

OUR MYTHICAL CHILDHOOD

# OUR MYTHICAL HOPE

The Ancient Myths  
as Medicine for the Hardships  
of Life in Children's  
and Young Adults' Culture

Edited by  
Katarzyna Marciniak



# OUR MYTHICAL HOPE

“OUR MYTHICAL CHILDHOOD” Series

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PART II

# The Roots of Hope



## BANDAR-LOG IN ACTION: THE POLISH CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCE OF DISASTER IN LITERATURE AND MYTHOLOGY

[...] an indescribable noise arose. Nik, Tom, and Ania, having grabbed each other's hands, began dancing in the middle of the room, singing at the top of their lungs the Monkey Song from *The Jungle Book*.<sup>1</sup> But Olek, his hands sunk deep into his pockets, scowled at his unruly siblings and said: "These are the real monkeys". Then before he knew it, his siblings had grabbed him by the hands and made him join the dance and triumphantly sing along:

A lonesome trail  
but who cares?  
There's still fun  
in pulling each other  
by the tail!

Zofia Żurakowska, *Skarby* [Treasures], 1925<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *The Jungle Book* by Rudyard Kipling first appeared in 1894; five years later it came out in French; the first Polish translation by Józef Czekalski as *Księga puszczy* [The Forest Book] is from 1900; Zofia *de domo* Duszyńska Żurakowska (1897–1931) probably read the second edition published by Gebethner and Wolff in Warsaw in 1902 (the book's second translation, by Franciszek Pik Mirandola, appeared in 1922). These dates have meaning for my deduction.

<sup>2</sup> Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Print, 1991 (ed. pr. 1925), 17: "[...] powstał hałas nieopisany. Nik, Tom i Ania, pochwywszy się za ręce, zaczęli tańczyć w środku pokoju, wyśpiewując na całe gardło pieśń małp z *Księgi Dżungli*, a Olek zatopił ręce w kieszeniach i, patrząc z pogardą na niesforne rodzeństwo, rzekł:

– Oto są prawdziwe małpy. – Nim się jednak opamiętał, został schwycony za ręce i musiał tańczyć pospołu z rodzeństwem, śpiewając zwycięsko:

trop stracony  
mniejsza o to!  
my z ochotą  
ciągniem siebie  
za ogony!"

The present chapter, as well as this and all subsequent quotations, have been translated by Marek Steele-Zieliński, unless stated otherwise.

This episode takes place in the spring of 1913 in Warsaw. The children are frolicking like monkeys because they have just learned they are to go home sooner than expected. The older boys are attending a Polish school, so for the duration of the school year the whole family moves to Warsaw.<sup>3</sup> And though the flat is large, they feel ill at ease in it. The children's family home is in the east, in Volhynia. Zofia Żurakowska's two autobiographical novels<sup>4</sup> tell us their estate was called Niżpol. The novels feature the family of August and Marta Charłęski,<sup>5</sup> who have five children. I have surmised the dates of their births on the basis of the available clues: Olek (short for Aleksander) – 1900, Marta – 1902(?), Nik (short for either Mikołaj or Nikodem) – 1904, Tom – 1907, and Ania – 1909. In the neighbouring estate of Hołowin live two of their cousins: Renia, later known as Nata (short for Renata) – born in 1899, and Ali (short for Aleksander) – born in 1905 – counts Oleśnicki.<sup>6</sup> During that portentous winter of 1918/19 only Tom and Ania could be considered children – though as their behaviour shows, they were aware of their responsibilities.

The autobiographical character of the two novels has great meaning, but it is important to note that the plot shares little with the real life of Żurakowska (maiden name Duszyńska), who lived from 1897 to 1931. Her family home was in fact situated in Wyszpol<sup>7</sup> (in the Zhytomyr area of Volhynia), and just as the nearby Hołowin, it belonged to the Salis, the family of the novelist's mother. Feldspar mines, hop plantations, and modern agriculture ensured her family high living standards. And this is also the novel's portrayal. The author, by contrast, had three sisters and no brothers,<sup>8</sup> so in her work she had to delve into her imagination, and possibly into her own experiences as well. This has crucial meaning for my further reflections, for I wish to weigh the correlation between

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<sup>3</sup> In the Russian partition Polish-language education was not permitted – thus, children from wealthier families were taught at home. It was not until after the revolution of 1905 that private secondary schools with instruction in Polish emerged.

<sup>4</sup> *Skarby* [Treasures, 1925] and *Pożegnanie domu* [A Farewell to Home, 1927].

<sup>5</sup> The Charłęskis were an old noble family in the Kiev voivodeship of the Rzeczpospolita, tracing its origins back to the fifteenth century; it seems to have died out by the end of the nineteenth.

<sup>6</sup> Their father, Ryszard, the brother of Marta Charłęska (the uxorial form of the surname), is the "sober entrepreneur" type; Marta's younger brother, Dymitr, is, conversely, a Romantic. Among the descendants of Aleksander Oleśnicki was also the deceased Feliks and his sporadically mentioned daughter Marietka.

<sup>7</sup> The wordplay here is that "Niżpol" suggests an obverse image of "Wyszpol" (with *niż* meaning 'low', and *wysz* sounding just like 'high').

<sup>8</sup> Felicja (b. 1895), Maria (b. 1902), and Anna (b. 1910).

traumatic childhood experiences and the inception of mythology.<sup>9</sup> I will refer to literary materials as well as to memoirs.

## I.

Żurakowska's story about the children from Niżpol is special not only because of its literary quality,<sup>10</sup> but above all because of its complete focus on the children, because of its autobiographical character, and finally because the story is free of the patriotic exaltation that came to typify children's literature in the interwar period. Above all, it is a testimony of exceptional quality to the catastrophic demise of Poland's Kresy, the eastern borderlands of the former Rzeczpospolita (Republic of Nobles, Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth).<sup>11</sup> The novels of Maria Buyno-Arckowa (1877–1952)<sup>12</sup> and Helena Zakrzewska (1880–1952),<sup>13</sup> although they deal with children during wartime and their plots are often set on the Kresy, are not characteristic testimonies, and so I would not consider them "Kresy literature". Besides, they are rather lowbrow products, and that reduced their influence. Important literary testimonies of this type belong instead to the category of "mature literature", even when they include childhood recollections. I have in mind, for instance, *Szczenięce lata* [Puppy Years] by

<sup>9</sup> I label as "mythology" the set of myths accepted within the given community for defining its identity (in accordance with the systemic model of society); see Jan Kieniewicz, "L'Espagne comme un modèle positif et négatif des Polonais au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Continuité et discontinuité dans la mythologie nationale polonaise", *Acta Poloniae Historica* 58 (1988), 51–79; Jan Kieniewicz, *Wprowadzenie do historii cywilizacji Wschodu i Zachodu* [Introduction to the History of Western and Eastern Civilization], Warszawa: Dialog, 2003, chs. 3 and 4. Cf. Wiktor Werner, *Kult początków. Historyczne zmagania z czasem, religią i genezą* [The Cult of the Origins: Historical Struggles with Time, Religion, and Genesis], Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 2004, 6ff, and also Kwame Anthony Appiah, *The Lies That Bind: Rethinking Identity. Creed, Country, Color, Class, Culture*, New York, NY, and London: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> The literary oeuvre of the prematurely deceased Żurakowska was highly appraised by many, including the famous writer Maria Dąbrowska.

<sup>11</sup> The term "Kresy" did not appear until the mid-nineteenth century; a century later, in turn, it was extended to include the lands east of the Bug river that Poland lost in the settlements of World War Two; see Jacek Kolbuszewski, *Kresy*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1995; Feliks Gross, "Kresy: The Frontier of Eastern Europe", *Polish Review* 23.2 (1978), 3–16. See also *Kresy Rzeczpospolitej. Wielki mit Polaków* [The Old Rzeczpospolita's Kresy: The Poles' Grand Myth], "Pomocnik Historyczny: Polityka" [Historical Helper: Polityka Weekly], Warszawa: Polityka, 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Maria Buyno-Arckowa, *Ojczyzna* [Motherland], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo M. Arcta, 1922.

<sup>13</sup> Helena Zakrzewska, *Białe róże* [White Roses], Warszawa: E. Wende [Ignis], [1922]; *Dzieci Lwowa* [The Children of Lviv], ill. Kamil Mackiewicz, Warszawa: E. Wende, 1925.

Melchior Wańkowicz (1892–1974).<sup>14</sup> *Bohaterski miś* [The Heroic Teddy Bear] by Bronisława Ostrowska (1881–1928)<sup>15</sup> in fact does not tell about the experiences of children; rather, the story is dedicated to them as a way to understand Poland's military involvement in the Great War. Maria Dąbrowska's (1889–1965) *Dzieci ojczyzny* [Children of the Motherland] features special-occasion patriotic readings.<sup>16</sup> Finally, an essential matter: Żurakowska's novel ends happily and is free of drastic scenes.

Both of Żurakowska's novels were bought for me when I was eight years old. I suspect this happened deliberately, but certainly without any comment. My parents must have perceived the convergence of their own fate with the novel's narration. My mother, Zofia Sobańska, born in 1911 in Zhytomyr, was not inclined to recall escaping her family's estate in Podolia and the evacuation of Kiev in 1919. My father responded sceptically to any nostalgia for the Kresy, and this can be seen in his professional writing – even though he was the same age as the novel's Tom, and was probably quite similar to him as well. But I was not inclined to ask.

Therefore, I will compare and contrast the experiences of the novels' children with the record of my family's memories. At that same time, in Dereszewicz, in the eastern region of Polesie, lived the Kieniewicz boys: Hieronim (born in 1901), Stefan (1907), Kazimierz (1909), and Henryk (1911).<sup>17</sup> They were accompanied in the pre-war years by Tekla Łopacińska (1906) and by Iga, Blanka, and Zula Grabowska<sup>18</sup> during the war. My family's memories do not match the novel; they seem to be less plentiful in dramatic events. In some sense this gap is filled by the novel *Bezdomni* [The Homeless], written in 1918 by my father,

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<sup>14</sup> A novel Melchior Wańkowicz wrote before 1930, and published in 1934 (Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze „Rój”). *Dolina Issy* [The Issa Valley] written by Czesław Miłosz in 1953 (published by Instytut Literacki in Paris, 1955) does not really include the war years.

<sup>15</sup> Bronisława Ostrowska, *Bohaterski miś* [The Heroic Teddy Bear], ill. Kamil Mackiewicz, Warszawa: E. Wende, 1919.

<sup>16</sup> Maria Dąbrowska, *Dzieci ojczyzny. Opowiadania historyczne dla młodzieży* [Children of the Motherland: Historical Stories for Youth], Warszawa: J. Mortkowicz, 1918. I do not mean to diminish the book's worth by this; I felt moved when reading this work. Cf. Wilhelm Coindre, “*Dzieci ojczyzny*, a Collection of Short Stories by Maria Dąbrowska in 1918, and Its Reflection in the *Noce i dnie* Novel Published in 1932–1934”, *Perspektywy kultury / Perspectives on Culture* 24.1 (2019), 23–37.

<sup>17</sup> The sons of Antoni and Magdalena Kieniewicz, née Grabowska; see Antoni Kieniewicz, *Nad Prypecią dawno temu...* [Long Ago on the Pripyat River...], Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1988; the image of childhood in the memoirs of Stefan Kieniewicz, *Pamiętnik opóźnionego dojrzewania, część 1* [Memoirs of a Late Blooming, Part 1, 1978], and Henryk Kieniewicz, *Wspomnienia* [Memories, 1980/81] – both manuscripts are found in my private archives.

<sup>18</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, *Pamiętniki* [Memoirs], Kraków: Znak, 2021, 20.

Stefan Kieniewicz.<sup>19</sup> Here, however, the adolescent author portrayed everyone but himself in a slightly caricatured form!

## 2.

There are two reasons for connecting childhood memories known from a literary version with those in diary form. First of all, they refer to the same social sphere, the same time, and the same region – namely, the remnants of the old Rzeczpospolita, that Polish world now sunk into a completely foreign abyss. But even long after the Kresy had disappeared, some people continued to identify proudly with that region, even while considering themselves citizens of the newly re-established Rzeczpospolita.<sup>20</sup> In ethnic Poland, especially the part found in the Prussian partition – identifying with the Kresy was long looked down upon as old-fashioned. Only the landed nobility, called the *ziemiaństwo*, retained connections that extended over the partitions to all parts of the former Poland. This is especially true about the era under discussion. The war and the revolution radically displaced these people. Moreover, independent Poland did not prove kind to them.<sup>21</sup> Memories in both versions were created *post factum*, which means they are an interpretation. These narratives primarily served to explain one's own lifetime decisions. In both cases what occurs is not only an analysis of the process of growing up, but essentially the same form of coping with trauma. I mention this because children simply saw things quite

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<sup>19</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, *Bezdomni* [The Homeless], Bobowa: Wilczyska, 2007. This work by the eleven-year-old may be treated as a record of his impressions, a child's interpretation of the loss of the family home. Noteworthy is that it was created *before* the family was forced to leave Dereszewicze once and for all. Stefan Kieniewicz (1907–1992) was an eminent historian of Poland's nineteenth century, associated with the Warsaw Historical School. The diaries (*Dzienniki*) of Adela Kieniewicz (1870–1935) offer much of value. They are held in the collections of the State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Kiev; they end abruptly in May 1915. See Katarzyna Nadana-Sokołowska, "Dzienniki Adeli Kieniewicz: kobieta pisząca przełomu XIX i XX wieku" [Diaries of Adela Kieniewicz: A Writing Woman from the Threshold of the Twentieth Century], *Teksty Drugie* 1 (2019), 303–320.

<sup>20</sup> See Jan Kieniewicz, "Kresy", in Zdzisław Najder, Anna Machcewicz, Michał Kopczyński, Roman Kuźniar, Bartłomiej Sienkiewicz, Jerzy Stępień, and Wojciech Włodarczyk, eds., *Węzły pamięci niepodległej Polski* [The Nodes of Memory of Independent Poland], Kraków and Warszawa: Muzeum Historii Polski, Fundacja Węzły Pamięci, and Znak, 2014, 363–368. See also Jan Kieniewicz, "Barwy i smaki Kresów" [The Kresy's Colours and Tastes], in his *Spotkania Wschodu* [The Meetings of the East], Gdańsk: Novus Orbis, 1999, 120–151.

<sup>21</sup> See Rafał Smoczyński and Tomasz Zarycki, *Totem inteligencji. Aristokracja, szlachta i ziemiaństwo w polskiej przestrzeni społecznej* [A Totem of the Intelligentsia: Aristocracy, Nobles, and Gentry in the Polish Social Space], Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, 2017.

differently. Perhaps they adapted more easily to the new reality. Nonetheless, their experiences of World War One and their memories of the destruction of the Kresy became part of the Kresy mythology. This happened without their consent, independently of decisions later made in adult life. I shall return to this matter at the close of my thoughts.

A serious methodological reservation may arise here. Namely, how did this fragment of history, the childhood experience of the loss of the Kresy, differ from other significant displacements? Without looking too far, we have the mass experience of children deported from the lands taken by the Soviets after the invasion of Poland on 17 September 1939. And this includes the history of the children led out of the USSR by General Władysław Anders and their trek – motherless and fatherless – across three continents. Or what about the memoirs testifying to the traumas of children in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944? A mere coincidence deprived me of the chance to experience the Uprising. A saving grace, that coincidence.<sup>22</sup> I admit that in making my choice I was motivated by sentiment; I identified with the characters in the novels. These children also underwent trauma together with their parents. The loss of their home, a catastrophe by anyone's measure, could thereby have a happy ending, just as it happened in my own life.

A balanced attitude towards sacrificing one's life played a significant role in helping me make my choice. In Żurakowska's novel the children are patriotically minded, but I do not discern a fervour to sacrifice their lives for their Motherland. True, in 1914 Olek and Nik are worried the war is going to end before they grow up – however, they stress that it is not a Polish war. They wish to fight for Poland, but they do not want to die. The titles of subsequent parts in fact allude to the Romantic tradition,<sup>23</sup> but in not a single episode do I find exaltation over sacrificing one's life.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the author stressed

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<sup>22</sup> If my brother and I (then three and six years old, respectively) had been sent off to Warsaw in the last days of July 1944, what chances would we have had of escaping whole from the burned family home, with our father badly injured and our mother eight-months pregnant? What saved us from our grandparents' horrible decision was the common sense of a local parish priest.

<sup>23</sup> The title of the third part of *Pożegnanie domu*, "ja się w chwili ofiarnej jak kadzidło spalę" [I in this sacrificial moment alight myself like incense] is a quotation from *Kordian* (1834) by Juliusz Słowacki, and the title of chapter 17, "Ale ty, Panie, który z wysokości – patrzysz, jak giną Ojczyzny obrońce" [But you, Lord, from on high, you look down upon the defenders of their Motherland dying] is a travesty of a passage from Słowacki's poem "Na pogrzeb kapitana Meyznera" [For the Funeral of Captain Meyzner, 1841].

<sup>24</sup> This is, however, altogether pronounced in the stories by Buyno-Arckowa. Ostrowska regretted the loss of young life, but "each drop of that holy blood, shed for the Cause, was a new life, one absorbed into the veins of the deceased Motherland. For without that terrible living font, Poland

several times that Russian soldiers were also fulfilling the duty to fight for their Motherland. Even if very reluctantly...<sup>25</sup> After all, Uncle Dymitr, who is adored by the children of Niżpol, goes to war voluntarily. Similarly moderate, and above all not lofty, was the patriotism of the children of Dereszewicze. Stefan did recall, however, a mood of patriotic exaltation in the period when the family was fleeing from Dereszewicze to Mozyrz,<sup>26</sup> that is, between November 1917 and the spring of 1918.<sup>27</sup>

In laying out my source base I discern a couple distinctions that can influence the attempt at interpretation. For instance, it seems that the novel's children in Niżpol enjoyed greater freedom than did the children in Dereszewicze. They were allowed to romp in the orchard and venture off on independent escapades beyond the park. They were just as carefully raised, but less monitored, as it were. The schooling and upbringing were the same. Perhaps the key difference was that in 1913 the youth of the Charłęski family continued their education at a Polish school in Warsaw, whereas the young Kieniewiczzes were in the orbit of Vilnius – and, after the war erupted, of Kiev. After 1914 this was obvious: Olek and Nik commuted to school in Zhytomyr every day,<sup>28</sup> Heruś (as Hieronim was affectionately called) remained at a boarding school in Kiev, and the same fate would have concerned Stefan, who passed the test to the second class of a Polish junior high school. Some differences may have emerged due to the divergent management techniques on the farm estate and with the forest enterprise. But this may not have been relevant. What was relevant were the issues of upbringing, with the Kieniewicz family treating their children more strictly. In Dereszewicze it seems that there were more care providers and pedagogical personnel, and that the children were more strongly subordinated to their supervision. In Niżpol the relations between the children and the staff appeared to have been warmer, and the children's food more varied.<sup>29</sup> The day's schedule, however, was the same in both families. Both homes had rich libraries,

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could not have arisen from the tombs" (*Bohaterski miś*, ch. "Swoi" [The Ours], 72: "każda kropla tej świętej, za Sprawę przelanej krwi, to było nowe życie, wsączane w żyły obumarłej Ojczyzny. Że bez tego straszliwego żywego źródła nie mogłaby powstać Polska spod mogiły").

<sup>25</sup> Żurakowska, *Pożegnanie domu*, 211.

<sup>26</sup> Mozyrz, a city on the Pripyat.

<sup>27</sup> Kieniewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 39.

<sup>28</sup> See Anna Pawełczyńska, *Koniec kresowego świata* [The End of the Borderland World], Lublin: Wydawnictwo Test, 2003, 59.

<sup>29</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz recalled that day after day they received a dinner of chicken soup and diced cutlets with potatoes and carrots, and compote... (*Pamiętniki*, 18). See the remarks concerning Dereszewicze in Janina Żółtowska, *Inne czasy, inni ludzie* [Other Times, Other People], Londyn: Alma Book, 1959, 200.

and reading held a similarly important place in the methods of child-rearing. No trace is left of those houses and libraries; nonetheless, not everything was buried or blown away...<sup>30</sup> The way the children played was also similar. Horses meant more in Niżpol, while dogs were more important in Dereszewicze. Sports, in turn, received stronger emphasis in Dereszewicze, but croquet and tennis were of course played at both manors. Indeed, in both cases it was during play – when the fun-hindering etiquette was thrown off – that there was space for shouting, for outbursts of passion, and for minor and major dramas. Clowning around, exaggerating and bragging, wrangles and frolics – even uncontrolled movements were considered inappropriate. The point is that in this ever so tight-laced world there still was place for spontaneous behaviour. I believe this was more or less deliberate on the part of the parents.

It was in this milieu before World War One that the children were read *The Jungle Book*. Or else they read it themselves,<sup>31</sup> in Polish or French version, though reading the original English cannot be ruled out. Whatever the case, no matter the language, the term “Bandar-log”, describing excessively frolicsome children, appeared. It was used to refer to boisterous, spontaneous, and heedless behaviours, ones opposed to the accepted rules for good behaviour. The use of a term borrowed from a “proper” book had a moderating as well as a taming character. It allowed parents to temporarily accept behaviours which they normally did not, a sort of turning a blind eye. Bandar-log sounds better than “tomfoolery”. The children were aware that this interpretation was conventional, and it does not seem they took old Baloo’s teaching<sup>32</sup> too personally. What was essential was ensuring the children a sort of balance between the spontaneous and decorous. The starchy standard of the old *dresura*<sup>33</sup> would never have permitted such liberties. The *dresura* involved practices that influenced how youngsters were to grow up and become dutiful. Interest in child-rearing theories and in techniques for shaping the young generation began to become important at the beginning of the twentieth century. There was a departure from the hitherto hidebound practices. The “English” attitude appeared with the

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<sup>30</sup> Thus did Włodzimierz Odojewski, in *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje* [All Is Crumbling and Blowing Away, Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1973], conjure the image of the Kresy’s demise during World War Two.

<sup>31</sup> Kieniewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 28. See also above, n. 1, on Kipling’s translations.

<sup>32</sup> Baloo the Bear, the teacher of the wolf cubs of the Seeonee Wolf Pack.

<sup>33</sup> This was the term my aunt, Janina Żółtowska, used about children, of course adapting it from the French “dressage” (horsemanship), which sounded better than the Polish “tresura”, used about training dogs and circus animals. One way or the other, young people in those spheres were subjected to a stern upbringing at home.

beginnings of scouting, and also under the influence of reading.<sup>34</sup> In my view, this of course does not relate to the tale of the Monkey-Folk. Kipling presents them in dark hues:

[The Bandar-log] are outcastes. They have no speech of their own, but use the stolen words which they overhear when they listen, and peep, and wait up above in the branches [...]. They are without leaders [...]. They boast and chatter and pretend that they are a great people about to do great affairs in the jungle, but the falling of a nut turns their minds to laughter and all is forgotten [...]. They are very many, evil, dirty, shameless, and they desire to be noticed by the Jungle-People.<sup>35</sup>

Nor am I interested in Kipling's didactic intention. Rather, the use of this term in regard to his own children is what seems most significant to me.

### 3.

Being young was then a transitional period, an introduction to adulthood, and of course huge importance was attached to this transition. It was definitely detached from childhood. After all, it involved giving a vaguely defined shape to the mind, and it often referred more to spirit than to age. Adolescent children, today called teens, a hundred years ago tried in all possible ways to associate with and be accepted by adults; they despised their younger siblings, who were treated as none other than Bandar-log. Relevant here is the distinct way children perceive time, focused as they are on the moment and unable to foresee the future. It is in this trait that they seemed akin to monkeys. Now, one hundred years later, in a twist of fate, that trait is becoming universal!<sup>36</sup> The concept of Bandar-log lost its meaning with the degradation of propriety and a willingness to tolerate the "barnyard" model where a child's behaviour is regulated not by books, but

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<sup>34</sup> I have no confirmation that Kipling's *Stalky & Co.* was read in Dereszewicze; however, that seems to have been the case in Niżpol. We learn about the reading of these children haphazardly – as with the copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (no doubt the Polish edition of 1901) left on a park bench and found (without illustrations) by village children (Ukrainian ones, of course) – *Skarby*, ch. 15. The character of Nik seems modelled on Stalky, all the more so as the author did not have a brother. Worth noting is that boys of that kind were not an exception; see Stefan Kieniewicz's comments (*Pamiętniki*, 32) about his friends in Mozyrz in 1917–1918 (namely, Bohdan Lenkiewicz and Danek Zaniewski).

<sup>35</sup> A speech delivered to Mowgli, the child accepted into the wolf pack; see "Kaa Hunting", in Rudyard Kipling, *The Jungle Book*, New York, NY: The Century, 1894, 53–54.

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin R. Barber, *Consumed: How Markets Corrupt Children, Infantilize Adults, and Swallow Citizens Whole*, New York, NY, and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2007.

by imitating their peers. This transition occurred in the next generation, primarily after World War Two and during the systemic revolution which established communism in Poland. And not because children ceased to have governesses, tutors at home, and a sense of security resulting from their material status. After all, many children met with the same circumstances after World War One in the free Poland. The process of "declassing" families expatriated from the Kresy affected the lives of my heroes in sundry degrees. In one matter, however, their fates were shared: patriotism became a way of overcoming the feeling of catastrophe. And this could happen only with the recognition of a free Poland. That process unfolded differently after World War Two, when my heroes had their own children. I recall us being labelled with the term *Bandar-log* when I was ten years old. Today my guess is this term was already anachronistic. "*Bandar-log*" lost its meaning because the circumstances of growing up proved to be completely different. If there had been any unconscious revolution, it happened in child-rearing. The harshest rules, constantly enforced by our grandmas, proved helpless even in the most traditional families. But this is an entirely different story, precisely because *The Jungle Book* quickly lost its magical charm.<sup>37</sup> *Bandar-log* in action is an attempt at looking at the process of growing up, and at the relationship of traumatic experience with mythology in bygone times. It is all about transitioning from eagerly pulling each other by the tails to a conscious responsibility for oneself and others. I think this margin of freedom, this concession for the temporary suspension of accepted rules, was an essential tool in the process of maturation that centred on grappling with catastrophe.

What was the influence of upbringing on behaviour? How did it reveal itself in confrontation with drama? The splendid scene where Nik throws out of a train wagon fellow passengers who could threaten the clandestine escape from Russia of Mr Andrzej, a young Polish legionnaire dressed up as Mlle Lucette, is a prime example of *Bandar-log* in action.<sup>38</sup> In an operation worthy of *Stalky*, "not even for a moment did it occur to him to wake up his elders and entrust them with the further fate of the matter".<sup>39</sup> Nik is twelve years old and he proceeds as a born

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<sup>37</sup> It all began with categorizing *The Jungle Book* as childish, which was likely meant to deflect criticism aimed at Kipling's imperialism. However, together with the collapse of reading, this undermined the capacity for reflection. Today it seems to me that the "millennials", at least, have no idea of what's going on in these tales.

<sup>38</sup> Żurakowska, *Pożegnanie domu*, ch. 17. Mlle Lucette, the Swiss governess of Renia Oleśnicka, appeared in *Skarby*. In Dereszewicze, the Swiss teacher Dromler remained with the children until 1916.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 328: "Ani na chwilę nie przyszło mu do głowy, by zbudzić starszych i powierzyć im dalsze losy tej sprawy".

scout, but only a Bandar-log could invent and carry out something like this! My conclusion is that "Bandar-log" served as a critical, ironic term adults used to describe the behaviour of children in a way that helped the young build trust in their own powers. Naturally, Nik's psychological profile played a considerable role here. Stefan Kieniewicz as a child would not have been capable of doing what Nik did. And as a father, he would have accepted the reasoning Nik heard from his Uncle Dymitr – namely, that "[f]or the conscience there are no evil matters – only evil intentions".<sup>40</sup> Nor did this line of reasoning protect me from repeating the fate of a wimp. What is crucial is that even terrified children did not give up: they proved they were able to behave if not exactly heroically, then most certainly responsibly. Indeed, Nik, that potential Bandar-log, will sneak back at night to his plundered manor house in order to get his heroic great-grandfather's war standard from the January Uprising of 1863.<sup>41</sup>

Here, my theme concerns how literature deals with childhood experiences caught up in rapid transformation, confronting war and revolution, and then how, under the influence of these experiences, myth takes up the loss of childhood, when that loss simultaneously involves the destruction of the child's world. Myth becomes a crucial element in the transition to a mature identity in a reborn Motherland. What ends for the children from Niżpol together with their childhood is the Arcadian myth of the Kresy as a fabled paradise. Counter to the poet's expectations,<sup>42</sup> the young expatriates from the "land of childhood" will "none other than in spring time" see Poland – their home regained. "Now we have our MOTHERLAND. This means more than a home", says Nik,<sup>43</sup> and Stefan echoes him: "[W]e were very young and could take pleasure in the fact that in return for losing our home and country, we gained a free Poland".<sup>44</sup> This was not a common attitude at the time. Many members of the landed gentry, bereft of their properties on the Kresy, cursed the Peace of Riga of 1921, signed between

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<sup>40</sup> Ibidem, 329: "Dla sumienia nie istnieją sprawy złe, tylko złe intencje".

<sup>41</sup> Nik from Żurakowska's novel in many aspects incorporates Henryk Sienkiewicz's pattern of a courageous boy – a candidate for a hero "with no blemish and without fear".

<sup>42</sup> From the famous poem "Herostrates" by Jan Lechoń (1899–1956), a prominent Polish poet. He published "Herostrates" as a young man, in 1920. He faces in the poem the problem of the Romantic national tradition in the context of the future of the country. The well-known verse goes: "A wiosną niechaj wiosnę, nie Polskę, zobacz!" (And in spring let me see spring, not Poland!). See Czesław Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London: University of California Press, 1983 (ed. pr. 1969), 385.

<sup>43</sup> Żurakowska, *Pożegnanie domu*, 374 (capital letters in the original): "Mamy teraz OJCZYZNĘ. To więcej, niż dom".

<sup>44</sup> Kieniewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 41: "[B]yliśmy jeszcze bardzo młodzi i mogliśmy się cieszyć, że w zamian za utratę domu i kraju rodzinnego uzyskaliśmy wolną Polskę".

Poland and Soviet Russia, treating it as treason.<sup>45</sup> Even more numerous than these former landowners were Poles driven from other regions, especially those who witnessed the extermination in Podolia and Volhynia with impotent rage. They felt as if the Rzeczpospolita had renounced them. Their testimonies are choked with bitterness and despair, their reports replete with cruelties.<sup>46</sup> Such notions are not to be judged simplistically, as if these noblemen were merely trying to defend their holdings or their social status.<sup>47</sup> They were not colonizers of those lands, and above all they did not feel alien there. Nonetheless, they were shocked at the hatred they elicited.<sup>48</sup> It is worth knowing that the children processed the events that deprived them of their homes in a similar way. In her unfinished novel *Nieporozumienia* [Misunderstandings], Żurawska wished to highlight this contrast of attitudes and manifold reactions. She tried to appraise fairly the reasons for regret and the feeling of guilt. Perhaps if time had allowed, the problem would have died out in a natural way, would have given room to new challenges and needs.<sup>49</sup> On the Vilnius–Pinsk–Lviv axis, the old borderland could not be recreated. This was especially true with regard to the earlier domination of large estates. Thus, the federalist project was a utopia, particularly within the borders agreed to by the Riga Peace. Confronted with awakening national aspirations and feeling under threat from the Bolsheviks, Poland did not find effective solutions to these issues.

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<sup>45</sup> Protest of Henryk Grabowski in the Sejm on 14 April 1921.

<sup>46</sup> Zofia Kossak-Szczucka, *Požoga* [Conflagration], Kraków: Krakowska Spółka Wydawnicza, 1922; Józef Franciszek Wójcik, *Powrót na Kresy. Część I: rok 1920* [Back to the Kresy. Part I: 1920], Rumia: Józef Franciszek Wójcik, 2003.

<sup>47</sup> Not once did Stefan Kieniewicz ask himself if the defence of the Kresy concerned anything more than the interests of the landowners; see his *Pamiętniki*, 39. This topic is highly charged in regard to the times both before and after the partitions (see the works by Daniel Beauvois), but it is an even conundrum because of the fate of civilians, not only Polish, during Soviet rule.

<sup>48</sup> The surprise expressed over the *pogrom* was outright identical in Niżpol and Dereszewicz; A. Kieniewicz, *Nad Prypecią*. Worth adding is that, during the next war, the Polish population eagerly plundered not only the manors, but also the municipal buildings – if only to mention the Officers' Yacht Club in Warsaw on the Vistula, emptied of anything valuable immediately after the capitulation of Warsaw in September 1939.

<sup>49</sup> The obvious national and social tensions of the period between the two world wars made embracing the name Kresy in the eastern voivodeships a problem admittedly understandable, albeit misfortunate; cf. Mirosław Ustrzycki, *Ziemiańscy na Kresach 1864–1914. Świat wartości i postaw* [The Polish Gentry in the Kresy 1864–1914: A World of Values and Attitudes], Kraków: Arcana, 2006; Włodzimierz Mędrzecki, *Województwo wołyńskie 1921–1939. Elementy przemian społecznych, cywilizacyjnych, politycznych* [The Wołyń Voivodeship 1921–1939: Some Elements of Social, Civilizational, and Political Transformations], Wrocław: Ossolineum, 1988.

#### 4.

The childhood experience of my heroes was a hastened shouldering of responsibility for others, a necessary concession to an irreversible fate. All that was lost was what created our memories and that loss was compensated by an idea. Perhaps this sounds too simple? Delving deeper into the story, I find a message of hope that allows trauma to be transformed into maturity. The Bandar-log survive owing to the hope of becoming part of the Seonee Pack. The Nizpol children do not hope for something that is going to come to them all by itself. Rather, theirs is an active attitude. They will build their Motherland out of a sense of duty, at the same time hoping that they will also be rebuilding their home, by returning a sense of order to their lives. I have stressed that in this particular case – that of children from privileged circles – the confrontation with fate proved the effectiveness of their upbringing. The Bandar-log passed muster despite all the commandments and convictions that were broken. In their history, I do not find any attempt at idealizing the privileges of their early lives.<sup>50</sup> At the time, the prevailing notion was that all children, whether rich or poor, whether from the village or the city, became more resourceful in life from having to confront life's difficulties earlier and more often. No one used the term "Bandar-log" to indicate that the children were not "well raised". It did not mean that they were lacking good manners. Thanks to Bandar-log they did not need the usual contrast between the rules and the requirements of childhood life to help them get through difficult moments. Following these beliefs, Stefan Żeromski's plot involving Cedro and Gajkoś repeats itself with the stress on the stereotype of the loyal servant. And indeed, this is how subsequent literary narratives took shape.<sup>51</sup> In this material there are traces of relationships between the children from the manors and those from the village, ones that were highlighted, for example, by Buyno-Arctowa, and which are, in fact, pejorative. In the process of rescuing the banner of the January Uprising from the devastated manor, Nik bribes the butler Hawryłko – a village boy employed by the family. Though

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<sup>50</sup> It is understandable that Stefan Kieniewicz, when editing his memoirs sixty years later, was even ultra-critical towards himself. However, in *Bezdomni* his presentation of the characters is rather benevolently satirical.

<sup>51</sup> In Stefan Żeromski's *Popioły* [Ashes, 1902], the old sergeant-major Jacek Gajkoś is the mentor and guardian of young Krzysztof Cedro in his military service, above all spent in the famed regiment of the Vistulan Uhlans in Spain, 1808–1812; their bond symbolizes the equality of status, despite age and rank, in the service of the Motherland. This pattern recurs in all possible types of literature describing the violent encounter of young people with war, like in Żeromski's *Przedwiośnie* [The Coming Spring, 1924], to mention only one example.

a second earlier he was “a homie”, now he is ready to betray Nik, a “[c]ompanion of his childhood years, a friend who shared every one of his toys with him, and whom he trusted”.<sup>52</sup> And with whom he spoke Ukrainian! Ksawery Pruszyński (1907–1950), who came from that region, testified that children from the Polish manors acquired Ukrainian quite naturally.<sup>53</sup> The revolution broke barriers, but not beliefs,<sup>54</sup> and superstitions about class were buttressed by prevailing stereotypes throughout the rapidly changing circumstances.

## 5.

The experience of childhood trauma during war and revolution proved to be attractive as literary material. The emerging narratives influenced attitudes and imagination in the next generation. Schemas, stereotypes, and mythologies predominated over authentic experience. Żurakowska’s novel is special in this regard. Even the characters, the brave Bandar-log, turned out to be resistant to mythologization. They proved this in yet another confrontation with an unwanted fate during World War Two. Nevertheless, it is worth thinking about the place of these narratives in the process of mythologizing the Kresy. Transforming experiences into a literary image was the first step; the second was harnessing literature into the politics of the time. The third step led to mythologization.

The founding myth of the Kresy was the Edenic garden, “a land of milk and honey”, where the young characters were happy and innocent. Their fates took shape in a way that allowed the exile from paradise to be substituted by the idea of a happy family in the reborn Motherland. This memory and its literary form influenced education and imagination, and also provided the scouting

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<sup>52</sup> Żurakowska, *Pożegnanie domu*, 351–352: “Towarzysza swych lat dziecinnych, przyjaciela, który dzielił się z nim ongiś każdą zabawką i darzył zaufaniem”.

<sup>53</sup> Pruszyński, while an intern at the Polish General Consulate in Kiev (in 1933), managed to pass himself off as a local Ukrainian, and thereby succeeded in visiting his family’s part of the country; see Mieczysław Pruszyński, *Migawki wspomnień* [Snippets of Recollection], Warszawa: Rosner i Wspólnicy, 2002, 66. See also Ksawery Pruszyński, *W czerwonej Hiszpanii* [In Red Spain], Warszawa: Towarzystwo Wydawnicze „Rój”, 1937. Ukrainian was also the language of daily use in the Sobańskis’ Zwedenówka. However, in Dereszewicze it was the other way around; this is purportedly why efforts were made to hire staff from the Polish settlements.

<sup>54</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz, *Pamiętniki*, 40, recounted that in 1918, having arrived in Dereszewicze a few days ahead of his parents, under the protection of the German army, he eagerly played with “little Kiper, the young son of the vodka distiller, but when Mom came, she put an end to all such comradery and little Kiper disappeared from the horizon” (małym Kiperem, synkiem gorzelanego, lecz Mama po przyjeździe położyła kres poufałościom i mały Kiper znikł z horyzontu).

ethos of duty and service which states "all that is ours, to Poland we give".<sup>55</sup> At the same time, this became a didactic narrative promoting appreciation of the achievements of a free Poland.<sup>56</sup> It gave birth to the variant of the Kresy myth that served as a compensation, a variant that turned into a vision of free Poland as a capstone of national consciousness. Briefly stated, this myth served to underpin the none too successful policy towards national minorities. Nevertheless, people discerned a very important unifying element in this myth, so necessary in the years of captivity. Of the characters I have presented, at the very least Nik and Stefan constructed a critical attitude towards their experiences and were distrustful towards mythology. Though faithful to their dear memories, they did not suppose that their suffering justified anything.

The huge career of the Kresy myth began only after World War Two, and my heroes could not find their feet in the new situation. This happened because "after the war" (and not after any liberation), the possibility of free expression was blocked. In the wake of the captivity, the possibility to voice one's own experience and formulate an interpretation was distorted. Memories of war and occupation, of Konzentrationslager and Gulag camps, of smugglers and insurgents, encountered barriers and traumas. All these things could not be freely expressed. Literature managed to cope with the silence, at least until socialist realism was imposed. Children's literature, by contrast, had no chance. As long as it was possible, people from the first generation returned to literature from their own childhoods, and tried to contrast the narrative learned at home with the new version of the past promulgated in the schools. The results were ambiguous.

## 6.

The traumatic experience of the second generation was again war, revolution, and losing their homes. For people living in the east of Poland it meant Soviet deportation, the massacre in Volhynia, and ultimately exile – and all of this became only marginally the topic of children's literature. Why? Because these stories offered writers no way to write a happy ending? Or perhaps because of the

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<sup>55</sup> The first words of the hymn of the Polish scouts in the version by Olga Drahonowska-Małkowska, who in 1912 adapted the lyrics to suit the melody of the revolutionary song "Na barykady, ludu roboczy!" [Workers – To the Barricades!].

<sup>56</sup> A delayed echo of this is Hanna Mortkowicz-Olczakowa, *Jak się wszystko zmieniło* [How Everything Has Changed], ill. Antoni Uniechowski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Jana Mortkowicza, 1946.

coerced silence in which those experiences were cloaked after the war?<sup>57</sup> Maybe the tragedy was of such magnitude that children's literature, childish readers could not be allowed to know?<sup>58</sup> As one who fortuitously survived not only the war, but also the post-war period, I really cannot refer to memories. No shadow rests on them. To what extent is this an ordinary experience and to what degree extraordinary? As a historian I can assume that it is rather ordinary.

This perspective allows us, however, to indicate the continuation of the process transforming experiences into mythology, and to sharpen our suggestions regarding the role of literature in this process – particularly children's literature. The experience of childhood we have outlined here permits us to think that literature served as a conduit through which a deeply troubled past became material for mythologization. The children themselves, at least in part, were protected from such direct participation by the process of their upbringing. And through such upbringing we have found the source of self-reliance against school indoctrination in post-war Poland. Then the need was not to look at reality, and so myth swallowed up their testimonies. This myth-making process proved to be even stronger after World War Two, when mentioning the many traumas was limited by censorship and political control. The myth sank roots primarily because of the final severing of the Kresy from Poland, something which affected an incomparably greater mass of people. The truth – the fighting, the war crimes, and losses – was banned; this created ideally fertile conditions for mythologizing. The children's story about losing home, about bravery and persistence, about the creative power of hope, was overwhelmed by the need for a discourse that could compensate for the feeling of loss.

I would sum the matter up as follows: the children of the mythical paradise were equipped with a capacity to face life's challenges, without feeling fated to hardship. Their parents, in turn, seem to have surrendered to naive illusions. Undoubtedly, some of them were pompous or at least frivolous. But being critical comes more easily with the passage of time. It was only after the fact, only once

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<sup>57</sup> See Mariusz Zawodniak, "Baśń i realizm. Jeszcze o powojennej sytuacji literatury dla najmłodszych" [The Fable and Realism: Once Again about the Situation of Literature for the Youngest], in Kornelia Ćwiklak, ed., *Baśń we współczesnej kulturze* [The Fable in Contemporary Culture], vol. 1: *Niewyczerpana moc baśni. Literatura, sztuka, kultura masowa* [The Inexhaustible Power of the Fable: Literature, Art, Mass Culture], Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2014, 151–162; Zbigniew Jarosiński, "Socrealizm dla dzieci" [Socialist Realism for Children], *Teksty Drugie* 6/54 (1998), 69–86.

<sup>58</sup> The texts by, e.g., Odojewski, along with the whole of memoir and compensation literature for children, are unsuitable. I harbour a deep reluctance towards grasping these issues from the child's perspective or as literary productions targeted at children.

everything had been decided that the witnesses of those times in their written recollections revealed their conviction that destruction lay inevitably in store. There is nothing much of use here. And those living in paradise, the Polish landowners, were in any case not inclined to listen much to those who did not share their views on the world. This was true as well for the Poles who had arrived from Tsardom's western lands in vast numbers, seeking there, on the Kresy, the positions of status which were ever so hard to obtain in Congress Poland.<sup>59</sup> Poles from the intelligentsia enjoying "a situation" in a manor on the Kresy seldom shared the faith and self-satisfaction of the lord and his family. In the main, however, Poles from the Congress lands concealed their radical view, especially in social matters. The plight of the peasants received even less attention, for the peasants, according to the way the landed class thought about things, were simply a resource to be exploited "in paradise". Polish landowners were therefore even less inclined to believe in haunting premonitions since, in their judgement, they, the gentry, were a permanent fixture in their own land.<sup>60</sup>

## 7.

The children of Niżpol and Dereszewicze were the last generation of people whose Polish identity was tied – and for over 500 years – to lands that are today Ukrainian and Belarusian. They hailed foremost from the local people, and not the colonizers – and this especially goes for the aristocratic families, the great landowners who during the times of the Rzeczpospolita had accepted the Polish language, culture, and religion.<sup>61</sup> Thus, no viable parallels can be drawn with the French in Algeria, the Portuguese in Angola, or the descendants of the

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<sup>59</sup> The term is traditionally applied to the area of the Russian partition of Poland, from which Tsar Alexander I in 1815 created the Kingdom of Poland. It ceased to exist separately in 1832, following the failure of the Poles' November Uprising. In 1864, directly after the collapse of the next major insurrection against Russia – the January Uprising – these lands were renamed "Vistula Land". Lands inhabited primarily by Poles developed propitiously in the early twentieth century; nonetheless, the numerically growing intelligentsia could not find employment. Thus, that class's members sought their fortunes on estates out on the Kresy, and even more often in the Russian hinterland.

<sup>60</sup> This lost Paradise was analysed by Czesław Miłosz in *Szukanie Ojczyzny* [Searching for Motherland], Kraków: Znak, 1992.

<sup>61</sup> See Hieronim Grała, "Rzeczpospolita szlachecka – twór kolonialny?" [The Republic of Nobles: A Colonial Entity?], in Jan Kieniewicz, ed., *Debaty Artes Liberales*, vol. 10: *Perspektywy postkolonializmu w Polsce, Polska w perspektywie postkolonialnej* [Postcolonial Perspectives in Poland, Poland in Postcolonial Perspective], Warszawa: Wydział „Artes Liberales”, Uniwersytet Warszawski, 2016, 275–299.

Spanish conquistadors.<sup>62</sup> The exploitation of the subjected population did not have a colonial character. This needs to be borne in mind when we reflect on the consequences of the social and confessional conflicts of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and when we examine Russian policy vis-à-vis the great Polish estates on the lands incorporated into the empire of the Tsars.<sup>63</sup> All the same, this is to cite our knowledge as of today – and with today's sensitivities. Back in those years, despite the experiences of the revolution of 1905, the Polish enclaves, rich and European, did not seem imperilled. They were protected by the Tsarist authorities, and this was by no means insignificant. When Tsarist Russia was overthrown, it seemed to plenty of Poles that a meeting of the minds could be achieved with a democratic Russia. This was particularly true of the aristocratic milieu – and of the ownership class in general. These illusions were altogether ubiquitous. But with the coming of the civil war, in which White Russia perished, all national aspirations, not only those of the Poles, proved to be merely wishful thinking. The revolution swept that world away with no regard to class nor to ethnic identity. This is easy to discern today. In 1917 and 1918, illusions were the norm.<sup>64</sup>

Even less so did the children have a sense of impending Fatum. They had to behave in accord with the decisions of the adults, but they were not hamstrung by the feeling that this or that could not happen. The Bandar-log did not anticipate the future, though they dreamed dreams. Hence, those children proved ready for anything; nothing bridled their imagination. In acting

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<sup>62</sup> This is very fashionable now, which does not mean it is wise; see Stefan Kieniewicz, "Daniel Beauvois o kresach południowych (w związku z pracą D. Beauvois, *Le noble, le serf et le revisor. La noblesse polonaise entre le tsarisme et les masses ukrainiennes (1831–1863)*, Editions des archives contemporaines, Paris–Montreaux 1985, s. 365)" [Daniel Beauvois on the Southern Kresy (In Response to the Work of D. Beauvois, *Le noble, le serf et le revisor. La noblesse polonaise entre le tsarisme et les masses ukrainiennes (1831–1863)*, Editions des archives contemporaines, Paris–Montreaux 1985, p. 365)], *Przegląd Historyczny* 77.4 (1986), 767–775.

<sup>63</sup> Daniel Beauvois writes more extensively about this in *Trójkąt ukraiński. Szlachta, carat i lud na Wołyniu, Podolu i Kijowszczyźnie 1793–1914* [The Ukrainian Triangle: Nobles, Tsarism, and the People of Volhynia, Podolia, and the Kiev Region 1793–1914], trans. Krzysztof Rutkowski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo UMCS, 2005. See the polemics over this matter in the debate on colonialism in Jan Kieniewicz, ed., *Debaty IBI AL*, vol. 1, Warszawa: Instytut Badań Interdyscyplinarnych „Artes Liberales”, Uniwersytet Warszawski, 2008.

<sup>64</sup> This is wonderfully captured in the memoirs of the prince of Pereyaslav, Mieczysław Jałowiecki, *Na skraju imperium i inne wspomnienia* [On the Empire's Outer Edge and Other Recollections], selection and layout of the text by Michał Jałowiecki, Warszawa: Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza „Czytelnik”, 2013. See Karol Wędziągowski, *Pamiętniki* [Memoirs], ed. Grzegorz Eberhardt, Warszawa: Iskry, 2007. In may well be added that quite similar illusions accompanied the Soviet invasion of Poland in 1939; see M. Pruszyński, *Migawki wspomnień*, 33.

spontaneously, they created Hope. And thanks to Hope, and being unaware of the pointlessness of resistance, they squared off with Ananke. And they won.

Today I, a descendant of the Bandar-log, do not anxiously strain my ear, for I know that no voice will reach me thence.<sup>65</sup> Those lands and waters of the old Rzeczpospolita,<sup>66</sup> long covered in the dust of dying memory and destruction... – well, with every move of my hand I am revealing artifacts, memories, family traces, and remembrances, or rather their remains. The witnesses of the first storm have already passed away, and there are few left who witnessed the second one. Traces of memory and testimonies of feelings were left by people resistant to ideologies, by children capable of building a new home following failure upon failure. Beyond events, beyond history, beyond even narratives these traces still exist.

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<sup>65</sup> Just as no voice from Lithuania reached Adam Mickiewicz... The exiles from the Kresy were lucky to have rescued a photo album, but even these were to perish in the next catastrophe. As it would happen, after writing these words a voice from my family's former parts arrived, a voice of strengthening Belarusian identity. I spoke about this in December 2019; see Jan Kieniewicz, "Dziedzictwo Polesia. Od *locus amoenus* do *locus communis*" [The Heritage of Polesie: From *locus amoenus* to *locus communis*], Wydział „Artes Liberales” Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego [Faculty of “Artes Liberales” of the University of Warsaw], <http://al.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Jan-Kieniewicz-Dziedzictwo-Polesia.-Od-locus-amoenus-do-locus-communis.pdf> (accessed 10 June 2020).

<sup>66</sup> “Kaczki ciągną nad wodami Rzeczpospolitej” (The ducks are descending over the waters of the Res Publica), as Czesław Miłosz wrote in “Haftki gorsetu” [Clasps of a Corset] in his *Nieobjęta ziemia* [Unattainable Earth], Paryż: Instytut Kultury, 1984, 20–21; a poem inspired by reading Janina Żółtowska's memoirs at the home of the Weintraubs in Cambridge, MA.

The book is to be recommended for academics as well as graduate and post-graduate students working on the reception of Classical Antiquity and its transformations around the world.

David Movrin, University of Ljubljana  
From the editorial review

*Our Mythical Hope* is the latest collection of articles by scholars participating in an ongoing collaboration to ensure that the beauty and profundity of Classical myth remain known, and (hopefully) remain part of our modern culture. The size of this compendium, the sweep of subjects considered, the involvement of leading experts from around the world, all testify to how important and extensive this initiative has become over the last decade. The project's continued commitment to engage all ages, especially the young, and to extend its outreach beyond the Academy merely, makes it a leading model for how research retains its relevance.

Mark O'Connor, Boston College  
From the editorial review



Classical Antiquity is a particularly important field in terms of "Hope studies" [...]. For centuries, the ancient tradition, and classical mythology in particular, has been a common reference point for whole hosts of creators of culture, across many parts of the world, and with the new media and globalization only increasing its impact. Thus, in our research at this stage, we have decided to study how the authors of literary and audiovisual texts for youth make use of the ancient myths to support their young protagonists (and readers or viewers) in crucial moments of their existence, on their road into adulthood, and in those dark hours when it seems that life is about to shatter and fade away. However, if Hope is summoned in time, the crisis can be overcome and the protagonist grows stronger, with a powerful uplifting message for the public. [...] Owing to this, we get a chance to remain true to our ideas, to keep faith in our dreams, and, when the decisive moment comes, to choose not hatred but love, not darkness but light.

Katarzyna Marciniak, University of Warsaw  
From the introductory chapter

