

“THE MORE OFTEN IT IS SET ON FIRE, THE BETTER”

Contemporary symbolism of the rainbow in the Polish press¹

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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the contemporary symbolism of the rainbow, i.e. novel references raised during a public debate in Poland following the burning of a rainbow installation in Warsaw in 2013. The symbolism will be reconstructed through a textual analysis of press articles from two weeklies: the conservative *W Sieci* magazine and the liberal *Newsweek* magazine. We will examine how two ideologically opposing magazines profile the same event, which leads to the emergence of certain references of the symbol of the rainbow.

Keywords: public discourse, press discourse, symbolism, textual picture of the world, conservatism, liberalism

Introduction

This article discusses the contemporary symbolism of the rainbow, i.e. novel references raised during a public debate following the burning of a rainbow instal-

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lation on plac Zbawiciela (‘Savior Square’) in Warsaw during the Independence March on November 11, 2013. To do so, a textual analysis of five press articles texts from the conservative weekly magazine *W Sieci*, published on November 18, 2013, and six articles from the liberal weekly magazine *Newsweek*, published on November 17, 2013, will be performed. These magazines have been chosen for this study because they are the most popular ideologically opposing magazines in Poland (from January to June 2015, *W Sieci* ranked 3rd with a circulation of 75,400, whereas *Newsweek* ranked 2nd, selling roughly 111,000 copies; see Media2.pl, 2015).

The analysis explores how two ideologically opposing magazines profile the same event differently, resulting in the emergence of certain references of the symbol of the rainbow, which, in consequence, contributes to its imagery according to adequate stances of ideological perspectives presented by the authors. Assuming the existence of interrelations between society and a system of symbols, which consists in the influence of symbols on the society which produced these symbols previously (Schutz 1962), two basic aims are formulated in this paper: (1) *descriptive*: presenting this particular incident of burning the rainbow installation together with the Polish socio-political context of that time is meant to show the significance of the symbol in the current ideological debate in Poland – and hence the considerable impact of symbolism on the Polish social reality, and (2) *explanatory*: a reconstruction of the ways in which this particular symbol is perceived by Polish society serves as an example of a paradigmatic case which leads to more general conclusions regarding the ways in which Polish media make use of social incidents to realize their information policies – hence our aim is also to produce evidence that symbols are consciously and deliberately used by the media to influence the structure of society and widen the gap within this society.

These aims can be accomplished by a textual analysis of news reports on the incident in question. It will be performed in the form of social communication in which references to values, attitudes, opinions, and ideologies dominate. By focusing on a specific symbol employed in the public debate and present in the opinions published in the two magazines mentioned above, we intend to reveal a unique element of attitudes, values, and ideologies (constitutive of a deep, psychological layer of culture) expressed in social communication, which is reinforced by certain discursive mechanisms in order to establish these attitudes and ideologies in an axiological opposition.

Theoretical background

Socio-political context of burning the rainbow in Warsaw

It is important to be briefly acquainted with the socio-political context of the burning of a rainbow installation in Warsaw. The artwork was created by a perfor-

mance artist, Julita Wójcik, for the Adam Mickiewicz Institute as one of many initiatives in a cultural program launched on the occasion of Poland's presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2011. Originally, as part of the program, the installation stood in front of the European Parliament. At the end of the presidency, it was decided that the rainbow should be moved to Warsaw. Paweł Potoczyn, director of the Adam Mickiewicz Institute, justified that decision as follows: "We thought that instead of sending this gem to a junkyard, we could give it a proper home and let it stand in Warsaw. Warsaw needs art in public spaces, things that will make people and passers-by smile against their will" (Culture.pl, 2013). Before the Independence March in 2013, which has been organized yearly since 1989 on the National Independence Day celebrated on November 11 to commemorate the anniversary of the restoration of Poland's sovereignty in 1918 after the partition of Poland by Russia, Prussia, and Austria for 123 years, the rainbow had been vandalized by hooligans for three times and finally renovated completely by the Warsaw authorities in early November, only to be set on fire at the time of the march.

Controversies around the Independence March started in 2010 when liberals, anti-fascist organizations, and the readership of *Gazeta Wyborcza* (the best-known liberal daily newspaper in Poland) began to criticize its organizers, i.e. the far-right All-Polish Youth, the National Radical Camp, and other nationalist groups (including football hooligans). Among the supporters of the march were such prominent right-wing politicians as Janusz Korwin-Mikke and Artur Zawisza, but also well-known scholars, commentators, artists, and foundations like the Association of the National Armed Forces Soldiers, to name a few (Marszniepodleglosci.pl, 2014). In 2011 the march turned into clashes, with the police being attacked with stones, bottles and flares both by leftists and right-wing demonstrators. In consequence, over a dozen people were injured, including nine policemen, and a television van was set on fire (Reuters 2011). During the march in 2012, 22 policemen were injured after being pelted with bottles, bins, flares, stones and bricks, and 176 demonstrators were arrested (TVN24.pl, 2012). In 2013, 72 people were detained and a dozen policemen injured, whilst in 2014 270 demonstrators were arrested and about 50 people were injured (RT.com, 2014).

It is important to note that the growing number of casualties shows that the Polish society is becoming more and more ideologically divided. One of the reasons for this is citizens' dissatisfaction with life in Poland and, naturally, with the Polish authorities who had been in office for the past eight years ('Platforma Obywatelska' – 'Civic Platform' political party). The latest Polish presidential elections that took place on May 24, 2015, resulted in a defeat of the president in office, Mr. Bronisław Komorowski, who had been hoping for a second term, but lost to his rival Mr. Andrzej Duda, a right-wing unknown politician. Many suggest that this was due to the fact that the Poles had grown tired of the centre Civic Platform party which had always backed Komorowski.

Possible meanings attributed to the symbol of rainbow

As a semiotic sign, *rainbow* is a manifestation of both the sun and the rain (Singer 1984) for interpretations of linguistic symbols (and the word *rainbow* exemplifies such a symbol) are subject to Charles Peirce’s (1955) pragmatic maxim according to which our conception of the effects imprinted in our mind by a particular object constitutes the whole of our conception of that object. In other words, the symbolism of the rainbow cannot be considered as something objective and constant as (1) it is not a representation but it must be representative of something (Webber 1938), and (2) it is dependent on the subjects who conceptualize this object in reality.

Before its actual conceptualization in the Polish media is reconstructed, let us first discuss how the symbol of rainbow has generally been understood in various religious, literary, societal, and political contexts.

In classical literature, the rainbow is of a divine character, though it is not perceived as something good, but rather sinister as in the “Iliad”, where a rainbow sent by Zeus portends a war or storm to mortals: “the dragons on Agamemnon’s shield are like rainbows which the son of Kronos put in the cloud, to be a sign to mortal men” (11.27–28), a sign either of war or of cold winter (17.548–549). In Greek mythology, Iris personifies the rainbow on which she comes to earth as the messenger of the gods; this is why she is named the “goddess of the rainbow” (Friedlander 1992, p. 36). For example, the goddess Juno, the protectress of Carthage founded by the legendary queen Dido, sent Iris who descends on a rainbow to cut a lock of Dido’s hair to release her soul from her body (in ancient folklore a person’s soul could be released only if the person had some object in which the soul could reside) (Hall 1996).

In Church symbolism, the rainbow refers to God’s promise to Noah and, together with ark, the Flood: “I have sent my bow in the cloud” (Gen 9, 13), and because the *bow* also means the weapon of war, “forty days of rain can only have been God’s arrows; that God is hanging up his bow is a promise of fair weather to come, and therefore a sign of the covenant” (Brown 2000, p. 146). In “A Dictionary of Literary Symbols” (Ferber 1999), the symbolism of the rainbow is also depicted by reference to the biblical covenant God makes with Noah, and therefore the rainbow is presented as a “«natural symbol» for a bond between earth and heaven, as it is a product of the sun (heaven) and rain (falling from heaven to earth), while its arc reaches from earth to heaven and back to earth” (Ferber 1999, p. 165). In turn, in Chinese philosophy, the rainbow symbolizes the union of *yin* and *yang*, and is therefore an emblem of marriage (Hall 1996).

In the poetry and art of the Catholic Church, the rainbow also refers to the Virgin Mary. Since she belongs to both the lower and higher world and for theologians she connects the two worlds, everything that could illustrate such a connection may be attributed to Mary. As a result, the Mother of God was “*scala coeli*”, i.e. the “heavenly ladder which Jacob saw in his dream, and down which

God descended to men”, and the rainbow – “the visible bridge which stretches its arch across the skies from Earth to Heaven and from Heaven to Earth” (Hirn 1912, p. 464).

A similar meaning is given to the rainbow in Eastern and Western art where it denotes a link between heaven and earth. That link is typified by Christ’s three-colored throne, which denotes the Trinity. Also, the Last Judgment is conveyed to people in the form of the Lord seated on a rainbow (Webber 1938).

In European folklore, passing under a rainbow was believed to change a person’s sex (Conner et al. 1997), whilst nowadays a rainbow is conceived of, especially in political terms, as a way in which various kinds of people can communicate so that race barriers are crossed (Stobie 2005). Randy Conner et al. (1997) differentiate two meanings of rainbow:

The primary bow is that of sexuality and gender, epitomized by the rainbow colored Pride flag, celebrating sexual diversity. The secondary bow is the ideal of the rainbow nation, a term used in South Africa to denote racial and ethnic equality in the body politic (the use of the term “rainbow nation” is associated in South Africa with Albie Sachs and Desmond Tutu, but, as my epigraph from Gloria Anzaldúa makes clear, can be traced back through Jesse Jackson to Native American usage). This metaphoric space is a place of swirling colors and light; a place of the refraction of images; a place which represents liminality, diversity, respect and process (Conner et al. 1997, p. 66).

Accordingly, the core imagery of the rainbow is a representation of everything that is diverse with reference to sex, and of equality with reference to the political reality. As a result, the positive axiologization is induced by the reference to equality of rights among people of different racial and cultural backgrounds, which can be observed in some collocations coined by the LGBT movement such as *LGBT rights* or *basic rights* which are inscribed in their mission:

The mission of the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union – M.W.] LGBT Project is the creation of a society in which lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people enjoy the constitutional rights of equality, privacy and personal autonomy, and freedom of expression and association (ACLU 2015).

The symbolism of the rainbow is also to arouse positive associations, and because it is epitomized in the Pride flag, the lesbian and gay community is supposed to be associated in such a manner as well. Patricia Cain (2000) explains the etymology of the collocation *rainbow rights* as equal or special rights granted to lesbian and gay people:

Many people outside the lesbian and gay community assume that the word “rainbow,” when used in a discussion involving politics or rights, refers to Jesse Jackson’s Rainbow Coalition. But the gay movement claimed the rainbow first, and it remains the foremost symbol of gay pride, replacing the pink triangle, which was used to identify homosexuals in Nazi Germany and which has always carried negative connotations of the homosexual as victim (Cain 2000, p. 2–3).

The rainbow has positive connotations because it relates to a diverse community of people of different race, nationality, profession, gender, class, etc., what is also manifested in the lesbian columnist Deborah Price's words: “We (gay people) are so different, [...] We're men and women. We're black and white and brown, every color... and every class. It's a spectrum, and that's why it caught on” (Price 1995, p. 5). The rainbow is said to be a symbol of gay pride, which is derived from ancient myths, and it was constituted as the official symbol of the modern lesbian and gay rights in 1978 when a well-known seamstress called Gilbert Baker decided that it would be a symbol of San Francisco's gay pride parade (Cain 2000).

The nature and functions of symbolism

In “Słownik symboli” (‘Dictionary of Symbols’) by Władysław Kopaliński (2007, p. 428), we read that the rainbow symbolizes “God's presence, bow, God's message, blessing, covenant, bridge of love; reconciliation, forgiveness, mercy, promise, peace, harmony (of colors), surprise, news, hope, rebirth, resurrection, victory; perfection, unattainable thing, evanescence, appeasement, serenity” (transl. – M.W.). Nevertheless, in the light of the event in Warsaw, it seems that the values mentioned above have been dismissed from Polish public language and consciousness. The question is: “To the benefit of what values?”

The words *sign* and *symbol* happen to be used interchangeably. A sign might be a symbol and vice versa, but the basic difference between these concepts is that a “sign is an exact reference to something definite and symbol an exact reference to something indefinite” or unexpressed (Tindall 1995, p. 6), and the meaning of the latter occurs in two overlapping contexts: “there is the context from which the symbol emerges – namely the work within which it occurs, and the yet wider context of meanings which the artist draws on in making his work; and there is the context into which it enters – namely the moving and developing life of the person responding” (Knights 1960, p. 136). For instance, the word *rainbow* indicates an optical and meteorological phenomenon via one-to-one correspondence, but a picture of a rainbow (apart from illustrating that phenomenon) or a concept of “rainbow” may also have a symbolic value, i.e. they may be traditionally associated with God's covenant or mercy.

The nature and functions of symbolism were aptly reduced to four basic “Principles of Symbolism” by Wilbur Urban (1939). These are:

1. *Every Symbol Stands for Something*: a symbol serves as a surrogate which has a reference to something but to itself, and hence it stands for something. Interpretation of a symbol consists in recognizing that reference, even if it might be an unexpressed one. If such interpretation is impossible, then the symbol is not a real symbol, but rather a sign, e.g. substitutional scientific signs with no intrinsic meanings which are used for operational purposes.

2. *Every Symbol Has a Dual Reference*: a symbol has, of necessity, a double reference, i.e. reference to the original object and a new reference. If it loses the first reference, then it ceases to be perceived as a symbol and becomes a mere conventionalized sign, because it is the function of symbol to “relate two contexts or domains of discourse hitherto unrelated” (Urban 1939, p. 423–424), and such relating happens partly unconsciously. If a symbol is consciously made to have only one meaning, then it becomes a sign because it performs a designatory function.
3. *Every Symbol Contains both Truth and Fiction*: this principle follows on from the previous one. The fact that a symbol has some other reference apart from the original one entails that such a reference is fictional or unreal, and hence – different from that of a substitutional character.
4. *Every Symbol is of Dual Adequacy*: the primary concept of truth can be boiled down to the “principle of adequation or *adaequatio* (*adaequatio rei et intellectus*) according to which each plane of reality corresponds to an instrument of knowledge adequate to the task of knowing that particular level of reality” (Nasr 2006, p. 99). Accordingly, every symbol may be adequate from the perspective of expressing an object by another object, or it may be adequate from the perspective of expressing an object on the basis of human consciousness. This property of symbolism makes it possible that some people see a rainbow as something of a divine character, e.g. God’s presence, and others as something of a pragmatic character, e.g. equality of rights.

Method

The basic tool applied to the textual analysis is a qualitative method which falls within the research methodology of a textual picture of the world (a subcategory of the linguistic picture of the world). Accordingly, we assume that the language we speak produces templates, categories and ways of speaking about the world (Whorf 1956; Gumperz, Levinson 1996; Bartmiński, 1999; see also Gut, Wilczewski 2014). We also assume that a development of numerous cognitive processes (important from the social aspect) is culturally and linguistically dependent, and therefore the way people speak about a certain section of reality, in this case about the burning of the rainbow installation, influences the way people think about the rainbow itself.

A textual picture of the world is understood here in the same way as given by Wojciech Kajtoch:

A textual picture of the world (appearing at the level of *parole*) is a specific concretization – made in a concrete text or texts – of a linguistic picture of the world (appearing at the level of *langue*), and therefore it is a sum of regularities that come from a preference in a given text or texts for particular inflectional, word-forming,

syntactical constructions and, most of all – for a particular vocabulary. A textual picture of the world indicates a dominating (in a given text or texts) view of the presence and functioning of individual constituents of the world and their proportions and relations between them, and hence a view of the concept of the world’s organization, its hierarchies, and its values professed by the author of a given text and accepted by the readers of that text (Kajtoch 2008, p. 14–15; transl. – M.W.).

Due to the fact that text – as a manifestation of de Saussure’s *parole* – contains a specific linguistic representation and has a specific subject (discusses particular sections of extra-linguistic reality), a textual picture of the world is a representation of the linguistic picture of the world which – except for realizing a semantic layer of *langue* (conventional aspect) – also informs the reader about the author’s cognitive attitudes (inventional aspect). A reconstruction of a textual picture of the world is aimed at revealing knowledge and values common to a given social group on the basis of “recurrent word collocations used by a particular social group in a specific area of communications” (Kiklewicz 2006, p. 334; transl. – M.W.). Because the linguistic picture of the world consists of such elements as grammatical features of a language, vocabulary, word-forming mechanisms, etymology, semantic connotations, and conventionalized linguistic constructions (e.g. metaphors or linguistic stereotypes) which comprise a conceptual structure present in that language, the textual picture of the world serves as a means to reconstruct a subjective, individual manner of perceiving reality.

Below, subjective textual pictures of the burning of the rainbow installation are recreated and discussed to show the ways in which the symbol of the rainbow is perceived by the Polish magazines in question and to determine the extent to which this particular symbol is linked to and significant in the media debate.

Textual analysis

The symbol of rainbow in the *W Sieci* magazine

Not surprisingly, for liberal communities, the construction of the rainbow on plac Zbawiciela symbolizes equality and tolerance, and for conservative communities – a clear contradiction of Christian values which were embodied in the original symbolism of the rainbow. This kind of symbolization exemplifies an effect of shifting symbolic and axiological polarization, because traditionally the rainbow has a positive connotation in Catholicism (“a bridge between heaven and earth”), which is the meaning originally intended by the artist who designed the installation – it was supposed to represent tolerance, and equality and hence to be associated with the LGBT community. An act of burning the rainbow may be accounted for as an act of returning to the original references of the symbol, and the very incident is used by conservative journalists to comment on other events and actors of the Polish political scene. It is seen in the example below where the reference to

the November riots is meant to depreciate the Prime Minister's rule which has led to the situation when Poland can be termed as a "stubble" or "scorched rainbow":

[1] There will be California upon the Vistula, said the Prime Minister. But we do not really know why California. Is it about bankrupctcy, earthquakes or Latinos (we would be happy to adopt a few mulatto girls), but as we are constantly growing, all we have now are stubble and scorched rainbow, but soon we will have San Francisco and Malibu (*W Sieci*, 46/2013, p. 8)².

Speaking with irony about Polish politicians' activities by referring to the symbol of the rainbow seems to play a dual role. First, the basic role consists in devaluating the actual meaning of the symbol because even if the rainbow is of so much significance for those in power that they promise to rebuild it no matter how many times it is burnt, boiling the rainbow down (in an ironic manner) to a symbol crucial for Polish *raison d'état* is *de facto* an attempt to contradict its function. It can be noticed below, where the author irreverently compares the rainbow to a triumphal arch and exhorts that it should be burnt so that Poland may become a successful country:

[2] Communism is symbolized by a teddy bear³, and today's reality will be symbolized by the rainbow on the Savior Square. The more often it is set on fire, the better. Any restoration of this triumphal arch is a success. And we do need successes (Makowski 2013, p. 13).

Not only are politicians defending the symbol of the rainbow, but also participants of public life, e.g. celebrities, and thus they become subject to axiologization. If a person who is given much media attention starts to support the defenders of the rainbow installation, then he automatically comes under fierce criticism of the opponents of that installation. This also applies to the situation when celebrities do not stand up for Christian values:

[3] Humiliation and acts of aggression towards Catholics do not lead to waves of compassion felt by the celebrities who shed tears over the damaged rainbow (Pospieszalski 2013, p. 35).

In the next example, a famous Polish pop singer's acceptance of rebuilding the rainbow is criticized. This criticism takes the form of a reference to Edyta Górniak's artistic output. The author suggests that she should take up her creative process, i.e. what a musician ought to do, but not what goes beyond artistic competence.

[4] **Black despair:** Edyta Górniak was mourning the rainbow burnt by hooligans on the Savior Square. She wrote on that occasion: 'I have put a few

² For the sake of textual clarity, only English translations without original Polish excerpts will be given. All the translations of the Polish passages are provided by the author; they are as literal as possible. Some fragments of text excerpts are spaced out in order to put emphasis.

³ Communism happens to be symbolized by the 1980 cult Polish film "Miś" (Eng. "Teddy Bear") directed by Stanisław Bareja. *Miś* is a nickname of the main character played by Stanisław Tym.

orange gerberas into the Warsaw rainbow as a rainbow does not look good with no colors. [...] What a shame Górnjak cannot be talked about in the context of her new album, but only about her new attacks of despair. Black despair (Świetlik 2013, p. 22).

Furthermore, an ironic character of that commentary derives from Górnjak’s well-known high emotionalism, and it is realized by such expressions as “black despair”, “[she] was mourning” or “new attacks of despair”. This mechanism serves to devalue Górnjak’s opinions and actions with regard to the issue of the rainbow since the journalist convinces the reader that her reaction to the burning of the rainbow was typical of her and implies that it was inadequate to what had happened, which is also demonstrated in the following passage:

[5] **Grief for the rainbow.** It is unbelievable that mourning for the rainbow has not been proclaimed by President Komorowski. It could even last a proverbial “Russian month” [for a very long time – M.W.] (Świetlik 2013, p. 22).

Here, we are again dealing with an irony about reactions of people from public life to the burning of the rainbow. The article’s author signalizes that such reactions are exaggerated through a personification of the rainbow. Writing about its burning, he refers to death which should be celebrated by the society in the form of mourning – even national mourning, declared by the president.

A similar technique was applied in a commentary by Łukasz Warzecha who hyperbolically describes the burning of the rainbow as “the most terrible thing”, even “bestiality”, and the perpetrators of this bestiality as “fascist murderers” (example 6). It is not surprising then that, again, the rainbow is personified as a victim (of a murder) who is not to blame (example 7) and about whom “moving reports” are published (example 6); after its death there is a time of sadness and mourning (examples 6, 7), and its body in the form of an “empty skeleton” and “reminds of the rainbow” has become an object of cult for the Warsaw elite (example 6).

[6] Damaged cars – it’s nothing. Broken cobblestones – it’s nothing. Even injured policemen are unimportant. The most important and terrible thing which happened during the Independence March was the burning of the rainbow on the plac Zbawiciela. All the lemmings in Warsaw are in mourning now and tearfully watch an empty skeleton of the rainbow from behind the windows of their hipster joints abundantly located in that part of the capital. The unfailing *Gazeta Wyborcza* gives us moving reports on outstanding representatives of the metropolitan elite, who make pilgrimages to the sad remains of the rainbow and lay flowers there. Michał Piróg, Monika Olejnik and Anna Mucha – outstanding intellectuals of the Third Polish Republic – are stunned by the bestiality of the fascist murderers of the rainbow (Warzecha 2013, p. 25).

[7] The media have reported on the emotional collapse of the “equality” part of Warsaw. “When I heard that the rainbow on the plac Zba-

wiciela had again been burnt, I became desperately sad. In fact, I wanted to cry. What has it done wrong?” – said the columnist from *Newsweek*, Renata Kim (Nykiel 2013, p. 39).

It should be emphasized that the symbol of the rainbow serves to evaluate these media environments which try to defend it. Therefore, people who regret that the rainbow was burnt are called *lemingi* (‘lemmings’, slang. people/followers with no voice of their own who uncritically believe in everything the pro-government media say) or are ironically named as “outstanding intellectuals of the Third Republic of Poland”.

The rainbow as a gay symbol

In the eyes of the columnists in the conservative weekly magazine *W Sieci*, original and traditional references to the covenant with God are far removed from the imagery of the rainbow on the plac Zbawiciela:

[8] Tusk was hoping that Kaczyński would set fire to the gay rainbow in Warsaw, throw Molotov cocktails from the roof and attack the porter’s lodge at the Russian Embassy. But this dodger was hiding in the Wawel Castle. What could be done? Professional instigators were hired, who ensured that Varsovians were not bored and that their TV sets could sling mud at the Independence March, and that hired commentators could talk rubbish. A few days before, other instigators had deliberately prepared the rainbow on the plac Zbawiciela for burning and they planned the march route to go around the Russian Embassy, which had not placed any guards there. Why bother the arsonists? (Warzecha 2013, p. 26–27).

[9] Attorney Bartosz Kownacki expressed them (reactions after burning the rainbow) a little bit more blatantly in his post about the burning of the “faggot rainbow”, and criticized the spending of public money on the next renovation (Pospieszalski 2013, p. 31).

Łukasz Warzecha pointedly writes about the rainbow as a symbol of gays, cf. “gay rainbow”, whilst Jan Pospieszalski, citing an MP from the PiS (‘Prawo i Sprawiedliwość’ – ‘Law and Justice’ political party), describes the object even more strongly as “faggot rainbow”. Moreover, the rainbow’s role is far from narrowing the gap in the society, but it is rather a tool in the Prime Minister’s hands to fight his main political opponent Jarosław Kaczyński. The rainbow is a tool for provocations arranged by people hired by the Prime Minister, similarly to the media which are at the command of the government and the Warsaw authorities, who are said to have restored the rainbow deliberately just before the Independence March so that it could be damaged. This hypothesis is also put forward by J. Pospieszalski who invokes the opinions of residents in Warsaw:

[10] The neighborhood residents and parishioners say that in the context of those three arsons, wrapping the rainbow with paper flowers a few days before the In-

dependence March looked like a deliberate provocation (Pospieszalski 2013, p. 32).

Symptomatically, on this occasion an ideological polarization of the actors of the political scene is created: Jarosław Kaczyński is conceptualized as an embodiment of independence, whereas Donald Tusk as an instigator, opponent of independence (cf. “[instigators] ensured that [...] their TV sets could sling mud at Independence”).

The fact that besides traditional connotations the rainbow symbolizes sexual minorities is reflected in the opinion of the very author of the installation on plac Zbawiciela herself, Julita Wójcik:

[11] Nobody has ever stated any reasons for which the symbol appropriated by the LGBT community has been erected just in front of the church on the Savior Square. The designer, Julita Wójcik, argues that it is a universal sign of the covenant, love, peace and hope, but she also admits that the rainbow serves as a symbol of emancipation of sexual minorities (Pospieszalski 2013, p. 32).

The author of the above passage argues that it typifies nothing but sexual minorities, as it is they who recognized the rainbow as their symbol. Consequently, an attack on Christian values has been viewed in such symbolism, as manifested, *nomen omen*, in J. Pospieszalski’s article “Tęczowa przemoc” (‘Rainbow Violence’):

[12] Recently, the rainbow has not been the only act of symbolic violence. [...] Humiliation and acts of aggression towards Catholics do not arouse a wave of compassion in celebrities who shed tears over the damaged rainbow (Pospieszalski 2013, p. 35).

[13] From the very beginning, they [the gay community – M.W.] have treated the installation as theirs, victoriously taking photos in that place and adding the Savior Square to the “map of gay Warsaw”. [...] The ideological function of the rainbow is a mystery to nobody. As it has been immediately recognized by the gay community as their symbol, beyond a shadow of a doubt it has also been read by conservatives and Christians as an act of symbolic violence (Pospieszalski 2013, p. 33).

Such an image of the rainbow corresponds elsewhere with a cultural struggle for values. Accordingly, the rainbow symbolizes a phenomenon of cultural revolution that has been imposed on Poland by the West, and which *de facto* destroys European cultural heritage (example 14) and serves to familiarize people with immoral attitudes that are contrary to nature (example 15):

[14] The conflict over the rainbow in Warsaw is a classic example on which we can examine the elements of the mechanism of the cultural revolution which has been steamrolling Western civilization and which has taken hold in Poland over the past few years (Pospieszalski 2013, p. 34).

[15] The visual arts, theater, film, literature, mass culture (such performances as the rainbow) play a very important role in this process. They familiarize, desensitize and set trends. All this creates a climate for connivance with the attitudes and practices which – until very recently – have been regarded as immoral, harmful and contrary to nature (Pospieszalski 2013, p. 35).

That cultural revolution seems to be embodied in the rainbow installation which is referred to as a “homosexual triumph”. Burning this symbol is treated in the next passage as a defeat of the homosexual community since the event “has put the hipster society in a truly mourning mood” (example 16). Furthermore, passage 17 informs the reader that fighting against the rainbow is justified as the symbol exemplifies an ideological provocation and such provocations should always raise objections in society:

[16] **Maybe burning the rainbow should be treated as a revenge for the constant desecrations of the Cross? Will the “burning rainbow” installation convince the world of antiart that there really are some limits to artistic freedom?** [lead]

It has been burnt for the fifth time. This time for good. A blackened construction of a symbol of homosexual triumph on the plac Zbawiciela has put the hipster society in true mourning. (Nykiel 2013, p. 39).

[17] Although the hooligan excesses are worthy of reproach, the casus of a burnt rainbow must make people aware of one thing, i.e. ideological provocation will always raise objections. It has to be taken into consideration by everyone who is going to treat art as a means of propaganda. [...] The identity of the installation in Warsaw is also unquestionable. After November 11 the LGBT community (and its supporters) published in *Gazeta Wyborcza* an unequivocal “call to stand up for rainbow Poland”, recalling that the rainbow is a “Warsaw monument-symbol of tolerance for the LGTB people and every effort must be made to stop homophobic sentiment” (Nykiel 2013, p. 39).

The symbol of the rainbow according to the *Newsweek* magazine

In contrast to an explicitly polarized image of the rainbow created in the *W Sieci*, the *Newsweek* magazine presents the symbol both from the traditional and liberal perspectives:

[18] It is worth fighting for such a biblical-pacifist-gay symbol as the rainbow. In the meantime, however, we need to take a liking to the color which dominates in our landscape – grey (Lis 2013, p. 2).

This pluralized image is also demonstrated in an interview with Wojciech Cejrowski who is well-known for his conservative opinions and negative attitude to sexual minorities. The traveler does not describe the rainbow as a symbol of the covenant with God, but solely – if it is seen in a public space – as a gay symbol (cf. below an offensive reference to gays by means of the reference to a hypotheti-

cal “pederasts’ square”), and he does not hide his satisfaction with the burning of the installation:

[19] – So, the rainbow has... was erected on the plac Zbawiciela in Warsaw and it was burnt. Finally! [...] as it is the square of the Savior, not of pederasts (Kwaśniewski, Cejrowski, 2013, p. 18).

Moreover, Cejrowski suggests that the Warsaw authorities glorify gays by letting them build the rainbow installation. This installation is not meant to typify Christian values (embodied in that case by the plac Zbawiciela), but the European Union which is, by the way, despised by nationalist movements:

[20] – [...] if Gronkiewicz-Waltz wants to erect rainbow monuments for pederasts, she should look for a European Union square and do erect the rainbow there, as the nationalists will not go there even to take a pee (Kwaśniewski, Cejrowski 2013, p. 20).

Burning the rainbow as a homophobic act of barbarity

The offensive description of both gays and their symbol on the plac Zbawiciela by conservative celebrities is regarded by the *Newsweek* columnists as a manifestation of homophobia which is typically ascribed by the Polish media to the conservative part of society which does not accept the LGBT community promoting legal and societal equity for people who are not of heterosexual orientation (e.g. by means of a Campaign Against Homophobia). Therefore, anyone who publicly expresses critical or offensive opinions about gays and anything that could be associated with them is referred to as a Catholic homophobe (example 21), the people who set it on fire – as “physical troglodytes”, and the commentators who justify that event – as “mental troglodytes” (example 22):

[21] Burning the “fruity rainbow” – as one of the PiS MPs kindly described it. This is nothing but a manifestation of conservative Catholic homophobia driven to the edge (Kalukin 2013, p. 32).

[22] I would suggest that these acquaintances who do not want to propagate should hang above their beds a picture of the PiS MP Bartosz Kownacki – the one who was so delighted in public that the “fruity rainbow was burning”. The rainbow was set on fire by physical troglodytes, and soon afterwards mental troglodytes – who are much further to the right – started explaining and justifying this barbarity (Meller 2013, p. 61).

The public debate over the Warsaw rainbow fits into a broader ideological debate between the conservative and liberal parts of the Polish society. As a result, the rainbow starts to be perceived as another matter worth fighting for as it provides both groups with an opportunity to express their world-views. And even though some liberals have so far been unimpressed by the rainbow installation, they immediately felt obliged to defend the “rainbow” after all the media hype about its burning, so the rainbow became a bone of contention between conserva-

tives and liberals. While conservatives regarded it as a symbol of the “sin of sodomy” (example 23), liberals started to talk about those conservatives in terms of “nationalist and Catholic Poland”, and about the people who set the rainbow on fire – in terms of “morons”:

[23] And the rainbow on the plac Zbawiciela? Installing it, Julita Wójcik distanced herself from any political or ideological connotations; she said that she wanted her work to be just an object arousing “positive associations”. It is the nationalist and Catholic Poland (especially such writers as Rafał Ziemkiewicz or Wojciech Cejrowski) that has interpreted it as a symbol of the “sin of sodomy”. [...] The protest against its damage has mobilized people of different opinions—both political and esthetic – for joint actions. As the screenwriter and director Andrzej Saramonowicz said in his Facebook post, “I have always been against the rainbow on the plac Zbawiciela for one simple reason – it defaces the square. And I have to defend it now, and I think it should be rebuilt. This is another reason for which I hate those morons who were destroying Warsaw yesterday!” (Bratkowski 2013, p. 108).

The *Newsweek* magazine does not just concentrate on the ideological aspect of the discussion about burning the installation. In fact, it also gives neutral opinions that tell the reader to treat this fact as an act of vandalism, but not as an attempt to burn a symbol of any kind:

[24] **Do you not care about the fact that the rainbow on the plac Zbawiciela has once again been burnt?** – I do, but as an act of vandalism. [...] But I have never seen it as a symbol of tolerance and freedom, just as an architectonic gadget, which anyway complies with the intention of the author of that installation (Kim, Prokop 2013, p. 50).

Discussion

An analysis of the articles from the *W Sieci* magazine has revealed that for conservatives the symbolism of the rainbow is extended to the following references:

1. *Provocation*: the rainbow symbolizes a political struggle started by people hired by the Prime Minister, the media at the command of the government and the Warsaw authorities, who deliberately renovated the installation on plac Zbawiciela so that the riots on November 11 could erupt and widen the gap in society. (The pragmatic role of this reference is to depreciate the Prime Minister’s rule).
2. *Cultural revolution*: the rainbow symbolizes a phenomenon of cultural revolution destroying European cultural heritage and familiarizing the Polish society with immoral attitudes.

3. *Gays and contradiction of Christian values*: erecting rainbow installations is considered to be a manifestation of the gay community and an attack on Christian values.

Constructing a specific textual picture of burning the rainbow plays a pragmatic role in the Polish public debate, which consists in highlighting and reinforcing the profiles enumerated above via such discursive mechanisms as:

- a. *Irony*: discussing Polish politicians' activities with reference to the symbol devaluates them. Ironic comments on other participants of the public life (e.g. celebrities) put them under criticism. Ironic nominations of media which defend the installation as “outstanding intellectuals of the Third Republic of Poland” serve to evaluate them pejoratively.
- b. *Irony+hyperbole*: nominating an act of setting the rainbow installation on fire as “the most terrible thing”, “bestiality”, and the perpetrators as “fascist murderers” is meant to ridicule the very act.
- c. *Personification*: writing about the rainbow on plac Zbawiciela in terms of a victim is meant to ridicule those who oppose the traditional understanding of the symbol.
- d. *Lexis*: the symbol arouses negative associations by the use of words and collocations valued negatively, e.g. “faggot rainbow”, “rainbow violence”, “homosexual triumph”, etc.

An analysis of the articles from the *Newsweek* magazine has shown that the weekly presents such references of the symbol that are both traditional and new. The traditional reference to Christian values highlights the Catholic dimension of the imagery of the rainbow. The new references are as follows:

1. *Homophobia*: offensive nominations of gays and the rainbow installation are understood as a manifestation of homophobia ascribed to Catholic writers named as “mental troglodytes”. As a result, one of the profiles of the symbol is a fight for legal and societal equity for people who are not of heterosexual orientation.
2. *Lack of symbolic value*: at first sight, this reference might seem surprising as – according to *Newsweek* – setting the Warsaw rainbow on fire should be recognized as an act of vandalism, but not as anything of a symbolic value (the reader is made to think that the rainbow on the plac Zbawiciela is just an artistic construction).
3. *Freedom of self-expression*: the rainbow symbolizes a matter that is worth fighting for as it provides an opportunity to express people's worldviews.

The discursive mechanisms employed to construe new profiles of the symbol are:

1. *Hypothetical spatial projections*: the rainbow installation should be burnt because it was situated on the “Savior Square, not a pederast one”.
2. *Lexis*: negative lexemes used with regard to people who are against building rainbow constructions on the streets, e.g. “physical/mental troglodytes”, “morons” and representatives of “nationalist and Catholic Poland”,

etc. epitomize emotional and ideological attitudes of people who do not accept the conservative view of the symbol.

Conclusion

A textual reconstruction of the actual references of any symbols deeply embedded in a culture reveals discursive trends in the communication of values and ideologies, i.e. by means of symbols, the liberal/conservative sender will tend to reinforce a given ideological stance by highlighting traditional or/and activating new references of the symbol through discursive mechanisms (e.g. irony, mocking, personification, hyperbole, metaphor, etc.). Such practice indicates a pragmatic function of symbols in the public debate.

No matter how novel or even absurd a given reference to the symbol might be, it appears to be useful for the senders as long as it fulfills their immediate communicative aims. If, for instance, a symbol is recognizable to the public, e.g. the symbol of the rainbow in the light of the events during the Independence March in Poland, then this fact is willingly used by the sender either to ridicule the authorities by conservatives, or Catholics by liberals, which translates into the support or rejection of certain sets of norms, values or ideologies, depending on the ideological stance of a given medium. Thus, one may conclude that there are certain values in culture which are perpetuated in symbols, and the same symbols are used in communication to disseminate new values or preserve the old ones. This is why a symbol itself is a suitable tool for this because it refers to something vague or unexpressed and it can be modeled according to the sender's intention; it is therefore an attractive tool of persuasion and manipulation. According to Mirosław Sobecki (2010, p. 24), individuals who are able to manipulate symbolic meanings achieve the biggest success in society. The ability to incorporate a new meaning into symbolic communication is possible due to endowing it with axiological importance which constitutes a basis for group integration and such contacts among the group members as collaboration, coexistence, and even conflict.

Apart from the benefits that such a reconstruction of attitudes, values, and ideologies by exploring symbolism offers to sociologists and culturologists, it also seems valuable for cross-cultural and intercultural studies. Because symbolism exemplifies one of the main media of communicating values in culture (and is difficult to be verbalized and is often a source of communicative problems) (cf. Jacko 2005), it deserves deeper scrutiny in the context of globalization – where there is a high need to enhance communication across cultures. In recent years, researchers have focused on the negative transfer of deep socio-cultural values and its destructive impact on communication practices in an intercultural environment and second language acquisition (e.g. Liu Dilin 1995; Wei Xiaohong 2009, 2012; Zhu Honglin 2011) as well as on revealing the importance of symbolic cultural expression in intercultural communication (e.g. Lwin et al. 2010; Hanssen 2011).

Further comparative and systematic research into symbolism in various forms of social communication across cultures constitutes a promising area for both cross-cultural and intercultural communication studies. Disclosing both unique and common ways of modeling the same and distinct symbols across different cultures leads to capturing differences in experiencing values in these cultures. Such modeling may be regarded as a method for understanding how values are culturally perceived, and together with an understanding of discursive methods of preserving them, it may also provide practical information on how to communicate values in another culture and how to attain a unique kind of experience of the world which would remain obscure for people were it not for symbols, and which can be described and understood in no other language than the symbolic one (cf. Walczak 2011, p. 89).

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STRESZCZENIE

„Im częściej ją podpalają, tym lepiej”. Współczesna symbolika tęczy w polskiej prasie

W artykule omówiono współczesną symbolikę tęczy, tj. aktualne odniesienia aktywowane w polskim dyskursie publicznym w kontekście podpalenia instalacji tęczy w Warszawie w 2013 roku. Symbolika tęczy zostanie zrekonstruowana za pomocą tekstowej analizy tekstów prasowych z konserwatywnego tygodnika *W Sieci* oraz z liberalnego tygodnika *Newsweek*. Analiza wykaże, jak dwa ideologicznie odmienne czasopisma profilują jedno wydarzenie, co prowadzi do aktywowania określonych odniesień symbolu tęczy.

Słowa kluczowe: dyskurs publiczny, dyskurs prasowy, symbolika, tekstowy obraz świata, konserwatyzm, liberalizm