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## Kresy (Polish Eastern Borderlands) in Polish Literature of 1918–2018. Significant Interpretative Perspectives

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**Abstract:** The paper offers a comprehensive, synthetic account of the discourse on the subject of the Polish Eastern Borderland over the course of the last hundred years. It analyses the ways in which the understanding of the notion of Kresy and “borderland”, as well as the strategies for presenting the term, have changed, including attempts to replace this category with other terms. Furthermore, the paper characterises the dynamics concerning the transformations of situational contexts that emerged in the period of the Second Polish Republic, developed during World War II, after 1945 (in the country and abroad) and continuing from the 1980s and 1990s to the present. Significant interpretative perspectives include, among others, the trends in literary schools, the legends and myths of the Polish Eastern Borderland, the notion of the borderline of cultures, small homelands, and methodological phrases and breakthroughs (spatial turn, geopoetics, postcolonial criticism).

**Keywords:** Polish Eastern Borderlands, borderland discourse, Polish literature of 1918–2018, myths and legends, borderland of cultures, small homelands, controversies over the category of “Kresy” (Eastern Borderlands of Poland), postcolonial criticism

The subject matter taken up in this article is one that is very extensive, multi-faceted and difficult to describe, especially in a single text; as an endeavour it is almost backbreaking. In fact, characterising any phenomenon over a span of 100 years is usually a high risk task and generalisations formulated in a relatively short essay bear the risk of oversimplification. It should be remembered that the problem indicated in the title appears not only with reference to literature, but also as an indispensable element of geographical, historical, national, axiological and cultural matters. Besides, the term “Kresy” has functioned in different forms,<sup>1</sup> and although the bor-

<sup>1</sup> Stefan Kieniewicz stresses that “three different names have been used to describe the eastern territory of the former Republic of Poland, located on the other side of the Bug and the Neman rivers. Those territories were referred to as: “Lands Annexed,” “Lithuania and Rus” or “Eastern Kresy (Borderland).” In the 19th and 20th centuries those names were sometimes used interchangeably, although each of them had a different meaning, a different

derland myth started to solidify in the times of the partition of Poland,<sup>2</sup> its germs could be found much earlier, for example in the version of “borderland *heroicum*” or connected with the 17<sup>th</sup>-century idea of that area being *antemurale christianitatis*. In the interwar period, evolution of the semantic field of “Kresy” became activated, which was even then the source of controversies that have continued to the present day. With the diminishing size of the territories of Poland and its borders moving westward, the notion of “Kresy” came to include territories more and more extensive longitudinally and more shallow latitudinally.<sup>3</sup> Leaving aside, for a moment, the discussions on the very notion, so frequently already referred to, let us assume that the terms “kresy”/“Kresy”<sup>4</sup> contain, first of all, the varied history of Polish presence in the East, and the term “Kresy” has become in the consciousness of many Poles a sort of emotional dogma, a quasi “home of the Polish being.”<sup>5</sup> In my opinion, there is a necessity at least to make an attempt to present the multiplicity of the senses connected with Kresy and their characteristics, up to their deconstruction, and the ways of including them in various interpretative contexts, which reveal themselves in the subsequent methodological “turns” and “breakthroughs” in present-day literary studies (or in the humanities, generally). Hence, the formula included in the subtitle of the present study becomes a certain filter for approaching such problematics by indicating significant interpretative formulas of the “eastern” subject matter finding its representation in Polish literature of the period 1918 – 2018. We are, then, interested not so much in a complete corpus of literary works, which, by the way, has been already catalogued and generally thematologically processed,<sup>6</sup> but in highlighting

emotional load and implied a different political content.” See: S. Kieniewicz, “Kresy. Problem Litwy i Rusi w dobie porozbiorowej,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1989, No. 46, p. 1. An extended version is titled “Kresy. Przemiany terminologiczne w perspektywie dziejowej,” *Przegląd Wschodni* 1991, Vol. I, issue 1, pp. 3–13. It should be added that in the 20th century, in particular, the lexicon of the terms used interchangeably has become even more differentiated.

<sup>2</sup> Jacek Kolbuszewski starts his considerations of “Kresy” with Wincenty Pol’s “Kresy Mohorta,” assigning to the poet a significant role in creating an axiological understanding of the term in his chivalric rhapsody from 1854. See: idem, *Kresy*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1995, pp. 5–52. See also J. Kolbuszewski, “Kresy jako kategoria aksjologiczna,” in: *Kresy – pojęcie i rzeczywistość*, a collection of essays edited by K. Handke, Warszawa: Slawistyczny Ośrodek Wydawniczy, 1997, pp. 119–130.

<sup>3</sup> See: A. Ziemilski, “Miasto kresowe Polski międzywojennej: mit i rzeczywistość,” *Odra* 1983, No. 4, p. 38.

<sup>4</sup> See: R. Kiersnowski, “Kresy przez małe i przez wielkie ‘K’ – kryteria tożsamości,” in: *Kresy – pojęcie i rzeczywistość*, pp. 109–118. The spelling reflects the process of transformation of “kresy” as a common noun into Kresy – a geographically, politically and axiologically loaded proper noun beginning with a capital letter.

<sup>5</sup> In this way J. Kolbuszewski paraphrased Martin Heidegger’s saying. See: idem, “Legenda Kresów w literaturze polskiej XIX i XX wieku,” in: *Między Polską etniczną a historyczną*, edited by W. Wrześniński, Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1988, p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, B. Hadaczek, *Historia literatury kresowej*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011 (as well as the earlier edition

representative approaches to that literature, which will be helpful in organising the title subject matter.

It was Jerzy Jarzębski who, characterising the evolution of the depiction of “Kresy” after the war, noticed that “the Eastern subject matter” in Polish literature is in a way an attempt “to describe a cut-off hand, which still hurts” and stressed that this subject matter was “present in the whole period of” the Second Republic of Poland whose independence was regained after 1918, and “was reborn in various forms over decades, appearing unexpectedly in the works of writers who could not, even from their early childhood, remember the territories located east of the Bug river.”<sup>7</sup>

Let us begin by posing a question about the situational contexts in which the syndrome of “Kresy” appeared in the period of the Second Republic of Poland, after 1939, after the end of World War II, and since the 1980s and 1990s up to contemporary times. Isolating those periods, we would like to indicate the changing dynamics of the “historical landscape” and the primary historical and cultural scenery in individual periods. Obviously, we can only signal selected elements of the constantly changing discourse of “Kresy.” We follow the principle according to which it is impossible to try to draft the frames of the “Kresy” narratives without “grasping the relations between an expression and its situational, social and cultural context.”<sup>8</sup>

In the interwar period, a new understanding of the term “kresy” started to be formed. Kresy of Mohort, Ukrainian, deeply related to the south-eastern territories of the pre-partition Republic of Poland, found themselves on the other side of the new border established on the grounds of the Treaty of Riga. The term started to be used with reference to the eastern territories of Poland reborn after 123 years of partition, frequently more precisely called the “inner kresy,” that is the eastern provinces of the Second Republic of

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Szczecin 2008), J. Jarzębski, “Exodus (ewolucja obrazu kresów po wojnie),” in: idem, *W Polsce czyli wszędzie. Szkice o polskiej prozie współczesnej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PEN, 1992; *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*, edited by E. Czaplejewicz and E. Kasperski, Warszawa: „Wiedza Powszechna”, 1996; S. Uliasz, *Literatura Kresów – kresy literatury. Fenomen Kresów Wschodnich w literaturze polskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1994; D. Sapa, *Między polską wyspą a ukraińskim morzem. Kresy południowo-wschodnie w polskiej prozie lat 1918 – 1988*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 1998.

<sup>7</sup> J. Jarzębski, “Exodus,” p. 129. This text – as the author informs in the bibliographical note – in its first version was presented in March 1986 as part of the spoken periodical *Na Głos* [Aloud], in the conference room of Cracow KIK, and appeared in print later on. Getting slightly ahead of our considerations, we should notice that the sentence about “phantom limb pain” will be evoked in analyses of the “Kresy” discourse and in interpretations with an application of notions from the field of psychoanalysis and postcolonialism. The quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Agnieszka Grząśko or Elżbieta Rokosz, unless stated otherwise

<sup>8</sup> Mieczysław Dąbrowski, using discourse theories, writes about the rule of discursiveisation and although he uses it with reference to a different subject, it is universal. See: idem, *Projekt krytyki etycznej. Studia i szkice literackie*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2005, p. 218.

Poland. However, in the consciousness of some of the people of the times, as well as independence activists, the “real” kresy (i.e. outer, historic, Mohort) found themselves outside the cordon, and thus the argument was used that we could only talk about so-called “Eastern Kresy,” if the term was to function at all.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the local inhabitants, as inheritors of the idea of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, indicated that the term kresy was “a peculiar name, worthy of a chaotic transitory era” and it carried in it the mechanism of “free shortening, shrinking or extending itself – according to the needs of one nation, on the territory of three nations.”<sup>10</sup> Rejecting the Kresy concept of Lithuania, they indicated the “artificial work,” that is manipulations carried out to popularise the old name, but with reference to the altered reality; they concluded that “kresy are remembered, but countries are forgotten.” However, the term caught on and became in the interwar period “a semi-formalised name for six (eastern) borderland provinces,”<sup>11</sup> and besides, the very notion of Eastern Kresy “blended itself completely into the notion of Polish national and state community.”<sup>12</sup> This was decided upon by factors that were both external (consciousness of the constant threat from the East) and internal (erosion of the traditional understanding of Lithuania; the category of “double national and cultural identity,” and even more so – that connected with the state – was becoming more and more problematic and complicated<sup>13</sup>).

It is a fact that Eastern Kresy were born mentally together with the Second Republic of Poland, although the process of their constitution had been taking

<sup>9</sup> See: Joachim Bartoszewicz, *Znaczenie polityczne Kresów Wschodnich dla Polski*, Warszawa: Druk. “A. Michalski,” 1924, p. 3. “But Kresy of the former Republic of Poland – the Ukrainian lands – are not located within the borders of present-day Poland. Neither Red Rus, nor western Podolia [...] nor Volhynia and Polesia, nor Lithuania had ever been Ukrainian Poland. It is unjust and inappropriate to use the name “Kresy” regarding the Lithuanian and Rus territories, which the Polish state currently has under its control. Our Kresy are located outside the cordon.” J. Bartoszewicz was a National Democracy politician and he held the position of a senator representing the Popular National Union (later the National Party).

<sup>10</sup> K. Skirmuntt, *Idea jagiellońska a polityka kresowa*, Wilno 1925, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> See: R. Kiersnowski, op. cit., p. 112.

<sup>12</sup> R. Kiersnowski, op. cit., p. 116.

<sup>13</sup> As an example we can use here Józef Piłsudski’s intention to create a federation of Poland and Lithuania, hence the famous manifesto in 1919 in Polish and Lithuanian addressed to the inhabitants of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania or the creation by general Lucjan Żeligowski of so-called Central Lithuania as a result of an alleged rebellion, which after multiple perturbations ended up in the incorporation of the Vilnius region into Poland. A contemporary scholar concludes: “the Polish dream about a federation ended in the form of nationalistic claims,” A. Zieniewicz, “Czesława Miłosza „Wyprawa w Dwudziestolecie” jako ekskursja w podświadomość III RP,” in: *Nowe dwudziestolecie (1989 – 2009). Rozpoznania. Hierarchie. Perspektywy*, edited by H. Gosk, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010, p. 32. At the same time Vilnius ceased to be the capital of historic Lithuania, becoming the capital of the Province of Vilnius, included in reborn Poland, while at the Museum of War in Kaunas there was an obelisk with the characteristic caption: “Lithuanian, remember that the treacherous Pole took away Vilnius, your capital.” See: H. Wisner, *Wojna nie wojna. Szkice z przeszłości polsko-litewskiej*, Warszawa: “Książka i Wiedza,” 1978, p. 31.

place from the times of the January Uprising, when the political organism of the former Republic of Poland started to disintegrate itself into separate nations, created on the basis of ethnic divisions.<sup>14</sup> The problem of Kresy in the times of the Second Republic of Poland kept appearing in the contexts pivotal for the epoch. A representative list of the factors that co-defined the consciousness of the interwar period includes: the historic events of World War I; the Bolshevik revolution; the Polish-Bolshevik War, the Treaty of Riga, the “cutting in half” of Byelorussia and Ukraine with the new borderline and the creation of so-called Central Lithuania – the Vilnius region in the form of a “severed stump, rising into the emptiness of the swamps, into the silence of three borders, two of which are closed, and the third almost dead;”<sup>15</sup> unquenchable collective memory about the borders from before the first partition confronted with the reality of “the tragedy of the diminished borders;”<sup>16</sup> the existing conviction of the Polish character of Vilnius and L’viv (L’viv was fought for in a fratricidal war in 1918, recorded in the Polish version in the form of the legend of the Lwów Eaglets); attempts to consolidate into one political organism the post-partition segments as well as attempts to reconstruct Polish statehood on the territory of Eastern Poland, most frequently identified with “Poland B” (see: a cycle of reportages by Melchior Wańkowicz, titled, symptomatically, *Znowu siejemy w Polsce B* [Here we go a sowing in Poland B]).

The period of World War II brought about many dramatic events in Kresy whose consequences were irreversible. On September 17, 1939 the annexation of the Eastern Borderland of the Republic of Poland by the Soviet Union took place and it was, in fact, “a kind of *Anschluss* in a communist version, with tragic and irreversible consequences.”<sup>17</sup> Two simultaneous

<sup>14</sup> See: P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Kresy – dzieje pewnego pojęcia*, www. teologiapolityczna.pl (accessed on 3.02.2018), p. 5/34.

<sup>15</sup> M. Wańkowicz, *Anoda i katoda. Było to dawno*, selection, arrangement, and edition of the texts T. Jodelka-Burzecki, Kraków-Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1986, p. 243.

<sup>16</sup> See: J. Kolbuszewski, “Dramat pomniejszania granic,” *Odra* 1989, No. 11. The territory of the Polish state shrank from 734 000 km<sup>2</sup> before the partition to 388 000 km<sup>2</sup> after the Treaty of Riga, with the reduction of the former territory taking place almost exclusively in the east. The borderline running through the centre of historic Kresy, settled upon in Riga, did not satisfy any of the parties involved. It only reflected the fragile truce between the parties at war, not the demographic or political reality. It was an “artificial insertion” which divided families, communities, parishes, and economies that had intermingled for a long time. See: K. Brown, *Kresy. Biografia krainy, której nie ma* [A Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland], transl. A. Czwojdrak, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013. “The Bard” of Byelorussia, Leonard Podhorski-Okołów created a poetic etymology of this border (“granica” in Polish), which in Polish seems to have a lot in common with the verb “to injure” - “ranić.” See: the author’s poem titled *Granica*. Numerous famous inhabitants of the territory contested the border established by the Treaty of Riga, for various reasons. For more, see: S. Uliasz, *Literatura Kresów – kresy literatury*, pp. 36–44, 84–88. Very few even of the later journalists shared Juliusz Mieroszewski’s train of thought, believing that the Treaty of Riga was to some extent “a forerunner of Yalta.”

<sup>17</sup> K. Jasiewicz, *Zagłada polskich Kresów. Ziemiaństwo polskie na Kresach Północno-Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej pod okupacją sowiecką 1939–1941. Studium z dziejów zagłady dawnego narodu politycznego*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza Volumen, 1998, p. 18.

processes were taking place then, called by Eugeniusz Czaplejewicz the “siberisation of Kresy” and “kresovisation of Siberia.”<sup>18</sup> Kresy became in a way “the first station of the Cross,” experienced by Poles deported to the territory of the “white hell,” into the region of “the other world,” of Vorkuta and Kolyma, among others. The 20<sup>th</sup>-century trails intersect with the former 19<sup>th</sup>-century ones of the exiles recorded in such literary works as *Dziady* Part III and *Anhelli*. The martyrdom finds its completion in a series of repressive actions of the Soviet authorities which led to the killing, in several locations in the territory of the USSR, of both prisoners of war and civilian prisoners from Poland, considered by the occupant to be class enemies. Those actions are referred to collectively as the “Katyn massacre”<sup>19</sup> of 1940. An event of particular significance was the 1944 battle of Monte Cassino, in which the 5<sup>th</sup> Kresowa Infantry Division took part, and the Polish cemetery at Monte Cassino has become a symbolic testament of the multinational Republic of Poland. Besides the graves of Poles, there are those of soldiers representing other nationalities and ethnic groups (Byelorussians, Ukrainians) as well as Jews and followers of other religions, who lived in the eastern territories of interwar Poland.<sup>20</sup> In the years 1943 – 1945 the anti-Polish activity of Ukrainian nationalists increased, culminating in the so-called “massacres of Volhynia.”<sup>21</sup> Eastern Kresy “turned out to be a true Pandora’s box” and “exploded with excessive nationalism” as well as “primitive egalitarianism.”<sup>22</sup> Unsuccessful national policies of the Polish government in the interwar period, as well the increasing centrifugal currents fuelled by the Soviets and appearing among so-called national minorities living in Kresy, plus “hunger for land,” undoubtedly contributed to the formation of a hostile atmosphere, skilfully used by the Soviets, who as early as in 1939 were giving away to “the freed” their “master’s” (Polish) land.

However, the ultimate loss of Kresy seems to have taken place during the conference in Yalta, and the Yalta cause of 1945 started to symbolise the division of Europe, becoming, from the Polish perspective, a sign of

<sup>18</sup> E. Czaplejewicz, “Kresy a Syberia,” in: E. Czaplejewicz, E. Kasperski E., *Literatura i różnorodność. Kresy i pogranicza*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “DiG” 1996, pp. 30–37.

<sup>19</sup> See: K. Stepan, “Mord katyński,” *Polityka. Pomocnik Historyczny* (“Kresy Rzeczpospolitej. Wielki mit Polaków”), No. 2, 2015, pp. 123–125.

<sup>20</sup> In *Katechizm szturmowy* A. Międzyrzecki argues that “the stronghold of the Apennines” in a specific way engaged participants of the battle, who would think about their “small homeland,” i.e. the regions of Vilnius, Volhynia, L’viv or Pinsk. See: *Kresowa walczy w Italii*, edited by L. Paff, Italia, 1945, p. 87. Also inscriptions on monuments, e.g. on the monument on hill 575 at Monte Cassino, inform that the soldiers of the 5th Kresowa Infantry Division “were fighting – dying – winning” for L’viv and Vilnius and indicate the trail of their wandering from “being violently expelled from their homeland” through prisons, camps, Siberian tundra ... in their continuous marching towards Poland.

<sup>21</sup> See: G. Motyka, “Rzeź wołyńska,” *Polityka. Pomocnik Historyczny* 2015, No. 2, pp. 126–129.

<sup>22</sup> See: K. Jasiewicz, op. cit., pp. 50–51. The author refers to the conclusions formulated by Prof. Marian Zdziechowski a dozen or so years earlier, which turned out to be prophetic.

“the Soviet dominance and communist rule.”<sup>23</sup> Two testimonies are worth quoting here. Włada Majewska’s memories are highly telling:

While in Breda, we learn about the end of the war. The news about the Yalta settlement reaches us. Germany has been defeated – who wants, can return home, to Poland. But for us, the natives of L’viv and all those from kresy, it was very, very hard, tragic and sorrowful. We did not want to accept the political situation – the territorial division, the eastern borders – we did not want to return anywhere!<sup>24</sup>

Jerzy Stempowski, on the other hand, an excellent representative of the Polish “essay school,” “an unhurried passer-by,” already from a certain time perspective, concluded:

One “summit” conference, a few signatures and vague commentaries were enough for Poland to get rid of the remains of the Jagiellonian territory and to return to the borders of the Piasts’ Poland. No Grand Duchy of Lithuania, no “kresy,” no national minorities; one nation, one country, one language, one religion and one party; almost like *ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*. Such a picture is new, of little resemblance to the Poland of the times of elected kings or even to that of the interwar period.<sup>25</sup>

After the end of World War II the problem of Kresy may be perceived from both the domestic and émigré perspectives. During the Polish People’s Republic the borderland traditions underwent various manipulations,<sup>26</sup> carried out with varying intensity, by means of the imposition of censorship, among others. Attention was paid to negating “the Jagiellonian conception” which was contrasted with the only correct “Piast conception,” hence the promotion of the issue of the Recovered Territories and the rules of a mono-ethnic country. The notion of “Recovered Territories” was annexed by the communist authorities for propaganda reasons and “it became one of the foundation myths of the new country.” The optimistic rhetoric harmonising with this notion finally came to an end after October 1956.<sup>27</sup> It was accom-

<sup>23</sup> See: K. Kersten, “Jałta – mit i rzeczywistość,” in: *Jałta z perspektywy półwiecza*, edited by S. Nicieja, Opole: Instytut Historii Uniwersytetu Opolskiego, 1995, pp. 15–25. See also: P. Osęka, “Utrata Kresów,” *Polityka. Pomocnik Historyczny* 2015, No. 2, pp. 130–133.

<sup>24</sup> W. Majewska, *Z Lwowskiej Fali do Radia Wolna Europa*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 2006, p. 113. Tymon Terlecki’s opinion was similar: “The years (...) 1945, 1946 were the deepest low we had ever reached, deeper than that of September 1939 [...] The ground slipped from our feet, the future slammed us out.” T. Terelecki, “O ‘Wiadomościach’ bezprzymiotnikowych,” *Wiadomości* (London) 1955, No. 51/52, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> J. Stempowski, “Etapy pewnego odwrotu,” *Kultura* (Paris) 1960, issue 6/152, quoted after J. Stempowski, *W dolinie Dniestru. Listy o Ukrainie*, selected, edited and provided with an afterword by A.S. Kowalczyk. Warszawa: “LNB”, 1993, p. 96. On the other hand, Kate Brown presents the long-term process (also politically and ideologically controlled) of a transformation of the multinational borderland, culturally hybrid, into unambiguous national spaces. See: eadem, *Kresy. Biografia krainy, której nie ma [A Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland]*, transl. A. Czwojdrak, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2013, op. cit., pp. 14–15, 264–268.

<sup>26</sup> See: L. Szaruga, “Problem literatury kresowej w okresie PRL-u,” *Szczezińskie Prace Polonistyczne („Kresy w literaturze”)* 1994, No. 6, pp. 23–34.

<sup>27</sup> See: J. Szydłowska, *Narracje pojałtańskiego Okcydentu. Literatura polska wobec pogranicza na przykładzie Warmii i Mazur (1945–1989)*, Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwer-

panied by propaganda focusing on the repatriation of inhabitants of the Bug river land, a truly painful experience, as a result of which those people lost their national identity (being expelled and hounded out of their motherland); in fact, the term “expatriation,” which was the correct name for this process, was not used. The persuasive efforts in favour of shifting the Polish borders from the east to the west, to the Curzon Line and to the Oder and the Lusatian Neisse, were made “in the shadow of” Yalta and, to a great extent, they resulted from the decisions made at the Yalta Conference. “Kresy” became an unmentionable term, a taboo. The issues connected with it were perceived as unwelcome also due to the memory of Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania, evoked allusively by the term Kresy, and frowned upon when these republics belonged to the Soviet Union. One could say that “in the hypocrisy of the Polish People’s Republic, Eastern Kresy [...] underwent the process of annihilation.”<sup>28</sup> The process of depolonisation of Kresy was completed and the borderland tradition was removed from the public sphere, remaining only in the memory of individual people and their families.<sup>29</sup>

The notion of “the emigration of imagination” appeared in Polish literature in the 1960s and it consisted in turning the imagination and memory of writers born in Kresy towards the lands of childhood and youth, into the past or even to something imaginary.<sup>30</sup> They seemed to be saying “(without putting it so explicitly): we live in a Poland different than the official one.”<sup>31</sup> We should add that the convention of the myth, tale or dream adopted in such texts turned out to be “digestible” for censorship.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, the

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sytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie, 2013, pp. 49, 51. The author, on the basis of present historical knowledge, states that as a result of the Yalta-Potsdam decisions an area of over 1000 km<sup>2</sup>, that is about 70 000 km<sup>2</sup> less than the area of Eastern Kresy remaining beyond the eastern border, was included in the territory of Poland. Note that the Polish territorial losses were larger (22%) than those of the defeated side (18%), according to statistics from before 1939 (see p. 48). After World War II during repatriation over two million people were relocated to Poland from the former Kresy. Those people were a majority among four million people who settled on the so-called recovered territories. According to Bakula, “new lands” may be perceived from the borderland perspective, but only in the post-war period. This quasi-borderland location is supposed to be justified by the following elements: multiculturalism, multinationalism, its settlement nature, ravages, the function of the eastern frontiers of Poland, the forbidden and dangerous area, the issue of the frontier, see Bakula, “Między wygnaniem a kolonizacją. O kilku odmianach polskiej powieści migracyjnej w XX wieku (na skromnym tle porównawczym),” in: *Narracje migracyjne w literaturze polskiej XX i XXI wieku*, edited by H. Gosk, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012, p. 167. The first version of Bakula’s text was titled *Z kresów na kresy*.

<sup>28</sup> See: R. Kiersnowski, op. cit., p. 117.

<sup>29</sup> See: P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, op. cit., p. 6/34.

<sup>30</sup> See: J. Błoński, “Bezładne rozważania starego krytyka, który zastanawia się, jak napisałby historię prozy polskiej w latach istnienia Polski Ludowej,” *Teksty Drugie* 1990, No. 1, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> See: L. Szaruga, “Problem literatury kresowej w okresie PRL-u,” p. 23. It is worth noting that the convention of comedy was “acceptable” for censorship and, similarly to the case



experimental – at the artistic level – nature of a number of texts connected with Kresy from the 1960s and 1970s, located at the opposite end of mimetism and political involvement, seems to have performed the function of an “invisible barrier,” which – according to the Swiss Slavicist German Ritz – prevented the future possibility of revanchism.<sup>33</sup>

In other words, the Polish diaspora abroad after 1945 failed to work out a common position on the issue of Kresy. Polish emigrants in London (“the invincible ones”), cultivating the tradition of the Second Polish Republic, took the role of post-war “wanderers” and “pilgrims” and perceived the lost eastern territories “through the entanglements of the imposed borders.”<sup>34</sup> They rejected the theory of compensation for “the western lands for the eastern ones” and the term Kresy, encompassing the whole complexity of Eastern affairs, was treasured. The myth of Kresy cultivated in emigration became the quintessence of Polishness, the epitome of “the motherland of the most distinguished sons,” an inseparable element of the autonomy of Poland which was accompanied by the motif of martyrdom: despite the fight, bloodshed and suffering, not only for Poland, but Europe as well, Poles were eventually betrayed. It was believed that the Allies contributed significantly to the Yalta partition of Poland. Undoubtedly, “the ideology of creating a powerful country”<sup>35</sup> was behind this idea, even if it had with a hint of bitterness. Such a myth of Kresy was, however, “politically dead.”<sup>36</sup> In turn, the environment of the Paris-based *Kultura* from the 1950s gradually started to abandon both the concept of resentments, and illusions concerning the borderlands. In this context, texts by Juliusz Mieroszewski (the Londoner) took on particular significance. Together with Giedroyc, Mieroszewski was creating Poland’s new eastern program and popularising it in the pages of the Parisian émigré journal, arguing that Poland should adopt a bridge conception and reject the idea of being “the bulwark.”

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presented in *Sami Swoi (All Friends Here)* (1967), it transformed “trauma into laughter.” We may say that the convention “dismantles a bomb,” telling a story of people being displaced. One may find here language specific to that period even though it was forbidden for twenty years after the war. The story of two feuding families is presented in a “mocking and didactic” way. It presents the issue of the settlement (“regaining the lands”) of the western lands. See: P. Czapliński, “Kresowe narracje. Kresy Rzeczypospolitej. Wielki mit Polaków.” *Polityka. Pomocnik Historyczny* 2015, No. 2, pp. 173–174.

<sup>33</sup> See: G. Ritz, “Przeobrażenia stereotypu Ukraińca u Andrzeja Kuśniewicza i Wilhelma Macha,” in: *O dialogu kultur wspólnot kresowych*, edited by S. Uliasz, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej 1996, pp. 293–294.

<sup>34</sup> Tułacz, “Kłaniam się Tobie...,” *Biuletyn Koła Lwowian* [London] 1987, No. 53, p. 21. *Kresowy Polonez* was popular among the journal’s readers (*Biuletyn Koła Lwowian* 1985 No. 49, pp. 2–7). *Biuletyn Koła Lwowian* [The Bulletin of the Association of Lviv Citizens] changed its title to *Lwów i Kresy* [Lviv and Kresy] in 1988 in order to stress that “it defends the integrity of Eastern Kresy.”

<sup>35</sup> See: R. Habielski, “Utopia kraju lat dziecińczych (Emigracja powojenna wobec Kresów),” *Kresy* 1995, No. 2(22), pp. 74–80. The quotation is extracted from page 78.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 79.

A precondition for it was full independence for Belarus, Lithuania and Ukraine; only then could Poland, though deprived of the eastern lands (as from pre-1939 times), feel independent and even safer than during the Second Polish Republic.<sup>37</sup> This does not mean that the Londoner did not recognise the great contribution of “the easterners” to the development of Polish culture. The fact remains that as far as literature is concerned the myth of Kresy provided numerous invigorating artistic inspirations, although sometimes – as in the case of the London emigration – it turned out to be anachronistic for political reasons.<sup>38</sup>

Another, very specific, return to the problematics of Kresy can be observed in the time since the 1980s and 1990s. After a few significant “turns,” it led to several attempts at reinterpretation of the subject of the East that are observable in our times.

The first symptoms of changes started to appear after the rise of “Solidarity,” when there was a great need to fill in the gaps in Polish history, especially those connected with the dramatic history of Poles living in the eastern part of the country. There was also an urge to find a new face of Polish literary history to eliminate everything left unsaid or ignored, which in the 1980s and 1990s had a different dimension and scope than later on, after 2000. People felt free to keep individual and collective memories concerning Eastern Kresy alive.<sup>39</sup> In spite of the fact that in the 1980s censorship in Poland was performed by the Main Office of Control of Press, Publications and Shows (up to 1990), as far as the subjects connected with Kresy were concerned, one could notice symptoms of an upcoming change, for example the Institute of History at the University of Wrocław organised a conference devoted to Kresy in Polish political thought (Karpacz 1982). Nevertheless, it was not until 1988 that the post-conference monograph under the altered title *Between Ethnic and Historic Poland (Pomiędzy Polską etniczną a historyczną)* was published. It is fitting to add that Jacek

<sup>37</sup> See: J. Mieroszewski, *Final klasycznej Europy*, selected and prefaced by Rafał Habielski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1997. The conclusions put forward by Habielski allow us to outline Mieroszewski’s conception. In turn, Szaruga notes that a potential border with independent Ukraine, Lithuania and Belarus leads to the undermining of the Poland-centred viewpoint as well as supporting political aspirations of the Western Soviet Republics. See: L. Szaruga, “Palimpsest Międzymorza (zarys problematyki),” *Tekstualia* 2008, No. 1(12), pp. 6–9. The category of intermarium sometimes replacing the notion of “Kresy” had wider connotations. See: L. Szaruga, “Blaski i cienie koncepcji Międzymorza,” in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, edited by J. Fazan, K. Zajas, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012, pp. 302–312.

<sup>38</sup> On the subject in question, see: N. Taylor, Taylor N., “Dziedzictwo W.X. Litewskiego w literaturze emigracyjnej,” *Kultura* (Paris) 1986, No. 10 (469), pp. 124–136; M. Zadencka, *W poszukiwaniu utraconej ojczyzny. Obrazy Litwy i Białorusi w twórczości pisarzy emigracyjnych* (Florian Czarnyszewicz, Michał Kryspin Paulikowski, Maria Czapska, Czesław Miłosz, Józef Mackiewicz), Uppsala: AUU, 1995.

<sup>39</sup> See: L. Szaruga, “Pamięć Kresów,” in: idem, *Dochodzenie do siebie. Wybrane wątki literatury po roku 1989*, Sejny: Pogranicze, 1997, p. 93.

Kolbuszewski's essay titled *The legend of Kresy in 19<sup>th</sup>-century literature (Legenda Kresów w literaturze XIX wieku)* was published in the 12<sup>th</sup> issue of *Wrocław Odra* in 1982. Five years later Daniel Beauvois organised a session devoted to Kresy at the University of Lille<sup>40</sup> and in 1989 in *Ruch Literacki* he gave an account of his adventure with Kresy, turning the readers' attention to the fact that Polish literature was plagued with an "overdose of the beautiful."<sup>41</sup> It is worth noting that after the abolition of censorship a variety of reprints and re-editions of texts devoted to the issue of Kresy were published, both by Polish<sup>42</sup> and émigré writers (the phenomenon of "delayed reception"<sup>43</sup>). In fact, the subject of Kresy was still very popular in Polish literature, it was like an "enormous silo," rich in various topics, conflicts and stimuli.<sup>44</sup> It was at the beginning of the 1990s that the first attempts to analyse "the return of Kresy" were made<sup>45</sup> and this was the time that research on literature devoted to Kresy started to crystalise itself. After its inter-war introductory phase<sup>46</sup> and occasional references made to it before

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<sup>40</sup> *Les confins de l'ancienne Pologne. Ukraine, Lituanie, Bielorussie XVI – XX siècles.* edited by D. Beauvois, preface Czesław Miłosz, Lille: Presses Universitaires de Lille, 1988. See the review of the publication, e.g. K. Rutkowski, "Na Kresach czyli w domu," *Kultura* (Paris) 1988, No. 10, pp. 129–133; M. Nesteruk, "Kresy polskie – między arkadą i apokalipsą," *Przegląd Humanistyczny* 1989, No. 10, pp. 172–176; J. Święch, "W Polsce, czyli na Kresach," *Kresy* 1992, No. 12, pp. 214–217; M. Tomaszewski, "Między Atlantydą a Dzikimi Polami," *Zeszyty Literackie* (Paris) 1992, No. 24, pp. 122–127. A few years later Beauvois returned to the issues discussed in the post-conference publication from 1988. See: D. Beauvois, "Mit 'kresów wschodnich', czyli jak mu położyć kres," in: *Polskie mity polityczne XIX i XX wieku*, edited by W. Wrzesiński, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 1994, pp. 93–105.

<sup>41</sup> D. Beauvois, "Moja przygoda z Kresami," *Ruch Literacki*, 1989, Issues 4–5, p. 285.

<sup>42</sup> Take, for example, Zofia Kossak-Szczucka's book titled *Pożoga. Wspomnienia z Wołynia 1917–1919* which after World War II and during the times of censorship was kept in the library catalogues with the annotations "Res" (reserved) or "Nps" (not to be borrowed). In 1990 two editions of the book were published (Saint Hyacinth Bookshop – Zofia Kossak Society, Katowice-Cieszyn, signed as "the first post-war edition" and Resovia Publishing House in Rzeszów), and in 1996 another one (Warszawa, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX).

<sup>43</sup> See: P. Czaplinski, "Kresowe narracje..." p. 174. Czaplinski provides the following examples of such a phenomenon: *Nadberezyńcy* by Florian Czarnyszewicz, *Dolina Issy [The Issa Valley]* by Czesław Miłosz, *Pierścień z papieru* by Zygmunt Haupt and *Atlantyda* by Andrzej Chciuk. Before these works were published in Poland, they had come out abroad.

<sup>44</sup> See: Z. Bieńkowski, *Przyszłość przeszłości. Eseje*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996, p. 8. According to the author, both the notions of peasantry and Kresy are two wide areas of the past that make our literature long-lived. Paźniewski stresses that "the cultural imagination of Poles still feeds itself with the Jagiellonian myths which – from the political point of view – diminished in the inter-war period and after Yalta they even ceased to exist." See: W. Paźniewski, *Gramatyka rozproszenia*, Sosnowiec: "Offmax", 1995, p. 123.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., K. Kopka, "Powrót Kresów," *Tygodnik Literacki* 1991, No. 13–14, p. 24. The author stresses the "triumphant return of the Golden Legend of Kresy" which many times triggered xenophobic reactions and national megalomania. The popularity of the Kresy issues also resulted from the Sovietological context present in a number of texts dealing with the eastern problems.

<sup>46</sup> See the monographic issue of *Pamiętnik Literacki*, R. XXXIII, issue 1, edited by L. Bernacki, Lviv 1936. On this type of literature see the works of Stefan Kołaczkowski, Julian Krzyżanowski, Stanisław Estreicher or Otto Forst Battaglia.

1980,<sup>47</sup> the research in Kresy literature started to develop dynamically and – as a result – studies are now conducted at a number of universities, both in Poland (Szczecin, Poznań, Wrocław, Opole, Katowice, Kraków, Rzeszów, Lublin, Warsaw, Białystok, Olsztyn, Gdańsk) and abroad (France, Great Britain, the US, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, Sweden). Given the limited space of this article, we cannot discuss all the findings of this research, thus we shall only outline the characteristic interpretative approaches to Kresy in literature.

The most common way to analyse and interpret literature connected with Kresy is by perceiving it from the perspective of the schools of literary criticism.<sup>48</sup> And so, we can distinguish two movements, namely the Lithuanian-Belarusian and the Podolia-Volhynia-Ukrainian ones, also known as “the school of the North” and “the school of the South,” respectively.<sup>49</sup> The Ukrainian school,<sup>50</sup> established earlier than the Lithuanian one, having living traditions from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (pastorals by Szymonowicz and both Zimorowicz brothers), presented the complex Polish-Ukrainian history, rich not only in dramatic tensions but also in specific charm. It was a paradise lined with hell; it is a picture full of “roses and thorns.”<sup>51</sup> The writers from the Ukrainian school presented a world full of characters such as atamans, Cossacks and bards, set in the “steppe iconosphere” (lush nature, crosses, graves and kurgans). Such a world co-created the images of Mother-Ukraine in a few versions: gentry and Cossack as well as Arcadian

<sup>47</sup> See: Z. Kurzowa, *Elementy kresowe w języku powieści powojennej*, Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1975; J.R. Krzyżanowski, “A paradise lost? The image of „Kresy” in contemporary Polish literature,” *American Contributions to the Eighth International Congress of Slavists*, Vol. 2, Columbus, Ohio 1978, pp. 391–421. See also the shortened version J.R. Krzyżanowski, “Kresy w powieści powojennej,” in: *Antologia polskiej krytyki literackiej na emigracji 1945–1985*, selection of works, introduction and biograms provided by J. Dąbala, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, 1992, pp. 329–337.

<sup>48</sup> H. DUBYK redefines the term “Ukrainian school,” mainly associated with the poetic specification and she introduces a new term that is narrower than Kresy literature; nevertheless, it allows us to place given titles in a group of thematically and stylistically homogeneous works, but without genealogical restrictions. A similar reasoning may be adopted in the case of the Lithuanian–Belarusian school. See: H. DUBYK, *Sen o Ukrainie. Pogłosy „szkoły ukraińskiej” w literaturze polskiej dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW, 2014, p. 14.

<sup>49</sup> For example, Tadeusz Drewnowski defines “the school of the South” in literature through an analysis of three “duchies of the Polish South”, namely the works of Kuśniewicz, Buczkowski and Odojewski. See: T. Drewnowski, *Próba scalenia. Obiegi – wzorce – style*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1997, pp. 392–410 (chapter titled “Kresy utracone – kresy uzyskane”).

<sup>50</sup> For example, DUBYK links the movement of the “Ukrainian school” with the transformation of Kresy myths in the works of, among others, Bolesław Leśmian, Jarosław Iwaszkiewicz, Józef Łobodowski and Julian Wołoszynowski. See: H. DUBYK, *Sen o Ukrainie...*

<sup>51</sup> Maria Janion also used this expression (Pl. “róża i cierń” – “rose and thorn”), see: M. Janion, “Róża i cierń Ukrainy,” in: eadem, *Wobec zła*, Chotomów: “Verba,” 1989, pp. 173–209 (the first version was published in the journal *Znak* 1989, No. 9).

and rebellious ones.<sup>52</sup> In the 20<sup>th</sup> century this tradition was enriched with pictures of fratricidal slaughter and history with the mark of Cain. This school was represented by, among others, Malczewski, Goszczyński, Zaleski, Słowacki, Czajkowski, whereas among their contemporary followers we can enumerate Iwaszkiewicz, Łobodowski, Wołoszynowski, Buczkowski, Kuśniewicz, Chciuk, Haupt, Paźniewski, Srokowski and Odojewski.

The Lithuanian-Belarusian school created a Polish version of the paradise<sup>53</sup> where one can feel safe and is part of a community. Everyday simple matters were made poetic, folk demonology and mythology were exploited, the tone of the works was tender and sentimental. The subject matter was drawn from folk songs and agrarian mythology. The school created an idyllic rustic space which successively fed itself on turbulent history and the poetics of lament: it is a picture of “sad Arcadia.”<sup>54</sup> It is a vision of the “land” and “lands annexed,” affected primarily by the post-uprising tsarist repressions; the land whose population yearned for being connected to their motherland. These people wanted to survive at all costs. Thus, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the representatives of the school show the tragedy of people “torn by borders,” uprooted and condemned to exile. The school in the past was represented by Mickiewicz, Syrokomla, Rzewuski, Orzeszkowa and Rodziewiczówna, while nowadays we may find its traces in the works of Podhorski-Okolow, Baliński, Bohdanowiczowa, Iłhakowiczówna, Miłosz, Mackiewicz and Cat-Mackiewicz, Piasecki, Czarnyszewicz, Pawlikowski, Konwicki, Wańkiewicz and Żakiewicz.

Literature connected with Kresy is often discussed in terms of its chronological order, in which we may distinguish four periods: the times of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Old Polish literature),<sup>55</sup> the times of the partition of Poland (Romanticism, Positivism, Young Poland), the times of the Second Polish Republic and the period after 1939 (both in Poland and in exile), from the inter-war times until the end of World War II (literature connected with Kresy would be the “last line of defence” of the Second Polish Republic’s values), and the times after 1945 (the decisions made in Yalta,

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<sup>52</sup> There are slightly different terms defining the standard images in poetry of the “Ukrainian school” of Polish Romanticism in Ukrainian literary studies. For example, Rostisław Radiszewskij discusses Ukrainian novels showing the life of the gentry (*Maria* by Antoni Malczewski), Haidamaka Ukraine (*Zamek Kaniowski* by Seweryn Goszczyński) and Arcadian Ukraine created by Józef Bohdan Zaleski where both Cossacks and water nymphs live. See: R. Radiszewskij, *Polski romantyki “ukrajńskiej szkoli,”* Kiev, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> See: J. Błoński, “Polski raj,” *Tygodnik Powszechny* 1987, No. 51–52.

<sup>54</sup> See: F. Ziejka, “Smutna Arkadia,” in: idem, *Nasza rodzina w Europie. Studia i szkice,* Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 1995.

<sup>55</sup> Some researchers question the applicability of the term Kresy in relation to the period between the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, because Kresy in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century understanding of the term did not exist then. During the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth the term was not a historical proper noun. See, e.g., E. Kasperski, “Kresy, pogranicza, mity. O metodologii badań nad literaturą kresową,” in: E., Czaplejewicz, Kasperski E., *Literatura i różnorodność. Kresy i pogranicza,* Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “DiG”, 1996, pp. 106–111.

the changes of Polish borders and the new political system had an influence on the lives of many writers; many of whom decided to stay abroad). Each of these periods created the characteristic motifs and images that shaped the style of the epoch (e.g. the writers from Kresy strongly influenced the style of Romanticism<sup>56</sup>) or they became one of the crucial elements typical of a given literary period. For example, during Positivism new subjects started to be discussed and the myths connected with Kresy were devalued for many reasons. Nevertheless, the issue of the Lands Annexed was mentioned by some writers: it appeared in the description of the area located by the Neman in Orzeszkowa's novel, in Rodziewiczówna's<sup>57</sup> Polesia and in Sienkiewicz's Trilogy, where he created the "geography of nature"<sup>58</sup> and "fished the Polish souls from the Russian sea."<sup>59</sup>

In spite of the fact that the issue of Kresy was an inseparable element of literature of the inter-war period, it was not a distinctive feature of it (Kresy were still part of the culture and the administrative and political division of the country). After World War II, literature connected with Kresy, written abroad by "wanderers and exiles" following the traces not so much of Odysseus, but rather of Aeneas, presents the impossibility of returning to the homeland due to the fact that Kresy (like Troy) "were burnt." Thus, they turn their attention to the "things of memory", not "of imagination."<sup>60</sup> This literature describes the eastern borderlands (e.g. in Chciuk's works) as areas identified with flooded Atlantis (in Vincenz's works as "Slavic Atlantis"), "moon land" and the Grand Duchy of Bałak. Also in the literature created in Poland there is a motif of homeland (from the 1960s) which in the middle of the 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s is transformed into a "post-Yalta childhood motif" (e.g. Huelle, Chwin, Jurewicz, Zagajewski). Also the traditionally perceived myth of the borderlands acquired a new

<sup>56</sup> Hadaczek uses the term "Kreso-Romanticism". See: B. Hadaczek, *Historia literatury kresowej*, from p. 93.

<sup>57</sup> See: C. Miłosz, "Rodziewiczówna," *Kultura* (Paris) 1991, No. 3, pp. 3–30. This article was later published in Miłosz's book titled *Szukanie ojczyzny*, Wyd. Znak, 2nd ed., Cracow 1996, pp. 13–52. The model of Kresy patriotism described by Miłosz, consolidated by Rodziewiczówna, functioned in the model of "a Pole but a Lithuanian," which was disappearing in her times. It should be noted that Miłosz unwillingly used the term "Kresy," which – as he said – "drove him mad." "When one says "Kresy" [...] everything seems as if 'done.' What Kresy? It was Poland that was Kresy for me"; see: "Ręka opatrności. Z Czesławem Miłoszem rozmawia S. Bereś," *Odra* 1997, No. 12, p. 37. Probably in order to make the issue of borderland relations and the Commonwealth of Nations universal, Miłosz introduced the English term *Commonwealth* (see: Miłosz's essays titled *Rodzinną Europą*).

<sup>58</sup> See: W. Paźniewski, *Gramatyka rozproszenia*, pp. 118–123. "The geography of nature – says Paźniewski – is [...] the collection of addresses, landscapes and well-constructed plots that may be found on the map of culture and in our collective memory" (p. 119).

<sup>59</sup> W. Lednicki, *Pamiętniki*, vol. 1, London: R. Swiderski, 1963, p. 567.

<sup>60</sup> See: E. Czapplewicz, "Rzecz pamięci (z poetyki literatury emigracyjnej)," in: E. Czapplewicz, *Pragmatyka, dialog, historia. Problemy współczesnej teorii literatury*, Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1990, pp. 359–376.

form. For example, in *Boża podszewka* (1993, extended edition from 1997) by Lubkiewicz-Urbanowicz the motif in question, although rich in autobiographical elements, is presented in a distanced way; the characteristics of Kresy are deprived of sentimentalism and mawkish reminiscences.<sup>61</sup>

Sometimes in the synthetic works devoted to the history of literature connected with Kresy, exposing forms of memory or the perspective of “restoring memory,” we can distinguish a movement known as “literary Galicia” and another one called the Grand “Duchy of Literature.”<sup>62</sup> We can also expose the most common artistic strategies in literature connected with Kresy, and mention in that context the mythologisation of the descriptions of home areas (the use of nostalgia) and (equally frequently) demythologisation, whose purpose is to tell unpleasant truths and make people aware of the “real reality” (starting with the plebeian and folk plot in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and finishing with Mackiewicz’s works). A complete characterisation of literature connected with Kresy should include the problem of the selection of literary characters (e.g. characters of noble descent, people of mixed parentage, peasants coming from either Polesia or Krużewniki) and the most frequently used genres (lament, gentry tale, adventure and historical novels, the Polish borderland “school of essay” represented by Miciński, Stempowski, Vincenz and Miłosz).

Another way of analysing the topic in question is by focusing on the legend and myth of Kresy in Polish literature.<sup>63</sup> The fact remains that a number of literary works are in a way a source of historical knowledge, from which we can learn a lot about the areas known as Kresy, not necessarily in mimetic terms, but rather by the principle of representation.<sup>64</sup> However, literature frequently co-created “the picturesque ruins of failed utopias,”<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See: L. Szaruga, “Kresy w prozie Teresy Lubkiewicz-Urbanowicz,” *Szczecińskie Prace Polonistyczne* (“Kresy w literaturze”) 1999, No. 10, p. 122.

<sup>62</sup> I am referring here to Adam Wierciński’s book titled *Przywracanie pamięci*. 2nd extended edition, Opole 1997, in which the author distinguishes two characteristic phenomena in Polish literature, namely “Literary Galicia” and “the Grand Duchy of Literature.” The latter is obviously associated with the idea of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. One may find there maps (pictures 7 and 9) and the names of authors (and sometimes their works) connected with these lands (Galicia and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania).

<sup>63</sup> Although the notion of myth is often used while describing the chronotope of Kresy (see the issue of *Polityka* devoted to Kresy titled *Wielki mit Polaków. Od Kazimierza Wielkiego do mordu katyńskiego* [*The great myth of Poles. From Casimir III the Great to the Katyn massacre*]), another source of inspiration is worth mentioning, namely the seminal publication titled *Mit Galicji* [*The Myth of Galicia*], edited by J. Purchla et al., Kraków: Międzynarodowe Centrum Kultury, 2014. What seems to be the most interesting is the part about “the foundation myths” in which we may find the characteristics of various types of narration on the same topic, including Polish, Austrian, German and Ukrainian types of tales.

<sup>64</sup> See Markowski’s methodological findings: M.P. Markowski, *O reprezentacji*, in: *Kulturowa teoria literatury. Główne pojęcia i problemy*, edited by M.P. Markowski, R. Nycz, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012, pp. 287–333.

<sup>65</sup> While writing about Kresy, Kolbuszewski often referred to this, which was Ignacy Fik’s definition of myth and the source of the title of the interview with Jacek Kolbuszewski

images of the wonderfulness of an idyllic character associated with those places. Hence, following the history of Kresy becomes an opportunity to observe legend-creating endeavours (in “bright” and “dark” versions<sup>66</sup>), to register the beliefs of the Polish community about Kresy, to expose various ways of expressing emotions and national complexes, and to emphasise the stages of updating Kresy myths or making them outdated. Let us quote Paźniewski, according to whom:

the Kresy mythology resembles a plaster copy of a Roman statue standing among tall grass and stinging nettles in the park where all the trees have been cut down for firewood. It is possible that someone wrote an obscene word on its torso. [...] A mythology no one wants to be the first to say *adieu* to, because how can you come to a devastated park with a hammer and hit the forgery with all your strength so that it falls apart? It is far more convenient to dance the polonaise around it.<sup>67</sup>

It is still interesting to analyse Kresy, both in cognitive and methodological terms, as a borderland (and borderlands of cultures). This category appeared in Polish literary studies together with the extremely offensive term “kresy,” understood as “a specific kind of borderland,” generally associated with the Eastern borderlands of the former Polish Republic. Simultaneously, the term “borderland” became an expression of the search for more objectified tools of description that would not be endowed with an aura of controversy, including when used in the circles of other nations. It is worth noting that Hadaczek treated “Kresy” as a “super-term (arch-category),” “a peculiar irreplaceable mental shortcut.”<sup>68</sup> However, if we analyse Kresy from the borderland perspective:

the whole system of evaluation and description of culture and the human condition is altered. The category of the borderland to a large extent reduces the repressive nature of the border whose aim is to separate, isolate, guard inviolability, mark off and take possession of the land. It indicates the outermost settlement, a bastion.<sup>69</sup>

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held by Mariusz Urbanek in 1995. See: “Malownicza ruina utopii. Rozmowa z prof. Jackiem Kolbuszewskim, autorem książki ‘Kresy,’” *Polityka* 1995, No. 48, 1995, pp. 45–46.

<sup>66</sup> The borderland myth about the Grand Duchy of Lithuania is presented from the “bright” perspective, whereas the borderland Ukrainian myth from the “dark” perspective. See, among others, T. Bujnicki, “Cywilizacyjny mit kresowy w literaturze o WXL. Wiek XIX,” in: *Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską*, edited by K. Stępnik and D. Trzeźniowski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej: 2010, pp. 81–85.

<sup>67</sup> W. Paźniewski, *Gramatyka rozproszenia*, pp. 135–136.

<sup>68</sup> B. Hadaczek, *Historia literatury kresowej*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2011, pp. 376–377. It is fitting to add that Hadaczek followed the rule of a very strong “emotional” relationship with the subject he had been investigating for many years. His works were usually dedicated to “People from Kresy, regardless of where they live,” and the language of literary works specific to Kresy was an inseparable element of his literary studies. See: B. Hadaczek, “Duma o Kresach Rzeczypospolitej (osnuta na motywach literackich),” *Rocznik Luwowski*, Warszawa 2010–2011, pp. 215–221. It begins with the most famous quotations from *Pożoga* and *Lato leśnych ludzi*.

<sup>69</sup> S. Uliasz, *O literaturze Kresów i pograniczu kultur. Rozprawy i szkice*, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2001, p. 15.



When analysing Kresy from the perspective of the borderland, we can realise that we are dealing here with a peculiar synthesis which results from the distinctiveness, exchange, osmosis, dialogue and conflict of the elements deriving from different communities existing in the contact zone of cultures. Writers often decide whether to take into consideration or reject the perception of the world that characterised a given borderland area, whether to include elements coming from different cultures. Obviously, it was not “coexistence free of conflicts, quite the contrary, tensions arose at the points where cultures, religions and ideologies met; these elements, however, could be inspiring for an artist.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, analyses of Kresy led to a particular fascination with the phenomenon of the borderland culture, with its “hybridity,” axiological ambivalence and an opportunity to see oneself and one’s culture reflected in “others.”<sup>71</sup> There was also an interesting research project whose aim was to explore the places where two cultures met and testing “the hypothesis concerning the uniform nature of imagination, similar sensitivities and cultural community, even if based on diversity.”<sup>72</sup>

Another impulse in the development of frontier studies in the humanities came with the “spatial turn” and “new geography.” The notion of the border and liminality started to change; “dynamic zones – borderlands, where we can observe various processes of interpenetration”<sup>73</sup> became of interest. Moreover, the phenomenon of deterritorialisation allowed the researchers to go beyond “the narrow geographical and territorial connotations” to explore broad symbolic<sup>74</sup> and cultural meaning. To some extent,

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<sup>70</sup> T. Bujnicki, “Pogranicze,” in: *Kultura pogranicza wschodniego. Zarys encyklopedyczny*, edited by T. Budrewicz, T. Bujnicki and J. S. Ossowski, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo “DiG”, 2011, p. 331. See Birkenmajer’s opinion on the elements connected with Lithuania in Mickiewicz’s works: “If these elements were omitted or forgotten, Polish literature would definitely be impoverished,” J. Birkenmajer, *Motywy i zagadnienia litewskie w literaturze polskiej*, reprinted from *Kuryer Polski*, Milwaukee, [Wisconsin], [1939], p. 12. It seems that this comment could also be used to refer to other literary and cultural trends, e.g. Byelorussian, Jewish, Ukrainian, Russian or even Tatar and Krymkaraylar which were specific to the model of Eastern borderland.

<sup>71</sup> See: E. Dutka, *Próby topograficzne. Miejsca i krajobrazy w literaturze polskiej XIX i XXI wieku*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego 2014, pp. 117–118.

<sup>72</sup> See: E. Czapplejowicz, “Czym jest literatura kresowa?,” in: *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*, p. 73. To discuss the places where both cultures meet we need to analyse the topoi which function in Polish and Ukrainian literature. See: S. Uliasz, “Z dziejów motywu stepu w polskiej literaturze Kresów,” in: *Poszukiwanie rzeczywistości. Literatura – dokument – Kresy. Works devoted to Tadeusz Bujnicki*, edited by S. Gawliński and W. Ligęza, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2003, pp. 53–65; A. Astafiew, “Mifologema stepu i literatura stepu,” *Kiewski Polonistyczny Studji* [Kiev] 2012, vol. XIX, pp. 296–312; J. Sawicka, *Wołyń poetycki w przestrzeni kresowej*, Warszawa: “DiG”, 1999 (chapter titled *Miejsca wspólne. Topika stepu i wiśniowego sadu*, pp. 88–118).

<sup>73</sup> See: E. Domańska, “Epistemologie pograniczy,” in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, pp. 85–86.

<sup>74</sup> See: E. Kasperski, “Kategoria pogranicza w badaniach literackich. Problemy metodologiczne,” in: *Pogranicze kulturowe (odrębność – wymiana – przenikanie – dialog)*. *Studia*

this conception corresponded with that put forward by Bachtin, according to whom the whole of cultural life is concentrated on the frontiers, in the situations of polyphonic mixing, at intersections, that is in the borderlands, where “one’s own words” grow in the context of “somebody else’s words.”<sup>75</sup>

An inseparable element of the “borderland literary consciousness” is the “theory of small homelands.”<sup>76</sup> Hence, placing the subject of Kresy within the trend of small homelands becomes a canonical activity. Small homelands were a kind of Ark of the Covenant, because they connected people living in exile in Poland and abroad, and literature written during the period of the Polish People’s Republic with literature of the Third Polish Republic. The binding material proved to be the different historical stages, biographical and artistic forms of still the same experience, namely exile and disinheritance, that is getting back to one’s roots, uprootedness and lack of roots.<sup>77</sup> The transformation of Polish Kresy into “an international, transcultural borderland” had a huge influence on the history of small homelands in literature and their myth-forming power, which grew stronger with the memory of the Yalta wound. The “myth-forming operation” mentioned by Wiegandt was changed into a “semantic matrix of a small homeland,” a very comprehensive figure, found in the works of Stanisław Vincenz, Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Konwicki, Andrzej Kuśniewicz, Andrzej Stasiuk, also included in the works of writers connected with the Polish-German borderland as well as Julian Strykowski and Piotr Szewc.<sup>78</sup>

In the literature devoted to small homelands we can distinguish writers of the older generation and younger writers; however, attention is drawn to the fact that after 1989 the motif became gradually transformed. The for-

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*i szkice*, edited by O. Weretnik, J. Wolski, G. Jaśkiewicz, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Stowarzyszenie Literacko-Artystyczne “Fraza”, 2009, pp. 9–13. Wiegandt focuses on yet another element, namely “deconstructed” Polish Kresy transformed into supranational multicultural borderlands, See: eadem, “Podróż z Kresów do Europy Środkowej,” in: *Kresy – dekonstrukcja*, edited by K. Trybuś, J. Kałużny, R. Okulicz-Kozaryn, Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, 2007, p. 37.

<sup>75</sup> See: L. Witkowski, *Uniwersalizm pogranicza. O semiotyce kultury Michala Bachtina w kontekście edukacji*, Toruń: Adam Marszałek 1991, from p. 193. See: L. Witkowski, “Bogactwo Kresów – między pograniczem kultury a kulturą pogranicza,” in: *Kresy w literaturze. Twórcy dwudziestowieczni*, from p. 75.

<sup>76</sup> See: E. Wiegandt, “Literackie formy świadomości kresowej,” *Polonistyka* 1997, No. 4, p. 197. We omit here the history of the term “small homeland” (also known as “private” or “domestic”) stemming from German terms *Heimat* and *Vaterland* translated into Polish by Ossowski. See: a collective monograph titled *Pojęcie ojczyzny we współczesnych językach europejskich*, edited by J. Bartmiński, Lublin: IEŚ-W, 1993.

<sup>77</sup> See: E. Wiegandt, “Literacka kariera małych ojczyzn,” in: *Słowa i metody. Księga dedykowana profesorowi Jerzemu Świąchowi*, edited by A. Kochańczyk, A. Niewiadomski, B. Wróblewski, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 2009, p. 434.

<sup>78</sup> See: *ibid.*, pp. 430–431. Wiegandt elaborated on this issue in her later works, see: E. Wiegandt, “‘Pogranicze’ jako kategoria interpretacyjna literatury małych ojczyzn,” in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, edited by J. Fazan, K. Zajac, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2012, pp. 51–66.

mer group of writers (Stanisław Vincenz, Józef Wittlin, Jerzy Stempowski, Andrzej Chciuk, Zygmunt Haupt, Czesław Miłosz, Waclaw Lednicki and Tadeusz Konwicki), while presenting the world of their own homelands, paid attention to the situation before the destruction of the space-time they had experienced (and created). They exposed such values that seemed to have been destroyed by the tragic events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely the order maintained by the community, “the idyll of originality” (immediately before the approaching “era of standardisation”<sup>79</sup>), coexistence with nature, perception of the world as a mystery of existence that is difficult to grasp, the phenomenon of “the fluidity of nationalities,” when purely linguistic nationalism was not yet known,<sup>80</sup> although its first symptoms could be observed in the background. It is in a way “magic realism,”<sup>81</sup> and it indicates nostalgia (the “ubi sunt” topos, namely “that’s not the way it used to be”),<sup>82</sup> which becomes more meaningful when faced with modernity and history. In turn, after 1989 the generation of younger writers (Aleksander Jurewicz, Stefan Chwin, Paweł Huelle, Adam Zagajewski, Zbigniew Żakiewicz) started to shape new narratives of Kresy. Their stories are mostly set in the “moved space,” between the abandoned place<sup>83</sup> and the place to which the narrator goes, noticing that it is another place of settlement that was abandoned by other displaced people. What becomes important in these narratives is the “rhetoric of objects” and metatextual “awareness of objects”<sup>84</sup> (e.g. photographs accidentally found, objects that were left) which start to allude to the “traces” of the presence of “others” (see Jurkiewicz’s *Lida*, where we can find the motif of “childhood after Yalta”). As Czapliński observes:

The characters recognise the overlapping of someone else’s beauty and longing with one’s own experience. [...] In those narratives, borderland experience becomes the school of nobility, but it is no longer the model to present post-war biographies and to explain the 20<sup>th</sup>-century history of Poland.<sup>85</sup>

The overlapping of the images of “places,” the narrative perspectives of child and adult narrators (the viewpoint of an analyst), and searching for

<sup>79</sup> See: W. Lednicki, *Pamiętniki*, p. 559.

<sup>80</sup> See: W. Meysztowicz, *Poszło z dymem. Gawędy o czasach i ludziach*, Warszawa: Oficyna Wydawnicza “Pokolenie”, 1989, p. 5.

<sup>81</sup> See: P. Czapliński, *Kresowe narracje*, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

<sup>82</sup> See: E. Wiegandt, *Literacka kariera małych ojczyzn*, p. 430.

<sup>83</sup> Interpretative tropes usually lead to the anthropology of the place and space as well as geo-poetics. See: E. Rybicka (e.g. “Miejsce, pamięć, literatura (w perspektywie geo-poetyki),” *Teksty Drugie* 2008, No. 1–2, pp. 19–32). Examples of the modern approach to the analysis of “the geographical and cultural imagination” may be found in: P. Czapliński, *Poruszona mapa. Wyobrażenia geograficzno-kulturowa polskiej literatury przełomu XX i XXI wieku*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2016; and a collective monograph titled *Galician Polyphony. Places and Voices*, edited by A. Molisak and J. Wierzejska, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2015.

<sup>84</sup> See: J. Szydłowska, *Narracje pojałtańskiego Okcydentu*, pp. 369–370.

<sup>85</sup> P. Czapliński, *Kresowe narracje*, p. 178. See: P. Czapliński, *Wzniosłe tęsknoty. Nostalgie w prozie lat dziewięćdziesiątych*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2001. There is a characteristic transformation from “homeland narrations” to “narrative homelands,” p. 128.

identity, led to the abandoning of one common story in favour of detailed and fragmentary reports; the story is available only “in the form of reconstructed excerpts” as “tangled narrative material.”<sup>86</sup> The “back-breaking archaeology” taken up, resembling “tapping a crypt” was “an attempt to exhume something that like the post-memorial trauma had happened before and had been hidden behind the traces of absence.”<sup>87</sup>

Moreover, the notion of “a small homeland” is not an exclusively geographical term referring only to the space and place of Eastern Kresy. In fact, in the 1990s it might also have been used with reference to other Polish regions, western, northern or southern (e.g. Gdańsk, Kashubia, Łódź, Wisła, Dukla and Pogórze).<sup>88</sup> More and more clearly the literature of small homelands indicated “the imagined and extremely subjective [...] space in which narrators or characters tried to find or reconstruct their lost identity in relation to the world.”<sup>89</sup> After 1989 the literature of small homelands, and the subject matter ascribed to it, was “rewritten” and, in consequence, placed “in the field of reflection on Central Europe.”<sup>90</sup>

Presentation of important interpretative perspectives of the subject of Kresy cannot refrain from reference to the opportunities and risks that may come from postcolonial criticism. In 2006 Bogusław Bakula noticed that “postcolonial criticism is Poland does not have its own tradition yet” and he saw its main aim as “unmasking the language, including deeper structures of collective consciousness hidden in literary and non-literary texts.”<sup>91</sup> Soon

<sup>86</sup> A term taken from B. Dąbrowski, “Postpamięć i trauma. Myśleć inaczej o literaturze małych ojczyzn (na przykładzie powieści Pawła Huellego i Stefana Chwina),” in: *Nowe dwudziestolecie (1989–2009). Rozpoznania. Hierarchie. Perspektywy*, edited by H. Gosk, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010, pp. 212, 213, 219.

<sup>87</sup> B. Dąbrowski, *Postpamięć i trauma*, pp. 214, 219.

<sup>88</sup> See: I. Pięta, “Małe ojczyzny” w prozie polskiej po 1989 roku,” in: *Dwie dekady nowej (?) literatury 1989–2009*, edited by S. Gawliński and D. Siwor, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2011, p. 226. See: P. Czaplński and P. Śliwiński, *Literatura polska 1976–1998. Przewodnik po prozie i poezji*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1999, pp. 155–165 and 195–207.

<sup>89</sup> See: I. Pięta, op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>90</sup> See H. Gosk, *Opowieści „skolonizowanego/kolonizatora”. W kręgu studiów postzależnościowych nad literaturą polską XX i XXI wieku*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2010, p. 16. See: E. Wiegandt, “Podróż z Kresów do Europy Środkowej,” in: *Kresy – dekonstrukcja*. It is worth adding that in the poem titled *Dwanaście stacji* (2004) by Tomasz Różycki (born 1970) predominant features of the literature of small homelands (including Central Europeanism and the issues connected with borderlands) were presented from the perspective of pastiche and parody. In turn, Ziemowit Szczerek (born 1978), while presenting an alternative history of Poland, assuming that Poland had kept the eastern territories from before 1939, depicts Kresy as a “dying” and emaciated area. Meanwhile, it was often said that these areas were a “rural idyll” and the “Ruritania of Eastern Europe.” See: Z. Szczerek, *Rzeczpospolita zwycięska. Alternatywna historia Polski*, Kraków: Społeczny Instytut Wydawniczy Znak, 2013, pp. 269–270.

<sup>91</sup> See: B. Bakula, “Kolonialne i postkolonialne aspekty polskiego dyskursu kresoznawczego (zarys problematyki),” *Teksty Drugie*, 2006, No. 6, p. 19. According to the author, Ewa M. Thompson’s publication titled *Trubadurzy imperium. Literatura rosyjska i kolonializm*, translated by A. Sierszulska, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych

the situation changed and the “postcolonial approach” started to grow in popularity.<sup>92</sup> The discourse concerning Kresy<sup>93</sup> is of a specific nature, because the issue of “Kresy” co-defines “the heart of Polishness;” it cannot be treated only as “kresomania.”<sup>94</sup> Because in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the narrative about Kresy crystallised in the context of very “hot,” “unleashed” history (revolution, wars, exile, repatriation, the shadow of Yalta, “phantom pains”), its discourse is rich in melancholy, which – according to psychoanalytical interpretation and the rule of compensation – allows people to maintain mental balance. The postcolonial approach accounts for the “phantom pains,” but there is the other side of the issue to be discussed. Postcolonialism reveals a hidden, shameful situation, suggesting that Polish culture in Kresy was a form of colonising “Others,” even if it was done in a peaceful way, although sometimes this rule took on “violent” forms. The point is that the voice of both the colonising and the colonised should be heard. The complexity of the situation results from the fact that the colonisers (Poles) were at the same time colonised by Russia/ the USSR. At the very basis of such considerations there appears the problem of nomenclature. Some researchers use the term “velvet colonisation” (A. Fiut), others claim that in the Eastern borderlands domination and dependence alternated incessantly (T. Bujnicki). There are also those who give up on the notion of postcolonialism<sup>95</sup> in favour of the analysis of post-dependent discourse,<sup>96</sup> and those for whom such considerations are a sign of “betrayal” (B. Hadaczek). There are various evaluations of the significance of

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Universitas, 2000, had a considerable influence on the revival of the discussion concerning postcolonial theory in Poland. The aim of this article is to present the characteristic approaches to “Kresy” from the perspective of postcolonial criticism and not to report the stages of the development of postcolonial studies in Poland.

<sup>92</sup> See: M. Dąbrowski, “Kresy w perspektywie krytyki postkolonialnej,” *Porównania* 2008, No. 5, p. 1 (on-line access) Dąbrowski M. pdf (accessed on 16. 02. 2018).

<sup>93</sup> We refer here to Dariusz Skórczewski, who in one group of texts attempted to discuss literary “persuasions” and other explanations (a widely understood literary approach) concerning Kresy, which turned out to be rather ambiguous. See: idem, *Teoria – literatura – dyskurs. Pejzaż postkolonialny*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013 (especially the chapter titled “Melancholia dyskursu kresoznawczego,” pp. 427–479). We only base our analysis on excerpts from the author’s works. Note that Skórczewski consistently writes the word “Kresy” in inverted commas, which, in all likelihood, is supposed to be understood as standing aloof from the issues discussed. According to Skórczewski, all literary, academic and critical “expeditions to Kresy” are of a melancholic nature (see p. 473). It is fitting to add that in contemporary literary research melancholy became a notion that was used extensively. Some say that we are even dealing with a fashion for “melanchology.” See: Alina Świeściak, *Melancholia w poezji polskiej po 1989 roku*, Kraków: Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych Universitas, 2010, p. 5.

<sup>94</sup> See: “Kresomania. An interview with Prof. Daniel Beauvois held by A. Sabor,” *Książki w Tygodniku*. A supplement to *Tygodnik Powszechny* 2006, No. 13, p. 15.

<sup>95</sup> D. Beauvois started to use the term “feudal system” with reference to the Polish expansion east in the 16th and 17th centuries.

<sup>96</sup> This approach is presented in works written within the Post-dependence Studies Centre which was established in 2009 at the University of Warsaw under the auspices of Prof. Hanna Gosk. It gathers representatives of various disciplines and academic environments.

this approach; options include postcolonial understanding of literature, an important “turn” in research and a new inspiration. Some say that there is a change of the paradigm in the humanities comparable to “the Copernican Revolution” (Maria Delaperriere<sup>97</sup>).

How should we analyse literature connected with Kresy if we are aware of the presence of postcolonial language in academic discourse? How can we notice behind the mask of the captivating beauty of the literary language, in the nostalgic aura, frequently evoking suffering, grievance and lament or “patriotism of loss” (an expression used by Bujnicki) that additional ingredient, that is “an element of domination, dependence, aversion, stereotyping, difference”? What can we do not to “throw the baby out with the bathwater” keeping the maximum of the researcher’s carefulness?<sup>98</sup> It seems worth remembering about a few warnings formulated by the “followers” of this approach. For example, German Ritz says that “postcolonial reading of Polish literature carries [...] the risk of an uncritical return to the well-known role of a victim or the risk of its one-sided revision.”<sup>99</sup> He warns us that theories, which are critical by definition, are “in danger of being treated instrumentally” (p. 117) and that the specific strategies of reading “in reverse” may in fact lead to even stronger stereotyping (p. 117). According to Ritz, this kind of reading may give Polish literature a “grounded platform to do one’s own or somebody else’s examinations of conscience” (p. 118), but given that the postcolonial approach “is based on the difference of stances,” “it cannot be the first approach” (p. 120). Marcin Klimowicz was also one of those who paid attention to the “fundamentalist awareness” and pursuit of “explicitness at all costs”<sup>100</sup> in postcolonial discourse, also emphasising a feature of such an approach to reading borderline literature: “seeing both an obverse and a reverse of the same problem.”<sup>101</sup> The above-mentioned warnings do not discredit the post-colonial approach; they emphasise its

<sup>97</sup> M. Delaperriere’s stance is characterised by I. Wawrzyczek, “Badanie kultury polskiej w perspektywie światowych studiów postkolonialnych,” in: *Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską, op. cit.*, p. 19. In turn, Ryszard Nycz, observing the inspirations coming from postcolonial criticism, presents five levels of analysis of literature and culture from the perspective of the category of borderlands. See: idem, “Możliwa historia literatury,” in: *Na pograniczach literatury*, pp. 19, 29–32.

<sup>98</sup> M. Dąbrowski, *Kresy w perspektywie krytyki postkolonialnej, op. cit.*, pp. 8–9.

<sup>99</sup> G. Ritz, “Kresy polskiej w perspektywie postkolonialnej,” in: *(Nie)obecność. Pominięcia i przemilczenia w narracjach XX wieku*, edited by H. Gosk, B. Karwowska, Warszawa: “Elipsa”, 2008, p. 117. In other quotations of this text the page numbers are given in brackets.

<sup>100</sup> See: M. Klimowicz, “Retoryczność polskiego dyskursu postkolonialnego,” in: *Studia postkolonialne nad kulturą i cywilizacją polską*, p. 64.

<sup>101</sup> See: M. Klimowicz, *ibid.*, p. 66–67. For more practical information see, e.g., H. Gosk, “Polski dyskurs kresowy w niefikcyjnych zapisach międzywojennych. Próba lektury w perspektywie ‘postcolonial studies’,” in: *Dwudziestolecie 1918–1939. Odkrycia. Fascynacje. Zaprzeczenia*, edited by A.S. Kowalczyk, T. Wójcik, A. Zieniewicz, Warszawa: Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2010, pp. 231–249; H. Gosk, “Polskie opowieści w dyskurs postkolonialny ujęte,” in: *(Nie)obecność. Pominięcia i przemilczenia w narracjach XX wieku*, pp. 75–88.

complementary character towards other ways of interpretation. This does not mean that the new way of understanding should be treated as marginal, as if it did not exist, and thus call the perspective of postcolonial studies a “questionable” and “far-fetched” interpretation of the literature of Kresy. One must “persistently keep planting and tending strong oaks and elms in the borderlands.”<sup>102</sup> When making Kresy the subject of our studies we should take a “mistrustful” attitude. One should treat “the paradigm of these studies as an inspiration to pose [...] new questions,”<sup>103</sup> taking into account various names of the rich Book of Kresy.<sup>104</sup> One should revise such terms as “half-breed,” “step-brother,” “a local” as potential “masks of Polo-centrism.”<sup>105</sup> The demand to dialogise the discourse and to include alternative narrations, which emerges from the postcolonial lesson, is equally important. Hence, we should confront the Polish viewpoint (Polish narration) with the viewpoint of other members of social communication represented by writers of other nations and cultures who used to live in the areas of former Kresy or other borderland territories in general.

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<sup>102</sup> See: B. Hadaczek, *Kresówki (Kresy w literaturze polskiej)*, Szczecin: Volumina, 2011, pp. 148–149.

<sup>103</sup> H. Gosk, “Polskie opowieści w dyskurs postkolonialny ujęte,” in: *(Nie)obecność. Pomięcia i przemilczenia*, p. 75.

<sup>104</sup> See: A. Mazur, “Imiona Księgi Kresowej,” *Kresy* 1991, No. 8, pp. 149–152. See also S. Uliasz, *Literatura Kresów – kresy literatury*, op. cit. (chapter titled *Imiona Księgi Kresowej*). This is how we indicate the palimpsest literary (and cultural) truth about “Kresy” which should not be limited exclusively to the idea of bulwark and the civilisational borderland myth in the east.

<sup>105</sup> See: A. Fiut, “Kolonizacja? Polonizacja?,” in: idem, *Spotkania z Innym*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006, p. 39.

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