

# THE SECRETS OF NEMOLAND:

## BECOMING NEMO AND TRAVEL TO THE LEGENDS

### NEMO AND THE BLACK TRIANGLE OF EUROPE

By some fate of history, climate and geology, the area around Nemoland has always been the centre of Europe as a crossroads and meeting point of three different cultures, religions and ideologies. Often the region flourished by this triple development, but in the last centuries the region became a victim and literally a 'black triangle'; the no-man's land of Europe. A lost land, a landscape which lost its language and meanings.

Once the area was known as the "Toscane of Middle Europe", a big landscape park with a huge quantity of castles and 'Kurorten' (spa's). After the war the area around Nemoland became a 'lost land', because the people who lived there and the people who came to live there both lost their native land. Big industrial companies ruined the nature and many monuments were ruined. Now two mining companies want to explore an open stone mine in Mala Kamienica and an uranium mine in Kopaniec, and ruin this beautiful landscape. If we are not able to stop these plans, one of the most beautiful areas of Poland and Middle Europe will be forever a black triangle.

Which were these three powers of history, which shaped this crossing place and finally the black triangle?

1. in prehistoric times: the German, Slavonic and Celtic migrations and influences
2. from the 12th till the 20th century three main migrations and influences: the Slavic/Polish, Bohemian/Austrian and Prussian/German
3. from the 15th century the clashes between Humanism, Reformation (Luther, Hus) and Catholic Contra-Reformation
4. In the 19th century the three kings/emperors of Middle Europe: the Prussian kings and German 'kaiser' and 'führer', the Austrian Habsburg emperors and the Russian 'tsars', who all smashed Poland.
5. For many centuries Poland as borderland between the three main Christian traditions: Greek/Russian Orthodoxy, Roman Catholics and Protestants.
6. in 20th century the clashes between the three main European ideologies: Fascism, Communism and Capitalism/Liberalism
7. in 1946 the decision of the three world-powers (Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill) to expel Germans and Polish from their homelands, which caused traumatic migrations and disruption of the region.
8. in communist time the three main industrial areas in Germany, Poland and former Czechoslovakia caused a huge ecological disaster (dying of woods and killing of nature). From that time the area was called "black triangle".
9. in the 21st century in Poland the clashes between Neo-liberalism (EU), Polish nationalism and ecological/sustainable alternatives.
10. in Stara Kamienica the rivalry between three main economic powers: big companies (mining companies, supermarkets), agriculture according EU-standards and rural sustainable development (agrotourism, ecological farming, handicrafts)

Becoming Nemo is meant as a passage (walkabout) from the 'black triangle without language' to the landscape of myths, legends and stories. The passage offers the black triangle not as an abyss but as a gate from the lost land to the promised land. From Nemoland to Wonderland. This Wonderland is not meant as a prefab Walt Disney Utopia, like Pandora in Avatar, but as 'earthship', where the reality of nature is captain.

# ZRANIONA ZIEMIA

## Songs of the wounded earth

### Piosenki o ziemi zranionej

The feeling or understanding that walking combined with telling, singing and even dancing legends connect us with nature and landscape is a common concept that we share with native peoples in Finnish countries, Siberia, North America and Australia. Earth, landscape elements, paths and creatures living there, are able to present and express themselves in legends and songs of local inhabitants. The telling and singing protect them from getting wounded and destroyed. If people forget to sing and tell about them, they cannot give us their power and support. However, if we tell and sing about them, they transmit to us the powers of the nature that are a part of them. And nobody knows in this case if the landscape is touched by the legend telling or singing wanderer, or the wanderer is touched by the legendary landscape.

The perfect existence is that of a singing and legend telling wanderer. If you walk your path without legends (or telling stories without walking) then this is an insult to the land, to meadows, trees and animals, and they show their disapproval of such a wanderer by taking away from him the power of moving on. Meanwhile a landscape without walkers will be neglected and forgotten, and even hurt by companies who want to dig and exploit the treasures of the landscape.

Surprisingly these songs and legends reflect the movement of walking; being monotonous, uncomplicated, associative, magic, giving freedom to improvisation and personal rhythm and tuning: the song and story wanders; the landscape sings; footpaths are songlines, drawing the mindmap as a piece of art.

### “Earth Center Nemoland”

**in the forelands of Góry Izerskie; a magic landscape full of myths and songs.**

Because of the turbulent history of the forelands of Góry Izerskie, the migrations and changing borders, this landscape became a treasure chamber full of myths and legends which disappeared elsewhere. Most of these legends are connected with striking landscape elements and inexplicable natural phenomena. They are a mix of old Polish, Slavonic, German and even Celtic mythology, spread by immigrants like glass blowers, weavers and pilgrims going to the Wolfgang Chapel. Nowadays many artists, new farmers and foreigners settled here because they felt attracted by this magic landscape, full of hidden meanings. They made and are making new legends, based on the old ones.

Because of the devastating Pol Skal mining plans in Mala Kamienica and the planned uranium mines in Kopaniec, both just opposite Nemoland Nemo started to search and to collect legends like a ‘mining company’ digging and exploring the secrets of the landscape by combining legends with walking, theatre, art and workshops.

Legends served as a mean to fight the mines and to protect the landscape! And successfully! Enjoying the legends is the best way to understand, value and preserve the landscape, because legends are the language of the landscape and the living memory of the people who lived here and came to visit this wonderful landscape. Nemo invites you to come ‘back to earth’; to Nemoland and discover and enjoy the language of the landscape!

The logo and symbol of Nemoland are 3 rings linked together. The 3 rings are symbols of the Polish, Austrian and German influences which created the landscape. For Nemo the 3 rings are a key to understand the hidden meanings of legends and landscape. The source of inspiration is the magic space in between; and that is exactly the region of Nemoland, meaning no man’s land! The legends are a way to connect these circles, build bridges over the gaps of history and find the source of inspiration.

# THE STORY OF RAM

## The origins of Miedzylesie/Ramberg

Miedzylesie is a hamlet between Kopaniec and Chromiec in the municipality of Stara Kamienica. In German time until 1945 Miedzylesie was called 'Ramberg' and in Polish time until 1960 it was called 'Gogolice', but the villagers still use the old name Ramberg. In 1998 the Nemo Cooperative settled here, calling their place 'Nemoland'. Nemo collected old legends from the area to experience the history of the people and the landscape. One famous legend is about Miedzylesie/Ramberg!

### Historical introduction

According to historians the region around Nemoland (Chromiec/Kopaniec) contains the oldest history of Izery/Karkonosze mountains and dates back to prehistoric Celtic times, and maybe even older. Here there are traces of Celtic cult places and the origins of Cernunnos/Rübezahl and here the first glassworks (finding and melting quartz for glass making and finding pigments for glass colouring, like the precious rubor) started because the area around Nemoland contained the most precious minerals of Europe. From all over Europe people came here to find and explore these minerals. The Walloons of Venice were the first who made mines to search for gold, cobalt and quartz, and until these days mining companies want to dig the mountains to explore the minerals in an industrial way and destroy the landscape. But before the Walloons, alchemists came here because they believed in the magic power of nature and minerals. They were the first who discovered the hidden treasures of the mountains, which were lying here on the surface instead of deeply hidden. Their aim was not to industrialize the minerals, but to use them for their secret knowledge of finding the elixir of eternal life and the 'philosophers stone' of knowledge. They came here, because only here they found the black matter (basalt kobalt uran) for their 'nigredo' (black energy) and the white matter (leucite, quartz, moon stones) for their 'albedo' (white energy). Mixing the black and white energy, they thought to mix earth and heaven, male and female energy, death and life, the powers of the under- and upper world. This mixing was experienced as a passage through the dark underworld and the light upper world, like moving through the cycle of seasons, moon tides and day&night rhythms.

In later times under- and upper world were called hell and heaven, and alchemists were regarded as witches, associates of the devil and his black magic. By criminalizing the magicians of nature, churches could be built and the priests got control about daily life rituals. This is how this area became an industrial area for exploring wood, minerals and tourists. And the stories about the black and white magic, were transformed to harmless children fairy tales about Rübezahl and the kidnapped princess.

### The story of Ram

Searching in old archives and libraries Nemo found a story about Miedzylesie/Ramberg, which dates back to the times people still believed in the magic power of nature. In prehistoric times Miedzylesie/Ramberg was an important crossroads of the richest mineral finding places of Europe. The first inhabitant who discovered this richness was an alchemist, called Ram. His name is connected with Indo-European roots of our culture, which dates back to the Indian/Sanscrit name of the god Ram or Rama (written in the Ramayana). Likewise the Indian god Pashupati could be the origins of Cernunnos/Rübezahl. In the oldest Walloon books we found a copy of Ram's life story. The Walloons collected these old stories in search for gold. Ram lived on the place where later on the counts of Schaffgottschi built a hunter's lodge and where the white house of Nemo was built. Nearby the river he built a water mill to use energy for his alchemist experiments and he built a workshop place, which became a restaurant in German times (Ramberg Schänke). According to the stories Ram developed a method to explore and extract the black and white energy of nature. By mixing the essence of black and white matter, he produced a sacred thread which protected people against evil and gave them health and the knowledge of nature. The hamlet of Ram, Ramberg, became a pilgrimage place and people all over Europe came here to get the sacred thread. To obtain this thread they had to perform a ritual by walking and dancing a spiral labyrinth around the hamlet of Ram. Today Fundacja Nemo, settled in the hamlet of Ram, invites all guests to experience this 'Ram labyrinth'.

# With Nemo to no man's land

## Experience the saga and legends of the Isermountains! in and around the Nemo- Sagahall at the Ramberg

The Iser Mountains range and the Giants Mountains range (in the Sudete area of Polish Lower Silesia) lies in the heart of Europe and in the epicentre of a lively past of which the marks are still visible. Through the area passes the most important geological and historical fractures of Europe, that's why the area offers a kaleidoscope of the history of Europe and an entrance to hidden treasures. In the west most fractures are made invisible or are put away in galleries, here the past is still visible on the surface.

Just like the numerous minerals, the all traces of the past seem to crystallize in the most marvellous shapes. Because of the Iron Curtain the area was closed and time has given several dimensions and shapes. It has become a no man's land and a walker becomes in this area a time-traveller in a mythical landscape. Between the fractures of the history flourish the stories, legends and myths which tell about the history, the landscape and the people who lived there and their secrets.

“Nemoland Centre of Legends” in the forelands of Góry Izerskie; a magic landscape full of myths and stories. Because of the turbulent history of the forelands of Góry Izerskie, the migrations and changing borders, this landscape became a treasure chamber full of stories, myths and legends which disappeared elsewhere. Most of these legends are connected with striking landscape elements and inexplicable natural phenomena. They are a mix of old Polish, Slavonic, German and even Celtic mythology, spread by immigrants like glass blowers, weavers and pilgrims going to the Wolfgang Chapel.

Nowadays many artists, new farmers and foreigners settled here because they felt attracted by this magic landscape, full of hidden meanings. They made and are making new legends, based on the old ones.

Because of the devastating Pol Skal mining plans in Mala Kamienica, just opposite Nemoland Nemo started to search and to collect legends like a ‘mining company’ digging and exploring the secrets of the landscape by combining legends with walking, theatre, art and workshops. Legends served as a mean to fight the mines and to protect the landscape! And successfully!

Enjoying the legends is the best way to understand, value and preserve the landscape, because legends are the language of the landscape and the living memory of the people who lived here and came to visit this wonderful landscape. Nemo invites you to come to Nemoland and discover and enjoy the language of the landscape!

The logo and symbol of Nemoland are 3 rings linked together. The 3 rings are symbols of the Polish, Austrian and German influences which created the landscape. But also symbols of 3 main aspects of life: 1. nature and emotions, 2. language and ratio. 3 imagination and phantasy. For Nemo the 3 rings are a key to understand the hidden meanings of legends and landscape. The source of inspiration is the magic space in between; and that is exactly the region of Nemoland! The legends are a way to connect these circles, build bridges over the gaps of history and find the source of inspiration.

# THE MYTH OF AGA AND RÚBEZAHL

1. In olden times the Giant Mountains were an impenetrable primeval forest no one ever dared to enter. It was said to be inhabited by a Mountain Spirit. Whoever had entered the mountains has never come back. The Spirit would sometimes manifest itself as a sudden fog, a terrible thunderstorm, a forest fire, or a snowstorm. Or it would appear in the shape of an old man with a long beard and a walking stick, pretending to be a guide for wanderers who had lost their way. But in reality it took the wanderers to dark caves deep under the mountains, where they had to hew stones for the rest of their lives.

For down below, under the surface of the earth, the Mountain Spirit had a large kingdom, with enormous, extended passages. At the lowest point of the caves there was a large fire and a well, from which flowed boiling water; this was the Source of the Living Water giving the Mountain Spirit its magical powers and its immortality. The Spirit was still without a name. It made everyone terrified and the people tried to exorcize their fear by coming together for devotion in their church.

2. Not far from the Giant Mountains, in an old castle called Stara Kamienica, lived the Duke of Silesia, Boleslaw III, who was also the King of Poland. His youngest daughter was called Aga. She was absolutely against the wars her brothers Wladislaw, Boleslaw and Mieszko were waging against each other for the power over Poland. She preferred the mysterious nature of the mountains. It was Aga's task to attend to the kitchen garden and when she was planting beets or turnips she listened to the songs of the birds and sang a song.

3. After finishing her work in the kitchen garden, Aga loved going for a hike to pick mushrooms and herbs. One day, when she was looking for mushrooms near Ram Mountain, halfway between Stara Kamienica and the Giant Mountains, all of a sudden it became pitch-dark. There flashes of lightning came down from the skies and a crashing peal of thunder. It started to rain heavily. The Mountain Spirit, ruler of the elements, sent lightning and thunder to the earth. Aga sped home for shelter.

4. When the storm had passed, Aga went to Ram Mountain again to pick mushrooms, in spite of her father's and sisters' warnings. The soil was damp after the rains and it smelled wonderful. Aga stopped by a brook and sat down on a stone near the water to listen to the murmuring of the water and the birds' songs.

5. While she was listening she suddenly felt someone was standing behind her. She turned around and saw a handsome prince with wavy blond hair. This was the Mountain Spirit in human form who had fallen in love with the beautiful Aga. She was very much impressed by his tall stature and, blushing, she asked him where he came from. He just laughed and said that he came from a land far away where no man had ever been. "I will show you my magic power, if you like, ... "

6. The red-haired prince murmured: "Karkonosze ...Karkonosze...", ... there was a tearing and cracking sound and the ground burst open. Aga shrank back, but her curiosity won from her fear and she followed the handsome young man down the stairs leading to his underworld kingdom.

7. Out of love for Aga the prince built a large and beautiful castle at the foot of the Giant Mountains. Aga taught the prince how to lay out a kitchen garden and how to grow corn and vegetables. She taught him how to make felt from wool and how to spin yarn and how to weave clothes, how to talk and laugh; in short: how people lived. Each day Aga sang for him, for she had a beautiful voice and through this contact with Aga, his features became more and more human by the day. The prince, in his turn, had Aga drink from the Source of Living Water, teaching her all the secrets of the mountains: the language of the animals and the herbs, and everything there is to know about the Spirits of Earth, Fire, Wind and Water.

8. Aga was happy in the underworld kingdom with the man who gave her everything her heart desired. Yet there were times she felt sad, feeling homesick for Stara Kamienica and Ram Mountain ... And although her friend assumed more and more human features, she felt he would never be able to be really human. One day she asked him to show himself in to her his true form. He took her to his Source of Fire and suddenly disappeared. Where he had stood only a fire flaming high was to be seen. The flames lapped around Aga. When she almost suffocated, the flames abruptly retreated and there was the prince again, standing on that same spot. Now Aga knew that her blond-haired prince was the same as the Mountain Spirit the people feared so much.

10. This newly obtained knowledge burnt in Aga's soul: she felt more and more homesick and she became afraid of the Spirit and his fiery shapes. The Spirit, who felt her inward struggle, wanted to keep Aga for himself and asked her to marry him. She refused, not once, but six times. The seventh time she couldn't refuse anymore and she told him she would marry him if he first counted all the turnips in the field. The Spirit started counting immediately. Day and night he counted and each time he had to start all over again because at the end of the field he saw that he had missed a row. While he was counting, Aga managed to escape.

11. At that moment a heavy storm broke. There was a roaring sound of falling rocks along the mountain sides. The mountain spirit had noticed her escape and was throwing rocks, made it rain and storm. The Spirit, who from now on would go by the name of Rübzahl – he who counts turnips – , hated the humans who had deceived him.

12. All over sudden Aga had fled from the underworld kingdom and returned to her father's country. There her father gave her in marriage to Ratibor. But Ratibor was not a good husband. He drank himself stupid day after day and threatened Aga he would beat her up if she didn't listen better.

In her distress she roamed through the mountains, looking for what she had lost: her Mountain Spirit's unconditional love. She often came back to the place where Rübzahl had carried her off, at the foot of Ram Mountain. On the spot where Rübzahl had opened the earth for her she tried to dig a tunnel to the underworld cave of the Mountain Spirit. While she was digging, a stream of water appeared and her tunnel became a well. She took a sip of the water. Aga immediately felt a primeval energy run through her body – this was the Source of Living water, the same source that had given Rübzahl his magical power.

13. Whenever she drank the water of the magical well Aga received magical powers. She used the spring water for medical potions and ointments too, and she could heal sick people and animals. People from far and near came to seek comfort with her. Yet there were villagers who didn't trust Aga ... they didn't believe in the healing water. To them she was a witch who brewed the goriest and the most sinister magic potions. They called her Aga the Witch.

14. During the great wars Aga was blamed for all misery and she was chased away. But it is said that she returned in the shape of a falcon circling above her father's old country. As for Rübzahl: he still resides in his underworld cave below the tunnel, waiting for Aga to return, and passionately longing to be born as a human. With his magical power he can move rocks, create storm and thunder, but up till now it has not been of any use in transforming himself into a human (yet). For that he needs Aga's love, who can open the tunnel to the world of man for him. Aga's soft song can still be heard up in the skies each Friday night, the songs with which she entices Rübzahl and wants to open the tunnel from the underworld to the world of man. And until this day, we can hear Rübzahl's sobbing and humming from below Ram Mountain each Friday night (the beginning of the witches' Sabbath). Yet by their singing Aga and Rübzahl are united. Sad and separated, joined by their song.