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“The Sacred” and “Spirituality” in Polish Literary Research

Describing¹ the function of the category ‘the sacred’ in literary works inevitably leads towards the beginning of its function as a scholarly term. I would like to present the steps of how ‘the sacred’ category became present particularly in Polish literature studies. For the analysis I have applied the historiographical method. Before the term ‘the sacred’ appeared in the area of literary studies, it had existed in the area of sociological and cultural studies. It is within the framework of civics where the first semantic borders of the discussed lexeme and the way of understanding it have been defined, while eventually becoming a useful research tool. Both time and contemporary epistemology reflection, emphasizing the linguistic and sociological conditioning of cognizance, made it easier to recognize something that could be called a distortion of the cultural understanding of ‘the sacred’. It seems that the functioning of the aforementioned term would not be possible in Europe without some distance to one’s own civilization, defined by Christianity and its language. Such distance has its determinants outside of science – ideological and sociological – but it is also connected with the process occurring within science, with the growing expansion and strength of natural science, which dominated the cultural area in the middle of 19th century so strongly, that they were able to impose its own knowledge paradigm upon other areas of science – placing religion on the brink, or even outside the area of human academic activity.

Can one talk about religion without referring to a dictionary of Christian ideology, which has been scholarly cursed, laughed at or tabooed? Nowadays, we get the impression that the attempt to spread “the sacred” category, undertaken by Emil Durkheim and other French soci-

¹ Cf. R. Koselleck, *Dzieje pojęć. Studia z semantyki i pragmatyki języka społeczno-politycznego*, translated by W. Kunicki, J. Marecki, Warszawa 2009.

ologists at the turn of 19th and 20th centuries, was a kind of answer to such a question. The term 'the sacred' had an important function: it made the presence of religion in scholarly discourse possible. It allowed for opposing tendencies for reductionism in treating religious phenomena in the category of class struggle or subconsciousness play. However, the appearance of the analyzed term had another dimension – it encouraged the observation of religious phenomena from outside language and the cultural tokens of Christianity, it provoked the attempt at scholarly examination of religions other than monotheistic, it led towards the transcultural conceptualization of religiousness. Whilst possessing all these possibilities, the term did not reveal them immediately. Emil Durkheim is not the creator of the meaning of "the sacred" from the angle of cultural studies. Writing about the opposing "the sacred – the profane", the French sociologist tried not to show the specificity of religious perception, but rather the difference of human bonds created by religion on the grounds of other sociological factors². It was quickly discovered that the French school of sociology omitted something that is the very essence of religion – the phenomenon of experience with something that goes beyond the area of empirical experience, what is transcendent not only for the senses, but also for the language and all ways of rationalization³.

The first stage of development of the sociology of religion carries some problems, which have to be released with time. Jean Servier writes about it in a very expressive way in his book *L'homme en Invisible*, published first in Paris in 1964⁴. It is not only about the aforementioned slowly surmounting reductionism, but also about evolutionism. The belief in the model of evolution common for all cultures resulted in the perception of European culture at the final and most perfect stage of development to be a link to and a point of reference for other cultures. In the titles of works written at that time, the term 'primitive cultures' appears very often. It had been spread by Lucienne Lévy-Bruhl's essay *Le Surnaturel et la nature dans la mentalité primitive*⁵. It was strongly criticized by Mary Douglas who openly classified the proposed distinction of logical and pre-logical mentality as racial. After some time Lévy-Bruhl withdrew from his theses, but still they were very symptomatic of the

² Durkheim's perception of *sacrum* is discussed by M. Koza-Granosz in the article *Analiza pojęcia sacrum w sytuacji współczesnej sekularyzacji*, „Kultura i Historia”, 2009, nr 16, [Internet edition, <http://www.kulturaihistoria.umcs.lublin.pl/archives/1488>, access: 20.08. 1012].

³ Ibidem.

⁴ I used 5th edition: J. Servier, *L'homme et Invisible*, Paris 1995⁵.

⁵ L. Lévy-Bruhl, *Le Surnaturel et la nature dans la mentalité primitive*, Paris 1931.

cultural aura at the beginning of the 20th century and inscribed themselves into the context of anthropological thought at that time⁶. It is then worth emphasizing that the contemporary methods of using ‘the sacred’ category in cultural research is based on cultural anthropology which – emerging from sociology in the beginning of the 20th century thanks to researchers like Bronisław Malinowski – rejected Occidentalism and the ethnocentric orientation. The rank and popularity of the term ‘the sacred’ within cultural research has been growing as they were abandoning its limitations. Overcoming racial or mind-set prejudices, open and impartial attitudes (as far as it is possible), and at the same time phenomenological, which means directed to what is essential – all that resulted in time with a description of the transcultural features of the ‘subject’ of religious experience, gradually constituting a modern way of understanding the category of our interest.

The first ‘phenomological’ description of the religious experience was not written by a culture anthropologist, but by a theologian and a comparativist of religion. In 1917, Rudolf Otto published his essay *Das Heilige*⁷. Unlike Durkheim, a German expert of religious studies, recognized religion as a *sui generis* phenomenon – not imprecated to any other. He emphasized that its uniqueness is achieved through the relation with something completely different, separate, something that could be defined as ‘the sacred’ or *numinosum*. Even though the analyses was made by a researcher of the religious experience, the discovery of such components like *tremendum* and *fascinosum* leaned towards a psychology of religion and corresponded with the essay by William James⁸, fundamental for this field, and they also influenced cultural studies and research: freedom from language clichés, tainted with the impression of cultural superiority, they sanctioned and authenticated an open view, fundamental for cultural anthropology – oriented at searching for elements common for many religions. Even though they seemed too theoretical and one-sided (which were Roger Caillois’ objections), they encouraged discussion and creative statements⁹.

⁶ The discussion referred by: Servier J., *L’homme et Invisible*, op. cit., p. 45-49.

⁷ The first Polish edition: R. Otto, *Świętość. Elementy irracjonalne w pojęciu bóstwa i ich stosunek do elementów racjonalnych*, translated by B. Kupis, Warszawa 1968.

⁸ I am thinking about *Doświadczenie religijne*, translated by J. Hempel, Kraków 2001. Interesting commentary on James and Otto views can be found in a book by Roy A. Rappaport entitled *Rytuał i religia w rozwoju ludzkości*, translated by A. Musiał, T. Sikora, A. Szyjewski, Kraków 2007 p. 67.

⁹ R. Caillois, *Człowiek i sacrum*, translated by A. Tatarkiewicz, E. Burska, ed. 2nd, Warszawa 2009, p. 14-15.

The French cultural researcher opened the idea of ‘the sacred’ to minority religious discourse, as well as broadening the point of view with these elements of the phenomenon of religion that exists outside of the subject. A collection of essays *L’Homme et le sacré* (published first in Paris in 1939) is a completion of the outlined project, spreading the understanding of the category of our interest as we find in contemporary works. We owe the modern definition of ‘the sacred’ to Roger Caillois himself. In his book he emphasized the wide spectrum of the idea, thus appreciating the so called primitive religions. The Sacred became a synonym of what links all religions, what remains the unnamed highest values, what is mysterious, completely different, but, at the same time, persistently present, penetrating human awareness, shaping how we live our time and perceive space¹⁰.

Gerardus van der Leeuw’s *Phänomenologie der Religion* (first published in 1933)¹¹, and post-war works by Mircea Eliade changed the way of perceiving the discussed category ‘the sacred’ in a significant way. Together, they drew the category into phenomenological discussion and usage. Surely they gave it impact, though. Eliade particularly committed to the shift of ‘the sacred’ from the border of humanistic discourse to its centre¹². The power of the Romanian researcher was not only the possession of a great literary talent and a powerful interpretative imagination, but also of brilliant erudition – great knowledge of different religions, extensive knowledge of religious studies his opponents did not have. Thanks to him, ‘the sacred’ category became the mutual good of not only religious studies, but many other areas of science – literary studies among them.

The process of its use in research literature was different in European countries; it even appears that it did not cover the whole of Euroatlantic culture. In Poland, in the seventies of the last century, until this day, ‘the sacred’ has become the vital category for reflections on the religious aspects of literature (eliminating such terms as ‘Catholic literature’ and ‘religious literature’). This relatively long time of academic use of the term obviously has its cultural determinant. In the background there was the process of religious revival, happening in Poland from the seventies. and reaching its peak in the eighties. of the last century. It was

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 21-22.

¹¹ The first Polish edition: *Fenomenologia religii*, translated by J. Prokopiuk, Warszawa 1978.

¹² It is mentioned by S.Sawicki in his article *Sacrum w literaturze*, in: *Sacrum w literaturze*, eds. J. Gotfryd et al., Lublin 1983, p.13.

caused by many reasons¹³ and included many aspects of culture¹⁴. It was characterized by the widening view of the phenomenon of experiencing faith and specificity of ethical canons rooted in Christianity, as well as a non-biased way of perceiving religious institutions and their representatives.¹⁵ It had outstanding manifestations in many works of art, among them, obviously, literary works. Krzysztof Dybcki, in a draft published in 'Znak' magazine in Cracow in 1977 captured the distinct change of the audience's expectations:

The need for literature inspired by Christian values is growing among our literary audience. Together with the decline of traditional forms of religiousness, perceiving activity – not only among believers – directed at religious culture phenomena is growing¹⁶.

The researcher also noted changes in writing strategies, and also within the area of immanent world of literary works. He wrote: 'The element of 'the sacred' is comprehensively present in the contemporary literature. It specially concerns reflective lyrics, dealing with fundamental issues of human existence¹⁷. Similar observations were made by other critics.¹⁸ It was noted that traditional terms, such as 'Catholic literature', common in the twenty year period between the World Wars and after the war, have not only been tabooed¹⁹, but became more and more distant from the world presented in literature. It was emphasized that contempo-

¹³ A most important was the fact that Catholicism – also in its institutional dimension – was perceived as an ally in the struggle with totalitarian regime. It is mentioned by sociologist, e.g in a comprehensive elaboration entitled *Religijność społeczeństwa polskiego lat 80. Od pytań filozoficznych do problemów empirycznych.*" Eds. M. Grabowska, T. Szawiela, ed. 2nd, Warszawa 2005.

¹⁴ For the literary culture a fact that the Catholic Church was an important patron and propagator of literature published outside censorship was very meaningful.

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ K. Dybcki, *Trudne spotkanie. Literatura polska XX wieku wobec religii*, Kraków 2005, p. 34

¹⁷ Quote after: K. Dybcki, Ibidem.

¹⁸ I am mainly thinking about Jan Błoński's essay entitled *To co święte, to co literackie*, published in „Tygodnik Powszechny” in 1979. The text was reprinted in the collection (the book) entitled *Kilka myśli, co nie nowe*, Kraków 1985, p. 9-41.

¹⁹ J. Błoński said: 'Miłosz said that in the period between the wars, the label of a 'Catholic' meant inferiority [...] Different taboos occur in culture, connected with subject or genre areas. The label of inferiority, assigned to 'Catholic' writers 50 years ago was, above all, a function of moralistic auto-censorship', J. Błoński, *Kilka myśli...*, op. cit., ibidem, p. 12.

rary works of literature draw much wider horizon of reference to the 'sacred' reality than the one covered by narrow religious qualifiers²⁰.

Changes occurring in the area of literature and its reception were a specific challenge for literary research; it demanded the creation of such descriptive tools which could link the study of literature and literary culture. The situation encouraged the overcoming of prejudices and limitations (present in the study and research paradigms itself, as well as outside it). Anticipating a later so-called cultural shift in literary studies, it prepared us to address the study of literature and cultural studies. Many factors point to the fact that sacral research was one of the first attempts to build a bond between literary and cultural studies.

The source of popularity and constancy of 'the sacred' category in Polish literary research was not only a phenomenon outside the literary studies; it is also worth mentioning those that came from within. An important asset was surely the axiological neutral, non-confrontational profile of the term – distinctly different from the profile used in the fifties, of the term 'Catholic literature', which had a differentiating character, building opposition towards 'non-Catholic' areas. The term 'the sacred' did not have a classification or typological aim (such function was sometimes assigned to the 'religious literature' term). Its wide range allowed activities that led to the identification of the religious profile of the literary work. Its primary context was not any ideology or religious doctrine, but cultural anthropology, so it demanded competence in cultural studies more than being involved in world outlook. It thus imparted an impartial stand, a willingness to make objective observations, and while following the rules for proper analytical and descriptive procedures created in the contemporary interpretative communities.

Researchers using the aforementioned category have often noticed the phenomenon of subjective style of reading which is oppressive towards the text. Krzysztof Dybciak wrote: 'Sometimes we deal with, and on a large scale, a phenomenon of reception making the message, which genetically and structurally belongs to the profanum sacral sphere (sub-

²⁰ It was discussed thoroughly by S.Sawicki in his article entitled *Czy zmierzch "literatury katolickiej"?* „Znak”, 12:1960, no. 11(209), p. 1423-1440. 'Catholic literature' category was often faced with accusations that it demands the use of terminology elaborated in the area of certain theology, it builds the horizon of expectations of 'correlation' between religious doctrine and text semantics, which may easily mean lack of respect for the autonomy of the literary language – not subjected to theological paraphrase, not limiting it to narrow religious categories. It is also worth to quote J.Błoński: 'A religious reflection on literature is often distorted by religious qualifications, which are more confusing than explaining', J. Błoński, *Kilka myśli...*, op. cit., p. 15.

jectively)²¹. Stefan Sawicki diagnosed the situation in the eighties.: '[...] presently 'sacral' interpretations can be found very often; they even belong to something which could be called good taste among literary critics or literary researchers. In this situation we should rather think about deeper insight into research, and show exaggerations or even deviations, inevitable in common phenomena in culture²² The same researcher pointed to the fact that 'the sacred' is an 'inner' literary category, manifested in literary works thanks to sacral indicators of such elements as language, time, space or a hero's motivation. Interpretive processes which serve to reveal such indicators would then undergo the same verification procedures as any other judgement of reality²³.

The scale of interest in this category was also determined – apart from reasons mentioned before – to be the fact that sacral studies were supported institutionally. 'The sacred', introduced to literary studies works by Stefan Sawicki, became a part of the research paradigm, spread by the researchers from The Institute of Research on Religious Literature Studies at the Catholic University in Lublin. They organized numerous academic conferences, led publishing series, and gathered a wide circle of collaborators, embedding the results of studies conducted in Polish on awareness studies. They turned out to be especially important for the history of literature (there is a separate reflection on the meaning of 'the sacred' category in historic literature studies²⁴). Monographs were written, dedicated to authors who displayed religious threads in their works, such as: Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna, Hanna Malewska, Jan Twardowski, Stanisław Vincenz, Janusz Stanisław Pasierb, Zofia Kossak-Szczucka²⁵, as well as authors who preferred to hide religious meanings in the depth of their texts, such as Zbigniew Herbert²⁶. In the series *Religijne tradycje literatury polskiej* (The religious traditions of the Polish literature) there

²¹ K. Dybciak, op.cit., p. 34.

²² S. Sawicki, *Granice „sakralnych” interpretacji literatury*, in: Sawicki, *Wartość. Sacrum*. Norwid, Lublin 1994, p. 105.

²³ Ibidem, p.132.

²⁴ Cf. Z. Zarębianka, *Sacrum jako kategoria historycznoliteracka*, [in:] id., *Czytanie sacrum*, Kraków–Rzym 2008, p. 11-23, cf. also *W meandrach metodologii*, in: eadem, *Tropy sacrum w literaturze XX wieku.*, Bydgoszcz 2001, p. 9-18.

²⁵ Cf. M. Ołdakowska-Kuflowa, *Chrześcijańskie widzenie świata w poezji Kazimierzy Iłakowiczówny*, Lublin 1993, A. Sulikowski, *Pozwolić mówić prawdzie. O twórczości Hanny Malewskiej*, Lublin 1992; idem, *Świat poetycki księdza Jana Twardowskiego*, Lublin 1995; P. Nowaczyński, *Mądrość Vincenza*, Lublin 2003; W. Kudyba „Rana, która przyzywa Boga”. *O twórczości poetyckiej Janusza St. Pasierba*, Lublin 2006; M. Nowak, *Koncepcja dziejów w powieściach historycznych*, Lublin 2009.

²⁶ Cf. T. Garbol, „Chrzest ziemi”. *Sacrum w poezji Zbigniewa Herberta*, Lublin 2003.

have been works of a synthetic character. They covered the main literary genres²⁷ and literary periods²⁸, revealing the riches of “spirituality” hidden in literature of different periods and the works of the most eminent Polish writers.

The shift of ‘the sacred’ category from the area of cultural studies to the area of analysis and historical and literary synthesis did not happen without the inevitable disruptions. The wide range of the notion, completely natural and desirable in the anthropology of culture, did not have to be something obvious in the research of separate literary works, at times evoking the image of the world strictly connected with a particular religion, or even a particular worship. Let us put it this way: even though Polish research confirmed the usefulness of this descriptive term, it also made us realize the limitations of its use. Stefan Sawicki in his well-known text, fundamental for the methodology of sacral analysis, claimed:

The content of the notion is [...] poor and not very clear, strongly connected with the phenomena of primitive religions, eventually leading to an experience of undefined mystery. I reckon that ‘the sacred’ understood in this way can be useful for the interpretation of phenomena in modern literature, in which we discover many situations similar to primitive religions [...]. It does not satisfy all the needs of criticism or study of literature²⁹.

In a later article – documenting many years of experience in ‘sacral’ interpretation he added that ‘the sacred’:

[...] covers so many phenomena, which are so diversified that it can easily become a bag-term. If [...] it is to be a term useful in this research it must – I reckon – have narrower range. It must concern only this specification of the term that represents it in a ‘clear’ way, which means those works that contain ‘the sacred’ without adjectives, neutral, and not religiously tainted³⁰.

²⁷ Cf. *Polska liryka religijna*, red. S. Sawicki, P. Nowaczyński, Lublin 1983; *Dramat i teatr religijny w Polsce*, red. I. Sławińska, W. Kaczmarek, Lublin, 1991; *Proza polska w kręgu religijnych inspiracji*, eds. M. Jasińska-Wojtkowska, K. Dybciak, Lublin 1993.

²⁸ Cf. *Nurt religijny w literaturze polskiego średniowiecza i renesansu*, eds. S. Nieznajowski, J. Pelc, Lublin 1994; *Religijność literatury polskiego baroku*, eds. Cz. Hernas, M. Hanusiewicz, Lublin 1995; *Motywy religijne w twórczości pisarzy polskiego Oświecenia*, eds. T. Kostkiewiczowa, Lublin 1995; *Religijny wymiar literatury polskiego romantyzmu*, eds. M. Maciejewski, D. Zamaćńska-Paluchowska, Lublin 1995; *Problematyka religijna w literaturze pozytywizmu i Młodej Polski. Świadectwa poszukiwań*, eds. S. Fita, Lublin 1993; *Religijne aspekty literatury polskiej XX wieku*, eds. J. Święch, M. Jasińska-Wojtkowska, Lublin 1997.

²⁹ S. Sawicki, op. cit., p. 13.

³⁰ S. Sawicki, *Metafizyczne-sakralne-religijne w badaniach literackich*, in: idem., *Wartość. Sacrum*. Norwid 2, Lublin 2007, p. 55.

Both statements quoted serve to define a clear area of the possible uses of 'the sacred' as a research category. In both the author convinces us that the condition of the success of research is the adequacy of the used category with the world as presented in literary works. It means that using 'the sacred' in interpretation can be useful, when it serves to analyse literary works in which religious meaning of the world as presented cannot be explained with the conceptual apparatus of any of the so-called great religions. During the first conference dedicated to 'the sacred' in literary research a question was asked about the point of using this category in reference to literary works which are distinctly set in the context of a specific religion, or even a specific worship. The answer to this was Sawicki's offer to replace 'the sacred' category when analysing such works with 'other terms, more adequate to examined phenomena'³¹.

Organizational measures undertaken by the founder of Lublin school of sacral research were soon verified by the reality of academic discourse, subject at each discourse to the rules of the terminology in fashion. 'The sacred' became the fashionable term for some time – used and overused, perhaps. It became the keyword to open all possible references to the religious sphere in literary works. It was applied not only to areas where the layer of religious meaning remained generalized in the text, but also in those areas which were distinctly involved in the symbolic world of a specific religion. Not much was changed by the sane commentary of Piotr Nowaczyński, who, referring to some philosophers' doubts³², noticed that despite common elements, religions also contain different elements – and those differences concern such fundamental issues as the concept of 'holiness'. 'The sacred' of primitive religions has completely different meanings than the concept of a God in person in Judaism, and the differences between both visions of the world, man and God's, are so great that they seem more important than what is mutual³³.

Attempts to differentiate 'sacral' terminology also did not bring the expected result. There were of course attempts to introduce new notions where the context demanded it. I am also thinking about the

³¹ Ibidem., p. 6.

³² Cf. E. Lévinas, *Trudna wolność. Eseje o judaizmie*, translated by Agnieszka Kuryś, Gdynia 1991, P. Ricoeur, *Manifestation et Proclamation*, w: *Il sacro. Studi e ricerche, Atti del convegno indetto dal Centro Internazionale di Studi Umanistici e dall'Istituto di Studi Filosofici, Roma – 4-6 Gennaio 1974*, a cura di Enrico Castelli, Istituto di Studi Filosofici, Roma 1974, p. 57-76.

³³ Cf. P. Nowaczyński, *O badaniach nad literaturą religijną KUL*, in: *Religia a literatura w publikacjach KUL 1918-1993*, p. 17-18.

sanctum category, which was popularized – with the use of philosophical and theological works – by Zofia Zarębianka³⁴. Even though the term was an adequate tool of description for literary works inspired by Judaism and Christianity, so common in Polish literature, it was not popular among researchers. The popularity of the sacred noticeably blocked the possibilities of innovations in terminologies and made changes within the area of sacral conceptual apparatus impossible. The impossibility of broadening the repertory of notions triggered the investigation for new methods of reading. And they were provided by the history of ideas. Models of reading functioning within it made it possible to attempt to cover philosophical conceptions in literary works, and also opened the possibility of exploration in a theological character. Reading books where the world presented was strictly connected with the Christian vision of reality could now omit ‘the sacred’ category, which, for them, was inadequate, but it had to lift the knowledge of Christian learning of Revelation and resist the temptation to measure literary language with stiff theological terms. It is true that they enabled some brilliant remarks on theological issues present in the works of Cyprian Kamil Norwid³⁵, but they aroused some serious doubts³⁶ concerning the style of reception – similar doubts were caused by the so-called kerygma method³⁷.

Presently, when the fashion has passed, and literary studies more and more often relied upon cultural studies, we can ask whether a cultural break happening in literature studies opened a new field of sacral research? The answer is not easy. But if the story of the Other is really a vital part of contemporary literary studies, shaping our ways of building academic discourse, assigning the kind and scope of undertaken search, it might be that an interesting area of research on different forms of cultural violence in the field of literary studies is forming. New sensitivity to different forms of oppression makes us look again at our ways of organizing knowledge about literature and the value of literary works. It may happen that the notions of so-called ‘religious literature’, its depreciation and – eventually – elimination from the range of interest for the recipients of culture are waiting for a thorough description when it comes to

³⁴ Cf. Z. Zarębianka, *Poezja wymiaru sanctum. Kamińska, Jankowski, Twardowski*, Lublin 1992, especially remarks on p. 7-8.

³⁵ Cf. A. Dunajski, *Chrześcijańska interpretacja dziejów w pismach Cypriana Norwida*, Lublin 1985.

³⁶ Cf. S. Sawicki, *Teolog o twórczości Czesława Miłosza*, in: *Wartość. Sacrum. Norwid*, Lublin 2007, p. 99-110.

³⁷ Cf. S. Sawicki, *Sacrum w badaniach literatury*, in: *Wartość. Sacrum. Norwid*, Lublin 1994, p. 102.

the process of making them stereotypical. It may be that the process of modelling the notion of ‘modernity’ or ‘modernism’ can be observed in such a way to put outside its range these elements of culture that reveal a positive attitude toward religious reality. Literature itself opens an interesting field for research. Do we not deal with the processes of labelling, stigmatization and depreciation of anything connected with religion in the world presented in contemporary literary texts?

The other challenge is the category of “spirituality” which appears more and more often in contemporary literary discourse. It was first adapted for literary research in France. It is where the analysis of *spiritualité* was given institutional support. I am especially thinking about the *Littérature et spiritualité* research centre, founded by Michel Baude with Metz University. The outcome of numerous academic conferences and academic works was not only historical and literary essays³⁸, but also those devoted to biblical inspirations in literature³⁹, issues connected with “spirituality” – e.g. literary documentations of conversion⁴⁰ or “spirituality” of particular writers⁴¹. (The constancy of conducted research, the regularity of academic conferences, and its significance is documented by a published series *Recherches en littérature et spiritualité*, presently published by the P.Lang). The popularity and even dominating character of the “spirituality” category in the research of the relationship between literature and religion is also observed in other European countries and in the USA⁴².

More and more often it is observed in Polish literary research. Does it have the status of an academic term? It does not seem so – it has

³⁸ Cf. *Romantisme et religion : théologie des théologiens et théologie des écrivains : colloque interdisciplinaire organisé à la Faculté des lettres de Metz les 20, 21, 22 octobre 1978 sous le patronage de la Société des études romantiques* by Michel Baude; Marc Mathieu Munch; Paris 1980; *Aspects du classicisme et de la spiritualité mélanges en l'honneur de Jacques Hennequin* by Jacques Hennequin; Alain Cullière, Paris 1996; *Poésie et spiritualité en France depuis 1950 : spiritualité chrétienne, spiritualité athée : colloque organisé à la Faculté des lettres et sciences humaines de Metz (13 et 14 novembre 1987)*, publiés par Michel Baude et Jeanne-Marie Baude. Paris 1988.

³⁹ Cf. *La Bible en littérature : actes du colloque international de Metz, septembre 1994* by Pierre-Marie Beaudé; Paris 1997.

⁴⁰ *La conversion : expérience spirituelle, expression littéraire : actes du colloque de Metz (5-7 juin 2003)* édité par Nicolas Brucker. New York 2005.

⁴¹ *Spiritualité verlainienne : actes du colloque international de Metz (novembre 1996)* réunis et publiés par Jacques Dufétel ; Paris, 1997.

⁴² Cf. E.g. S. Bach, *Spiritualität und Transzendenz in der modernen englischsprachigen Literatur*, Paderborn 2001; C. Brinker, *Contemplata aliis tradere. Studien zum Verhältnis von Literatur und Spiritualität*, Bern 1995; *Literature and Spirituality*, Edited by D. Bevan, Amsterdam-Atlanta 1992.

not yet been assigned with a range of meaning, not given semantic borders, not defined. The way to its understanding can be read from analysis conducted by particular researchers, but there are no clear gestures displaying methodological awareness and the sense of organized conceptual apparatus. It was first used in Poland in literary research by Andrzej Sulikowski in a quoted monograph *Świat poetycki księdza Jana Twardowskiego*⁴³ - it distinctly refers to meanings of “spirituality” provided by Christian theology. The same area of inspiration would be the meaning of “spirituality” used by Alina Nowicka-Jeżowa⁴⁴. It is different in a book by Dorota Heck *Bez znaku, bez śladu, bez słowa. W kręgu problemów duchowości we współczesnej literaturze polskiej*⁴⁵. Here philosophical inspirations dominate, the author knowingly uses such conceptions of “spirituality” that appear in contemporary philosophy⁴⁶. It could be expected that the difficulty of adapting the notion of “spirituality” to literary studies would be undertaken by the conference members, which resulted in the publication of *Fenomen duchowości*⁴⁷, it seems though that the interdisciplinary character of the symposium, in which not only literature and language studies experts participated, but also philosophers, theologians, psychologists and economists, made it impossible to reflect on the use of the category in the procedures of analysis and interpretation of literature.

Regarding the growing presence of the notion of “spirituality” in science and general language, such reflections seem more and more necessary. Before it is undertaken on a large scale, I would like to formulate a few assumptions concerning future research. I think that the semantic chaos should be overcome and the area of meaning clearly outlined. It might happen then that it is impossible to introduce into literary research such a way of understanding “spirituality” that makes this category a synonym of well-being, and names various kinds of psychotherapy, mind improvement, health care, work effectiveness, and a wide spectrum of

⁴³ A. Sulikowski, *Świat poetycki księdza Jana Twardowskiego*, Lublin 1995. Chapter VIII entitled *Duchowość w pismach ks. Twardowskiego* (p. 235-277) discusses the cult of Mary (p. 241-244) and the inspiration of Carmelite and Salesian spirituality (p. 252-255)

⁴⁴ It appears in: *Pieśni czasu śmierci. Studium z historii duchowości XVI-XVIII w.*, Lublin 1992.

⁴⁵ D. Heck *Bez znaku, bez śladu, bez słowa. W kręgu problemów duchowości we współczesnej literaturze polskiej*, Wrocław 2004.

⁴⁶ Many quotes from essay: A. Bielik-Robson, *Inna nowoczesność. Pytania o współczesną formułę duchowości*, Kraków 2003.

⁴⁷ *Fenomen duchowości*, eds. A. Grzegorzczak et al., Poznań 2006.

magic and occultism, such as amulets, horoscopes, fortune-telling, tarot etc.⁴⁸ It may also be discovered that an important area of inspiration might be theological research which has already created a wide, subtle and precise way of understanding the given notion. “Spirituality” is therefore understood as a syndrome of personal references to God, modelled culturally and anthropologically⁴⁹. Dictionaries of theological “spirituality” sometimes remind us of the classification proposed by A. G. Matanić⁵⁰. He suggested the following criteria:

1. Ethnical-geographical
2. Doctrinal
3. Ascetic-practical
4. Anthropological-psychological
5. Historical-chronological
6. Schools of spirituality

It seems that each of these categories opens the kind of research that may concern such a specific subject as literary work. These works – obviously – would use a wide range of research tools which would become a common good for literature studies. They would aim to abstract the model of “spirituality” or one of its aspects hidden in a literary work or series of works. If we replace the ethnical-geographical criterion with religious-cultural, we could aim to discover elements of Buddhist, Judaic, Christian and Atheist (so written about nowadays) elements in literary works. The second criterion allows us to research works connected with a particular religion, e.g. Christianity, and describe their “spirituality” when it comes to the cult of Mary, Passion, or Eucharist. The third could be used when reading older works and reach their atonement or contemplating “spirituality”. The fourth criterion diversifies “spirituality” according to sex, age, temper, status, job and allows us to find and follow the “spirituality” of man or woman, the “spirituality” of children, old people, or social groups (e.g. intelligentsia, peasants etc.) The fifth criterion could serve the history of literature, showing e.g. Middle Age “spirituality”, Baroque or contemporary, written in literary works of different epochs. The sixth one would demand the search for literary elements that

⁴⁸ As B. Dobroczyński writes, we owe such way of understanding ‘spirituality’ mostly to New Era movement and the process of commercializing spirituality that goes with it. Cf. B. Dobroczyński, *New Age*, Kraków 1997, p. 92.

⁴⁹ Cf. E.g. M. Chmielewski, *Vade-mecum duchowości katolickiej. 101 pytań o życie duchowe*, Lublin 2004, p. 18.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 24.

show inspiration with different schools or currents of “spirituality”. Matanić mentions Franciscan, Carmelite “spirituality”, but it might also concern the “spirituality” of new religious movements (like Neocatechumenal of Focolari movement and non-religions such as New Age. A question obviously arises – how can you conduct research on the works of these artists whose works are characterized by such individual model of “spirituality”, that it cannot be explained with any of these criteria (among Polish authors Zbigniew Herbert comes to mind). Intuition tells us that the criteria are not completely useless in that case – they may serve to show the tension between a poet’s individual “spirituality” and various aspects of “spirituality” present in the surrounding cultural context. Individual “spirituality” is always shaped in a society, does not grow in isolation from the culture. An interesting, wide and diverse area of research is open. Let it be explored well.

Summary

The article was devoted to the methodology of research on the relationship between literature-religion. Its aim is a critical reflection on the use of the category of ‘the sacred’ in the research. In Poland, in 70. of the last century, ‘the sacred’ has become the vital category for reflections on the religious aspects of literature (eliminating such terms as ‘catholic literature’ and ‘religious literature’). The historiographical method is used in the article. The author presents the steps of the presence of the category ‘the sacred’ in the humanities, especially in the Polish literature studies.

The main results of the analysis: sacrological research had prepared us to meet study of literature and cultural studies. Many factors point to the fact that sacral research was one of the first attempts to build a bond between literary and cultural studies. The term ‘the sacred’ did not have classification or typological aim (such function was sometimes assigned to ‘religious literature’ term). Its wide range allowed activities that led to identification of the religious profile of the literary work. Its primary context was not any ideology or religious doctrine, but cultural anthropology, so it demanded culture studies competence more than being involved in world outlook. The wide range of the notion – completely natural and desirable in the anthropology of culture – did not have to be something obvious in the research of separate literary works, at times evoking the image of the world strictly connected with particular religion, or even particular worship. The answer to this was Stefan Sawicki’s offer to replace ‘the sacred’ category when analysing such

works with other terms. Organizational measures undertaken by the founder of Lublin school of sacral research were soon verified by the reality of academic discussion – subject, as each discussion, to the rules of terminology fashion. ‘The sacred’ became fashionable term for some time – used and overused, perhaps. It became the key-word to open all possible references to religious sphere in literary works. It was applied not only where the layer of religious meaning remained generalized in the text, but also in those which were distinctly involved in the symbolic world of a specific religion. There were of course attempts to introduce new notion where the context demanded it.

Taken in the article analyzes the concept of the sacred in literary studies have been limited mainly to the area of Polish literary criticism. The text encourages further research. It has practical significance. It explains the methods, can serve students and other readers (such as teachers or students) to acquire the skills to interpret literary texts. The author is not only critically discusses the use of the sacred in the research literature, but also proposes a new research tools in the form of the category of “spirituality”.

Key-words:

methodology of literary criticism, history of literary criticism, *sacred*, religion, spirituality

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