

# Poetic elements of the sacred

## Images of holiness in the works of Janusz Stanisław Pasierb, Karol Wojtyła/ Pope John Paul II, Anna Kamieńska and Zbigniew Jankowski

### Summary

The primary aim of this article is to present sacral aspects of linguistic and cultural images of the elements (earth, fire water and air) in the poetic works of four writers: Janusz Stanisław Pasierb, Karol Wojtyła/ Pope John Paul II, Anna Kamieńska and Zbigniew Jankowski. This search for traces of the sacred was mainly performed using the cognitive method, in particular the open definition model, and the influence of textual connotations on the process of developing a given poetic space (in this case determined by the notion of the elements), at the same time taking the wider perspective into consideration, drawing on the scientific work of literary theorists, theologians and cultural anthropologists.

This analysis of poetic texts has led to several conclusions, the most important relating to the ways in which fundamental motifs connected with the elements are used by poets to create the sacral space. Marked differences in both quantity and quality are evident. In the first case there are clear disproportions between the degree to which poems are saturated with sacral poetic elements and their reference to particular elements. Father Janusz Pasierb is a writer whose work exhibits all elements, earth, fire, water and air. As a result, he can undoubtedly be dubbed the poet of all four elements. In the poetic works of Karol Wojtyła/ Pope John II clear reference can be found to three of the elements: earth, fire and water. The same is true for the work of Anna Kamieńska. Her work features clear references to earth, fire and air. The writer whose work is dominated by one element, water, is Zbigniew Jankowski. One might state with certainty that it constitutes the key concept in interpreting his verse.

In terms of the issues dealt with in this work the quality differences in the poetic mechanisms manifesting the sacred in the context of the four elements are particularly significant. Each writer has other means of expression at their disposal and different ways of creating categories of the divine in their works. They also have different ways of drawing on cultural traditions, which have a significant influence on the way particular concepts are defined, most importantly on their contextualisation.

On the basis of the texts analysed here it can be unequivocally stated that the sacred is manifested in them in a variety of ways and on various levels: genre, axiological and stylistic-linguistic. One of the key areas relates to the subject matter of the poems, which by using archetypal and biblical motifs to a lesser or greater extent, introduce categories of sacred time and space and the sacred – profane dichotomy. These motifs symbolise experience and

longing, convictions that remain always relevant to humans and which form their 'spiritual' sphere or truly sacred and transcendental sphere. There is no doubt that all the elements belong to this sphere, as due to their long tradition, they are significant in semantic terms and rich in cultural and religious content. For these reasons they constitute an excellent source of important and interesting references. Thanks for the introduction of new contexts, in poetic texts the concepts of earth, water, air and fire take on original meanings. They organise poetry's semantic space, at the same time evoking in each of the writers diverse associations that form a specific chain of concepts. Forming such chains not only opens up space for new semantic variants, but also provides an opportunity for the particular dynamics of the poetic world to be conveyed. At the same time, it presents homogeneity and consistency on both the philosophical and symbolic imagery level. In this context the poetic word takes on particular significance, becoming an instrument of higher values than the aesthetic, first and foremost testimony to the reality of the Other, an integral element of the sacred sphere, a hierophany revealing the Absolute.