaos of the era. In contrast, Kazantzakis was drawn to Saint Francis's radical rejection of societal norms and relentless pursuit of spiritual purity. Francis represented to Kazantzakis the embodiment of ultimate freedom – a freedom attained through self-mastery and the transcendence of earthly attachments. Through his narrative, Kazantzakis delved into themes of self-realization, transcendence, and the quest for meaning, reflecting his own existential and philosophical pursuits. In essence, both authors utilized the biography of Saint Francis to offer readers profound insights into the human condition and to navigate the complexities of their respective eras.

In the examination of the transformative capabilities of biofiction, this chapter has elucidated the manner in which Biofictions reimagine historical figures and furnish readers with a comprehensive existential framework for navigating contemporary existence. Through an analysis of the motivations and characterizations of Saint Francis by Zofia Kossak and Nikos Kazantzakis, it becomes evident how these authors utilize the figure of Francis to propose profoundly resonant and forward-thinking models of existence.

Kossak's portrayal of Francis as a peace leader, dedicated to the pursuit of sustainable peace, exemplifies her visionary mindset. Her rendition of Francis transcends temporal constraints, embodying principles of ethical leadership, non-violence, and inclusivity that hold significant relevance in contemporary society. Through his unwavering dedication to peace and his ethical engagements, Kossak's Francis emerges as a guiding light, encouraging readers to embrace a peace-building ethos grounded in humility, cooperation, and ethical conduct, thereby demonstrating the enduring pertinence of such principles.

In contrast, Kazantzakis depicts Francis as the embodiment of true freedom, symbolizing liberation achieved through the bold rejection of societal conventions and material wealth. Kazantzakis's Francis embarks on a spiritual journey characterized by relentless self-transformation and inner emancipation, attaining true freedom through steadfast adherence to personal convictions and beliefs, irrespective of societal norms. Engaged in an ongoing quest for enlightenment, this portrayal underscores the intrinsic value of the spiritual journey, positing that fulfilment and enlightenment derive from the journey itself. Kazantzakis's narrative prompts readers to introspect their own paths, pursue personal truths with authenticity and courage,

and find meaning in the continual process of self-realization, rather than fixated outcomes.

On the whole these depictions offer a compelling testament to the transformative potential of biofiction. By reimagining Francis in ways that highlight distinct facets of his character and odyssey, Kossak and Kazantzakis furnish readers with diverse existential frameworks that inspire novel perspectives and modes of existence. These narratives not only enrich comprehension of Saint Francis but also compel reconsideration of individual lives, motivations, and ethical frameworks guiding actions. The chapter underscores that biofiction serves as a conduit bridging historical verity with contemporary relevance, imparting profound insights into the human condition. Through the prism of Francis's life, both authors incite aspiration toward ethical elevation, deep engagement with personal journeys, and endeavours toward a world characterized by sustainable peace and genuine freedom. This exploration of biofiction's potential reaffirms its capacity to shape and revolutionize perceptions, guiding toward lives imbued with greater meaning and authenticity.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

Through meticulous exploration and comprehensive analysis across the preceding chapters, the profound capacity of biofiction to unearth multiple layers of transcending truths within the narratives of *Blessed Are the Meek* and *God's Pauper: St Francis of Assisi* is evident. Biofiction, by its very essence, embarks on a journey that traverses the boundaries between fact and fiction, illuminating realms of truth that transcend conventional historical accounts. In its portrayal of the lives of historical figures, biofiction maintains a deliberate detachment from the constraints of pure biography, opting instead for a rich canvas of imaginative interventions and narrative complexities.

The truths encapsulated within the realm of biofiction transcend the confines of mere historical accuracy. While traditional biographies provide insights into documented events and occurrences, the biofictions crafted by Zofia Kossak and Nikos Kazantzakis offer a far more profound, multi-dimensional exploration of truth that encompasses the undocumented emotive realities, lived experiences, and passionate dramas of the biographical subjects. These transcending truths, intricately woven into the fabric of the narratives, invite readers to delve beyond the surface of historical facts into the depths of human emotion and existential inquiry.

Kossak and Kazantzakis employ the artistry of their storytelling to weave a narrative that transcends conventional notions of historical truth. Through a delicate balance of factual accuracy and imaginative embellishment, they breathe life into the characters of Saint Francis of Assisi, infusing their narratives with a depth of

emotional and psychological insight that transcends the boundaries of documented history. In doing so, they offer readers a glimpse into the inner workings of Francis's psyche, his struggles, his triumphs, and his profound impact on the world around him.

7.1.2. The Multifaceted Nature of Biofiction

Biofiction stands at the intersection of historiography and literature, employing narrative techniques that allow for the exploration of historical personalities in ways that pure biography often cannot. By blending documented facts with creative liberties, authors such as Kossak and Kazantzakis craft narratives that are not only informative but also deeply engaging on an emotional and psychological level. This multifaceted approach enables a richer understanding of historical figures, presenting them as complex individuals shaped by their contexts and inner worlds.

The power of biofiction lies in its ability to humanize historical figures, transforming them from lifeless icons into dynamic, relatable characters. In the case of Francis of Assisi, this means portraying him not merely as a saintly figure but as a man grappling with profound spiritual and existential dilemmas. This humanisation fosters a deeper connection between the reader and the subject, making the historical person's experiences and emotions more tangible and immediate.

7.1.3 Expanding the Boundaries of Historical Representation

One of the critical achievements of biofiction is its ability to challenge and expand the boundaries of historical representation. Traditional biographies often adhere to a linear, fact-based approach that can sometimes limit the depth of insight into the subject's inner life. In contrast, biofiction employs a more flexible narrative structure, allowing for the exploration of hypothetical scenarios, inner monologues, and the nuanced interplay between fact and fiction. This approach not only enriches

the narrative but also offers a more holistic portrayal of historical figures, encompassing both their public actions and private contemplations. Kossak and Kazantzakis, through their respective works, demonstrate how biofiction can serve as a powerful tool for historical and biographical re-imagination. By infusing their narratives with elements of fiction, they create a space where the emotional and psychological dimensions of Francis's life are given prominence. This allows for a more comprehensive understanding of his character, motivations, and the broader implications of his life's work.

7.1.4. The Ethical Dimensions of Biofiction

The practice of blending fact and fiction in the depiction of historical personalities raises important ethical considerations. Biofiction, by its nature, involves a degree of artistic license that can blur the lines between historical accuracy and creative interpretation. This necessitates a careful balancing act, where authors must navigate the ethical implications of their narrative choices (Layne 8). Kossak and Kazantzakis approach this challenge with a conscientious sensitivity, ensuring that their imaginative interventions serve to illuminate rather than distort the truth. Their works exemplify how biofiction can respect the essence of the biographical subject while still offering new insights and perspectives. By prioritising the emotional and experiential truths of their subjects, Kossak and Kazantzakis demonstrate a commitment to authenticity that transcends mere factual accuracy. This ethical approach not only enhances the credibility of their narratives but also underscores the potential of biofiction to contribute meaningfully to historical discourse.

In light of the above, it may be asserted that biofiction as exemplified by *Blessed Are the Meek* and *God's Pauper: St Francis of Assisi* reveals the profound

capacity of this genre to uncover layers of truth that transcend conventional historical accounts. Through the imaginative and artistic narratives of Kossak and Kazantzakis, readers are invited to engage with the emotional and psychological dimensions of biographical subjects, gaining a deeper and more nuanced understanding of their lives and legacies. Biofiction, with its unique blend of fact and fiction, serves as a powerful medium for exploring the complexities of human experience, offering insights that enrich both literature and history.

7.2 Revisiting Research Intentions: Recap

This research aimed to discern the differences in the portrayal of Francis of Assisi as a character in the two biofictions, seeking to uncover the underlying motives driving the authors' creative choices and their impact on historical representation. By comparing the narratives crafted by Zofia Kossak and Nikos Kazantzakis, the study explored how each author's unique perspective and cultural context and world view they intended to highlight influenced their depiction of Francis, shedding light on the divergent approaches to character construction and thematic emphasis.

A significant focus of the research was to delve into the complex dynamics of agency within the biofictions centred on Francis of Assisi. This involved examining the agency concerning the author, which is the creative license used by the author in altering historical and biographical facts, agency pertaining to the biographical subject which involved the investigation of the protagonist's journey to gaining control over their own life within the plot line that is intentionally highlighted and agency concerning the reader involved examining how the narrative allows readers to engage with and explore potential actions, thereby crafting their own unique and innovative identities. By analysing the interplay between these elements, the study aimed to

reveal how the authors' narrative choices reflect their own projection of worldviews through the life of Francis and how these choices resonate with or challenge readers' perceptions of the historical figure. The study also examined, how biofiction can redefine historical narratives and influence contemporary understandings of the biographical subjects.

The study further sought to uncover the anchored symbolism and metaphorical dimensions inherent in biofictions portraying Francis of Assisi. By identifying and interpreting the anchored symbols and metaphorization, the research illuminated the nuanced layers of meaning and anchored imagination embedded within the narratives. This aspect of the study emphasised how anchored symbolism is used to draw parallels between historical settings, such as thirteenth-century Italy, and the sociopolitical issues of the authors' contemporary periods. It examines how these parallel situations mirror and critique the power structures, oppressive regimes, and institutional abuses of the authors' own times. Additionally, the study delves into the capability of biofiction to extend this critique beyond the authorial present, allowing readers to draw connections to similar structures in their own contemporary contexts. By doing so, the chapter reveals how authors use historical narratives to comment on and challenge past and present political and social dynamics, highlighting themes of power, oppression, and the discrepancy between professed ideals and actual actions.

Through a critical evaluation of political and ideological themes within the biofictions, the study assessed how these narratives challenge societal norms, critique prevailing ideologies, and offer alternative perspectives on historical and contemporary issues. This involved analysing the socio-political contexts in which Kossak and Kazantzakis were part and how their works reflect and respond to these contexts. In doing so, the research underscored the significance of biofiction as a

platform for engaging in political and ideological discourse. It demonstrated the capacity of biofiction to challenge and reimagine established narratives, thereby prompting a reconsideration of entrenched norms and beliefs.

Additionally, the study investigated how biofictions propose alternative ways of living or being, particularly in the context of Francis of Assisi's radical approach to life. This analysis included exploring the motivations behind the authors' choices to fictionalise Francis, considering factors such as personal beliefs, historical context, and literary tradition. The research aimed to understand how these motivations influence the portrayal of Francis and how they contribute to the broader discourse on alternative lifestyles and values.

Hence, this research not only compared the portrayals of Francis of Assisi in two significant biofictions but also delved into the broader implications of these portrayals. By examining the authors' creative choices, the dynamics of narrative construction, and the thematic and ideological dimensions of the texts, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of the transformative potential of biofiction. It highlighted how this genre can offer fresh insights into historical figures, challenge established narratives, and contribute to ongoing discussions on identity, agency, and societal values.

7.3 Chapter Highlights and Significant Findings

7.3.1. Tracing the depiction of Francis of Assisi

To achieve these objectives, the research commenced with a thorough examination of how Francis of Assisi has been represented both in his own time and in subsequent periods, thereby charting the evolving nature of his portrayal. This

foundational analysis was imperative for understanding the context and depth of his characterisation in the fictional works under scrutiny.

The investigation began with an in-depth study of Francis's own writings, which provided essential insights into his spiritual philosophy. His reflections on his way of life, his conceptualisation of God, and his personal quest for divine understanding were meticulously analysed. Additionally, his prescriptive ideas for the way of life of the brothers and the Rules he established for all the orders he founded were examined to grasp the core tenets of his spiritual and communal ethos.

From the writings of Francis's contemporaries and those who knew him personally, factual details about his education, personality, character traits, and his influence on his immediate circle and the broader community were gleaned. These sources also offered valuable perspectives on his reactions and responses to various situations, shedding light on his attitudes and dispositions. An accurate chronology of the events in his life was established and cross-verified, ensuring a robust historical foundation for subsequent analysis.

Furthermore, the study extended to analysis of both commissioned and non-commissioned writings about Francis that emerged within a century and a half after his death. This body of work provided a diverse array of conceptions about his philosophy, highlighting the shifting perceptions of his life and the evolving representations of his role and status within the church. Through this lens, the research traced the trajectory of how Francis of Assisi grew into a figure of legendary proportions, reflecting broader socio-religious transformations over time.

These findings were then systematically applied to the analysis of the two biofictions under study in the later chapters. Key areas of focus included:

1. Representation of Spiritual Philosophy: The research identified how Kossak and Kazantzakis interpreted and integrated Francis's spiritual philosophy into their narratives. The comparison revealed nuanced differences in how each author portrayed his quest for God and his prescribed way of life, offering readers distinct but complementary views of his spiritual journey.

2. Character Construction and Agency: The study examined the narrative techniques, focusing on biofictional elements, used by both authors to construct Francis's character, concentrating on the interplay of historical facts and imaginative elements. This analysis illuminated the complex dynamics of agency, revealing how these agencies contribute to the construction of Francis's character in biofiction. By allowing authors to reshape historical facts to reflect their worldviews, highlighting Francis's personal journey to autonomy, and engaging readers to explore and relate to his actions, the biofictions create a multifaceted and dynamic portrayal that resonates with both historical and contemporary contexts.

3. Anchored Symbolism and Metaphorization: The study found that anchored symbolism and metaphorical dimensions in biofictions about Francis of Assisi are used to draw parallels between historical settings and contemporary sociopolitical issues. These anchored symbols reflect and critique power structures and institutional abuses of the authors' times and the readers' present contexts. By doing so, the authors challenge political and social dynamics across different periods, highlighting themes of power, oppression, and the discrepancy between ideals and actions.

4. Political and Ideological Themes: By critically evaluating the political and ideological dimensions of the biofictions, the research assessed how these narratives challenge societal norms and critique prevailing ideologies. This analysis demonstrated the role of biofiction as a medium for political discourse, providing alternative perspectives on historical and contemporary issues.

5. Alternative Ways of Living: The study also explored how the biofictions propose alternative ways of living, reflecting on Francis's radical lifestyle choices. This aspect of the research delved into the motivations behind the authors' decisions to fictionalise Francis, considering how their own contexts and beliefs shaped their portrayals and contributed to the broader discourse on alternative lifestyles.

It is thus, that the research highlighted the transformative potential of biofiction through the reimagining of historical figures and narratives. By blending factual accuracy with imaginative storytelling, Kossak and Kazantzakis created multi-dimensional portrayals of Francis of Assisi that resonate with contemporary readers, offering new insights into his life and legacy. This study not only enhances the understanding of Francis but also demonstrates the enduring relevance and adaptability of biofiction as a literary genre.

7.3.2. Art of Agential Living Through the Lens of Kossak

The subsequent analytical chapter meticulously examined the biofiction *Blessed Are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak through the lens of biofictional theoretical frameworks. This comprehensive analysis aimed to unearth the intricate dynamics of agency, a defining characteristic of the genre.

7.3.2.1. Authorial Agency and Creative License

The investigation into the authorial agency in *Blessed Are the Meek* revealed that Kossak, exercising considerable creative license, ingeniously fashioned chance meetings, altered the sequence of events in the lives of various historical figures, and concocted plausible truths behind historical happenings. These narrative strategies were not merely artistic embellishments but deliberate choices aimed at achieving a desired portrayal of Francis of Assisi. By emphasising specific themes and characteristics, particularly the paradox of power in powerlessness exemplified by Francis's meekness, Kossak's work offers a nuanced exploration of spiritual and moral strength.

Kossak's narrative intentionally creates binaries or contrasts to highlight the unique methods Francis employs to resolve conflicts. This portrayal underscores themes of meekness, challenging traditional power dynamics and offering a critique of conventional authority and control. Through these contrasts, Kossak emphasises the revolutionary nature of Francis's approach to life, where humility and meekness are sources of profound strength and influence.

7.3.2.2. Biographical Subject's Agency

The biographical subject's agency in the novel is manifest in Francis as a static character who remains steadfast in his principles and actions throughout the narrative. This constancy serves as a focal point of contrast with the more dynamic characters around him. Kossak's aesthetic choice to depict Francis as unwavering and consistent highlights the unique way of living he embodies—everywhere and nowhere simultaneously—and the strength he derives from his humility.

Unlike conventional protagonists who typically undergo significant transformations, Francis does not experience major personal changes. Instead, his steadfast nature and unwavering commitment to his ideals make him a successful change agent within the biofiction. His influence on others and the transformative impact of his actions underscores his role as a catalyst for change, despite his own static character.

7.3.2.3. Reader's Agency and Provoked Alternative Thinking

The analysis also delved into the agency related to the reader, examining how Kossak's portrayal of Francis might provoke alternative thinking. Through her depiction of Francis, Kossak incites readers to adopt a new perspective on history, encouraging them to reflect on the nature of power and agency in their own lives. This reflective process is integral to the biofictional experience, as readers are invited to question established narratives and consider the transformative potential of meekness and humility.

By presenting a character who embodies an alternative model of power and influence, Kossak challenges readers to rethink conventional notions of strength and authority. This alternative perspective fosters a deeper engagement with the text, prompting readers to explore how the themes of meekness and powerlessness might apply to contemporary issues and their personal experiences.

7.3.2.4. Fresh Insights and Scholarly Reflections

Adding fresh insights, it is noteworthy how Kossak's narrative choices align with broader socio-political contexts. Her portrayal of Francis can be seen as a subtle commentary on the oppressive power structures of her own time, using the historical figure of Francis to critique modern societal norms. This layering of historical and

contemporary critique enriches the biofiction, making it relevant across different temporal contexts.

The chapter highlights the fact that *Blessed Are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak exemplifies the potent potential of biofiction to reimagine historical narratives and provoke thoughtful reflection on enduring themes of power, agency, identity and integrity. Through deliberate narrative strategies and creative license, Kossak crafts a portrayal of Francis of Assisi that challenges readers to reconsider traditional power dynamics and embrace alternative ways of living and being. This scholarly analysis underscores the transformative impact of biofiction, highlighting its capacity to illuminate complex human experiences and inspire profound personal and social introspection.

7.3.3 Art of Agential Living Through the Lens of Kazantzakis

In the subsequent analytical chapter, an in-depth exploration delved into Nikos Kazantzakis's biofiction *God's Pauper: Francis of Assisi*, utilising distinct theoretical frameworks tailored to the genre of biofiction. This thorough investigation sought to unveil again the intricate dynamics of agency within the narrative an analysis similar to the previous chapter.

7.3.3.1 Authorial Agency and Metamorphosis

In the analysis of *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* Kazantzakis's authorial agency manifests through strategic alterations to the sequence of major events in Francis's life and the supplementation of details within historical gaps. These creative liberties serve as vehicles for explicating the protagonist's evolving philosophical ideologies within the realm of biofiction. At the narrative's core lies Francis's profound metamorphosis, symbolised by his traversal through diverse stages of

transformation. Departing from traditional historical narratives and hagiography, Kazantzakis deliberately disrupts conventional expectations, underscoring the character's relentless pursuit of self-transformation. This narrative approach infuses the storyline with layers of philosophical depth and existential inquiry, prompting readers to grapple with profound themes of personal growth and spiritual enlightenment.

Kazantzakis's deliberate deviations from historical records and traditional biographical conventions serve as conduits for deeper exploration into the human condition. Through the interplay of creative license and thematic exploration, the narrative transcends mere documentation of events. The strategic reshaping of Francis's life trajectory and the infusion of philosophical nuances underscore Kazantzakis's intent to probe the complexities of existence and the perpetual quest for self-betterment. This analysis illuminates Kazantzakis's masterful manipulation of authorial agency to craft a narrative that not only entertains but also prompts introspection, challenging readers to contemplate the universal journey of personal transformation and the pursuit of higher truths.

7.3.3.2 Biographical subject's agency

The analysis of the biographical subject's agency reveals a protagonist who is not merely a passive figure in a historical setting but an active, dynamic force. Throughout the biofiction, Francis of Assisi is portrayed as someone who decisively shapes his own transformative journey. Starting from his origins as an affluent merchant, Francis consciously chooses to embark on a spiritual path, driven by a profound connection to God and a vision that remains steadfast despite the many trials

he faces. This unwavering vision is the cornerstone of his agency, enabling him to navigate the complexities of his life with clarity and purpose.

Kazantzakis's narrative vividly captures this aspect of Francis's character, illustrating how every decision and action he undertakes reflects his profound agency. Francis's journey is marked by significant choices that highlight his commitment to his spiritual ideals and his determination to live a life aligned with those ideals. His decisions to renounce wealth, embrace poverty, and his growing urge to love everything and everyone are all manifestations of his agency. These choices are not depicted as mere reactions to external circumstances but as proactive steps towards creating a new self and a new way of life.

Through masterful storytelling, Kazantzakis emphasises the transformative power of Francis's individual will and determination. The narrative showcases how Francis's agency not only shapes his own destiny but also profoundly influences the lives of those around him. His journey from a wealthy merchant to a spiritual leader serves as a testament to the strength of human will in overcoming adversity and achieving personal transformation. This portrayal underscores the idea that individuals have the power to shape their own destinies and impact the world around them through their choices and actions.

7.3.3.3 Agency in Connection with the Reader

The analysis of agency about the reader reveals how Francis's journey serves as a profound source of motivation, illuminating the path toward self-discovery and transformation for both himself and the readers. As readers delve into Francis's unwavering commitment to his chosen spiritual path, they witness his ability to find fulfilment in overcoming challenges. This exemplifies the power of agency in shaping

one's destiny, highlighting the importance of resilience and determination in personal growth. Through Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis's transformative saga, readers are encouraged to recognize and embrace their own capacity for resilience and growth.

Kazantzakis crafts a narrative rich with agential possibilities, where Francis's story becomes a catalyst for readers to embark on their own journeys of exploration, empowerment, and spiritual enlightenment. By accompanying Francis on his journey, readers are not only spectators but active participants in the narrative. They are inspired to forge their own paths toward liberation and self-realisation, drawing parallels between Francis's experiences and their own lives. This interaction with the narrative fosters a sense of agency within readers, encouraging them to explore their potential and take decisive actions in their own quests for meaning and fulfilment.

7.3.3.4 Fresh insights and scholarly reflection

Kazantzakis offers a profound reflection on the nature of conviction and human potential through his portrayal of Francis of Assisi. Francis emerges as a figure of unparalleled determination and unwavering commitment to his beliefs, serving as an inspiring example of the power of conviction. Kazantzakis uses Francis's journey to subtly critique societal tendencies towards institutionalising convictions only to later compromise on them. This critique is vividly illustrated by the metaphor of Francis's poverty, which serves as a symbolic representation of the poverty of the different societal factions, encompassing both the clergy and heretical groups in their observance of steadfastness in adhering to ideals.

Through Francis's steadfast adherence to his beliefs and his continual transformation, Kazantzakis challenges prevailing societal norms and calls attention to the importance of maintaining integrity in one's convictions and commitments.

This critique extends beyond the confines of thirteenth-century society to encompass broader historical and contemporary contexts, such as twentieth-century Greece, where political leaders and different regimes failed to uphold their promises causing brutal civil war and distress to ordinary people. By presenting Francis as a dynamic and uncompromising figure, Kazantzakis encourages readers to reflect on their own commitment to their beliefs, duties and ideals. Ultimately, Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of unwavering conviction and the enduring importance of maintaining integrity in the face of societal pressures and challenges and striving without the fear of loss or the expectations for profit.

7.3.4 Anchored Symbolism and Metaphorisation

The next chapter delves into the anchored symbolism and metaphorisation within both biofictions. This exploration reveals that, although the narratives are set in thirteenth-century Italy, they possess striking resemblances to the events and circumstances of the authors' contemporary periods. These parallels not only mirror the sociopolitical dynamics of the authors' present but also convey responses and consequences engendered by similar structural oppressions.

7.3.4.1. Anchored Symbolism and Historical Parallels

The analysis uncovers how Zofia Kossak, in her work *Blessed Are the Meek*, purposefully anchors her imaginative depiction of thirteenth-century Italy to draw attention to the totalitarian regimes of her time. Kossak's portrayal of the Church as an oppressive force, zealously armed in the name of a just cause against heresy, mirrors the authoritarian attitudes of contemporary regimes such as Bolshevism and Józef Piłsudski's regime in Poland. Through this anchored symbolism, Kossak vividly

parallels historical events with the sociopolitical dynamics of 1930s Poland, highlighting the abuse of power and the suppression of dissent by institutions wielding moral authority.

Kossak's narrative strategy involves the creation of historical analogies that serve as critiques of modern authoritarianism. The Church's militant stance against perceived heresy in the biofiction serves as a metaphor for the oppressive tactics employed by totalitarian governments, drawing a direct line between past and present injustices. This deliberate historical mirroring invites readers to reflect on the cyclical nature of power and oppression, encouraging a critical examination of contemporary sociopolitical realities.

7.3.3.2. Metaphorisation and Sociopolitical Critique

Similarly, Nikos Kazantzakis employs anchored symbolism in *God's Pauper: St Francis of Assisi* to critique both the church and the political leaders of his time. Nikos Kazantzakis masterfully employs the life of Francis as a potent metaphor to critique not only the 13th-century Church but also the author's contemporary society and, indeed, any age. Through Francis's radical embrace of poverty, humility, and unwavering commitment to his faith, Kazantzakis subtly highlights the stark disparity between the Church's professed ideals and the opulent, morally complacent reality of many of its clergy. Francis's life becomes a living rebuke, calling for a return to genuine spiritual values and serving as a timeless symbol of integrity and devotion against the backdrop of institutional corruption and excess.

Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis extends beyond a historical critique, resonating deeply with the author's present and offering a universal commentary on human nature. The narrative underscores a persistent truth about leaders and

movements: the tendency to abandon their founding principles once they achieve comfort and power. Whether in religious, political, or social contexts, the story of Francis, as depicted by Kazantzakis, serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of staying true to one's values amidst the allure of established power. This metaphorical critique is as relevant today as it was in the 13th century, reminding us of the perennial struggle to maintain integrity and commitment in the face of ease and complacency.

7.3.3.3. Fresh Insights and Scholarly Reflections

Adding fresh insights, the chapter also considers the broader implications of anchored symbolism in biofiction. Kossak and Kazantzakis utilise historical settings to comment on contemporary issues, showcasing the effectiveness of an anchored symbol over a literary symbol, which is inherently arbitrary. Anchored symbolism allows readers to perceive the inherent evil within a structure by situating it within past events, thereby connecting it to similar contemporary situations and predicting potential consequences. By embedding modern critiques within historical contexts, the authors create a dialogue between past and present that enhances the reader’s understanding of both. This not only serves as a spiritual critique but also as a commentary on social and political issues, with the potential to prompt informed readers towards action. Additionally, it underscores the importance of taking transformative steps in similar situations in the future to avoid repeating past mistakes.

Francis’s embrace of poverty and rejection of material wealth highlights the moral and ethical failures of societies obsessed with economic gain and power. This

metaphor extends beyond religious institutions to critique capitalist structures and the exploitation of the poor, offering a radical vision of social justice and equality.

Kossak's use of thirteenth-century Italy to reflect on the totalitarian regimes of her time also serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of unchecked power and ideological extremism. By drawing parallels between historical and contemporary oppressions, she warns against the repetition of history's darkest chapters and advocates for vigilance and resistance against authoritarianism.

The chapter thus elucidates how both Kossak and Kazantzakis employ anchored symbolism and metaphorical dimensions to create rich, multi-layered narratives that transcend their historical settings. Their biofictions not only offer profound insights into the lives of their historical subjects but also serve as potent critiques of their own contemporary societies. Through their anchored imagination in storytelling, they challenge readers to reflect on enduring issues of power, integrity, and social justice, underscoring the transformative potential of biofiction as a genre.

7.3.4. The Transformative Power of Biofiction

The final chapter unveils the transformative power of biofiction, delving into the motivations that inspired the authors to transform the biography of Francis of Assisi into fiction. By individually analysing the political and social contexts in which the authors wrote, as well as the worldviews they aimed to project, the chapter provides a comprehensive understanding of the unique contributions of Zofia Kossak and Nikos Kazantzakis to the genre.

7.3.4. 1. Motivations and Contextual Influences

The chapter begins by exploring the socio-political environments that shaped the authors' perspectives and narrative choices. For Kossak, writing in the tumultuous

period of 1930s Poland, the oppressive regimes of her time, such as Bolshevism and Józef Piłsudski's authoritarian rule, and the border and ethnicity-related strife significantly influenced her depiction of Francis. Her biofiction, *Blessed Are the Meek*, uses the thirteenth-century setting as a mirror to reflect the totalitarianism of her contemporary world. Kossak's Francis emerges as a peace leader, embodying resistance against oppressive forces through meekness and spiritual strength. This alternative way of thinking and being, challenges the aggressive and authoritarian paradigms prevalent in her time, advocating for a peaceful and morally grounded approach to leadership.

Kazantzakis, on the other hand, wrote in a different yet equally complex political landscape, marked by the ideological struggles of early 20th-century Greece. His biofiction, *God's Pauper: St Francis of Assisi*, portrays Francis as the ultimate paragon of freedom. Kazantzakis's Francis is a symbol of personal liberation and spiritual autonomy, standing in stark contrast to the institutional and political constraints of the period. This portrayal resonates with Kazantzakis's own philosophical and artistic quest for freedom and his critique of both religious and secular authorities that stifle individual expression and integrity.

7.3.4. 2. The Projection of Worldviews

The chapter also examines how Kossak and Kazantzakis projected their worldviews through their portrayals of Francis. Kossak's narrative is imbued with a vision of peace and reconciliation, reflecting her deep-seated opposition to the violent and repressive tactics of totalitarian regimes. Her Francis, who navigates conflicts through humility and steadfast faith, serves as a beacon of hope and an exemplar of peaceful resistance. By anchoring her biofiction in the historical context of thirteenth-

century Italy, Kossak draws powerful parallels that critique contemporary political oppression and advocate for a society grounded in moral and spiritual values.

In contrast, Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis as a figure of freedom reflects his existentialist philosophy and his commitment to individual liberation. His Francis transcends the confines of institutional religion, embodying a radical form of spirituality that prioritises personal enlightenment and ethical independence. This perspective challenges the conformity and dogmatism of established religious and political systems, promoting a vision of life that values freedom, authenticity, and personal integrity.

7.3.4. 3. Collective Insights and Transformative Potential

Collectively, the chapters demonstrate how the biographies of Francis of Assisi were skillfully adapted into biofictions that serve not only as historical narratives but also as powerful commentaries on contemporary issues. By blending factual history with imaginative storytelling, Kossak and Kazantzakis create rich, multi-dimensional portrayals that invite readers to reconsider conventional narratives and embrace alternative ways of thinking and being.

The transformative potential of biofiction lies in its ability to transcend temporal boundaries, connecting past and present in a dialogue that illuminates enduring human concerns. Through their creative reimagining of Francis's life, Kossak and Kazantzakis offer fresh perspectives on leadership, freedom, and moral integrity, challenging readers to reflect on their own values and the societal structures that shape their lives.

This chapter hence underscores the significant impact of Kossak's and Kazantzakis's works within the genre of biofiction. Their portrayals of Francis of

Assisi not only enrich our understanding of the historical figure but also provide a profound critique of their contemporary worlds. Through their narratives, they reveal the enduring relevance of Francis's ideals and the transformative power of biofiction to inspire change and foster a deeper understanding of the human condition.

7.4. Variations in the Biographical Subject in the Two Biofictions

7.4.1 Saint Francis as a Peace Leader vs. Radical Renunciation

Zofia Kossak's portrayal of Saint Francis emphasises his role as a peace leader. Her narrative highlights Francis's efforts to mediate conflicts and promote harmony, presenting him as a figure of moral fortitude and resilience. This depiction aligns with Kossak's intention to inspire hope and stability amidst the socio-political uncertainties of interwar Poland. By focusing on his peace efforts, Kossak aligns Francis's teachings with contemporary struggles for identity and morality, using her artistic license to craft a version of Francis that serves as a moral guide and source of strength in tumultuous times.

In contrast, Nikos Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis centres on his radical renunciation of the bourgeois lifestyle. Kazantzakis emphasises Francis's transformation through a series of renunciations, starting with his aversion to material wealth and societal expectations. This rejection of materialism is depicted as a courageous defiance against the social and economic structures of his time. Kazantzakis's Francis is not just a promoter of peace but a revolutionary figure who actively disengages from the conventional path of social advancement and economic success, aligning himself with the poor and marginalised. This radical renunciation serves as a critique of the socio-political situations of both his time and the author's era, highlighting the oppressive nature of materialism and conformity.

7.4.2 Emphasis on Ethical Living vs. Relentless Visionary

Kossak's depiction of Saint Francis emphasises his commitment to simplicity and humility. By renouncing materialism and leading a life of modesty, Kossak's Francis embodies an ideal of moral and ethical integrity. This portrayal, while highlighting ethical living, also suggests that these values are foundational to peace and reconciliation, and hence, essential to a harmonious society. Francis's lifestyle underscores the belief that the root of many social evils lies in the pursuit of possessions. Kossak's Francis is depicted as a figure whose ethical stance against material wealth and for simplicity is intended to serve as a model for her contemporaries in their socio-political struggles which extends to the reader's time.

Kazantzakis, however, presents his Francis as a figure driven by an unwavering commitment to a divine mandate, persistently challenging himself to strive for more. This relentless drive signifies Francis's freedom over stagnation and mediocrity, serving as a potent critique of the political and spiritual leaders of Kazantzakis's time. Through Francis's dynamic progression, Kazantzakis urges these leaders to reject corruption and complacency. Francis's journey reflects Kazantzakis's disillusionment with political ideologies such as communism, fascism, and Nazism, which often fail to fulfil their promises and instead lead to oppression. By paralleling the failings of political leaders with the moral failings of religious authorities, Kazantzakis underscores the importance of transcending boundaries and striving for greater moral and ethical heights.

Through the portrayal of Francis as a figure constantly pushing the limits of his capabilities, Kazantzakis delivers a timeless lesson to political and spiritual leaders, as well as to readers, about the dangers of mediocrity and the necessity of ongoing self-

improvement. Francis's relentless spiritual odyssey serves as an eye-opener, compelling reflection not only on the past but also on the present and future. Thus, Kazantzakis's narrative critiques the biographical subject's era while also encouraging his contemporaries and future readers to embrace a relentless pursuit of progress and integrity, rejecting stagnation and oppression.

7.4.3 Peaceful compassion Vs Spiritual Endurance

In Kossak's depiction, Francis's actions are rooted in a desire for peace and reconciliation. While the primary focus is on his role as a peace leader and moral guide, his character also critiques the ethnic dilemmas and border issues of his time. Kossak's narrative reflects the complex social tensions, including issues of land, boundary, belonging, and national identity. Through the struggles depicted in her work, she critiques the ethnic and identity crises exacerbated by geopolitical tensions and authoritarian regimes in Poland and beyond. Kossak's Francis is portrayed as a figure who shows mercy and compassion beyond boundaries, valuing everyone. He inspires others through his commitment to others, his conscientiousness, and his efforts to foster harmony.

Kazantzakis, on the other hand, emphasises Francis's rejection of conformity and his embrace of struggle and pain. Kazantzakis's Francis actively seeks out and embraces struggles as integral to his personal journey. Kazantzakis presents Francis's ability to face pain head-on and his freedom from the fear of suffering and death as central to his spiritual journey. This portrayal highlights the transformative potential of embracing life's inherent hardships and the profound sense of liberation that comes from such acceptance. Furthermore, Kazantzakis's Francis serves as a subtle critique of the socio-political environment, emphasising his courage to resist the tendencies to

settle into secure comfort zones and backslide from his initial ideals. The church and political leaders of Francis's times, his own brotherhood, and also political and military leaders in Kazantzakis's time broke their promises, sliding back to self-gain and putting ordinary people in jeopardy. Kazantzakis's portrayal of Francis, who embraces any struggle to keep in alignment with his convictions, is a subtle critique of this. Through Francis's inner conflicts and his quest for spiritual purity, Kazantzakis critiques the superficial and dogmatic approaches to faith that he found lacking in both religious and political spheres. Francis's journey symbolizes the deeper existential struggle for authenticity, integrity, and true spiritual transcendence, contrasting sharply with the compromised and often hypocritical practices of the time.

7.4.4 Mildness vs eccentricity

A key distinction in the portrayals lies in the motivations driving Francis's actions. Kossak's Francis is guided by a desire to live ethically and promote peace, with his actions often rooted in the socio-political context of his time. This narrative, frames Francis's journey as deeply intertwined with his external environment and the moral imperatives of his era. Consequently, Kossak's Francis is mild in his expressions and emotions, demonstrating a more consistent and controlled demeanour compared to Kazantzakis's Francis, who is characterized by extreme emotional fluctuations.

Conversely, Kazantzakis's Francis is propelled by intrinsic motivation and existential authenticity. His actions are validated by the journey itself, rather than by the anticipation of external rewards. Kazantzakis depicts Francis's spiritual journey as inherently fulfilling, highlighting the intrinsic value of seeking truth and meaning. This Francis is unafraid of ridicule and indifferent to praise. Kazantzakis portrays him

with intense emotions, capturing moments of frantic despair as well as extreme ecstasy.

This existential approach aligns with Kazantzakis's philosophical perspective, where the pursuit of personal growth and spiritual enlightenment is seen as an end in itself. This portrayal encourages readers to find meaning and fulfilment through their own authentic paths, fostering a sense of purpose that is self-generated and resilient to external circumstances. Additionally, Kazantzakis's Francis serves as a subtle critique of the socio-political environment, challenging readers to question and transcend the limitations imposed by societal norms.

These variations in the portrayal of Saint Francis in the biofictions of Kossak and Kazantzakis offer distinct yet complementary visions of the biographical subject. Kossak's focus on peace and ethical integrity provides a model of resilience and moral guidance, while Kazantzakis's emphasis on radical freedom and intrinsic motivation inspires readers to embrace continuous growth and existential authenticity. Together, these narratives enrich our understanding of Francis's multifaceted character and his enduring relevance across different contexts and eras.

7.4.5 Implications of the Variations

The portrayals of Saint Francis by Kossak and Kazantzakis offer distinct yet complementary visions. Kossak's Francis is a peace leader, focusing on ethical living and promoting harmony, reflecting the socio-political struggles of interwar Poland. He embodies simplicity and humility, serving as a model for ethical integrity and social stability. In contrast, Kazantzakis's Francis emphasises radical renunciation of material wealth and societal expectations. He is a revolutionary figure who critiques materialism and conformity, highlighting the importance of relentless self-

improvement and spiritual authenticity. This Francis is driven by a divine mandate, challenging political and religious leaders to transcend mediocrity. Kossak's Francis is mild and controlled, emphasising peaceful compassion and social reconciliation. Conversely, Kazantzakis's Francis experiences intense emotional fluctuations, embracing struggle and pain as essential to spiritual growth.

Moreover, both authors offer sociopolitical critiques through their respective portrayals of Francis. Kossak employs historical analogy to critique contemporary totalitarian regimes, suggesting that moral and spiritual steadfastness can serve as a form of resistance against oppressive systems. In contrast, Kazantzakis utilizes the metaphor of poverty and spiritual freedom to critique religious and political institutions, advocating for individual liberation and integrity in the face of systemic corruption. These sociopolitical critiques prompt readers to reflect on the complexities of power, authority, and the pursuit of justice in both historical and contemporary contexts.

Finally, the research highlights how both Kossak and Kazantzakis engage readers in profound contemplation through their portrayals of Francis. Kossak encourages readers to contemplate the role of personal integrity in effecting societal change, presenting Francis as an exemplar of peaceful leadership and moral courage. On the other hand, Kazantzakis invites readers to explore existential themes of freedom and personal growth, inspiring deeper contemplation of individual autonomy and the critique of societal norms. Overall, this research underscores the multifaceted implications of biofictions on reader engagement, sociopolitical critique, and thematic exploration, offering valuable insights into the enduring relevance of the Franciscan narrative in contemporary discourse.

Together, these portrayals enrich our understanding of Saint Francis. Kossak provides a model of ethical leadership and resilience, while Kazantzakis inspires radical freedom and existential authenticity, emphasising continuous growth and spiritual transcendence. To sum up, the variations in the biographical subject within Kossak's and Kazantzakis's biofictions reflect their distinct thematic concerns, biofictional strategies, and sociopolitical critiques. These differences enrich the genre of biofiction, demonstrating its versatility in addressing contemporary discourse

7.5. Limitations of the study

While the comparative study of Zofia Kossak-Szczuka's *Blessed Are the Meek* and Nikos Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper: St Francis of Assisi* offers rich insights into the transformative potential of biofiction, it also presents several limitations that must be acknowledged. These limitations pertain to the scope, methodology, and interpretative frameworks employed in the analysis.

7.5.1. Limited Scope and Representativeness

One of the primary limitations of this study is the narrow scope inherent in focusing on only two texts. While Kossak and Kazantzakis provide compelling and distinct portrayals of Francis of Assisi, their works cannot fully represent the diversity and complexity of biofiction as a genre. The selection of these two texts, though significant, adding and analysing many more biofictions on the same biographical subject might offer additional insight and perspectives

7.5.2. Methodological Constraints

The methodological approach of comparing two specific texts poses inherent constraints. The analysis may be limited by the availability and accessibility of secondary sources related to these works. Additionally, the study's focus on thematic

and biofictional elements might overlook other critical aspects such as narrative structure, literary symbols linguistic style, and reader reception, which could further enrich the understanding of the texts.

7.5.4. Interpretative Frameworks

The study employs biofictional frameworks focusing on agency, symbolism, and socio-political critique to provide insightful analyses of the texts. These frameworks are particularly useful for drawing connections and highlighting specific aspects that emerge from the authors' portrayals.

However, this study does not delve deeply into psychological character studies, which might provide a richer understanding of the characters' motivations and internal conflicts. Theological analyses could offer insights into the religious dimensions of the texts, which are also underexplored. Additionally, comparative genre studies, which might reveal how these works interact with and differ from other genres, are not fully addressed.

The complexity of biofiction as a genre necessitates a multi-faceted approach, and the chosen frameworks address only a narrow analytical lens, leaving other areas ripe for further investigation. Thus, while the comparative study of Kossak's *Blessed Are the Meek* and Kazantzakis's *God's Pauper: St Francis of Assisi* provides valuable insights into the transformative power of biofiction, it is essential to recognise its limitations

7.6 Closing Statement

The analysis and findings presented in these chapters substantiate the claim that *Blessed Are the Meek* by Zofia Kossak-Szczuka and *God's Pauper: St. Francis of Assisi* by Nikos Kazantzakis exemplify the defining characteristics of the biofiction

genre. These meticulously crafted works not only embody the aesthetic principles of biofiction but also serve as edifying narratives that bridge the historical past with the socio-political realities of the authors' present, aiming to transform the future perspectives of their readers.

Both Kossak and Kazantzakis, through their distinct worldviews, have reimagined the life of Francis of Assisi in ways that diverge significantly from conventional historical biographies. Each author has created a version of Francis that reflects their unique philosophical and ideological perspectives, resulting in portrayals that are both personal and innovative. Kossak's Francis, with his steadfast meekness and moral integrity, contrasts sharply with Kazantzakis's dynamic and freedom-seeking Francis. These variations highlight the versatility of biofiction in accommodating diverse interpretations of historical figures.

Biofictions, as demonstrated by these novels, transcend the limitations of traditional biographies by offering what can be termed as 'truthful fiction.' Each variation of Francis unveils a unique truth that transcends the others, offering diverse perspectives on his life and legacy. These narratives, while rooted in historical fact, are enriched by imaginative embellishments that reveal deeper cultural, social, and psychological truths. By weaving historical accuracy with creative fiction, Kossak and Kazantzakis provide readers with a more nuanced and emotionally resonant understanding of Francis of Assisi, one that speaks to contemporary issues and personal reflections.

The research posits that biofictions are more intimately connected to the realities of human experience than conventional biographies. While biographies tend to focus on documenting verifiable events and facts, biofictions explore the emotive

and existential dimensions of their subjects. This approach allows for a richer, multi-dimensional portrayal that resonates more profoundly with readers' cultural, social, and psychological realities.

In conclusion, this study affirms the transformative potential of biofiction as a genre. By blending historical fact with imaginative narrative, biofiction offers a unique form of truth that is both enlightening and transformative. It encourages readers to engage with history not just as a sequence of events, but as a tapestry of human experiences and emotions that continue to resonate across time. The works of Kossak and Kazantzakis stand as a testament to the power of biofiction to illuminate the past, critique the present, and inspire the future. Through their creative reconstructions of Francis of Assisi, these authors have enriched the literary landscape and demonstrated the profound capabilities of biofiction to convey deeper truths about the human condition. From all these findings we might state that biofictions are closer to social, cultural, political and psychological realities than biographies are.

Recommendations

The current study's exploration of the two biofictions opens multiple avenues for further scholarly inquiry. The findings underscore the rich potential of biofiction as a genre, suggesting several directions for future research that could expand upon the insights presented here.

Comparative Studies of Biofiction

Future research could extend the comparative analysis to a broader range of biofictional works. Investigating other biofictions about Francis of Assisi, or even about other historical figures, would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the genre. Comparative studies could examine how different authors from various cultural and historical backgrounds reimagine the same historical figure, exploring the influence of socio-political contexts on these portrayals.

Interdisciplinary Approaches

An interdisciplinary approach integrating literary studies with history, psychology, and sociology could yield deeper insights into the biofiction genre. Such an approach would examine how biofictions reflect and shape cultural and societal values, how they engage with historical accuracy, and how they affect readers' psychological and emotional responses. This would enrich the understanding of biofiction's role in bridging the gap between historical fact and imaginative narrative.

Reader Reception and Impact Studies

Investigating the reception and impact of biofictions on contemporary readers presents another promising avenue for research. This could involve empirical studies

assessing how readers perceive and interpret the blend of fact and fiction in biofictions. Understanding the cognitive and emotional impact of biofiction on readers could illuminate its potential as an educational tool and its effectiveness in fostering historical empathy and critical thinking.

Cross-Cultural and Transnational Perspectives

Exploring biofictions across different cultural and national contexts could reveal how cultural narratives and historical memory are constructed and contested globally. Comparative studies that include non-Western biofictions could highlight diverse narrative strategies and thematic concerns, offering a more global perspective on the genre. This would also involve examining how biofictions are received and interpreted in different cultural contexts, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of global literary dynamics.

Pedagogical Applications of Biofiction in Education

Investigating the pedagogical potential of biofiction in educational settings could offer valuable insights into its utility as a teaching tool. Research could explore how biofictions are used in curricula to teach history, literature, and critical thinking, assessing their effectiveness in engaging students and fostering a deeper understanding of historical and cultural contexts. This would involve collaboration with educators and educational theorists to develop best practices for incorporating biofiction into teaching. Furthermore, examining student responses and learning outcomes can provide data on how biofiction influences critical thinking skills and empathy. Such studies could pave the way for innovative approaches to interdisciplinary education.

Cross-Genre Exploration of Biographical Narratives

A cross-genre study of biofictions and biopics on the same biographical subject can illuminate the ways in which different artistic mediums shape perceptions of reality, truth, and the human experience. It can reveal new perspectives on the construction of identity and memory. This comparative analysis will delve into how narrative techniques in literature contrast with cinematic storytelling, offering insights into the interpretative flexibility of biographical representation. By examining these mediums side by side, the study aims to enhance our understanding of how audiences engage with and internalize biographical stories, ultimately influencing collective memory and individual identity formation.

Conclusion

The scope for further research based on the study of Kossak's and Kazantzakis's biofictions is vast and multifaceted. By expanding the comparative framework, embracing interdisciplinary approaches, and exploring the genre's theoretical and practical implications, future research can continue to illuminate the rich potential of biofiction. This ongoing scholarly engagement will contribute to a deeper understanding of how fiction and history intersect, offering new insights into the ways in which narratives shape and are shaped by human experience.

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