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“This Emigrant Fate of His”: On Włodzimierz Odojewski’s Short Story Collection *...i poniosły konie*

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Abstract: Włodzimierz Odojewski is one of the most famous émigré writers who still deals with the topic of emigration, even in his books published long after his both symbolic and real return to the homeland. Significant extension and dwelling on the said topic can be observed in the book *...i poniosły konie* [...and the horses bolted]. The aim of this paper is to provide an interpretation of the short stories gathered in the volume (published in 2006) from the perspective of the biographical context, the rest of Odojewski’s writings, as well as his opinions on various aspects of exile. Such interpretation reveals a more existential and internalized dimension of emigration but also its universal meanings. Thus, emigration is considered to be a metaphor of human fate.

Keywords: Odojewski, exile, emigration, fate, Volhynia, Podolia, short stories

“This emigrant fate of his” are the words uttered by the protagonist of one of the short stories by Włodzimierz Odojewski from the volume *...i poniosły konie* [...and the horses bolted]¹ which reflects on the story of his interlocutor’s father.² The laconic formula seems neutral, devoid of judgements and emotions, nevertheless – in the context of the whole work – it proves to be very telling in communicating a range of experiences, pain, unstated curiosity, and doubts, as well as issues which are not fully comprehensible and make individuals helpless. The journalist presented in this literary work avoids describing the fate of an emigrant despite it being an attractive topic for a newspaper. This decision, however, discloses far more than the readers could read in a newspaper. Now leaving aside the specific biography (presented in the short story *Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie* [A short meeting in Corinth], from where the above quotation derives) one

¹ W. Odojewski, “Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie,” in: idem, *...i poniosły konie*, Warszawa: Wielki Wóz, 2006, p. 246. Further on the quotations from this collection will be marked in the main text as Ipk, accompanied by the title of a short story and the page number.

² Translation available on: <https://pbn.nauka.gov.pl/sedno-webapp/works/245671>

may notice that it is the very statement which includes the belief that the experiences of an emigrant cannot be expressed and that they dominate any other experiences. Hanna Gosk writes:

The term emigration revises many senses and it can be considered to be an existential experience, an element of biography and a stylistic device. In the literary prose of the 20th century we note a gradual move of focus from the external, political, historical, collective conditionings of the emigrant's state of mind, his mission and attitude to the homeland from the perspective of patriotic duty to the benefit of individual, existential and internal conditionings.³

This is certainly the case in Odojewski's literary works: the historical events, his objection to the political situation do not exploit all the senses of this extremely complex experience. Especially in his later works, the existential and individual character of emigration comes to the fore.

When describing Odojewski's emigrant experiences, the scholar Magdalena Rabizo-Birek notices that they can be classified as a type of emigrant literature which is related to the wave of emigration after 1968.⁴ Odojewski joined the team of writers-emigrants who lived and published their works abroad.⁵ These works were linked by a common theme of Katyń which was undoubtedly "forbidden" then and by the history of exterminations during the war in Volhynia and Podolia.⁶ However, the works also presented the issue of emigration and the characters of the books were refugees.⁷ Magdalena Rabizo-Birek emphasises that the emigrant's experience is reflected not only in the themes, motifs and issues discussed by this writer but also in the genre perspective, at the level of style and the language of the literary works. It is expressed, among others, in the involvement in politics, departure from the experimental prose to the benefit of a more "classic"

³ H. Gosk, *Bohater swoich czasów. Postać literacka w powojennej prozie polskiej o tematyce współczesnej. Wybrane zagadnienia*, Izabelin: "Świat Literacki", 2002, p. 101. All quotations from the Polish sources have been translated by Edyta Więclawska, unless indicated otherwise.

⁴ M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem a historią. Twórczość Włodzimierza Odojewskiego*, Warszawa: "Twój Styl," 2002, p. 183.

⁵ W. Odojewski, *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...*, Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1973; idem, *Zabezpieczanie śladów*, Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1984. The writer's works were also published in *Kultura* (Paris).

⁶ Volhynia and Podolia are historical and geographical regions which were part of the south-eastern borderlands of the I and II Republic of Poland. After World War II they were incorporated into the Soviet Union and currently these territories in majority belong to Ukraine. The territories were multicultural and their history was complex and difficult. Volhynia and Podolia played an important role in the history of Polish culture. They became part of the borderlands considered to be almost a mythical land. For more on the development of geographical, historical and cultural dimension of the Borderlands (including Volhynia and Podolia) see J. Kolbuszewski, *Kresy*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996.

⁷ First of all, in the volumes of short stories entitled *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone*, Berlin: Archipelag, 1987; *Bez tchu*, Warszawa: Rosner & Wspólnicy, 2002; *...i poniosły konie*, and also in the novel *Oksana*, Warszawa: "Twój Styl," 1999.

one.⁸ The scholar considers this first period of Odojewski's literary activity as closed and discerns a new period which she called the "post-emigration" period. It is connected with the transformations which started before the events of 1989: the closing down of Radio Free Europe and a change of residence: Odojewski came back to Poland although he often stayed in Germany and France. The writer said a symbolic good bye to the past – as noted by Rabizo-Birek – in the short story *W noc kiedy umarł*⁹ [The night he passed away]. The novel *Oksana* opens a new period which features a distinct historical and existential situation.¹⁰

In the period "after emigration", that is in the 1990s and beyond the following reprints were published in the country: older works,¹¹ the Katyń story,¹² selection of critical essays¹³ and volumes of short stories, with corrected versions of previously published stories and some new texts.¹⁴

The volume *...i poniosły konie*¹⁵ seems to be particularly important as it comprises hitherto unknown and unpublished short stories, which clearly testifies the writer's interest in the issues related to emigration. Thus, the "after-emigration" period in Odojewski's writing is not defined by a radical departure from the themes of exile, homelessness, but – quite the contrary – it fosters deeper insight into these issues, including a somewhat different perspective. In each of the short stories in the collection we have an emigrant who leaves his home, his country, and who is involved in "big

⁸ M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem a historią...*, pp. 185, 189.

⁹ W. Odojewski, "W noc kiedy umarł..." in: idem, *Bez tchu...*, pp. 474–495.

¹⁰ The next stage of Odojewski's career as a writer is described by M. Rabizo-Birek, "Powroty po latach. Opowiadania Włodzimierza Odojewskiego," in: *Literatura utracona, poszukiwana czy odzyskana. Wokół problemów emigracji. Studia i szkice*, eds. Z. Andres, J. Wolski, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2003, pp. 332–346.

¹¹ First of all, the works which were considered to be part of the Podolia Cycle were reprinted: W. Odojewski, *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje*, Warszawa: "Czytelnik", 1990; idem, *Wyspa ocalenia*, Białystok: Zakłady Wydawnicze "Versus", 1990; idem, *Zmierzc świat*, Warszawa: "Czytelnik", 1995, but also other works such as: idem, *Kwarantanna*, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Fis, 1993; idem, *Czas odwrócony*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Książkowe Twój Styl, 2002.

¹² Idem, *Milczący, niepokonani. Opowieść katyńska*, Warszawa: Wielki Wóz, 2003.

¹³ Idem, *Raptularz krytyczny, Twórcy – dzieła – konteksty*, collection, introduction and edition by S. Barć, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1994; idem, *Notatnik półprywatny. W kręgu kultury*, collection, introduction and edition by S. Barć, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1996.

¹⁴ Apart from the already mentioned volume entitled *Bez tchu* the following collections of short stories are a case in point here: *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania*, Warszawa: "Twój Styl", 2000; idem., *W stepach, ostach i burzanie i inne opowiadania*, Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2009.

¹⁵ The writers who wrote about this collection include: J.R. Krzyżanowski, "Włodzimierz Odojewski po pięćdziesięciu latach," *Kresy* 2007, No. 3, pp. 133–135; M. Orski, "Rozłamywanie 'pieczęci czasu'," *Przegląd Powszechny* 2007, No. 2, pp. 153–155; A. Szolucha, "Bez kłajstrowania zaszłości... – o najnowszej książce Włodzimierza Odojewskiego," *Podlaskie Zeszyty Pedagogiczne* 2006, No. 13/14, pp. 105–109; T. Zubiński, "Stamtąd," *Dziś* 2006, No. 12, pp. 156–158.

issues” (a human being mired in history, his attachment with the land, *unde malum*, questions about the cause of hatred and ‘the vicious circle of crime’ being examples in point) known to us from the Podolia cycle.¹⁶ The change here consists more in moving the focus from the historical to the existential, internal dimension of the emigrant’s experiences, as Hanna Gosk notes. The fate of the refugees from Poland was presented in the following works from the collection under discussion: *Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze* [Still not able to wake up], *Sprawa Agnieszki* [Agnieszka’s affair], *Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie* [A short meeting in Corinth]. The short texts by Odojewski present also Ukrainian emigrants: one of the Petlura officers who lives in Paris (...*i poniosły konie*, Ipk, p. 50), Ukrainians who lived in Canada and Australia after World War II (...*i poniosły konie*, Ipk, p. 114–115) and Greek emigrants in the Soviet Union (*Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie*, Ipk, p. 219). The writer presents emigrants from many countries who leave their homeland (before World War II and after this war, that is after 1956 and after 1968). The reasons why they emigrate, their situation and state of mind in the new place also vary. Thus, the problem of emigration here is presented in a wider perspective (fostering a universal approach to this issue). Coming back to this topic at the point when the writer himself is no longer an emigrant makes it impossible to capture the issue of emigration exclusively in a biographical and historical context. Deeper understanding of emigration was signalled by the writer when commenting on Wiktor Trościanka’s book *Nareszcie lata pokoju* [Finally the years of peace]:

Emigration is not only about the physical dimension connected with the fact of permanent or temporary stay away from one’s own country. [...] **Emigration also – if not primarily – corresponds to certain mental and moral state.** It means objection to the surrounding reality, to the political systems, to the violence exercised on one’s own country. Thus, an emigrant can also be somebody who stays in one’s country, who physically never crossed its borders.¹⁷ [emphasis added by E. D.]

¹⁶ See footnote 10. Odojewski’s most famous works: the novels *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...* and *Wyspa ocalenia* as well as the collection of short stories *Zmierzch świata* are referred to as the Podolia cycle, the Podolian/Ukrainian epic or the Podolian/Ukrainian trilogy. The said parts of the cycle feature only tragic events which took place during World War II, mainly in the Podolia region, in the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands. The fratricidal fights between Poles and Ukrainians which resulted in the Volhynia Massacre make the central theme of the Cycle which was extended over the years. The Cycle is very varied and fragmentary. Events are presented in a non-linear fashion, from various perspectives. However, all the parts of the Cycle focus their stories around the history of two families from the Borderlands: the Woynowicz family and the Czerstwiński family. The Cycle is extensively discussed by Inga Iwasiów in her book *Kresy w twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego. Próba feministyczna*, Szczecin: „Jota”, 1994 (chapter *Cykl i fragmenty* (pp. 25–66). The novel *Odejść, zapomnieć, żyć...* which was to be published by the author and parts of which were published in the press is also considered to belong to the Cycle according to Stanisław Barć (S. Barć, “Posłowie,” in: *Odojewski i krytycy. Antologia tekstów*, selection and edition by S. Barć, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, 1999, p. 393). This issue is discussed also in another publication – see E. Dutka, *Ukraina w twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego i Włodzimierza Paźniewskiego*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2000, pp. 49–50.

¹⁷ W. Odojewski, “Emigranci i emigracje,” in: idem, *Raptularz krytyczny...*, p. 140.

The statement that the writer made during one of his interviews is specifically meaningful in the light of the 2006 volume:

I still feel like an emigrant. There are cases of emigration from which one never comes back. In such a situation I am also an emigrant because it is a **state of mind**. It means being separated from one's native soil and unable to grow into another one. One observes the surrounding reality as if one was a bit of a stranger, from outside, from a distance and – perhaps – somewhat unemotionally. This does not mean that you are indifferent, that various things hurt less. Not at all. Quite the opposite, the perception is extremely acute, sometimes unbearably acute. It happens often that one is of distinct opinion.¹⁸ [emphasis added by – E. D.]

I believe that the collection entitled *...i poniosły konie* provides the proper ground for extended reflection on the issue of emigration in Odojewski's prose. Apart from the considerations on political exile familiar from his earlier works, emigration is also assigned other senses. It becomes a metaphor of the human condition, and the individual's loss in the contemporary world. Presenting the history of various emigrants Odojewski earns the status of writer describing human fate and thus joins the team of artists who discussed this "almost obsessive motif of the works of literary art" employing various stylistic and narrative conventions:¹⁹ Tadeusz Konwicki, Henryk Grynberg, Artur Sandauer, Czesław Miłosz, and Witold Gombrowicz. Gawliński emphasises that these writers treated their literary activity as a form of self-cognition and the works of literary art as epistemological metaphors which include their own existential experiences. Such an approach enables the "philosophically tempered artist to reflect also on the human fate in general."²⁰

The composition of the collection *...i poniosły konie* encourages us to treat emigration as a metaphor and symbol of human fate. The writer accounted for the composition of the volume in the note placed on back of the cover, which reads as follows:

now, when I am reading the texts belonging to this collection before it is printed some of the short stories strike me as if they had a "different mother." Perhaps this impression is triggered by the fact that the works from the last decade go together with the older ones, or even much older ones which were confiscated some time ago. The latter include *Miejsce pod słońce* [Place under the sun], *Zapis zbrodni* [Record of the crime], *I za nim szły...* [And they followed him ...]. They were "lost" at certain point and then "found." I enclose the date when a work was written or a date when I come back to it after years, adding some improvements. I do not know if I am right dragging the past into the present. It is for the reader to decide.

The author emphasises that this collection includes earlier and more recent works but it is not a random composition. The older short story enti-

¹⁸ "Widzę ostro, nie do zniesienia'. Rozmowa z Włodzimierzem Odojewskim," *Przeгляд Tygodniowy* 1999, No. 10, p. 13. Quoted after: M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem a historią...*, p. 186.

¹⁹ S. Gawliński, "Metafory losu," in: idem, *Metafory losu. O współczesnej literaturze polskiej*, Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2005, p. I.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. II–III.

tled *Miejsce pod słońce* dated back to 1955 is the fourth one in the series. The collection entitled *I za nim szły...* was written one year later. The final edition of most of the works was in 2000. In general, we may notice that the order of the short stories is intentional: the older ones open the collection. They were written when the writer was in his homeland and they are connected with Odojewski's earlier literary output. Jerzy Madejski notices that the structure of the volume allows us to observe the "evolution of the narrative art of one of the most important writers of the second half of the 20th century."²¹ Notably, this comment may be supplemented by the statement that the structure of the volume also encourages us to take a fresh look at the older works. The arrangement of the short stories in the volume corresponds (to some degree) to the chronology of the events presented. Rabizo-Birek notices a rule in the composition of the texts which is known from Odojewski's earlier works. The author selected the texts in such a way that they make a whole and the organising force in the composition is the intention to present the chronological life story of a representative of the war generation to which the author himself belongs:

In this symbolically general but at the same time individual and collective life history the following borderline points recur: an idyllic childhood spent in the south borderlands of the Second People's Republic, the apocalypse of World War II which brought about the annihilation of the multicultural community and traumatic experiences for those who were saved, the humiliation of long-lasting communism and – finally – the choice of political emigration and its bitter taste.²²

Various histories presented in the consecutive short stories of the volume make a story about a man-emigrant who loses his home, feeling of safety, feels at a loss and does not have a sense of continuity in his life. He cannot put up with the loss and with the phenomenon of the passage of time. This is how the author presents various stages of experience which make a human fate. If we paraphrase the sentence referred to in the title and at the very beginning of the work, we may say "this emigrant fate of theirs (of the characters)" but also "this emigrant fate of his."²³

²¹ J. Madejski, "Klątwa pamięci," *Nowe Książki* 2006, No. 11, p. 32.

²² M. Rabizo-Birek, "Wpływ Saturna," *Odra* 2007, No. 2, p. 127. P. Czapliński noticed a similar principle in the composition of the collection of short stories which contained works written in different periods. In his work entitled *Jedźmy, wracajmy...*, he wrote: "The selection of works making part of the collection is determined by the internal chronology of events. It was neither the biography of the author nor the biography of the characters". P. Czapliński, "Pamięć i rozpacz," in: *Odojewski i krytycy. Antologia tekstów...*, p. 186.

²³ Universal interpretation of the character of an emigrant can be found in the earlier works of Odojewski. I believe that later works of this author make it clearer. However, let me referent this point to the remarks made by Małgorzata Hueckel during the time when she was reading the volume *Zabezpieczanie śladów*. "One does not need to be an emigrant to experience despair and feeling of hopelessness because of the haunting images from the past. Whenever we admit the fact of things passing by it hurts. We are all in exile in time and this is admittedly more important than any spatial distance. We all depart from our sources and we are not able to sustain the living and current bond with the past stages of our lives.

The first short story constitutes, as noted by one of the reviewers, a “tiny bit of the Podolia cycle.”²⁴ It features a come back to the old ruined and deserted manor house. The place reminds us of Cziprynia, known, among others, from *Wyspa ocalenia* [The island of salvation], and of the hero – Piotr Czerestwiński whose fate could be followed by the readers of the novel mentioned above. The background of the story, the image of the man and the circumstances of his comeback allow us actually to consider the short story as a variant and addition to the history presented in the novel issued for the first time in 1964. The short story *Miejsce pod słońce* seems to be another element of the Podolia cycle. The main hero called Paweł reminds us of another hero from the Podolia trilogy – Woynowicz. Moreover, the titular work and the two next works touch upon the plots which are well known to readers of Odojewski – the tragic, combined history of the Ukraine and Poland in Volhynia and Podolia with the nationality-based conflicts in the twenties of the 20th century, mutual grievances and faults, wartime exterminations and crimes. The other short stories focus on issues related to the political order imposed after the war, the times of the Stalinist regime and experiences of emigrants. The volume closes with the latest works which discuss events referring more to the contemporary times. The last group of the short stories entitled *Był spokojny* [He was calm] from the year 2004 and three texts dated for the next year *Jeszcze raz, i jeszcze...* [Once again, again...], *Tracił pamięć...* [He was losing his mind...], *Żadnego lęku...* [No fear...] stand out in particular here. Contrary to the earlier texts which include more or less developed plots, the later works closing the volume are decisively shorter and are more like images, visions and records of elusive states.

The arrangement of the short stories in the volume constitutes a kind of writer’s *summa* covering the conceptualisations which are most characteristic for Odojewski’s writing, that is obsessively recurring and recognisable themes, distinct and new images which constitute an addition to the works of the author we are already familiar with and enable us to identify the areas that have not been in focus so far. Plotting the endings of the earlier stories was signalled already in the wording of the title, which is a kind of ending of a broken sentence. Odojewski employed this type of title for the first time here and it is significant that his earlier works favoured decisively distinct titles which are composed of broken sentences (*Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...* [Everything will be buried and drift away],

[...] The example of an emigrant proves that however radically we may change our lives and thus the past together with the external circumstances which do not necessarily determine our past fate then the annihilation of one’s existential continuity is unbearable for a human psyche. We need to connect to our past and to the past and tradition of our community which is where we come from and it is only then that we can fully be ourselves” M. Hueckel, “O cierpieniu przemijania,” in: *Odojewski i krytycy...*, pp. 167–168.

²⁴ M. Rabizo-Birek, “Wpływ Saturna...,” p. 127.

Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone... [Forgotten and not unhealed], *Jedźmy, wracajmy...* [Let us go, let us come back...], *Odejść, zapomnieć, żyć...* [Leave away, forget and live...]. Such titles dominate in the latest volume²⁵ and the distinctiveness of the whole collection is striking against such a background. Hence, in the volume *...i poniosły konie*, apart from – as was already mentioned – extension and closer elaboration of the issue of emigration we may notice an attempt to sum up, properly close the experiences of the writer and emigrant.

The findings made by Bettina L. Knapp may prove to be useful in the interpretation of the collection. Her analyses of the literary works coming from various cultural circles and written in different periods (including the works of Dostoyevsky, Conrad, Malraux, Beckett)²⁶ include references to the external and internal experiences connected with being in exile. Since the time of giving up the nomadic lifestyle for the benefit of a sedentary way of living, exile has become a part and parcel of human experience. The characters experiencing it can be found in Mythology (Odysseus), in the Bible (Moses leading the chosen people to the promised land) and in many other works, not only literary ones (the record of experiences connected with expatriation is seen by Bettina L. Knapp in *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, the mystic texts of various Christian authors, in the prayers and holy books of different religions, in the work entitled *Attempts* by Montaigne, in the romantic poetry and in haiku). The list of these experiences is unlimited²⁷ and their variety causes that exile can be treated as part of the human state of mind. The researcher emphasises the universal character and timelessness of exile and suggests it should be treated as an archetype, described by Carl Gustav Jung.²⁸ There is one archetype but it undergoes numerous modifications and it manifests itself in many ways, depending on the individual temperament, sensitivity, the historical and cultural conditionings, etc. Knapp proposes a very telling analogy: she juxtaposes the archetype of exile with the fingerprints, the latter being a common thing which – at the same time is – unique

²⁵ According to M. Rabizo-Birek the fact that Odojewski often uses titles composed of broken sentences and phrases, including suspension points emphasises the ontological vagueness of the world presented. This stylistic device convincingly metaphorises the concept of transgressing the borders of life and death. Ibidem, p. 127. See also: E. Dutka, "O czym świadczą tytuły utworów Włodzimierza Odojewskiego? Interpretacja 'przez tytuł' na lekcjach języka polskiego w liceum," in: *W kręgu zagadnień dydaktyki języka i literatury polskiej. Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Edwardowi Polańskiemu*, ed. H. Synowiec, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2002, pp. 396–403.

²⁶ B.L. Knapp, *Exile and the Writer, Exoteric and Esoteric Experiences, A Jungian Approach*, Pensilvania: Penn State University Press, 1991. I would like to take the chance here to say thank you to Prof. Jerzy Świąch for referring me to the book of this author.

²⁷ "The list of exiles – exoteric and or/esoteric, voluntary or involuntary – is virtually infinite." Ibidem, p. 12.

²⁸ "As the great variety of the literature to be discussed here suggests, exile is a state of mind which is fundamental to humanity. It is so eternal and universal that it takes an archetypal stature." Ibid., p. 18.

and unrepeatable.²⁹ In this variety, she finds a place for the experience of emigration which is understood literally. She writes about the political exile which is manifested particularly in turbulent times: revolutions, insurrections, anarchies, colonisation, etc.³⁰ The tragic history of the 20th century is a constantly recurring theme in Odojewski's books and caused many people to choose emigration and exile. We read after Jerzy Świąch:

Never before did "exile" become a term so needed and polysemic as it was in this century. It will long stay infamous for producing so many emigrants (including the "internal ones"), expatriates, the expelled, runaways, fugitives, *displaced persons*, etc. However, one needs to admit that it is not only these exiles who want to be recognized as expelled. The same holds true for all the other persons who felt homeless, alienated from the circle of certain values, deprived of anything they had possessed for ever, uprooted not only from the homeland but also from the environment that was close to them, thus feeling displaced all the time, being "totally out of place", people who are on the way all the time. Consequently, eternal wandering, nomad, pilgrim, tourist and vagabond became a synonym for an exile.³¹

Such a perception of exile proves to be "the most universal figure of a man of the late modernity."³² Knapp notices that the biography of an exile conventionally has three stages in narration. The first stage relates to leaving the homeland (real or symbolic), the loss of one's house, a dominating feeling of being uprooted and alienation. The second moment is a kind of epiphany when "the dark night of exile" goes away, when the light comes on and the emigrant notices a world that is different from the one which was surrendered. He faces new circumstances and is born again as an artist. The life in the reconstituted world is another stage and it is dependent on the creator himself and the exile:

Now he enjoys all the power over the world which he obtained with difficulty. It is only now that he really feels himself after having left his temporary embodiment. He may freely decide about what the past and future look like and he may construct his own image according to the rules of art, which – from now onwards – becomes his real home.³³

According to Świąch this is a general perspective of the path that is taken by an exile but the pattern is materialised in the individual works in many ways. Jerzy Świąch notices that not each emigrant becomes automatically an exile, although the experience of an emigrant's fate is often shared by exiles:

In order to empathise with a real exile one needs to rebel against the position of an exile. In order to save one's good name one needs to sacrifice oneself to extreme loneliness and abandonment. An exile is a person who turns the alienation, uprooting, homelessness into a springboard which allows him to bounce back from the ground and spring into space, hoping that it is where he will find a real himself.³⁴

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³¹ J. Świąch, "Homo exul, czyli przygody nowoczesności," in: *idem, Nowoczesność. Szkice o literaturze polskiej XX wieku*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2006, p. 92.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 93.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

Exile is a road leading to a breakdown, distortion of identity, through the reconstruction of the personality and home symbolically, up to the retrieval of identity. Thus, exile literature – as Jerzy Świąch puts it – responds to one of the most painful challenges of modern times, that is to the “personality crisis,” “the death of the persona,” etc.

I believe it is worth considering the short stories from the volume *...i poniosły konie* from the perspective of the narration scheme referred to above, since thanks to it we may more specifically describe the situation of the protagonists in these works. It turns out to be indispensable thus to clearly distinguish between the state of mind of an emigrant and an exile (as understood by Jerzy Świąch). Odojewski's short stories allow us to follow in particular the initial stages of the process signalled here, however, the characters stay emigrants till the end. The transformation described by Świąch is not operative here – the symbolic reconstruction of home and retrieval of identity.

The short stories included in Odojewski's volume can be divided into three groups which present the consecutive stages of the biography of someone who had to leave his homeland.

The first part of the collection and the illustration of the early stage of exile is included in the works: *I za nim szły...* [And so they followed him...], *...i poniosły konie* [...and the horses bolted], *Zapis zbrodni* [Record of the crime], *Miejsce pod słońcem* [Place in the sun]. This is not only a record of the most recognisable topics and features of Odojewski's literature but the short stories share the experience of the loss of home, close friends and family and the old world. Already in the first short story we see a ruined house.³⁵ The reader is moved by the emptiness, lack of feelings and seeming indifference of the man who comes back to his ancestral home:

Then he stood there for a while in absolute darkness, breathing in the diluted smell of decaying stone, mould and fruity seasonings which were off, as if taken away from some other place by a draft of air and mixed with a hardly recognisable fragrance of wine which was spilt long ago and he was listening to the murmuring of the inside, however indifferently. There was nothing strange between them, but also nothing familiar. (*I za nim szły...*, Ipk, p. 6)

The man finds a glass cabinet. There are old glasses made from Venice glass. It is then that he gets a flashback of the past: parties in the living room, the buzz of conversations, the chinking of glass. The protagonist starts breaking the glasses as if he was in a trance and thus symbolically achieves closure with his past. Again what is striking about this image is the protagonist's lack of feelings and a kind of stupefaction:

Under his feet, there was a pile of glass. He bypassed it not to step on it and only from the distance of a few steps, he looked at the empty glass cabinet once again. However, he did

³⁵ This motif in the works of the author of the Podolia cycle is discussed by E. Szczepkowska, “Szkielety napełnione powietrzem. O symbolice domu w prozie Włodzimierza Odojewskiego,” in: *Kresy i pogranicza. Historia, kultura, obyczaje*, ed. Z. Frasz, A. Staniszeński, Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej, 1995, pp. 237–247.

not think about it at all. The doors slammed somewhere in the house again. This time he did not move at all. He left the living room. (*I za nim szły...*, Ipk, p. 10)

The main character leaves but he thinks that the women who once organised parties in this house and served wine in the Venice glasses follow him. The volume starts with an image of the end and relates to the title of one of the parts in the Podolia cycle. One may say that the image presented shows the “dusk of the world.” The continuity of the biography is distorted. There will be no house and meetings held there although the past follows the character and he cannot break free from it.

In the next short story, *...i poniosły konie*, about the friendship between a Pole and a Ukrainian, there appears a ruined house, as well. This time it is the seat of the Ukrainian Damiatycze family. The manor was reduced to ashes by a Soviet division of military police in revenge for the shooting of three soldiers. Together with the others the unnamed protagonist walks around the ruins and excavates the remains: parts of various equipment, furniture and china:

and there was the china. I held a cup from the set. This blue and white china in my hand. I blew away and cleaned the ashes on it with my fingers and the thought that was chasing other thoughts in my head: we lived together but separately. We knew each other but not really. Perhaps we were close to each other but at the same time we were far away from each other. Perhaps we were getting closer to each other, perhaps – quite the contrary. (*...i poniosły konie*, Ipk, pp. 65–66)

The short story *Swoi i obcy* [Familiar and alien], from the volume *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania* [Let’s go, let’s return and other short stories], presents a similar story of life going on next to one another but not together, with the reservation that here the story relates to the coexistence of Poles and Jews in the Borderlands.³⁶ In turn, the scene of searching through the ruins where the china is found brings about the scenes known from other literary works. Andrzej Kuśniewicz presents analogical images in *Lekcja martwego języka* [The lesson of a dead language]. The main character of this novel – the Austrian lieutenant-collector searched through the ruined manor houses in the Ukraine at the end of World War I and china occupies a special place among his trophies. These scenes bring to our mind the well-known *Piosenka o porcelanie* [The china song] by Czesław Miłosz. Setting the cruelty and ruthlessness of the war against something as fragile as china, Miłosz raises questions about the bygone world, about the traces that were left and about the meaning of art. It also poses explicit question about the kind of relations between what is ethical and what is aesthetic.

³⁶ “They lived next to us. We lived next to them. It is not easy to explain it, in particular these days.” W. Odojewski, “Swoi i obcy,” in: idem, *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania...*, p. 452. This collection of short stories is discussed by me in: E. Dutka, “Co skrywa zasłona? O uwikłaniach w tragiczność w tomie Włodzimierza Odojewskiego ‘Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania,’” in: *Problemy tragedii i tragizmu. Studia i szkice*, eds. H. Krukowska, J. Ławski, Białystok: Instytut Filologii Polskiej Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, 2005, pp. 875–885.

The continuity of the biography is broken in this short story as is the case in the work entitled *I za nim szły...* The hero puts a bit of the cup into his pocket and asks himself whether he will bring it home safely. Shortly afterwards he adds that he did not succeed in doing so (...*i poniosły konie*, Ipk, p. 66) and – along the same lines – in spite of all the efforts he cannot make his life story continuous. From now on it is unavoidably broken into incongruous parts. It becomes clear now that such feelings seem to be characteristic for the state of mind of a contemporary man in general.³⁷

The narrator cannot get free from the image of ashes, a kind of "desert." It seems to him that he feels the warmth of the ruins which burn out, however there is no continuity, no come back to the past. The symbolic scenes of leaving family houses in the short stories included in the latest volume by Odojewski constitute another version, a variant ending the most famous literary work of the writer – the novel *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...*³⁸ The gesture of closing the doors is a symbolic cut off point from the old world. It is the moment when exile starts.

In the other short stories included in the volume a similar role is played by events that change an entire life: crimes, cruelties, bullying, interrogations which make a human being feel alienated from the surrounding reality and cause him to lose the feeling of safety and feeling at home:

The forest yielded cracking noises in the distance, it roared and trunks that have been undercut fell on the ground as if they were torches. One could see flames crawling. Paweł thought about a quiet, sheltered place. He thought about a pile of brushwood which was exposed to the sun in a warm, good place where one could rest and he tried to recall where it all was. (*Miejsce pod słońce*, Ipk, p. 146)

Paweł – the protagonist of these short stories becomes an emigrant because of history and politics, but his emigration also displays an internal dimension, connected with the fear of inhumanity, evil, hatred one can experience from another man. Leaving one's homeland, the emigrants lose faith in friendship, feel alienated and uprooted, also in the spiritual sense.³⁹ The protagonists of Odojewski's works can behave in a cruel way,

³⁷ The sense of discontinuity of one's own life (the disintegration of human biography into episodes) which corresponds to the fragmentary story is characteristic for modern literature and it results from the arrangement of traditional concepts corresponding to reality, literature and human beings (change in the human state of mind). See R. Nycz, "Osoba w nowoczesnej literaturze, ślady obecności," in: idem, *Literatura jako trop rzeczywistości. Poetyka epifanii w nowoczesnej literaturze polskiej*, Kraków: Universitas, 2001, pp. 53–54.

³⁸ The final scene *Zasypie, wszystko zawieje* has earned numerous interpretations. See, among others, W. Tomasiak, "Odojewski, literatura bliska wyczerpania," in: *Odojewski i krytycy...*, p. 249.

³⁹ The phenomenon of being rooted as "possibly the most important and – at the same time – most widely acknowledged need of a human soul which belongs to the most difficult ones to define" is discussed by Simone Weil, "Zakorzenie, Wstęp do deklaracji obowiązków wobec istoty ludzkiej," in: eadem, *Dzieła*, transl. M. Frankiewicz, Poznań: Brama – Książnica Włoczęgów i Uczonych, 2004, p. 953. Anna Legeżyńska claims that this concept is wider than living somewhere or being settled somewhere. Becoming rooted in the life-giving

they swear, feel hatred, commit crimes, all of which is caused by what they have seen or experienced. These considerations encourage us to make the claim that such characters of emigrants embody a more universal literary figure. Hanna Gosk has the following to say about this:

The cultural model of an emigrant is connected primarily with the issue of alienation, being uprooted, problems with self-determination and self-identification and these are – as noted by researchers – features of the condition of a contemporary man in general.⁴⁰

The short stories *Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, *Sprawa Agnieszki*, *Zaklinanie Meduzy* [Conjuring the Meduse], *Krótkie spotkanie w Koryncie* are – first of all – a record of the experience of strangeness, as “the place of exile.” The emigrants do not have a home (neither “there” not in any other place). Homelessness is their fate and they cannot fight it. In one of the interviews the writer admitted that he is very familiar with such an experience:

I never tried to take roots in any reality: neither in the emigration-related reality, nor in the reality of a foreign country. [...] perhaps the reason was that I did not try to take roots anywhere, I did not have to conform to anybody. I could absolutely stay myself. Anyway, I felt as if I left home for a while. The fact that this moment has lasted for over 20 years is another issue and it is rather sad since later on it turns out that life has passed by and a human being stays as if suspended in an empty space, being neither here nor there ...⁴¹

The refugees are haunted by nightmares in the new places where they live. Cruel memories come back as a result of accidental encounters or in their dreams. The exiles do not recognise the places which used to be their homes in the past. They feel lost and they lose their sense of reality. The main character of the short story entitled *Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze* is conflicted with himself. In his dreams he moves to Warsaw or to the country near Trembowla and recalls the stories told by the teachers about the massacre in Tarnopol. He does not feel at home there. He feels like a stranger there. The man has a problem with his own identity. He looks at his former self as if he was a stranger now. The fight with his own reflection in the mirror shows he does not accept what has happened to him. The emigrant feels conflicted with himself and he does not know how to account for his own situation:

ground has an axiological dimension. A. Legeżyńska, *Dom i poetycka bezdomność w liryce współczesnej*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1996, pp. 18–19. According to the author of the work on home and poetic homelessness in the contemporary lyrics it is very important for the researchers of literature to believe in the statement which connects the assumptions of Heidegger and Weil and concerns “the need to search for the sense of human existence in the conscious identification of values, which allows for finding harmony and hidden teology in the world”. Idem. Becoming rooted – according to Simone Weil – also means *amor fati*, that is love for harmony in the world and consent for death and work. S. Weil, “Zakorzenie...”, pp. 1093, 1099–1100.

⁴⁰ H. Gosk, *Bohater swoich czasów...*, p. 101.

⁴¹ “*Ani tu, ani tam... Rozmowa z Włodzimierzem Odojewskim.*” The conversation was conducted by W. Żurek, T.J. Żółciński, *Przegląd Tygodniowy* 1992, No. 17 (as of 24.04.1992), p. 1.

Are my dreams are bad? Or, do I know myself what else? Is the fact that I have been with all the people around for too long a pointless thinking? Or, that life went this way and not the other? (*Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, Ipk, p. 148)

The common scenario shared by Odojewski's short stories is that his characters are lost, conflicted and they are haunted by ever increasing resignation and doubt:

I have talked about it on many occasions. I thought that this will be the way to dispel these cursed images. Unfortunately, they come back even stronger. Sometimes I try to encourage people to describe them but nobody cares. Is there anybody who would like to listen or read about the undignified death of other people? (*Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, Ipk, p. 155)

It is characteristic that at this moment the plan to run away is born; this stands for another type of emigration. This time it is a kind of emigration from one's life:

At that time the first thing was to end my life quickly. What do I need life for? The world has always been evil with the only reservation that it is evil in another way. No matter how many times we say that, shout it out, talk about it or describe it nothing will change. At the same time I understood that it has been a long time since then. It all got confused in my dream. (*Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, Ipk, p. 156)

The words uttered by Madame de Staël (quoted by Bettina L. Knapp) about exile being a cruel experience, sometimes worse than death can be used to describe all of Odojewski's protagonists.⁴² The thoughts about death as a kind of extrication from the emigrant's fate are found in particular in the short stories from the volume *...i poniosły konie*. The protagonist of the short story *Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze* is exceptionally emotional about the sentence that he remembers from the book. The sentence is about "the torment with human life which is unbearable" (*Nie mogąc obudzić się jeszcze*, Ipk, p. 162).

Another character who cannot free himself from his fate is the main character of the short story entitled *Sprawa Agnieszki*. Although he feels that he found a new place for himself and has made himself at home in Vienna, the past comes back when he meets his persecutor (a soldier who caused the protagonist to be heard in the country during the trial on fabricated charges) Then the emigrant takes cruel revenge as if he was not himself. It is another example of a striking and terrifying scene that comes up in Odojewski's work, a scene which shows a cold-blooded murder. The man talks about himself, about what he did, as if he was talking about a stranger. He does not find a connection with himself, either from the past or from the present time. The character tried to extricate himself from the past in this cruel and dramatic way. Unfortunately, he failed and – as is the case with other emigrants in Odojewski's short stories – he cannot be himself again. Referring to the title of the unfinished part of the Podolia cycle we may say that he cannot "leave, forget and live... "

⁴² "For active and sensitive temperaments exile is sometimes a more cruel torment than death." B.L. Knapp, *Exile and the Writer...*, p. 7.

It needs to be admitted here that the short story entitled *Zaklinanie Meduzy*, which is full of mythological references, seems to be the most emotional.⁴³ Hyst like Orpheus, the main character wants to follow his beloved in the underworld, although she asks him not to do this:

“Run away!”, she whispers, “Run away!”. And for me it is only ever-increasing emptiness. Pain shoots through my entire body. The blood in my veins gets thicker and colder. People close to me go away, landscapes run away, words are lost, things are lost. It is not only about gloves, keys, coins and buttons. If – sometimes – I happen to find them in the least expected places they do not look familiar to me anymore. Darkness. I look at myself as if I was a man struggling through my own dreams, totally lost in them and not able to get out to the light. There is no way back. “I do not want it!” I answer back, “Try to understand it. I do not want it!” I beg her. (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 198)

The opposition “there – here,” however, does not only mean setting the deserted country against the place where one currently stays, as is characteristic for the emigrant’s novel, but it is connected with crossing the line of life and death. The words “only there” recur throughout, making up a refrain and they are accompanied by the thought about a kind of Apocastasis:

Because it is **only there** that everything that is best will repeat itself once again. Behind the horizon which cannot be seen from here. (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 198 – emphasis added E.D.)

My love, after all, it is **only there** that all will repeat itself once again!... **Only there...** (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 199 – emphasis added E.D.)

And, after all it is **only there, only there** that things will repeat themselves, things which have not been destroyed by time, solidified in the column of fresh air, in the mirror of transparent water, in loyal memory, in the imagination which happens to be frantic or chilly, but always clear. **Only there** ... (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 200 – emphasis added E.D.)

Whenever I close my eyes, I see that house at the outskirts of the city, a house with a big garden and further on, up to the stream there are only meadows. Where can all this repeat itself once again. **Only there.** (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 201 – emphasis added E.D.)

The concept of Apocastasis, mentioned in the *Acts of the Apostles* (3, 21), and – most importantly – in the writing of Origen (especially close to Miłosz’s poetry⁴⁴) is limited in Odojewski’s short story not only to the urge to nullify the time in some way, to clear one’s memory and retrieve what was there. The belief that a comeback is possible only in another dimension – in the underworld – shows the totality and finality of emigration which changes and stigmatises a human being permanently.

⁴³ Jerzy Madejski pays specific attention to the novel about Medusa – “goddess who dared to rival for beauty with Athena. As a revenge she was changed into a monster with wings, snakes on the head and clutches. Thus, in Odojewski’s prose, Medusa stands perhaps for memory showing the horror of recollections and the longing for the transforming into stone those who remember it,” J. Madejski, “Kłątwa pamięci...,” p. 33.

⁴⁴ See: A. Fiut, “Apokatastasis,” in: idem, *Moment wieczny. Poezja Czesława Miłozza*, Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1998, pp. 125–132; D. Opacka-Walasek, “Apokatastaza w poezji Czesława Miłozza,” in: eadem, *Chwile i eony. Obrazy czasu w polskiej poezji drugiej połowy XX wieku*, Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2005, pp. 176–197.

In Odojewski's short story collection the third phase of the biography of an exile is of entirely different nature. It is not connected with finding one's place in the world of art and the sense of being in control of the world, but rather with one more type of emigration-internal one. It is brought to the fore in the last group of short stories *Był spokojny..., Jeszcze raz i jeszcze..., Tracił pamięć..., Żadnego lęku...*The protagonist of the second short story mentioned is no longer an emigrant in the political sense. He can cross borders without obstacles and he comes to a Polish town. However, it turns out then that, in principle, he is still an emigrant: he does not find his place and he gradually departs from reality, closing himself into an internal world and losing contact with the surrounding world:

And immediately a strange feeling of total loss penetrated me. It was a feeling of alienation from everything around me and it was so intense that it provoked fear. I was separated from everything. I was alone in the vast space of emptiness around, separating me from all the other surroundings which could not be captured by eye or mind. (*Jeszcze raz, i jeszcze...*, Ipk, p. 253)

The short stories included in this last group are dominated by a sense of resignation and doubt. Art is no consolation here, which results in a distinct form of these short stories.⁴⁵ The last texts in the collection *...i poniosły konie* are significantly shorter than the others and are rather images or examples of stream of consciousness. Jerzy Madejski calls them epic miniatures.⁴⁶

The situation presented in the final short stories calls to mind a kind of mirror-like reflection. The concept of emigration as fate is manifested in these works at the time when the actual emigration finished (political conditionings). Zbigniew Andres writes about a similar situation in Kazimierz Wierzyński's poetry, the difference lying in the fact that the concept of "eternal exile" was preceded by actual emigration, first the wartime emigration and then political emigration of the artist. The researcher refers to the fragment of the poem entitled *Ballada o świętych Mariach z Les Baux* [The Ballad about Saint Marias of Les Baux], written in 1937 during the poet's stay in Provence and then published in the volume *Korzec maku* [Peas in a pod]:

I am standing on the rough waves
I pray with words, helplessly:
Oh, my eternal exile
On the shore, in the clouds and underwater!⁴⁷

⁴⁵ M. Rabizo-Birek is of different opinion and claims that "Odojewski is not consistent. The matter-of-fact diagnosis acknowledging the impotence of art did not give rise to any essential change in his writing style and even his most ascetic, scary short stories from the volume *Zapis zbrodni* are filled with a sophisticated description of people, things and natural phenomena. It needs to be noted that this writing convention of his is not only a matter of technique he was used to but a consistent plan to emphasise the paradoxical character of human nature". M. Rabizo-Birek, "Wpływ Saturna...", p. 128.

⁴⁶ J. Madejski, "Klątwa pamięci...", p. 32.

⁴⁷ See: Z. Andres, "Los emigranta – Kazimierz Wierzyński," in: *Obszary kultury. Księga ofiarowana Profesorowi Krzysztofowi Dmitrukowi w 70. Rocznice urodzin*, edited by J. Pastarska, S. Uliasz, Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2011, p. 280.

Zbigniew Andres believes that the poem was written as a result of the poet's fascination with great art and it is the product of its contemplation and it reflects the spirit of the moment. The work primarily reflected the internal struggles and anxieties of the poet and also (by direction of the thoughts and by the character of reflection) it anticipated later works, stigmatising them with the actual experiences of an emigrant:

The motif of standing on unstable ground, on the "rough waves" leads up to this punch-line: "This eternal exile of mine". **The unique mental instability, the feeling of "exile" from being oneself, an immense ontological loss, anxiety experiences at all levels of existence** (the metaphorical: "On the shore, in the clouds and underwater"). All the experiences in the post-war lyrics of Wierzyński embody similar contexts but they are connected with an awareness of emigrant's fate.⁴⁸ [emphasis added – E.D.]

The never-ending emigration of the protagonists in Odojewski's short stories results in an emotional imbalance, a sense "exile from being oneself," and ontological anxiety. This is also reflected in the arrangement of short stories in the volume *...i poniosły konie*, leading the reader from terror, outcry, rebellion, revenge towards resignation, quietening, and then silence. The last short stories become ever shorter with broken sentences, unfinished plots, taking the reader into the silence:

Nothing but silence. Silence which drills into the ears and makes us startled. Never here? Is it possible that I forgot? This valley and the river which takes its dark waters through the stones and boulders in silence! Yet, he was not afraid at all. Then the two curtains which he pulled a while ago silently slide back again to the centre, they slide back and tightened up together, cutting off the whole view. The darkness hovered over him. Darkness all around.

And somewhat later he only felt his nails and hair growing. (*Żadnego lęku...*, Ipk, p. 262)

In the above-mentioned scene, which is also the last one in the volume, it is already "deafening" silence, deathly silence which introduces the new dimension of emigration. The third phase of the biography of the emigrants in Odojewski's short stories does not end with the come back to "me," but – quite the contrary – with the disintegration, extreme solipsism, lack of consent to what the world is like and death, that is with final departure.

Thus, in the various stories of the emigrants presented in the collection *...i poniosły konie* we may notice certain common elements which allow for generalisations. The individual histories show a more internal, psychological dimension of emigration and they also duplicate certain schemes and pattern. In this sense we may talk, following Bettina L. Knapp, about the archetypal character of the experience described by Odojewski. However, in the context of the short stories included in the volume under discussion (and also in the context of Odojewski's remaining works) the category of fate understood in a more traditional way which is closer to the mythical thinking of fate as destiny applies, as well. Maria Janion wrote earlier about the inevitability of fate in relation to the Podolia cycle and she defined it as being independent from our will and wishes:

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 281.

As is the case in a romantic tragedy of fate, the representative of the Czerestwieski and Woynowicz families await the final blow, they plunge into "sadness and wine," "in the feeling of failure." They are characterised by an "immensity of sadness." They see a "road full of pain ahead of them which – at the same time – is a hateful distance" and the road cannot be retreated from since it means inexorable destiny and we are called to cover it by the "cruel irony of fate."⁴⁹

Furthermore, Maria Barącz-Konieczniak wrote about fate as an incomprehensible necessity to kill, as a cyclical regularity of taking revenge.⁵⁰ The motif of destiny – fate occurs also in the works published later. A direct comment about "what was already destined by fate, overwhelming, devastating, irreparable, what was to be fulfilled and what was about to be fulfilled over the years" is found in the short story *Koń pułkownika* [Colonel's horse].⁵¹ In turn, the fate of Józef Czapski from the short story *W noc kiedy umarł...* [The night he died...] is defined by two issues of political and humanitarian nature: the search for the Polish captives among the Soviets after World War I and the search for thousands of captives who were buried in the graves in Katyń. The two episodes stigmatised the life of this emigrant. The short stories collected in the volume *...i poniosły konie* present specifically this aspect even more clearly – looking at emigration as if it was a kind of fate. The life of the protagonists of all the short stories in this volume is stigmatised by the loss of home and the necessity to leave the beloved place. However, the emigrant's fate here is at the same time a metaphor of the situation of a humankind in general; a kind of exile which is unavoidable – the main characters of one of the short stories think about the following:

About cruel life, about the impossibility to get out of the vicious circle of destiny, about the intricacies of the ways of the world which are impossible to be avoided. (*Zaklinanie Meduzy*, Ipk, p. 199)

Bringing to the fore this kind of dimension of the emigrant's experience in the Odojewski's latter works seems to be compliant with the natural mechanism of fate being disclosed only in the whole sequence of escalating passages, as discussed by Hanna Buczyńska-Garewicz:

Fate is something unavoidable, something on which we are dependent and something that we do not have any direct influence on. Irrespective of whether it is God's will or a specific case of a falling brick. Fate is also something which is always hidden and which shows itself

⁴⁹ M. Janion, "Cierń i róża Ukrainy," in: *Odojewski i krytycy...*, pp. 221–222.

⁵⁰ The researcher notes that *Zmierzch świata*, *Wyspa ocalenia* i *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje...* are not historical novels and "we should not expect to find things compliant with the facts, in particular with regard to the issue of the Ukraine and its fatum". M. Barącz-Konieczniak, "Z woli bogów gniewnych...", *Res Publica* 1988, No. 11, p. 68. The author of the essay pays attention primarily to the historiosophical fatalism which penetrates the works by Odojewski. It is similar to the one which was typical for the authors claimed to belong to the Ukrainian romantic school, perceived by this author in terms of geopolitics and believed to be toned with manichaeism.

⁵¹ W. Odojewski, "Koń pułkownika," in: idem, *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania...*, p. 88.

only through fragmentary manifestations. Fate is secret and unknown. Fate is governed by its own rights which are not to be captured by the human mind. Thus, it is not only that a human being is subjected to fate but fate is not penetrable by rational thinking and we need to surrender to it. The fact that we cannot predict things, thus its unpredictability in principle, is the essence of the concept of *fate*.⁵²

In the volume in which the majority of short stories are dominated by the perspective of looking backwards, summing things up and settling accounts, specific regularities which were not noticeable earlier come to the fore:

human fate lets itself be noticed only through a number of acts from our life, these being seemingly independent and one-time occurrences. It is only with the benefit of hindsight that their internal connections become visible.⁵³

The collection *...i poniosły konie*, summing up and closing (to some degree) Odojewski's writing, allows us to notice such elements of the emigrant fate, scattered in the short stories included in the volume, as well as in the earlier works of the author.

Translated by Edyta Więclawska

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⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

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