Weighing the anchor: Lotmanian perspectives on the Fighting Poland symbol

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Abstract. Simple symbols occupy a unique position within the semiosphere, constituting the symbolic core of culture with their ability to condense cultural memory into nimble, economic forms. This simplicity facilitates persistence, allowing these elementary symbols to recur diachronically, penetrating multiple layers of cultural strata to emerge and flourish in new contexts and variations. A novel example of a symbol which illustrates these attributes is *Znak Polski Walczącej* – the Fighting Poland symbol. Created in 1942 by the Polish Underground State as a propaganda tool, this straightforward monogram, consisting of interconnected letters P and W, became the official hallmark of Polish resistance and is now a controversial *de facto* national symbol. This article employs the symbol as a case study to explore two Lotmanian symbolic concepts: the vast semantic capacity of simple symbols, and their dual nature as invariable/variable entities. Born out of a utilitarian need for simplicity in Nazi-occupied Warsaw, the efficient form of the Fighting Poland symbol was a pragmatic matter of life or death. However, further examination of its simple design also reveals an underlying archaic depth. This article argues that the Fighting Poland symbol, metonymically known as the *kotwica* ('anchor') owing to its distinct shape, can also be viewed as an "emissary" from earlier cultural epochs, namely ante-Nicene Christianity, which made use of anchor symbology during an era of persecution and upheaval. Ultimately, this article provides a new semiotic perspective on a historically active yet understudied symbol with past and present relevance.

Keywords: archaic symbols; cultural semiotics; early Christian symbology; Hebrews; Home Army; Juri Lotman; Polish resistance; Roman catacombs

1. Introduction

No symbol has woven such a singular path through Polish culture as *Znak Polski Walczącej* – the Fighting Poland symbol. Initially created by elements of the Polish

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Underground State in a morale-boosting propaganda operation in early 1942, it immediately became a social phenomenon, exploding in usage and popularity as it took on a life of its own in occupied Warsaw. Embraced by the wartime public as the embodiment of Polish resistance, it later faded into a cultural grey area somewhere between taboo icon and sombre relic in a post-World War II Poland under communist domination. Returning to prominence with renewed semiosis at key moments in the 20th and 21st centuries, the symbol has shown a resilience and mercurial ability to pivot into new contexts and shades of meanings whilst increasingly becoming a highly visible container of cultural memory.

Despite the Fighting Poland symbol's stature as a ubiquitous *de facto* Polish national symbol, displayed today on innumerable plaques, memorials, and monuments, as well as manifesting throughout material culture on patriotic t-shirts, consumer goods, and tattoos, the symbol itself has been the recipient of very little published research. Contemporary scholarship primarily concerns the appropriation of the Fighting Poland symbol by feminist activists (Graff 2019; Ramme 2019; Zańko 2018), itself a phenomenon which arose in direct response to high-profile usage of the symbol by self-proclaimed patriots and nationalists. However, the Fighting Poland symbol is not the primary subject of these publications, often receiving only a brief mention with no further exploration outside of protest contexts.

Thus, an opportunity presents itself to examine the Fighting Poland symbol not within well-trodden nationalistic or feminist discourses, or via the frames of collective memory or memorialization politics, but as a discrete symbolic object moving diachronically through culture. This facilitates an analysis of the symbol by wresting it free of potential ideological baggage in order to bring its form, iconicity, and mnemo-representational attributes into the forefront. Temporarily depoliticizing the Fighting Poland symbol allows a new groundwork to be laid which investigates the place of the symbol in the continuum of cultural memory, its origins, and by extension, its future trajectory.

Accordingly, applying aspects of Lotmanian cultural semiotics, this article aims to elucidate the Fighting Poland symbol by unearthing the lineage of its metronymic attributes. Colloquially known as the *kotwica*, or anchor, due to its familiar lines, curves, and contours (see Fig. 1), the author posits that the Fighting Poland symbol is an heir of semiotic material from earlier anchor forms. In short: this article demonstrates that the Fighting Poland symbol is – in Lotmanian terms – an "emissary" from earlier cultural epochs (Lotman 1990: 104), notably ante-Nicene Christianity, which also made use of anchor symbology during an era of persecution and upheaval.
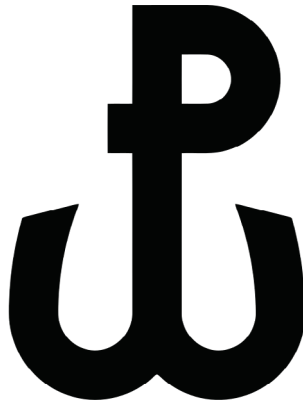
Figure 1. Fighting Poland symbol (*Znak Polski Walczącej*).[2]

2. Methodology

The primary methodology which informs this article is an application of the framework of *symbol* as posited by Juri Lotman, specifically in two key areas:

(1) the ability of symbols to penetrate multiple layers of cultural strata and be regenerated in new contexts;

(2) the greater semantic capacity of simple symbols versus complex symbols.

Much of Lotman's perspective on the subject of symbols was outlined in his 1987 article "The symbol in the cultural system", familiar to international readers due to its inclusion as a chapter in the translated collection *Universe of the Mind* (Lotman 1990), which disseminated his theories to a growing global audience (Pilshchikov 2022: 112). This work finds Lotman detailing his "distinct position" on symbols (Kalinin 2022: 211), namely that they constitute a stabilizing force within culture due to their dual nature as invariable yet variable semiotic objects, making them of great importance to both the cohesion and the variance of cultural memory (Tamm 2019: 13).

It is important to note that when delineating his own conception of symbol, Lotman did not generally adhere to the Peircean interpretation, instead favouring the Saussurean definition which views the symbol as a type of specialized non-

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2   "Kotwica jako symbol Polski Walczącej (SVG)" by Paweł Kruczyński is licensed under CC BY-SA 4.0. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kotwica_jako_symbol_Polski_Walczącej_(SVG).svg, accessed 6 June 2022.

conventional sign with iconic attributes (Lotman 2019[1987]: 161, 172). This is evidenced by Lotman's frequent citation (Lotman 1990: 102, 260, 2013: 136, 2019[1981]: 56) of Saussure's classic observation regarding the rudimentary "natural bond" of signifier/signified which exists within symbols. Thus, one of Saussure's defining characteristics of a symbol is that it is "never wholly arbitrary", with the example of scales as the symbol of justice, as opposed to a chariot or other random object, provided as testament to this bond (Saussure 1959[1916]: 68).

This notion of the signifier innately representing the signified on an atavistic level underpins the preponderance of Lotman's writings on symbols, which in turn informs one of the main currents of this article. It is not simply the existence of this trait which sets the symbol apart from other signs for Lotman, but by extension the function it carries out within culture (Semenenko 2012: 119). To wit, as recently highlighted by Kalinin (2022: 213), this natural bond reaches the depths of "culture's archaic strata", and it is within the valency of this bond that Lotman grounded his conception of the dichotomic invariable/variable essence of symbols. This ambivalent dual nature of symbols provides the foundation upon which Lotman constructs one of his primary conceptions of the symbol within culture: that their resistance to change over time *vis-à-vis* their malleability within their cultural environment makes them uniquely suited to the task of semiosis.

Turning first to its invariable characteristics, Lotman (1990: 111) highlights the role of a symbol as a "semiotic condenser", playing the part of an intermediary between different "spheres of semiosis". In effect, this moors the current locus of a symbol within the expanses of cultural memory, allowing it to act as a reference point which bridges multiple layers of culture. It is unsurprising, therefore, that Lotman (1990: 103–104) singled out symbols as being a key stabilizing force within culture. Symbols are replicated, transition from one synchronic frame to another, and span cultural and spatial borders, yet retain "an essential core that does not change" (Lorusso 2015: 99). This invariable core becomes a vehicle for driving the diachronic cohesion of culture itself, thwarting its decay into individual strata which would otherwise be stranded from both the past and the future. Lotman (1990: 104) explains:

> Since symbols are important mechanisms of cultural memory, they can transfer texts, plot outlines and other semiotic formations from one level of a culture's memory to another. The stable sets of symbols which recur diachronically throughout culture serve very largely as unifying mechanisms: by activating a culture's memory of itself they prevent the culture from disintegrating into isolated chronological layers.

Although he does not directly reference the "core" of a symbol in his writings, Lotman provides a rich metaphor – '*зерно*' – by referring to a "grain" (Lotman 1990: 105) or "seed" (Lotman 2019[1987]: 165) of a text which can become active outside of its original synchronic frame. Just as seeds are protected within their husks against the elements yet remain biologically viable for centuries, the core of a symbol can withstand protracted periods of hostile cultural conditions, yet retain the ability to germinate in new contexts and environments. These fresh cultural surroundings which introduce previously unencountered dynamics into the semiosis of the symbol can therefore be likened to "new soil".

As a result of this ability, the Lotmanian conception of symbol also contains a variable element. However invariable the core of the symbol, there still remains a degree of malleability to the symbol itself, allowing it to adapt itself to new cultural contexts, both influencing its environment and in turn being influenced (Lorusso 2015: 99; Lotman 1990: 104, 2019[1986]: 143–144; Tamm 2019: 13). As a result, symbols possess the ability to move diachronically through culture, progressing "along a vertical axis that passes from the past into the future" (Lotman 2019[1987]: 163). Once they are situated in agreeable culture conditions, they are reawakened "in a new text like a seed falling onto new soil" (Lotman 2019[1987]: 165). This unique regenerative feature of symbols is what ultimately drives their equilibrium between absolute immutability and their capacity for adaptation and variance (Kalinin 2022: 213–214).

Lotman previously expressed this notion of diachronic regeneration when he and co-author Boris Uspenskij modelled for the construction of new culture. In their first proposed model, it is stated that the "fundamental structural contours" of the deepest cultural layers persist but are reinvented; "*new texts* are created while the archaic cultural frame is preserved" (Lotman, Uspenskii 1985[1977]: 36). These ideas reach far back in Lotman and Uspenskij's oeuvre, with an earlier conception being forwarded in their seminal article "On the semiotic mechanism of culture", in which the policies of Peter the Great and Tsar Paul I were contrasted: the former battling to replace old symbols with new ones; the latter focusing on the semiotic intensification of existing symbolic forms (Lotman, Uspensky 1978[1971]: 212).

Further references to the importance of archaic elements were made by Lotman when he stated that an artist's individuality rests not only upon their ability to produce novel and previously unencountered symbols, "but also in the actualisation of symbolic images which are sometimes extremely archaic" (Lotman 1990: 86). This serves as yet another example of the application of Lotman's invariable/variable dichotomy of the symbol: new forms which succeed in becoming not only culturally feasible, but influential, regularly incorporate an element of older forms. Thus,

whilst multitudes of new symbolic forms are created and dispersed into culture, only a select few – often those which evoke an archaic heritage – are able to enter and remain within the deeper canon of cultural memory.

A subtype of symbol which received special attention from Lotman consists of those which he categorized as 'simple'. Building upon his concept of cultural recurrence, Lotman (1990: 104) pointed out that many of the most persistent symbols were those with "elementary expression levels". Citing examples such as the circle, the pentagram, and the cross, Lotman (1990: 104) identifies the intrinsic ability of such substratal symbols to possess "greater cultural and semantic capacity" in comparison to their complex brethren. He illustrates this point via the well-known painting *The Flaying of Marsyas* by the Renaissance master Titian, which Lotman (1990: 104) posits actually has less "semantic potential" than simple, basic symbols "due to their separation of expression and content" (Lotman 2019[1987]: 164). Thus, as a consequence of the inherent disconnect between content and expression, simple symbols contain a vast "gulf of mutual unprojectability" (Lotman 1990: 104), which allows them significant manoeuvrability in terms of semantic receptivity and output.

Lotman was clearly influenced greatly by Victor Turner's previously published observations regarding simple symbols. Citing a lengthy passage from Turner, Lotman adopts a similar stance to the anthropologist: that complex symbols are rigid and monovalent, whilst simple symbols possess an elaborate multivalency, capable of contextual adaptation which makes them apposite containers of signification. Turner gives examples of the cross, the lotus, the crescent moon, and the ark as simple vehicles whose *significate* can encapsulate texts as large as "whole theological systems" (Turner as cited in Lotman 2019[1986]: 143).

Turner's assessment is expanded upon by Lotman, who adds that the greater signifying capacity of simple symbols also equates to an enhanced ability to house cultural memory, clarifying that although "symbols stored in a culture carry within themselves information related to past events […] in order for that information to be 'awakened,' the symbol must be placed in a contemporary context, which will inevitably transform its meaning" (Lotman 2019[1986]: 143–144).

Finally, Lotman connects these two threads – the invariability/variability of symbols and the semantic potential of simple symbols – by pointing out that these attributes are commonly found cohabiting within symbols from the archaic layers of culture. Lotman (2019[1987]: 162) explains that "a key group of symbols" with "a deeply archaic nature" function as representatives of vast texts and plots within cultural memory, some of which date to even a pre-written era. He highlights that these symbols are "as a rule, elementary in a descriptive sense", following it with their other "similarly archaic feature":

> [A] symbol, representing a completed text, need not be included within a syntagmatic series, but when it is included, it will retain its conceptual and structural independence. It can easily be separated from its semiotic surroundings and can just as easily enter into a new semiotic context. (Lotman 2019[1987]: 163)

Thus, Lotman contends that not only do symbols have the unique ability to span multiple layers of culture due to their dual invariable/variable nature, but symbols with an archaic heritage, especially those of a simple or elementary nature, are ideally suited for this task.

3. Early anchor symbology

It is impossible to pinpoint the exact arrival of the anchor as a discrete object in cultural memory, except to state that it certainly postdates the invention of the dugout boat. Early anchors were likely first adapted by inventive fisherman from locally-sourced stones, heavy pieces of wood, and tree forks (Brindley 1927: 121; Moll 1927: 293). Gradually evolving from simple stones bound with rope, to specially chosen rocks based on their shape, to stones modified with a rope hole, the standard trapezoidal form of the ancient stone anchor eventually came into being (Kapitän 1984: 33–34).

By the time of the Bronze Age, beyond their utilitarian usage, anchors symbolized a mystical yoke between man and sea, which was reified in their usage as sacred religious objects. The Temple of the Obelisks (ca. 1600–1200 BCE) in Byblos, Lebanon and the Temple of Baal (ca. 1800–1400 BCE) located in the ancient port city of Ugarit are two primary examples of sites which housed stone anchors used as cult votives and ritual objects (Brody 1998: 6, 14; Noureddine 2016: 295). Serving as votive dedications to Baal-Zaphon, a distinct Baal manifestation who held dominion over sea storms, the cultic anchors at Ugarit were ceremonially used to invoke a deific power who protected against destructive forces at times of distress, with sailors and their loved ones offering invocations and appeals for protection and security to the anchor's familiar form (Herrmann 1999: 135; Jigoulov 2016: 121).

It is not until the early sixth century BCE that the archetypical and recognizable metal anchor form is articulated: a thin central shank with dual flared arms at the bottom, a crossbar stock, and an eye ring for attaching to rope (Casson 1986[1971]: 254; Moll 1927: 299). Greek tradition, as promulgated by Strabo, holds that the Scythian philosopher and inventor Anacharsis was the innovator of the lead two-armed anchor in approximately 600 BCE (Johnstone 1988: 82). This general timeframe is seemingly confirmed by the works of Pliny and the discovery

of the earliest known example of a lead anchor stock, recovered from the wreck of a sixth-century BCE Greek ship off the coast of Antibes (Casson 1986[1971]: 254 n119).

In terms of a pictorial, non-religious depiction, the earliest known representation of a Greek-style anchor can be found on a Sardinian scarab dating to 600 BCE which features an engraving of a craftsman using a tool on the arm of an inverted anchor (Brindley 1927: 5). The first examples of illustrative Greek anchors appear on pottery in *ca* 400 BCE, with sporadic appearances on regional coins – Cyzicus and Apollonia Pontica – in an early prototypical "mushroom" form with thick oversized arms, within approximately the same timeframe (Brindley 1927: 7; Moll 1927: 300).

With the iconic and familiar physical form of the anchor now fixed within cultural memory, we shall see the anchor regenerated in the first century CE as a new symbol of hope and salvation, recalling aspects of its Bronze Age votive usage, resulting in one of the core symbols of ante-Nicene Christianity.

4. Ante-Nicene Christian usage

4.1. Canonical origins

The anchor is one of the most recognizable and enduring ideographs of early Christianity (Bardill 2012: 166; Snyder 2003: 27). Long proclaimed to be a signifier of 'hope' (Hassett 1913: 462), 'safe harbour' (Kennedy 1975: 116), and 'security' (Wesler 2012: 213), ante-Nicene use of the anchor predates other early Christian symbols such as the cross, the Chi Rho, and even the *ichthys* ('ἰχθύς'), colloquially known as "the Jesus fish" (Brent 2009: 281; Morey 1912: 285; Snyder 2003: 26).

The term 'anchor' ('ἄγκυρα') cannot be found in the Septuagint, but does appear in two books of the New Testament: Acts and Hebrews. Referenced several times in the former, the anchor is here mentioned simply as a nautical device during the narrative account of Paul's shipwreck on Malta. However, the single occurrence of 'anchor' in the Epistle to the Hebrews forms the *locus classicus* of the anchor's scriptural idiom and in turn its wider diffusion as a symbol of hope into Christianity (Roberts 2017: 58). Hebrews 6:19–20 reads:

> We have this hope, a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus, a forerunner on our behalf, has entered, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version* 2018)

The 'hope' referred to in Hebrews 6:19 is one of salvation, of passing "beyond the veil" of the metaphorical tabernacle from the earthly to the heavenly kingdom

after death (Lindars 1991: 71). This hope is bolstered throughout Hebrews through a series of Hellenistic rhetorical strategies and exegesis techniques contrasting the eternal with the temporal (Martin 2012: 312–313; Powell 2018: 443). Earlier in Chapter 6, the unknown author assures reticent early Christians of the reality of their promised salvation by drawing comparisons to the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham in the Pentateuch as evidence of the certitude of this hope (Hurst 1990: 120–121). Accordingly, this hope is referenced with such surety that it "points to a present possession of a future reality", leading Small (2014: 291) to conclude: "This hope, then, is not wishful thinking but a certainty. This certainty is made explicit through the vivid nautical metaphor of the anchor."

Whilst Hebrews is in many ways a series of unknowns – author, year of writing, precise audience – the content of the epistle provides clarity on the central aspects of its *raison d'être*. First and foremost, it is being written to give reassurance to a beleaguered community undergoing crisis (Laansma 2019: 19). The group of early Jewish Christians to which its message was addressed were suffering in the face of persecution, which had likely included imprisonment of members of their congregation and confiscation of their property (Small 2014: 303). In the face of these hardships, the community of Jewish converts were growing irresolute in their faith, with many likely considering returning to Judaism in order to escape oppression (Lindars 1991: 4). Thus, within the wider Christian cultural canon, Hebrews functions as both a work of persuasive rhetoric in order to convince the wavering to remain faithful in their hope, as well as an emphatic letter of encouragement to those undergoing persecution.

This framework of hope within an adverse environment and the textual simile into which it was shaped by Hebrews would later become embodied in a tangible symbol which appears on the tombs of second- and third-century Christians.

4.2. Roman catacombs

The sepulchral usage of anchor symbology in the ancient catacombs of Rome represents a milestone on its diachronic path through culture. These cunicular complexes, primarily in use from the second to the seventh centuries CE, were heterotopian spaces: liminal labyrinths which bridged the corporeal, material world with the intangible, infinite spiritual world "beyond the veil" (Denzey Lewis 2016a: 169; Smith 2014: 1–4). Popularly portrayed as "vast networks of subterranean eschatological hope" (Denzey Lewis 2016b: 273),[3] Roman catacombs

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[3]   Denzey Lewis challenges the previously dominant binary narrative of "pagan" and "Christian" catacomb sections, advancing that "any clear delineation" between the two "was a product of early modern sensibilities" (Denzey Lewis 2016b: 288).

became important repositories of nascent Christian symbology and iconography which were later "discovered" during the Renaissance, forming an integral element of the historical conception of early Christian identity and grist to the mill of the Counter-Reformation (Caraher, Pettegrew 2019: 3–4; Denzey Lewis 2020: 51).

The anchor is one of the most frequently encountered Christian symbols in the Roman catacombs, prominently featured on the *tituli* of Christian tombs from the ante-Nicene era (Snyder 2003: 27). Within the three oldest catacomb complexes – Priscilla, Domitilla and Callistus – the anchor is most often found in sections dating from the early second century to the first half of the third (Moll 1927: 308; Morey 1912: 285); however, examples can be found up to the early fourth century (Hassett 1913: 462). No less than 35 variations of the anchor design appear throughout the numerous catacomb complexes, with approximately 70 individual inscriptions featuring the anchor in the Catacombs of Priscilla alone (Kennedy 1975: 116).

The appearance of anchor iconography on funerary epigraphs within the catacombs is closely linked to the construct of hope. Hebrews 6:19 is frequently pointed to as the likely "prooftext" of this usage, with the anchor testifying that the deceased were laid to rest "in the sure and certain hope of the Resurrection" referenced by its author (Kennedy 1975: 116; Whitlark 2021: 240–241). This "symbol of steadiness, of hope and of salvation" is often seen paired with complementary inscriptions such as *spes in Christo* ('hope in Christ') (Moll 1927: 308) or *spes in Deo* ('hope in God') (Kirsch 1924: 2028). The anchor in this metaphorical form had been completely unencountered in the biblical tradition, but after its single appearance in Hebrews, entered common usage as a Christian symbol of hope (Attridge 1989: 183). Moreover, Whitlark (2021: 233) concludes that the epistle's first-century CE literary link between the anchor and hope constitutes a *unicum* which "strongly suggests Hebrews as the origin of the anchor symbol in the catacombs".

Whether its usage within the catacombs was a direct reference to a biblical passage or, as has been alternatively postulated more broadly, "the anchor, a powerful symbol, denotes security in a hostile, if not negative, culture" (Snyder 2003: 28), the symbol held obvious significance to early Christians who were attempting to differentiate themselves meaningfully whilst carefully treading the fine line between tolerance and persecution (Davies 1999: 16). Early Christian burial practices, informed by Judaism in terms of process but by paganism in terms of custom and topographies (Davies 1999: 198), often made use of ante-Nicene Christian symbology – including the anchor – to mark and adorn Christian tombs (Kennedy 1975: 122; Stevenson 1978: 60). Until well into the fourth century, Christians and pagans could be found interred side by side within

communal cemeterial complexes (Denzey Lewis 2016b: 274–278; Finney 1994: 109).

Consequently, the symbols which accompanied the epitaphs of their respective tombs were frequently the only unique feature which could later allow the faith of the deceased to be identified. Northcote (1877: 113), discussing the many similarities of early Christian tombs to their pagan contemporaries in the Catacombs of Priscilla, specifically highlights the importance of "the Christian symbol of the anchor" in determining their classification. Early Christian funerary epigraphy, which commonly made reference to resurrection hope, can generally be viewed as an act of self-definition within a largely pagan milieu, and in turn played a significant role in guaranteeing salvation for the interred (Galvão-Sobrinho 1995: 453–456). Thus, epitaphial usage of the anchor can be seen as both an identifier and a symbolic representation of the defining eschatological belief of early Christians.

4.3. Decline of usage

Whilst the anchor symbol was clearly an element of early Christian identity, the meridian of its use was at hand. Although the anchor had flourished in sections of the catacombs dating from the early second century CE onwards, its usage noticeably began to decline the mid-third century, never returning to its previous prominence (Moll 1927: 308; Snyder 2003: 27). Its occurrence within the catacombs grew increasingly scarce for the remainder of the third century, and had completely disappeared by the early fourth century (Hassett 1913: 462). Further, despite the anchor's well-established epigraphic record in the ante-Nicene era, its wider symbolic usage within Christendom is curiously interrupted until its revival during the Renaissance (Kennedy 1975: 116).

The most straightforward explanation is that an important historical threshold in the Christian use of the anchor was crossed in February 313 CE when emperors Constantine and Licinius jointly issued the so-called "Edict of Milan" (Jones 2014: 10–11).[4] Following three centuries of sporadic state-sanctioned persecution, as well as shorter periods of violent hostility from pagans, Jews, and government officials at a local level, the decade-long Great Persecution beginning in 303 CE wrought by Diocletian brought a final storm for the growing religion to weather (Frend 1965: 259; Ste. Croix 2006b: 106–107). However, these waves of oppression were formally calmed in 313 CE as Constantine, who had converted one year previously to the faith (Drake 2000: xv), granted full tolerance to Christianity and

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[4]   See Barnes 2011 and Lenski 2017 for opposing sides of an ongoing debate regarding the most accurate terminology to refer to this document as well as the precise nature of its contents.

restored all previously confiscated properties throughout the Empire (Freeman 2011: 227), ushering in the era of the "peace of the church" (Cameron 2008: 538).

In turn, the anchor, which had served as an icon of steadfast and hope-laden safety and security throughout the turmoils of the previous three centuries, fell out of favour as a Christian symbol. A new array of overt, post-Constantinian symbology – the cross and Mary, chief amongst them – would emerge to replace the earlier, less conspicuous symbols which had served as early identifying features of the burgeoning faith (Snyder 2003: 57, 60–61). Soon, the persecuted became the persecutors, as newly empowered Christian mobs routinely engaged in temple desecration and enthusiastic lynchings of pagans and Gnostic "heretics" alike (Ste. Croix 2006a: 210). Now the emergent hegemony, Christianity tossed aside its increasingly obsolete symbols embodying hope and deliverance from what had been an oft-perilous environment. Referring to the ship, a closely related pre-Constantinian symbol of conflict and salvation, Snyder (2003: 30) observes: "It carried the early Christian through a difficult life. When that alienation with Rome no longer existed, the symbol of the ship, like the anchor, lost most of its popularity in Christian art."[5]

We next turn to a new cultural environment, also filled with strife, persecution, and despair, where the anchor finds "new soil" and re-emerges as a symbol embodying hope: occupied Poland during World War II.

5. Fighting Poland symbol

5.1. Background of creation

The summer of 1941 represented a paradigm shift not only in the course of World War II, but in the activities of the Polish underground as well. Following Nazi Germany's termination of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and subsequent invasion of the Soviet Union on 22 June, Poland was no longer bisected into separate German and Soviet zones and was now under complete Nazi control. Although this meant new atrocities in the form of *Generalplan Ost*, the Third Reich's systematic plan for the enslavement, deportation, and eventual liquidation of Poles and other Slavs (Beorn 2018: 64; Davies 2005: 336), the turn of events also brought

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[5] Kennedy (1975: 121–122) posits an alternative theory: that ἄγκυρα (*'ancora*/anchor') as denoted by epigraphic use of the anchor was actually a cryptic signifier of the quasi-homophonic phrase 'ἐν κυρίῳ' (*'en kurio*/in the Lord'). This symbolic wordplay fell out of usage as Koine Greek was gradually replaced by Latin as the primary epitaphic language of the catacombs throughout the second and third centuries CE. Kennedy's theory has not achieved widespread acceptance; cf. Whitlark (2021: 227–228).

a renewed optimism for achieving the overarching goal of the underground resistance: a massively coordinated nationwide uprising (Latawski 2010: 148).

The landscape of the Polish underground to this point had been a complicated affair. *Związek Walki Zbrojnej* (ZWZ – Union of Armed Struggle), the national resistance organization formally sanctioned by the Polish government-in-exile, had been formed in November 1939 after absorbing its short-lived predecessor *Służba Zwycięstwu Polski* (SZP – Service for the Victory of Poland) (Kochanski 2012: 116; Mazur 1987: 18). From its inception, ZWZ faced a series of challenges which hampered its effectiveness: the fundamental handicap of being forced to operate essentially separate organizations in the German and Soviet partitions (Garliński 1985: 42; Snyder 2010: 281), behind-the-scenes power struggles stemming from the pre-war political arena (Paczkowski 2003: 71, 82; Węgierski 1991: 186), and a byzantine assortment of ideologically-motivated resistance groups operating independently of the ZWZ structure (Zimmerman 2015: 69–70). Representing various extremes of both the left and the right, these rival organizations actively worked to further their own vision of Poland's political future, with a notable minority actively opposed to ZWZ and the government-in-exile (Ciechanowski 1983: 233–234; Prażmowska 2004: 30–31).

The aforementioned operational challenges, exacerbated by the "blood economy" imposed by the Nazis which saw 50 to 100 civilians massacred in reprisal for every German killed by Polish partisans (Kochanski 2012: 117; Zimmerman 2015: 54), limited ZWZ's scope of conventional resistance actions. Thus, the organization had largely carried out a variety of covert activities, applying a three-prong approach of propaganda, intelligence, and sabotage, laying the groundwork for the future national uprising in which Poland would regain its independence (Paczkowski 2003: 85; Zimmerman 2015: 52–54). With Germany's attention and resources now focused on the Eastern Front, the Polish government-in-exile took the decision to rebrand ZWZ into a much larger, all-encompassing, and apolitical military group, which would unite many of the rival resistance organizations under its umbrella for the eventual national uprising (Garliński 1985: 135; Górski 2012: 158–163).

And so, on 14 February 1942, General Władysław Sikorski, the Supreme Commander of the Polish Armed Forces, ordered the official renaming of ZWZ to *Armia Krajowa* (AK – Home Army) (Stachura 2004: 206). The creation of AK carried with it more than just a simple name change. Beyond promoting a neutral patriotism which placed the goal of an independent and free Poland above all other ideology, there was a crucial semantic distinction being made to the nation. Polish resistance ceased being a *związek*, which carried with it a certain conspiratorial or underground connotation, and became an actual *armia*: an overt,

visible, and authentic military force. AK was not a select few in a shadowy partisan organization, but an official branch of the Polish Armed Forces with over 100,000 members at its formation in February 1942 (Latawski 2010: 148). This semantic reframing was "more combative, more clearly propagandistic" (Niwiński 2007: 105),[6] and overtly signalled to the oppressed populace a new stage of revitalized and restructured resistance against the Nazi occupiers. AK was not merely a name, but a "name-symbol" which came to represent the entirety of all Polish resistance (Niwiński 2007: 103). AK had the name. Now all that was needed was the symbol.

5.2. Conspiratorial contest

In January 1942, *Komisja Propagandy Okręgu Warszawskiego* (KOPR – Propaganda Commission of the Warsaw District), a subdepartment of the Warsaw division of *Biuro Informacji i Propagandy* (BIP – Bureau of Information and Propaganda), the information warfare arm of the Polish Underground State, began quietly soliciting entries for an internal design competition. Circulated via word of mouth amongst trusted contacts of the commission and their personal associates, the call was to create a symbol which would serve as both a visual representation of the fight and struggle for Polish independence and a counterbalance to the swastika, which dominated the symbolic space of the occupied nation (Michalski 1974: 227). The requirements of the design were few but of paramount importance: it needed to be easily understood and recognized, simple and quick to reproduce, and its patriotic symbolism had to be readily apparent (Gładkowski 2008: 16).

These early stages of the symbol's history are closely intertwined with the activities of the *Wawer* unit, whose primary objective was *mały sabotaż* ('minor sabotage'). A youth brigade created in 1940 and subordinated to BIP, *Wawer* specialized in public propaganda acts such as painting morale-boosting graffiti and slogans, distributing underground leaflets, and defacing Nazi flags and posters to harass and demotivate the enemy (Bartoszewski 1966: 103; Gładkowski 2008: 26–27). The unit took its name from the location of the December 1939 mass execution of 107 Polish civilians, killed in reprisal for the deaths of two German NCOs who had been slain by a pair of escaped convicts – an early example of the "blood economy" of the occupation (Tyszkiewicz 2010: 12–26). Czesław Michalski, the initiator of the design competition and chair of the jury, served as Deputy Commander of *Wawer*, whilst Aleksander Kamiński, the creator and Commander of *Wawer* and head of BIP Warsaw District ZWZ-AK, served as a jury member (Gładkowski 2016: 31).

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6   Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Polish to English are the author's own.

The competition jury, comprised of BIP members with connection to the literary, journalistic, and visual design fields, received a total of 27 entries over the next two months, with two selected as finalists. The first design, the dual Grunwald swords crossed in victory, was a reference to the 1410 defeat of the Teutonic Order by the Polish-Lithuanian union; the second, an anchor composed of the letters P and W interconnected, was a stylized monogrammatic representation of the words '*Polska*' ('Poland') and '*Walcząca*' ('Fighting'), the main theme of the brief. Although both symbols were deemed to have significant patriotic content and a high level of simplicity, the anchor won selection by the jury as "the most clear and patriotic symbol of hope for the resurrection of Poland" (Gładkowski 2016: 32).

5.3. Mobilization of symbol

In March 1942, with their new design in hand, *Wawer* units sprang into action, blanketing every corner of the Polish capital with the anchor symbol. Over a two-week period from 20 March to 3 April, up to 400 *Wawer* operatives painted the anchor on a nightly basis, often with specially-developed paint mixed with tar, varnish, or other additives making it impossible to remove (Bartoszewski 1966: 90–91; Jaworska 1985: 47). The walls of public buildings and institutions, tram stops, billboards, and light posts in all corners of Warsaw were targeted in a well-coordinated marketing blitz which lasted significantly longer than a typical *Wawer* propaganda operation. During this specific period, *Wawer*'s primary objective was the mass popularization of the anchor amongst the populace (Bartoszewski 2005: 182). In addition to countless anchor symbols, *Wawer* teams added thousands of inscriptions of '*Polska Walcząca*' placed near the symbol to make its meaning explicit to both the citizens of Warsaw and its occupiers (Michalski 1974: 229).

Shortly thereafter, on 16 April 1942, *Biuletyn Informacyjny* (BI – Information Bulletin), the primary underground newspaper of SZP-ZWZ-AK and thus of the official Polish resistance, featured an article dedicated to the new symbol which had suddenly appeared throughout Warsaw. The founder, editor-in-chief, and primary writer of BI was Aleksander Kamiński, who could once again be found closely connected to the creation and dissemination of the symbol. Under the headline "*Kotwica*" ('The anchor'), the anonymous author – almost assuredly Kamiński himself (Michalski 1974: 226) – writes:

> For a month now, the symbol of the anchor has been drawn on the walls of Warsaw. [...] Every day, wiped from the walls, it appears on them anew, drawn by untold thousands of hands. [...] We cannot explain the popularity of this symbol. Perhaps there is a desire to show the enemy that despite everything –

> they have not broken our spirit, that we are still here, that we are just waiting for the right moment. Perhaps it is the symbolism of the anchor – a sign of hope and reliability – which inspires the imagination of the "drawers"? Or perhaps just a defiant desire to drown out the hostile swastika with our own Polish symbol? Either way – the anchor symbol has taken hold of the capital and is likely to spread throughout the country. Let it go into the world! Let it alarm the enemy, let it testify that Fighting Poland is alive and vigilant. (*BI*, 16 April 1942: 7–8)

This *de facto* endorsement by the Underground State is noteworthy on several accounts. Firstly, the publication of the article marked the first time that the anchor symbol had appeared in print. This early rendering of the symbol depicts it with strong nautical features, including elongated and sharply barbed arms which resemble a harpoon or fishing hook (see Fig. 2). Additionally, it was the first publication of the motto "*Polska Walcząca*" ('Fighting Poland'), formally linking this specific rendering of the 'PW' initialism with the slogan which the BIP wished to disseminate to the public. Most interestingly, it demonstrates the final stage of the process whereby the BIP surreptitiously released their symbolic design into the semiosphere of occupied Poland.[7] First created through a secretive design competition with unclear authorship, it was next diffused into the symbolic space of Warsaw through clandestine use of the *Wawer* minor sabotage unit. Its introduction was finalized with an officially-sanctioned message to the public feigning ignorance regarding the symbol's origins yet enthusiastically approving of its usage, going as far as to clarify its meaning to its intended audience. The entire affair serves as a captivating masterclass of the use of positive propaganda aimed at the inhabitants of an occupied nation by their own forces.

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7   The author here highlights the ability of a semiosphere (Lotman 2005[1984]) to be "a concrete space with a real geographical topology" (Nöth 2015: 12). The 'enclosed space' of Nazi-controlled Poland featured large-scale attempts at artificially-induced homogeneity as the Third Reich sought to filter and mould the semiotic space contained within into "a reality in itself" (Lotman 2005[1984]: 207, 210), manifesting in such ways as the renaming of streets, cities, and provinces into German, the removal of all Polish-language signs or inscriptions, and the destruction or cultural appropriation of Polish monuments (Epstein 2010: 235; Kochanski 2012: 274). The notion of semiospheric boundary was effectively weaponized in order to maximize what Lotman (2005[1984]: 210) referred to as "a limitation of penetration" by outside texts. Żyłko (2001: 398) describes the boundary of a semiosphere as a "narrow bottleneck" through which outside texts must "force their way through", thus emphasizing the struggle of the Polish resistance to assert their own new texts within this highly contested semiotic space, as well as the systematic and continuous "purging of texts" (Lotman, Uspensky 1978[1971]: 216) by the Nazi occupiers to counter them.
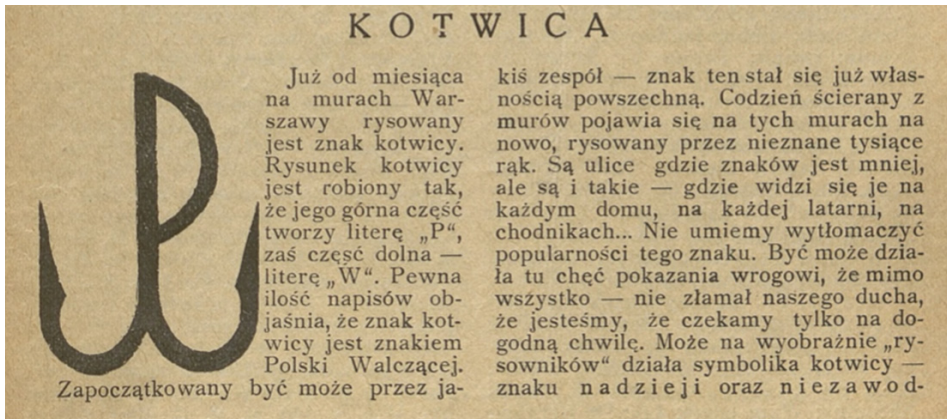
KOTWICA

Już od miesiąca na murach Warszawy rysowany jest znak kotwicy. Rysunek kotwicy jest robiony tak, że jego górna część tworzy literę „P", zaś część dolna — literę „W". Pewna ilość napisów objaśnia, że znak kotwicy jest znakiem Polski Walczącej. Zapoczątkowany być może przez ja-kiś zespół — znak ten stał się już własnością powszechną. Codzień ścierany z murów pojawia się na tych murach na nowo, rysowany przez nieznane tysiące rąk. Są ulice gdzie znaków jest mniej, ale są i takie — gdzie widzi się je na każdym domu, na każdej latarni, na chodnikach... Nie umiemy wytłomaczyć popularności tego znaku. Być może działa tu chęć pokazania wrogowi, że mimo wszystko — nie złamał naszego ducha, że jesteśmy, że czekamy tylko na dogodną chwilę. Może na wyobraźnie „rysowników" działa symbolika kotwicy — znaku n a d z i e j i oraz n i e z a w o d-

Figure 2. Extract from 16 April 1942 issue of *Biuletyn Informacyjny.*[8]

The public response was overwhelmingly positive, evidenced by the fact that chalk versions of the symbol drawn by untrained members of the public began springing up in imitation almost immediately. So enthusiastic was the spread and saturation of the Fighting Poland symbol that on 20 July 1942, the Warsaw commandant of the *Schutzpolizei* (Nazi State Police) issued a notice that homeowners had a duty to immediately remove any "disloyal inscriptions and graffiti" which appeared on their property under pain of punishment (cited in Szarota 1988: 40). In response, *Wawer* operatives and ordinary citizens simply shifted their focus to placing the symbol in areas where ownership was unclear, such as abandoned or damaged structures, or walls and fences between tenement houses (Gładkowski 2008: 41).

The Fighting Poland symbol was also used to mark public sites of martyrdom, with the symbol poignantly placed next to bullet holes resulting from public executions and extrajudicial killings (Michalski 1974: 234). Such impromptu memorial sites had an established history of being "smiled upon" by the Underground State (Kochanski 2012: 117). The symbol also appeared at sites of successful AK reprisal killings and of street skirmishes where resistance forces emerged victorious against German soldiers and police. Gładkowski (2008: 41) adds that these were "special signs" meant to "cheer the hearts" and were painted with "enthusiasm and devotion" by *Wawer* members and citizens alike. Throughout 1942, the symbol is drawn "on a mass scale" with chalk or paint throughout Warsaw (Bartoszewski 1966: 104), and Kamiński (2016[1943]: 138) describes this period as a time of "*kotwicowego szaleństwa*" ('anchor madness'),

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8   Reproduced with permission from the collection of Jagiellonian Library, Kraków, Poland.

with the Fighting Poland symbol being brazenly painted on busy streets and appearing on increasingly risky targets.

On 18 February 1943, General Stefan Rowecki, Commander of AK, announced with Order 120 that sabotage, diversionary, and insurgent actions taken by the AK should be "marked" at the scene with the Fighting Poland symbol. A week later, in the 25 February 1943 issue of BI, the Fighting Poland symbol was again reprinted and was declared to be "the symbol of the underground Polish Army" (cited in Chmielarz, Jasiński 2013: 260 n324). On 13 March 1943, Rowecki issued Order 252, which gave a degree of autonomy to units to carry out strikes on their own initiative, with the instructions, "Leave – whenever possible – the symbol WP [*sic*] entwined in an anchor" (cited in Chmielarz, Jasiński 2013: 265).

Through this series of issued orders and published notices, AK formally made known their endorsement of the Fighting Poland symbol as the official symbolic embodiment of the Polish struggle for independence. Although it had been widely used unofficially for nearly a year, AK, the Underground State, and the wider Polish resistance movement itself finally had a single symbol which they could all be united under. Zimmerman (2015: 125) summarizes the great importance of the Fighting Poland symbol in establishing AK's identity and legitimacy by stating: "The full maturation of the Home Army came with the adoption of a single, recognizable symbol."

Gładkowski, himself an AK liaison officer and participant in the Warsaw Uprising, writes that beyond all of the specialized propaganda developed and employed by the Underground State, what was most needed by the population was "some lasting symbol of hope for survival and ultimate victory" (Gładkowski 2008: 7). To fulfil this task, the BIP specifically chose to make use of anchor symbology to represent Poland's hope of regaining independence, and ultimately, of resurrection as a nation.

That hope was largely put on hold after the brutal suppression of the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 meant that AK's much-envisaged national uprising never materialized. What followed in the aftermath of World War II – approximately 45 years of domination by the subsequent foreign occupier, the Soviet Union – brought with it a new set of trials and tribulations for the nation to weather. In a post-communist Poland, with that hope seemingly finally achieved, the Fighting Poland symbol once again came to prominence in the nation's symbolic discourse. With 2004 marking the opening of the Warsaw Uprising Museum, which has worked to disseminate the symbol to new generations of Poles, and a 2014 act signed into law bringing the symbol under legal protection as a "national property" of Poland (Gadecki 2016: 55), the Fighting Poland symbol once again finds itself a ubiquitous and provocative part of the nation's semiosphere.

6. Discussion

In *Universe of the Mind*, Lotman (1990: 103) makes an observation that is even more pithily formulated in a later translation: "There is always something archaic in a symbol." (Lotman 2019[1987]: 162) The Fighting Poland symbol is no exception. It is a symbol which connects to an extraordinarily archaic current of semiosis: that of a timeless object which has etched its form on cultural memory from the earliest stages of civilization. The anchor's far-reaching impact is evidenced by its instant recognizability as a symbol which crosses temporal, cultural, and linguistic boundaries.

This article has identified two characteristics of the Fighting Poland symbol which illustrate Lotman's distinct position on symbols: the ability of symbols, especially those of archaic origins, to penetrate multiple layers of cultural strata, as well as the enhanced semantic capacity of simple symbols.

Symbols emerging from the archaic layer of culture, according to Lotman (2019[1987]: 163), "have the ability to preserve exceptionally large and meaningful texts in a compact form". In the case of the anchor, the symbol has become a repository for an especially vast text: the complex human emotion of hope, which has been embodied by the symbol in divergent situations and milieux spanning multiple layers of cultural strata. This embodiment emanates from the deepest recesses of human civilization into the present on a vertical axis, illustrating that "symbols never belong to a single synchronic cut of culture", one their essential qualities as identified by Lotman (2019[1987]: 163).

It is clear that even before its iconic form was instituted *ca* 600 BCE, the surety of the anchor symbolically represented hope to ancient mankind. Canaanite and Phoenician sailors left offerings in harbour temples with stone anchor votives to ensure their safety on the seas before setting sail as early as 1800 BCE. After advances in iron working led to the development of the metal anchor in the early sixth century BCE, the iconic representation of the anchor begins to be formed, with its first pictorial depictions on pottery and ornamental objects occurring shortly thereafter.

It can therefore be reasoned that the author of Hebrews did not arbitrarily choose the anchor to symbolize hope when writing their letter of encouragement to persecuted Christians in the first century CE. The singular usage of the anchor in this fashion in the New Testament is culturally significant. Previously unencountered in the biblical canon, this textual simile is the *unicum* which provides the form and context for a symbolic representation of hope which becomes an identifying mark with great religious significance in the ante-Nicene era.

With the idiom of the anchor as a symbol of hope established in the book of Hebrews, it became reified as a physical symbol in the catacombs of Rome, where it manifested and flourished throughout the second and third centuries CE. The first-century textual simile of hope became a sepulchral engraving in the catacombs, with Christian tombs being marked with the anchor to denote their identity and their primary eschatological belief. Forming one of the key components of the early palette of Christian iconography, pre-dating the Chi Rho, the cross, and even the *ichthys* fish, the usage of anchor symbology to signify the concept of hope within a hostile environment forms a significant juncture on the path which its familiar form has wended through culture.

Accordingly, it is then unsurprising that the Polish nation, facing inarguably its darkest hour, turned to this ancient symbol which had personified hope, safety, and survival for millennia. Much in the same way that both Saussure and Lotman underscored the rudimentary, natural bond between the symbolic signifier of scales and the signified of *justice*, we can find a similarly elemental connection between the signifier of anchor and the signified of *hope* – a bond rooted in a truly archaic level of culture. Tamm (2019: 13) summarizes Lotman's perspective on this phenomenon thusly: "As a rule, symbols belong to the more archaic, deeper layers of culture, accumulating in themselves old messages that can be discharged in a new shape in each new cultural situation." Within the Fighting Poland symbol, we see the "old message" of hope and salvation symbolized by the anchor in earlier diachronic frames "coming to life in a new text" of the monogrammatic intertwined P and W, created by the Underground State as a powerful propaganda tool both to inspire the nation and publicly rebrand its official resistance organization.

We turn now to the second Lotmanian aspect of interest regarding the Fighting Poland symbol: its expanded semantic capacity which is attributable to its simplicity. This characteristic can be evidenced in several ways, primarily in the fact that the Fighting Poland symbol was built from the ground up with a pragmatic simplicity being its underlying design consideration. It was a bespoke symbol, tailored under the auspices of an experienced propaganda department which had been tasked with a specialized mission: to broadcast a semantically rich yet succinct message to occupied Poland by unveiling and disseminating a new symbol to the populace.

The success of the Fighting Poland symbol lay in effectively exploiting this simplicity. The strategic effectiveness of plain and straightforward communication in earlier *Wawer* propaganda operations was likely the inspiration for Michalski's decision to launch a design contest to specifically produce such an uncomplicated symbol. Writing in a 1971 precursor article to his memoirs, he shares anecdotal

evidence that time and time again, "ordinary inscriptions" – caricatures, catchy slogans, simple pictures – drawn with chalk were more effective at capturing attention on the streets of occupied Warsaw than lavishly designed graphic propaganda posters, which were often misunderstood by the public (1612/WSK: 17).

Michalski's observations are clear: simple, elementary figures had a greater semantic impact and propagandistic value than more complex, detailed illustrations. This draws comparisons to Lotman's example, cited earlier, of the complex illustrative painting *The Flaying of Marsyas* actually having less semantic potential than elementary, simple symbols such as the cross or pentagram. For Lotman, symbols which are uncomplicated and straightforward carry with them "a greater capacity for cultural meaning" due to the semantic space between their expression and content (Lotman 2019[1987]: 164), allowing the content to "glimmer through" the expression level (Lotman 1990: 102) without explicitly defining it.

Beyond the powerful semantic aspects of the simple form of the Fighting Poland symbol, the BIP were also keenly aware of the pragmatic advantages of adopting such a simplistic design. As the symbol was specifically intended for use in guerrilla propaganda operations against a hostile enemy, these advantages manifested in two key areas: helping to ensure the safety of operatives, and promoting a memetic attribute which encouraged its replication amongst the civilian population.

Disseminating the symbol on the streets of occupied Warsaw was a hazardous task. Due to strictly enforced night-time curfews, the Fighting Poland symbol often had to be painted in broad daylight at great risk of arrest. Being captured with a bucket of paint, a used brush, stencils, or other items related to its creation "was almost equivalent to possessing a weapon, which was punishable by death" (Gładkowski 2008: 35). Arrest for activities in support of the Polish Underground State at a minimum meant being taken to the notorious Pawiak prison, where prisoners faced lengthy interrogations employing torture followed by execution or internment in Auschwitz for the remainder of their lives (Kochanski 2012: 113, 276). There were also roaming patrols of plain-clothes Gestapo agents during the daylight hours looking for painters, as well as the menace of random encounters with *Volksdeutsche* – members of the ethnic German minority – who were required to carry weapons and were known to open fire on those conducting minor sabotage operations (Gładkowski 2008: 30; Michalski 1974: 232–233).

The simplicity of the symbol, therefore, was more than merely a semantic consideration, but a matter of life and death which informed its compact, efficient design. As one of the primary design factors was that the symbol be "quick and simple" to reproduce, this translated into decreased exposure time for painters and other disseminators, which in turn increased their safety and the overall number

of symbols which could be produced. The winning anchor design was recognized specifically for its simplified painting technique: a vertical line which curved to the right at the bottom, a second curve to the left, and an arc at the top meant that "the anchor was ready after three strokes with a brush" (Gładkowski 2016: 52).

Simplicity was also essential to another crucial element of the Fighting Poland symbol: a memetic quality (Cannizzaro 2016; Dawkins 2016[1976]) which would allow and encourage ordinary, untrained members of the public to copy and spread the symbol after the initial push by *Wawer*. Again, this was a specific design feature rooted in the simplicity of the symbol itself. Michalski was cognizant of the fact that if the symbol were truly to become a phenomenon, widely popularized and disseminated by Poles outside of the conspiratorial underground, "it must be very simple; making such a sign cannot cause the slightest difficulty to anyone, even a child" (Michalski 1974: 227).

Michalski was proved correct. Inspired by the actions of *Wawer* and the high level of visible public support from the Underground State, ordinary citizens almost immediately began drawing and painting the anchor symbol as well. Bartoszewski (1966: 102) writes that the initial *Wawer* push of the symbol was "imitated spontaneously" by the local populace. In an April 1942 report to General Antoni Chruściel, Commander of the Warsaw District of the Home Army, Kamiński also relays that the streets "spontaneously cooperated in drawing anchors" (cited in Michalski 1974: 233). These *ad hoc* appearances of the symbol, drawn by "countless anonymous allies", demonstrated how quickly it became "the property of the whole society" due to the ease with which the symbol could be reproduced by untrained members of the public (Michalski 1974: 229, 234).

Finally, the Fighting Poland symbol serves as a notable example of the multivalent potential offered by simple symbols, which in this case is articulated at the symbol's basic expression level. Being comprised of a monogrammatic combination of the letters P and W, combined with the clandestine methods in which the symbol was unveiled to the public through the work of BIP, meant that some degree of ambiguity regarding what, beyond a symbol of hope and tenacity, was being represented by the symbol. *Polskie Wojsko* (Polish Army), *Podziemne Wojsko* (Underground Army), *Polska Wyzwolona* (Poland Liberated), *Pomścimy Wawer* (We will avenge Wawer), and most notably, *Powstanie Warszawskie* (Warsaw Uprising) were all common "misconceptions" of the BIP's intended meaning (Michalski 1974: 229; Gładkowski 2008: 20). Once again, the gulf of mutual unprojectability of simple symbols comes into play, in this case between the slogan *Polska Walcząca* and the PW monogram, which allows an extremely large degree of ambiguity and possibility in its translation. This potential in novel translation is adroitly demonstrated in contemporary feminist protest

appropriation of the Fighting Poland symbol, which modifies the slogan to *Polka Walcząca* (Fighting Polish Woman) as well as making structural changes to the symbolic form (Ramme 2019: 475), a semiotic phenomenon the author will explore in a future publication.

7. Conclusion

Although referring to physical anchors, pioneering underwater archaeologist Honor Frost (1995: 22) spoke volumes on the semantic potential of anchor symbology when she wrote: "All anchors are symbolic, because their function is to immobilize vessels so preventing them from being wrecked. It follows that lives and fortunes depend on their 'hold'." Given the circumstances that led to the creation of the Fighting Poland symbol, there is no doubt that her words hold a germane pertinence to the cultural context in which it emerged. The Polish nation, fractured by brutal Nazi and Soviet invasions and occupations, was in dire need of stability lest it be wrecked and once again wiped from the map of Europe. The Fighting Poland symbol was one such way the Polish Underground State attempted to provide that stability to the millions of lives depending on the anchor's hold.

Lotman (2019[1987]: 163) tells us: "The memory of a symbol is always more ancient than the memory of its non-symbolic textual surroundings," and the memory of the Fighting Poland symbol reaches back to an exceedingly ancient period, where the hope of survival, of life itself, has its beginnings in the most archaic layers of culture. Over the centuries, this memory began to be compressed and coalesced into a simple, elementary symbol capable of housing a vast text, re-emerging in new forms and diverse circumstances to both shape its surroundings and be shaped by them, whilst continuing to inherit and accumulate semiotic material from earlier synchronic cuts of culture.

Thus, in conclusion, the serpentine route of the symbology of the anchor, from votive use by Bronze Age Mediterranean religions, to becoming a recognizable feature of ante-Nicene Christianity, to use by a clandestine propaganda organization in occupied Poland during World War II, is a testament to the dichotomic invariability and variability of the symbol and its ability to enter novel cultural contexts. Therefore, this article has shown that the Fighting Poland symbol can be seen as both a Lotmanian "emissary" from earlier cultural epochs which found fertile "new soil" in Nazi-occupied Poland, as well as an illustration of the voluminous semantic capacity of archaic symbols which manifest in elementary form.

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Podnosząc kotwicę: Znak Polski Walczącej z perspektywy Łotmanowskiej

Proste symbole zajmują wyjątkowe miejsce w semiosferze jako składniki metaforycznego rdzenia kultury ze względu na swoją zdolność do subtelnego i zwięzłego wyrażania treści przechowywanych w pamięci kulturowej. Wspomniana prostota sprzyja trwaniu tych symboli, pozwala im przenikać przez liczne warstwy kultury po to, by co jakiś czas wyłaniały się i rozkwitały w nowych odmianach oraz kontekstach. Współczesnym przykładem symbolu, do którego odnoszą się wspomniane atrybuty, jest Znak Polski Walczącej, stworzony w 1942 roku przez Polskie Państwo Podziemne jako narzędzie propagandowe. Ten prosty monogram, składający się z połączonych liter P i W, stał się oficjalnym znakiem rozpoznawczym polskiego ruchu oporu, a obecnie pełni funkcję niepozbawionego kontrowersji faktycznego symbolu narodowego. W niniejszym artykule stanowi on punkt wyjścia do studium przypadku analizującego dwie spośród koncepcji Łotmanowskich: ogromną pojemność semantyczną prostych symboli oraz ich dwoistą naturę jako bytów jednocześnie zmiennych i niezmiennych. Sugestywna forma Znaku Polski Walczącej, zrodzona z dążenia do prostoty w okupowanej przez hitlerowców Warszawie, odzwierciedlała po prostu kwestie życia i śmierci. Jednakże głębsza analiza ujawnia jego pradawne korzenie. Autor dowodzi, że Znak Polski Walczącej, ze względu na swój wyrazisty kształt metonimicznie zwany „kotwicą", może być również postrzegany jako

„emisariusz" przybywający z poprzednich epok kulturowych, mianowicie chrześcijaństwa w okresie przednicejskim, odwołującego się do symboliki kotwicy podczas prześladowań i wstrząsów. Korzystając z perspektywy semiotycznej, autor prezentuje nowe spojrzenie na ten historycznie żywotny, choć niewystarczająco zbadany symbol tak bogaty w znaczenia odnoszące się zarówno do przeszłości, jak i do chwili obecnej.

Ankru hiivamine: lotmanlikud vaatenurgad Võitleva Poola sümbolile

Semiosfääris on ainulaadne positsioon lihtsatel sümbolitel, mis oma võime tõttu kultuurimälu paindlikule ja säästlikule kujule kondenseerida moodustavad kultuuri sümboolse tuuma. See lihtsus soodustab püsivust, lubades neil elementaarsetel sümbolitel diakrooniliselt taasesineda, läbida mitmeid kultuurikihte ning ilmuda ja levida uutes kontekstides ja variatsioonides. Uudne näide selliseid omadusi illustreerivast sümbolist on Võitleva Poola sümbol – *Znak Polski Walczącej*. Sellest 1942. aastal põrandaaluse Poola riigi poolt propagandavahendina loodud ühesest monogrammist, mis koosneb omavahel põimunud tähtedest P ja W, sai Poola vastupanu ametlik tunnus ning praegu on see vastuoluline *de facto* rahvuslik sümbol. Artiklis kasutatakse seda sümbolit juhtumiuuringus, et vaadelda kaht lotmanliku sümbolitega seotud mõistet: lihtsümbolite tohutut semantilist mahutavust ning nende kahetist olemust invariantsete/muutuvate entiteetidena. Sündinud utilitaarse lihtsuse nõudest, mida läks vaja natside poolt okupeeritud Varssavis, oli Võitleva Poola sümboli vormitõhususse kätketud pragmaatiline elu ja surma küsimus. Ent selle lihtsa disaini edasisel vaatlemisel tuleb ilmsiks ka sellele aluseks olev arhailine sügavus. Artiklis väidetakse, et Võitleva Poola sümbol, mida tänu selle äratuntavale kujule metonüümselt tuntakse kui 'ankrut' ('*kotwica*') võib vaadelda ka kui "saadikut" varasematest kultuuriepohhidest, nimelt Nikaia kirikukogu eelsest kristlusest, kus ankrusümboolikat kasutati tagakiusamiste ning rahutuste ajajärgul. Lõpetuseks pakutakse artiklis välja uus semiootiline vaatenurk ajalooliselt aktiivsele, ent vähe uuritud sümbolile, mis on (olnud) oluline nii minevikus kui ka olevikus.