

# Struggling with the Opening.

## The Avant-text of Selected Short Stories by Włodzimierz Odojewski (Based on Materials from his Poznań Archive)

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According to French text geneticists, collecting “genesis documents” is of key significance to the process of working with rough copies (manuscripts and typescripts) of works by a given author. Pierre-Marc de Biasi says that it is the decisive stage for the whole process, since all the studies and the quality of expected results largely depend on the completeness of the collected material and the clarity of identifying its particular elements<sup>1</sup>. My experiences with the genesis *dossier* of short stories, novels and Munich radio broadcasts (literary-cultural programs broadcast in Radio free Europe in the 1970s and 1980s) by Włodzimierz Odojewski<sup>2</sup> make me agree completely with this observation. As a reader of short stories selected

<sup>1</sup> P-M. de Biasi, *Genetic Criticism*, translated into Polish by F. Kwiatek, M. Prussak, Warsaw 2015, p. 53. [translation into English by PZ]

<sup>2</sup> Włodzimierz Odojewski's Archive at the Faculty of AMU Polish and Classical Studies in Poznań, which consists of several thousand pages donated to AMU by Odojewski in late 2010s.

from *Zabezpieczenie śladów* [Securing traces] (Paris 1984), *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone* [Forgotten, unconsoled] (1987) and *Jedźmy, wracajmy* [Let's go, let's return] (extended version from 2000)<sup>3</sup>, end especially as an investigator of the formation of key motifs from the stories in question throughout subsequent rough copies and typescripts, I can state that the richness of the source material allowed me to realize the crucial role that subsequent (typically over a dozen) attempts at editing first the seeds of the stories, and later subsequent parts of expanding texts, played in their creation<sup>4</sup>. Moreover, dissecting the avant-texts of selected stories based on collected materials provided me with strong impulses for new (or at least revised and enriched) interpretations.

In this study I decided to analyze three short stories by Włodzimierz Odojewski from a genetics-textual perspective: *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las* [The forest is walking towards the Dunsinane Hill] (from *Zabezpieczanie śladów*), *Co słycać w ojczyźnie* [What's the news from the motherland] (*Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone...*) and *Sezon w Wenecji* [A season in Venice] (second edition of *Jedźmy, wracajmy*). I selected those stories due to the rich collection of their rough copies in the Poznań archive, as well to the interesting writing genealogy of those texts. Texts written between 1976 and 1999 attracted my attention. While writing them, Odojewski was thinking about the bigger collections which were supposed to include them, which means that while he was writing each of those stories, he reached for texts he had written in the early 1960s (often abandoned already at the stage of rough copies, unfinished in terms of composition and content) and wrote new texts. For the artist, it was a time of intense (though interrupted) and eventually not finalized work on the so-called Berlin novel, which was supposed to be the culmination of the Podolski cycle<sup>5</sup>. When one browses through subsequent files containing the legacy of the author (which he himself put together, provided with initial descriptions and in that form they were donated to the archive of the Faculty of Polish and Classical Studies of AMU), it is very clear that Odojewski wrote practically incessantly, and that the process of writing was always accompanied by immersion in his own archive, which must have strongly influenced the editing of those works which he had started and put aside, as well as the writing of new ones.

<sup>3</sup> W. Odojewski, *Zabezpieczanie śladów*, Paris 1984; W. Odojewski, *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone...*, Berlin 1987; W. Odojewski, *Jedźmy, wracajmy i inne opowiadania*, Warsaw 2000.

<sup>4</sup> De Biasi points out other possible ingredients of "genesis documents" – correspondence, an intimate journal, sketches, drawings, notes from books (P.-M. de Biasi, p. 52), i.e. any other activities of the author (literature-related and others) while working on a studied text. In the case of Odojewski the number of such materials is varied depending on when he wrote a given text. In the case of the texts analyzed here, the documentation from *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las* is unusually extensive (mostly because it is about Katyń and that the short story was printed by the Institute of Literature in Paris, which entails a long correspondence between the author and Jerzy Giedroyc from the time when the collection was written, and rich editing documentation – everything is stored in the Archive of the Institute and Parisian "Culture" in w Maisons-Lafitte). When it comes to the *dossier* of the genesis of *Co słycać w ojczyźnie* and *Sezon w Wenecji* the documentation is limited to rough copies stored in the Poznań archive.

<sup>5</sup> See M. Rabizo-Birek, *W poszukiwaniu Katarzyny. Ostatnie dwa ogniwa cyklu podolskiego (cz. I)* [in search for Katarzyna. The final two parts of the Podolski cycle (p. I)], in: *Zabezpieczanie śladów. Wokół życia i twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [securing traces. About the life and works of Włodzimierz Odojewski], edited by A. Przybyszewska and D. Nowakowska, Poznań 2018, p. 13-24 and M. Rabizo-Birek, *W poszukiwaniu Katarzyny. Ostatnie ogniwa cyklu podolskiego (cz. II)* [in search for Katarzyna. The final two parts of the Podolski cycle (p. II)], in: *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone... Pamięć, zapomnienie, trauma w twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [forgotten, unconsoled... Memory, oblivion, trauma in the works of Włodzimierz Odojewski], edited by A. Przybyszewska and D. Nowakowska, Poznań 2020, p. 151-198.

One piece of evidence to support this hypothesis: there are many clues suggesting that the texts that were to enter the collection *Zabezpieczenie śladów* were already completed in 1983, whereas Odojewski probably started working on them at two completely different moments. The first one is early 1960s, especially 1963, when he was working on the novel *Cień wielkiej równiny* [The shadow of the great plain], out of which he extracted some of his short stories (Magdalena Rabizo-Birek<sup>6</sup> writes about that in great detail). To me, the second moment, i.e. the turn of 1970s and 1980s, is more significant, due to the intensification of the author's interest in the subject of Soviet labor camps, deportations from Kresy deep into the Soviet Union, and returning to the theme of Katyń. The last three short stories from *Zabezpieczanie śladów*: *Pod murem* [Against a wall], *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórz idzie las* and *W stepie, ostach i burzanie* [An grasslands, thistle and weed], are dated to 1980, 1981, 1983<sup>7</sup>, respectively. And the decisive phases of writing the cycle *Zabezpieczanie śladów* should be placed among them, whereas in the case of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórz idzie las* it is the years 1980-1981<sup>8</sup>.

Spending over four years with the materials from Odojewski's archive made me realize that the dream, necessary, and planned genetic edition<sup>9</sup> of one of the collections of short stories referred to in this paper requires years of further work. Even to arrange the rough copies of a given text (which are always over a hundred pages long) is an exceptionally complex and tedious task in the case of Odojewski. However, such an initiative is by all means necessary, as proven by observations made 30 years ago (without access to Odojewski's archive!, only based on reading his texts carefully and analyzing his book editions) by Wojciech Tomasik. The scholar highlighted that "anyone interpreting Odojewski cannot renounce the competences of a textologist", indicating "the constant corrections, introducing changes to subsequent editions and dissimilating different variants of a given text"<sup>10</sup>. Tomasik's observation regarding Odojewski's works as "entangled [...] in the creative process", and, consequently, making the reader highlight their "literary nature", is exceptionally accurate<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Por. M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem a historią. Twórczość Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [between myth and history. Works of Włodzimierz Odojewski], Warsaw 2002, p. 81-141.

<sup>7</sup> These dates appear for the first time in the Polish edition – W. Odojewski, *Zabezpieczanie śladów*, Warsaw 1990. However, Odojewski placed them under subsequent stories in his author's copy of the Paris edition, which is a part of his Poznań archive with a note "copy with corrections". Interestingly, in handwritten notes with dates under *Pod murem* and *Ku Dunzynańskiemu...* traces of hesitation and corrections can be found. In the case of the former the author originally wrote, as can be deduced, "1981", and then corrected the last digit to "0". As to the latter, first there was 1980, and then the author changed the last digit: 1981. On a separate note, I would like to add that author's copies of two subsequent editions of *Zabezpieczanie śladów* from 1984, 1990, 2009 also belong to the archive. The first two of them contain numerous corrections and additions, also regarding *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórz idzie las*. According to de Biassi these materials should be classified as print genetics (P-M. de Biassi, p. 50-52) and treated as continuous manifestations (despite the first printing) of the text-forming process. Due to limitations of space, this phase of the genetics-textual procedure is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>8</sup> One more significant observation (inspired by Rabizo-Birek) – an obsessive-systematic overview of various literary and documentary testaments regarding labor camps and deportations, which interested Odojewski in terms of his radio podcasts, became one source of inspiration in the case of stories written from 1980 and 1983 (*Pod murem*, *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórz...* and *W stepie, w ostach i burzanie*). In addition, there was also Katyń, which appears in numerous texts from the camp-Russia cycle, and further fuelled by an anniversary of the war crime (1980). In *Między mitem a historią* Rabizo-Birek writes about Katyń and labor camp apocrypha (see M. Rabizo-Birek, *Między mitem...*, p. 90-141).

<sup>9</sup> See P-M. de Biassi, p. 113-132 for different forms and characteristics of "genetic editions".

<sup>10</sup> W. Tomasik, *Odojewski: literatura bliska wyczerpania* [literature on the verge of exhaustion]. In *Odojewski i krytycy. Antologia tekstów* [O. and critics. An anthology], edited by S. Barć, Lublin 1999, p. 242-243. The first copy of the paper appeared in "Teksty Drugie" 1991, No 1-2, p. 133-153.

<sup>11</sup> Ibidem, p. 244.

Tomasik's observation that the basic genre of Odojewski's writing is "a collection of short stories – a literary form which harmonizes well with the technique of variants and supplements"<sup>12</sup> – seem especially important to me in the context of my attempts here. He continues about "deliberate and consistent"<sup>13</sup> self-repetitions, which ultimately make Tomasik classify Odojewski's short prose forms as "poetics of etudes", characterized by "unreadiness, non-independence, and internal repetitiveness", as well as concerning "measures taken in the process of forming the text and the multi-textual whole", which permits acceptance as a demonstration of "the plan of the author's biography"<sup>14</sup>. The formal accurateness of Odojewski's stories captured by Tomasik assisted my work with the exceptionally extensive rough copies documentation of the initial parts of short narrative forms by Odojewski from the three collections mentioned above, which can be found in the files of his Poznań archive.

## 2. "...from the darkness of the very beginnings"<sup>15</sup>, i.e. what hides behind sophisticated incipits

The effort required in trying to control the number and complexity of Odojewski's attempts at incipits, first paragraphs and pages of many short stories written in 1976-1999 made me compare those various editions with the memorable, master beginnings of Odojewski's greatest prose achievements – first and foremost with the first paragraph of his debut *Wyspa ocalenia* [Island of salvation], or the third (Katyń) chapter from the first volume of *Zasypie wszystko, zawieje* [It will bury everything, it will blow]. Here are the initial three sentences of *Wyspa ocalenia*:

Not even the slightest shadow. Light brown, naked slope was glaring, reflecting the sun, measurelessly empty, excluding any suspicion of ever having anything to do with life with its very looks. The burning blow of eastern wind withered among the rocks and the silence was no longer interrupted; it contained perfect nothingness<sup>16</sup>.

Motionlessness, heat, silence expressed in sentences whose style and rhythm has to be associated with poetry, and echoes through subsequent editions of the first sentences of the short stories that I studied. They are not saturated with as strong a sense of emptiness and nothingness, yet they remain closely related to a peculiar state of inertia and paralysis emanating from Odojewski's first novel. In her paper on the procedure of beginning and development in Odojewski's prose, Inga Iwasiów indicates the fundamental factor in these seemingly self-contained, self-alienating opening paragraphs of his texts: "The obsession of dwelling on selected, basic, and at the same time ultimate topics reveals itself both intensely and subtly, making the reader analyze the arcs, motifs, particular sequences with great

<sup>12</sup>Ibidem, p. 245.

<sup>13</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>14</sup>Ibidem, p. 249-250.

<sup>15</sup>From the avant-text (rough copy) of *Sezon w Wenecji*, to which I will refer later in the text.

<sup>16</sup>W. Odojewski, *Wyspa ocalenia*, ed. T. Burek, Białystok 1990, p. 15.

precision<sup>17</sup>. If so, this study should limit itself to defining the avant-texts of the beginnings of the three selected short stories, to try to capture the stylistic-semantic transformations revealing themselves in the subsequent phases of the text-forming process of those literary openings, as well as the premises for (re)interpretation of the definite (printed) wholes that emerge from them.

When text genetics was born, one of its founders, Jean Bellemin-Noël, warned against the illusion of complete objectivity in reference to the “*description of the work of an avant-text*”<sup>18</sup>. He believed that it is impossible to present the constant transformations made during and due to editing, hence the level of analysis should be defined, samples should be taken on each level, and particular moments in which a word or a whole sentence simultaneously causes a local metamorphosis and is subject to it should be highlighted<sup>19</sup>.

In the present paper the avant-texts of the openings of three short stories will be such samples and moments, becoming a subject of a micro-analytical procedure, so frequently practiced – as stressed by Adam Dziadek – by text geneticists<sup>20</sup>. Whereas de Biasi, presenting his method of work on the evolution of the first sentence of *The Legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller* by Gustav Flaubert, uses the formula of microgenesis<sup>21</sup>.

### 3. What do the rough copies of the first paragraphs reveal? Studies into three examples

The files in which Odojewski stored the materials from writing and editing the three short stories in question are almost completely deprived of all hints as to when subsequent manuscripts and typescripts were written, and the sequence of pages in particular collections is often significantly disrupted. Hence the basic task is to determine the avant-text of the initial paragraph of the selected short stories, i.e. recreate it based on the collection of manuscripts and typescripts of the sequence of inter-related and mutually-supportive sub-processes whose chain creates the picture of the whole<sup>22</sup>. At the same time, I have to bear in mind – as stressed by Jean Levaillant – that they cannot take place in the shadows and due to the final version of the text, but with the assumption that they are a different quality and that they do not tell the «correct» genesis story as much as they reveal the violence of conflicts, the price of choices, impossible endings, nodes, censorship, and revealing tensions<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>17</sup>I. Iwasiów, *Początek i rozwinięcie, czyli porządek i chaos w twórczości prozatorskiej Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [beginning and development – order and chaos in the prose of Włodzimierz Odojewski], in: *Formy i strategie wypowiedzi narracyjnej* [narrative forms and strategies], ed. Cz. Niedzielski and Jerzy Speina, Toruń 1993, p. 174.

<sup>18</sup>J. Bellemin-Noël, *Tekst i przed-tekst. Bruliony wiersza Oskara Miłosza (fragmenty)* [text and avant-text. Rough copies of a poem by Oskar Miłosz (fragments)], translated from French into Polish by K. Krzyżosiak, “Forum Poetyki” 2020, *Le texte et l'avant-texte: les brouillons d'un poème de Milosz* (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1971).

<sup>19</sup>Ibidem.

<sup>20</sup>Dziadek, Adam. „Poetyka i genetyka (tekstów)” [poetics and genetics (of texts)]. *Forum Poetyki* 2020.

<sup>21</sup>P.-M. de Biasi, p. 163.

<sup>22</sup>P.-M. de Biasi, p. 50.

<sup>23</sup>J. Levaillant, *Écriture et génétique textuelle. Valéry à l'œuvre*, Lille 1982, cited in: P.-M. de Biasi, p. 139.

### 3.1. *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las* – Suspension of consciousness

The edition of the beginning of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las* consists of the most extensive, impressive collection of rough copies (manuscripts and typescripts) among short stories selected for this study. Generally, Odojewski put the rough copies (manuscripts and typescripts) of the story in three files (2, 3 i 7)<sup>24</sup>, which are a part of a bigger whole – the documentation of the collection *Zabezpieczanie śladów* (12 files). The three files related to *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi* consist of 521 A4 pages (typically two-sided).

My observations concern the complete shape of the initial paragraph of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu...*, which – more broadly – tells the story of obscuring the Soviet war crime from 1940.

A careful analysis of the materials<sup>25</sup> comprising the avant-text of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi* allows to determine that the manuscripts and typescripts from file 3 document the earliest phase of the creative process – a long process of incubation, with many attempts. File 2 consists of typescripts documenting the middle phase – Odojewski already had the basic framework of the story and was working on subsequent transformations (additions, deletions) and corrections. File 7 mirrors the final phase of the work, when the story was prepared for print.

A genetic analysis of the first paragraph should be preceded by more general observations concerning both the printed version (the first printing of the Paris edition is from 1984), as well as several characteristics of subsequent editions in the earliest phase (file 3).

The published text of the story allows to distinguish three basic sequences (regarding story arcs and text), which I dubbed “Berlin 1”, “Geneva”, and “Berlin 2”, thus reflecting significant story turns related to subsequent changes of settings. The first sequence comprises the meeting of the Journalist with the Professor in the latter’s West Berlin apartment and focuses on the fact of secretly recording of the communist diplomat’s story of a Katyń survivor, whom he had met in the red underground army in Belarus. Next, the Journalist flies to the Geneva headquarters of his magazine, where he listens to the recordings of the so-called “Character’s” story in a hotel room. Finally, the Journalist returns to West Berlin, where he has a long discussion with a Belarusian Professor, intertwined with fragments of the survivor story as told by the Professor. What follows is that in each one of those sequences

<sup>24</sup>Włodzimierz Odojewski’s archive, AMU Poznań, “Spuścizna literacka Włodzimierza Odojewskiego. Opowiadania z tomu *Zabezpieczanie śladów*” [literary works by WO. Short stories from *Zabezpieczanie śladów*], files 1-12. Henceforth I will refer to these materials in the following way: AWO, *Zabezpieczanie*, file and page number.

<sup>25</sup>I owe many of my observations regarding the text-forming process of the first paragraph of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las* to my work with a small team of students of Polish philology, specializing in editing literary texts – especially Krzysztof Zydor and Magdalena Wojtaś, as well as Jakub Eichler. We also had a conference presentation together, “Pamięć, zapomnienie, trauma w twórczości Włodzimierza Odojewskiego” [memory, oblivion, trauma in the works of WO] (April 2018) organized by the Archive of WO at the Faculty of Polish and Classical Studies AMU Poznań. Our presentation was entitled “*dużo przerażenia, pamięć zbrodni i wyobraźnia*”. *Dossier genezy, proces tekstotwórczy oraz próba krytyki genetycznej opowiadania „Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las”* [lots of fear, memory of a crime and imagination. Genesis dossier, text-forming process and an attempt at genetic criticism of “*Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzowi idzie las*”], and has not been published to date.

the story takes place near Smoleńsk (among others, the alleged Katyń) and in the Polesie (Belarusian) wilderness.

It should be added here that the most extensive documentation collected in file 3 concerns the first 14 paragraphs which constitute “Berlin 1” sequence, especially the first four units, whose more and less extensive versions cover 20 pages. Reading the manuscripts and typescripts (typically accompanied by a dense network of hand- and type-written notes, as well as deletions) containing the first paragraphs of the story about Katyń (another one by Odojewski) makes one realize the amount of work, bordering on obsession, spent on the opening.

Out of the 20 records which comprise the avant-text of the opening sentences and the whole initial paragraph of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzcu*, as many as 17 can be found in file 3, out of which some are manuscripts, and the remaining 11 – working typescripts (with numerous traces of hand-written additions).

I would also like to remind the reader that in the 1984 Paris edition the beginning of the story also consisted of its own title – the motto from *Macbeth*, and a short (for Odojewski) paragraph (21-verse-long), from which the reader can learn about the several-hours-long meeting between the Journalist and the Professor (which took place late in the afternoon or in the evening) in a scorching hot apartment, the complicated process taking place (or rather not being able to take place) in the consciousness of the Journalist, amid growing fatigue and anxiety. Such a rudimentary reconstruction is necessary in order to facilitate reconstructing the writing process at the very beginning of that difficult story. “It was already around half past five in the afternoon, and the sun was burning and scorching the concrete walls of the apartment, just like then, when between twelve and one the Journalist met the Professor for the first time to talk about that tape”<sup>26</sup>.

I divide the 17 attempts at the first sentence and the first paragraph into two groups. The first one has three pages – one handwritten (k. 27v) and two typewritten (k. 30 and k. 157). Page 27v is the oldest surviving attempt at recording the opening of the story, whereas the typewritten pages are its rewritten and (quite heavily) edited versions. Thus, the author made a hand-written sketch of the starting point, and then typed it (k. 30), later adding hand-written corrections and typing it again (k. 157) with the corrections, but also adding subsequent corrections (typescript k. 30 was crossed out with crossing lines, which may mean it was rewritten and outdated).

Below you can see the scan of page 27v<sup>27</sup> with its transliteration<sup>28</sup>, in order to provide an insight into the way Odojewski was working on the early versions of his short story.

<sup>26</sup>W. Odojewski, *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzcu idzie las*, in *Zabezpieczanie śladów*, p. 73.

<sup>27</sup>AWO, *Zabezpieczanie*, file 3, k. 27v.

<sup>28</sup>The transliteration was assisted by the already mentioned Magdalena Wojtaś. We used diplomatic transliteration: “clear and «identical» recreation of a document, copying the layout of the text as close to the original as possible, with its empty spaces, references, margins, spacing, etc., copying also the position of words in reference to other words”. P.-M. de Biasi, p. 104.





Mój przyjaciel z Berlina Zachodniego (nazwijmy go Korespondentem) relacjonował mi rozmowę z pewnym osobnikiem z Polskiej Misji Wojskowej w tym mieście (nazwijmy go Osobnikiem)\* Tego popołudnia Osobnik zadzwonił podniecony i powiedział, że chce mówić K u przyszedł i upewnił się z nieufnością czy nikogo nie ma (tego rodzaju nieufność można by jeszcze zrozumieć, bo O. był komunistycznym dyplomata a K dziennikarzem jednego z pism szwajcarskich i specjalistą od spraw wschodnich, ale przecież już wcześniej przez telefon powiedział mi że będą sami, że żona

Mój przyjaciel z Berlina dał to, co swego czasu napisałem o masakrze w katyńskim lasu pewnemu osobnikowi z misji wojskowej. Po przeczytaniu ten osobnik miał mu powiedzieć, że oczywiście się zgodzą. wszyscy i tak dobrze wiedzą to wszystko i tak próżne pieprzenie, bo Sowietci nigdy nie zgodzą się już na ogłoszenie prawdy. Była jedna okazja za Gomułki, ale gomułka okazję przesrał ze strachu. A jak<sup>‡</sup> sami Sowietci nie ogłoszą, to świat i tak tego nie usłyszy, wiadomo, tak relacjonował mi mój przyjaciel z Berlina. ¶ Potem ten osobnik miał się namyślić i miał powiedzieć, że kiedy był w partyzantce to sam też o tym słyszał. Siedzieli w pokoju bibliotecznym mego przyjaciela a ten osobnik najpierw się upewnił, czy w mieszkaniu nie ma prócz nich nikogo i nieczego, choć przecież już przedtem, zanim przyszedł, o to przez telefon tego wieczora pytał, i przyszedł tylko pod tym warunkiem, że będą sami a mój przyjaciel zapewnił go nawet, że jego żony nie będzie, bo wybiera się na koncert a po koncercie ze przyjaciółkami mogą być na kolację i będą sami do późna ale jeszcze raz się upewnił i powiedział, że już wtedy w partyzantce o tym słyszał, o było

\* Pierwsza litera w słowie „popołudnia” poprawiona- pierwotnie było: „dopołudnia.

‡ Wstawka przed słowem „jak” trudna do odczytania.

What makes me treat those three pages separately and consider them to be the first sequences of the avant-text of the story's opening? Firstly, Odojewski used first-person narration and used the narrator's friends, the West-Berlin Correspondent and the Character (a representative of the Polish Military Militia) as protagonists only in those three versions. The reproduction (and transliteration) of page 27v shows that the first version in fact consists of two editions – the first one is more extensive, crossed out in many sections. I believe it is the first because of Odojewski's habit to use a template of a sort, i.e. A4 pages with numbered lines while working on rough copies (as well as final versions) in the form of manuscripts and typescripts. On page k. 27v the author, using a black pen, started to sketch the opening of the short story from the first line of the page, continuing to the end of the page, and subsequent pages. At some point he crossed out large sections of that version, drawing a horizontal black line above them, above which he wrote in a more neat (less hurried) handwriting a new version of the opening, this time using a blue pen. Later that version was crossed out with two crossing lines as well (black pen) – in my opinion this is how he marked the fact that the "blue" version was typed (k. 30).

Thus the autograph (k. 27v) *de facto* brings two conceptualizations of the story's beginning, where Odojewski wanted to introduce the motif of Katyń and the circumstances of the secret recording of the Polish People's Republic clerk as quickly as possible. Subsequent editions (typescript – page 30 and 157) show developing the presentation of protagonists (especially the Correspondent) and the writing-research work of the narrator regarding the Katyń war crime. Hence it can be assumed that the three discussed reconstructed editions (or actually four, if we agree with the classification of the hand-written notes on k. 27v as two separate attempts at opening the story) are a note of a sort, a sketch of an idea for a story, perhaps even an outline of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu...* It should be stressed that originally the author wanted to use first-person narration, and that the issue of remembering about the Katyń crime and questioning, erasing it from history was at the forefront. Hence it can be assumed that both in the already discussed and subsequent editions of the story's first paragraph there are story arcs and motifs which were redistributed in other paragraphs (mostly in sequences Berlin 1, as well as Berlin 2) in the printed version of the short story.

The remaining 14 pages (file 3)<sup>29</sup>, containing the opening section of the story can be classified as the second group, whose major characteristics include fundamental narrative-personal decisions of Odojewski – who henceforth uses personal narration (the Journalist's perspective), and introduces the Professor into the story. Several subsequent texts which I classify as the avant-text of the opening – five autographs and nine typescripts – also permit tracking of the mode and methods of Odojewski's work on the story text. For brevity's sake I would like to focus on the most important feature of that text-forming process.

<sup>29</sup>AWO, *Zabezpieczanie*, file 3: 1r(a), 4(a), 6(a), 7v(a), 11r(a), 13(m), 19(m), 20(m), 22(m), 24(m), 25(m), 31(m), 61(m) and 120(m). The letter "a" in brackets means autographs (manuscripts), and "m" – typescripts. Using that collection, I arranged the avant-text of the opening of the story: k. 4 → k. 6 → k. 7v → k. 11r → k. 25 → k. 24 → k. 20 → k. 19 → k. 22 → k. 13 → k. 31 → k. 61 → k. 1r → k. 120. Some arguments in favor of that sequence will be discussed further in the text, and the rest should be explained in a genetic edition of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las*, which Archiwum Włodzimierza Odojewskiego is planning to publish.

Having made the decision about the form of narration, Odojewski focused on constructing the temporal-spatial aspects of the meeting between the Journalist and the Professor, which revealed the sensational fact: the recording of a Katyń apocryphal of a sort (the story of the Character from the Polish Military Mission). Deciding how much information the first paragraph should contain is another, equally important problem that Odojewski faced. I select six out of the 14 subsequent attempts at the opening, which illustrate the essential turns and breakthroughs in editing the time, place and subject of the first paragraph. I typically quote the first sentence of subsequent versions (using a simplified transliteration), sometimes adding the second one, sometimes shortening the initial sentence, for my intention is only to signal the direction of transformations and to accentuate the destination of that long, thoughtful process. Each version is provided with its page number<sup>30</sup>:

[k. 4] *The Journalist ~~was at~~ visited the Professor a week ago. Although it was raining, it was hot and stuffy, and they were sitting in that mercilessly cluttered... in the gloomy charm of that weary afternoon.*

[k. 6] *They had been talking about it for two hours or so, strolling near the alleys of Tiergarten. Even the shadow casted by trees was hot and stuffy there<sup>31</sup>*

[k. 25] *It was around 4 p.m., and the sun was burning and scorching the concrete walls, just like then, between twelve and one, when both of them, having sighted/*sighting*<sup>32</sup>heavily at the same time, ~~but with relief~~, they fell down facing each other, limp *and run down because of the heat* on the doctor's sofas, worn down yet still comfortable, squeaking with their springs.*

[k. 13] *It was around half past five in the afternoon, and the sun was burning and scorching the concrete walls of the apartment, just like then, when between twelve and one the Professor and the Journalist met for the first time to talk about that issue in the mercilessly cluttered room<sup>33</sup>*

[k. 1r] *The Journalist and the Professor first met regarding that Katyń audio tape in that mercilessly cluttered room and maybe that is why nothing in, despite those six almost hours had passed, he still had not got it/*that*<sup>34</sup>, it had not reached his consciousness/brain [...] no sense of triumph had appeared in his mind*

[k. 120] *It was already around half past five in the afternoon, and despite that the sun was still burning and scorching the concrete walls of the apartment, just like then, when between twelve and one the Journalist met the Professor for the first time to talk about that audio tape. Perhaps then it was why, despite the fact that over five hours had passed, that seemingly obvious, self-imposing thought still had not reached him, had not reached his brain [...], still no sense of triumph had appeared in his mind<sup>35</sup>*

<sup>30</sup>AWO, *Zabezpieczenie*, file 3.

<sup>31</sup>At the top of that page the author added a significant deposition: "the story has to go back to Tiergarten, where a retrospection to the evening when the diplomat visited the Professor and told his story, should go", AWO, *Zabezpieczenie*, file 3, k. 6.

<sup>32</sup>A handwritten note with the polish *chajac* [-ing] was placed above the verb – a change in the form executed in the subsequent typescript of the page in question (in file 3 it is page number 24).

<sup>33</sup>This is where the title of the story appears for the first time – for now in the form "Las Biernam idzie" [Biernam forest is walking], without the *Macbeth* motto.

<sup>34</sup>[another change of a Polish verbal form]

<sup>35</sup>This version is entitled slightly differently "Idzie birhamski las" [Birham forest is going].

Towards what and using what devices is the author striving in those several versions of the opening? He must have been working on it for at least a few days, judging by the number of editions, especially those typed and corrected with hand notes, sometimes using a white corrector, and typed again. It shows much consideration of the aura in which another attempt at discussing the Katyń war crime in his work should be told. Already in the initial phase, the one written in first-person narration, the problem of remembering Katyń and lies surrounding it is clearly stated. Now the stakes were to highlight the contours of the protagonists of the drama. In the second phase (still first-person narration), Odojewski moves the action to a new place. First it is the West-Berlin Tiergarten, and later (until the end) – the action takes place indoors, in a concrete apartment block (it is mentioned on one of the pages). Odojewski originally focuses on describing what the apartment shared by the Professor and his (in some editions dead, in some, living) wife, a professional psychoanalyst, looked like. In every version he highlighted the weather conditions – it is always incredibly hot in the big city. Finally, he specifies the temporal frames – the length of the meeting between the Journalist and the Professor is further and further specified with each edition. Eventually, on page 1r he makes a hand-written note, possibly even with one pen stroke, of what he had been seeking. He moves information regarding the scenography, as well as about the meeting and the conversation that the Professor had with the communist diplomat, to further (yet still initial) paragraphs. He leaves the sentence about the several-hours-long conversation between the Journalist and the Professor, followed by an extended, highly complex sentence with a labyrinth structure that he mastered in his major works from the Podolski cycle. This is where he formulates what he meant. The printed version goes as follows:

So maybe that was why (although it had been over five hours) the thought – seemingly obvious, self-imposing – that something he had been searching for, wasting on it half of his life, fell into his hands, still had not reached him, had not reached his brain; still no sense of triumph, satisfaction, even compensation for the effort from fate, or even a sense of surprise that his searched had been met by a coincidence, and definitely no premonition that such a coincidence may affect his future efforts regarding that matter and that it would engage him for a long time, pushing aside and diminishing everything else he had been doing and what had constituted his life, had appeared in his mind<sup>36</sup>.

“Thought”, “feeling”, “surprise”, “premonition”, as well as “brain”, “consciousness” – all those words redirect the reader’s attention from external circumstances to what is going on with the Journalist. Or rather, what could not happen with him, because Odojewski decided to – in a way – suspend his protagonist’s consciousness. I believe that this is what Odojewski was striving for when working on his opening paragraph: to capture, in all its painfulness and... elusiveness. the state of internal paralysis of the protagonist, who spent all his professional (and not only) life on searching for and promoting the truth about Katyń, as well as what was going on in the regions of the Second Polish Republic under Soviet influence and related totalitarian practices. Odojewski wants his short story to open in the atmosphere of unbearable heat, and he wants the reader to look at what is going on from the perspective of someone who is dealing with inertia. Someone might say that I am only articulating the sense which the author wrote in the final phase of his work on the opening paragraph. However, I am convinced that outlining the creative

<sup>36</sup>W. Odojewski, *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu...*, p. 73.

road, and a genetic analysis of the reconstructed avant-text of the initial part of the story, make us realize its importance and the significance of that initial suspension of the Journalist's consciousness. He will have to deal with that problem throughout the story. The protagonist fights for the truth about the war crime to the same extent he fights for his subjectivity, taking his life into his own hands to confront his own limitations, resentments, grudges...

### 3.2. *Co słyszeć w ojczyźnie* – Postponing a meeting

The file containing rough copies of *Co słyszeć w ojczyźnie* has 188 pages, 60 percent of which are one-sided typescripts, and the rest are manuscripts, out of which two are written on both sides<sup>37</sup>. The *dossier* of the short story belongs to the six-part collection documenting the text-forming process of the cycle *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone*, which was first published by the West Berlin emigration monthly *Archipelag*<sup>38</sup>.

The story in *Co słyszeć w ojczyźnie*, written in the years 1983-1984<sup>39</sup>, is strongly connected to the introduction of martial law in Poland (the story takes place in 1982). It focuses on a meeting between the protagonist and the narrator, a Polish emigrant who does not hide his intellectual and writing competences, with an old friend who has arrived from Poland and is connected with the government there. They spend an evening and a night together, walking and stopping by a few places in an old, hot Italian seaside town. They both drink a lot, and try to put up appearances in an unsophisticated way. They both hide one crucial fact: the narrator knows that Beata, wife of his Polish friend, a woman he loved, has been dead for six months, whereas his friend pretends she is still alive. They both know that the other person is hiding something. Any facts, conversations, interpersonal relations shown in that short story are full of uncertainty, even phantasmagoria. The deeper the reader goes into the story, the more he or she has to deal with these half-sleepy, half-drunk, streams of consciousness and fantasies of the narrator, full of memories and visions.

In this study about Odojewski's struggles with opening his texts it will be very important to me to capture the way he set in motion the literary mechanism which creates a sense of unreality, growing from one paragraph to another, affecting the two troubled protagonists.

The avant-text of the opening paragraph consists of 15 pages, out of which two are autographs, and the rest are typed<sup>40</sup>. I disregard two pages with notes about the correction of the

<sup>37</sup>AWO, "Spuścizna literacka...", files 1-6. Apart from file 3, materials related to *Co słyszeć w ojczyźnie* can also be found in files 5 and 6, but those are copies of final drafts and computer printouts with corrections. Henceforth I will refer to these materials in the following way: AWO, *Zapomniane*, file and page number.

<sup>38</sup>The short story was first published in the London *Puls* (1983, No 17), where the title had a question mark at the end. Two years later the story was reprinted in a special issue *Puls. Przegląd numerów 14-17* [a review of No 14-17] (1982-1983), Cracow 1985.

<sup>39</sup>Starting from the third book edition of the short story (within the cycle *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone*) and at the same time the first one after 1989 (Warsaw 1991), the author added the year when the story was written: 1984. In the following edition (within a longer cycle, *Bez tchu* [breathless], Warsaw 2002) the date was preceded by the place: Otranto. However, given the publication from *Pulse*, the date is incorrect. The first printing is not much different from later book editions. The major difference is that in the *Pulse* version the opening paragraph encompasses the two initial paragraphs from book editions. This could mean that in 1984 Odojewski was still working on the final version of the text.

<sup>40</sup>For accuracy's sake it should be added that AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 3 contains two more cards with the initial paragraph, but those are copies of the pages I have already considered – k. 1 (copy of k. 17) and k. 52 (copy of k. 33).

beginning of the story, which are beyond the scope of this paper, which leaves us with 12 pages from file 3 and one from file 6. The analysis of those notes allows the division of the material documenting the work on the beginning of *Co słycać w ojczyźnie* into two halves, to which I give separate working names based on different incipits reflecting two fundamental phases in the work on the text.

**a) „Spotkałem go na corso...”** [I met him at corso] – the first phase can be found on pages which I arranged as follows: k. 187v → k. 185 → k. 180 → k. 17 → k. 33 → k. 135; the first one is an autograph (in a red pen, hardly ever used by Odojewski), and the remaining pages, which contain subsequent editions of the story’s opening, are typed. Each subsequent edition develops the opening text. Odojewski’s efforts concern enriching and chiseling the description of the topography of the streets of the Italian city where the story takes place. In this stage of work, the first paragraph consists of two very long, complex and complicated sentences. Below I compare (using simplified transliteration) the original and penultimate edition of the opening paragraph<sup>41</sup>:

[k. 187v] I met him at corso, here ~~in that old town~~ Otranto beginning in a ~~small~~ dead end at the foot of the city walls ~~of the castle~~ remains integrated into the rocks washed by the sea ~~waves~~, where there was a small square and several cafés spilling onto the sidewalk with their tables, umbrellas and chairs, or rather a little further on the square in front of the city gates, and continuing along the coast of the bay/ somehow containing some river, now almost completely dry/<sup>42</sup> between acacia trees/ with leaves/<sup>43</sup> mossy with dust and everyday heat, and it was already evening and not a bit of cold, although the indestructible wind/ picked up/<sup>44</sup> blowing from the sea as soon as it became dark.

[k. 33] I met him at Corso beginning here at the foot of city walls integrated into the rocks, in a dead end, where there is a small square, several cafés whose numerous tables under colorful umbrellas take up almost the whole sidewalk, *and* behind the broad window shop a room of automatic games is shining with fluorescent lights, and a bit further, where the small square turns into a big one in front of the medieval gate, and which leads to the newer part of the town in the lane of acacia trees along the bay coast, towards which the river Oremo is carving its way from the nearby mountains, now limited to a shallow spring, and from there you can to a square, through a bridge crossing the river, and again towards the bay, again between the thick acacia trees with leaves mossy and matted and grey with dust, the sun, and the heat, even though a delicate, moist wind picked up from the sea as soon as it became dark.

I quote here two editions of the initial sentence written in the first phase of Odojewski’s work on the story to show the growing descriptive inertia. The author must have known that his description runs aground and dangerously loses impetus gained thanks to first-person narration (rare in Odojewski, and whenever he used it, it was to accentuate the rich inner narration of his protagonist-narrator) at

<sup>41</sup>The passages are preceded by page numbers. Both are from AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 3. Similarly to the beginning of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu...* I note the handwritten passages in italics, and use regular font for typed text.

<sup>42</sup>I use the slash to mark phrases written above the verse starting with “bay”, which is an intrusion into the part of the sentence about the bay and acacia trees.

<sup>43</sup>The phrase “with leaves” was added between “trees” and “mossy”, but Odojewski left the word “mossy” declined in agreement with the plural acacia trees.

<sup>44</sup>The phrase “picked up” was added between the noun “wind” and the Polish preposition “od” [from]. However, Odojewski did not erase the superfluous verb “blowing”.

the very beginning. At the same time the changes taking place in the opening text between the first (k. 187v) and fifth (k. 33) version are evident. The toponym "Otranto" disappears, and the name of the river, which in fact has nothing to do with the south-Italian Adriatic port, appears. In the fifth attempt at editing the beginning there are more details revealing what Corso looked like, which do not add anything to the narrator's characteristics, although admittedly they allow the postponement of the confrontation between the narrator and his compatriot.

Hence Odojewski is looking for another way to open his story. He notes (in a black pen) on k. 142: "I know that I don't need to look for him, nor make an appointment with him on the phone, that in the evening it is enough to go out at Corso in order to meet him just like then..."<sup>45</sup>. He continues that sentence almost until the middle of the next page, ends it abruptly, and then places several unfinished phrases, where a ringing phone and a doorman's voice appear, and finally he turns to a completely new opening:

**b) „Właśnie chciałem wyjść..."** [I was just about to leave], is the second – i.e. striving towards the definite version of the opening paragraph – phase of the text-forming process of *Co słychać w ojczyźnie*. Here I also have six pages (similarly to the first phase, one is a manuscript, and the rest are typed), which I arrange as follows: k. 142 → k. 141 → k. 93 → k. 131 → k. 124 → k. 70. However, the avant-text of the first component of the story in the latest version (k. 70) is still very extended and encompasses text which will be divided into two separate paragraphs in the book version<sup>46</sup>. Here is the original edition of the new version of the opening:

I was just about to leave ~~but he called~~ and then the phone rang; I heard a voice in the earphone, as if ~~from a hundred kilometers away~~ melted in a vast distance and ~~I had to twice~~ maybe three times impatiently repeat my question before I understood that it was the doorman from a hotel only several hundred meters away, and that he was informing me that he had already arrived, and ~~maybe~~ had gone to bed to rest after the journey; and after all none else would call me and I knew very well that he would come<sup>47</sup>.

In the next five attempts – classified here as the second phase of work on the story – there are no drastic changes in the edition of the opening paragraph, only some extensions and corrections to the complex sentences quoted above. This means that the author found the right concept for opening the story, full of understatements between the two protagonists, and moreover each of them deals with the unbearable pain of loneliness, lack of fulfillment, even a sense of failure in life. Moreover those individual failures and the suicide of a loved woman are reinforced by the catastrophic social and political situation in Poland. It can be thus seen that the author needed another version of the opening of a text discussing such difficult problems other than one full of topographic details. After all, that work on the text (six versions under the same label, "Spotkałem go na corso...") was not in vain, since the descriptive-informative sentences from the third, fourth and fifth (phase two) paragraphs were later moved to further parts of the story, as evidenced by rough copies.

<sup>45</sup>AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 3.

<sup>46</sup>Before Odojewski introduces this change, the story with a longer opening paragraph will appear in the already mentioned *Pulse*. While he was working on the 1987 Berlin edition he decided to divide it into two separate paragraphs, which is documented by AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 6, k. 1.

<sup>47</sup>AWO, *Zapomniane*, file 3, k. 142.

Hence here the mechanism of the text-forming process works in a similar way as the avant-text of *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu...* The goal of changes in the already written text and moving certain elements (words, phrases, or even entire sentences carrying information about the time, place, and protagonists of the story) is after all different. The first paragraph of the previous story was to place the starting (weight) point in the external world of the lost Journalist, who will have to try to break the existential and spiritual impasse, turn the state of suspended consciousness. In *Co słyszać w ojczyźnie*, the author wants to highlight the scale of the dilemmas and ambivalences with which the first-person narrator is struggling. For this reason he postpones the moment of the meeting between the emigrant (narrator) with the newcomer, the news about the motherland, battered with martial law, and to the same extent, the death of a woman dear to both protagonists. In the course of writing it turned out that the effect of postponement and belatedness can be achieved more suggestively and effectively by moving it in time (the phone conversation informing about the arrival of the old friend took place before meeting him in the streets of the Italian town) and limiting space (the narrator's hotel room), and above all throwing some light on the course of thoughts and feelings of the first-person narrator. Knowing about such a shift in compositional accents, we can now put forward a thesis that the south-Italian scenery is of secondary importance to the story, and so we can focus on what concerns the emigrant, who is dealing with broadly understood loss. In that sense the postponement of the meeting with a guest from Poland signaled in the opening paragraph means postponing the irrevocable loss not only of a loved one, but also of motherland<sup>48</sup>. If we look at it that way, it may turn out that the text-forming process of that story shows the primacy of melancholy related to emigration, the experience of being exiled.

### 3.3. *Sezon w Wenecji* – Reducing the distance

The fundamental core of the *dossier* of the genesis of *Sezon w Wenecji* consists of two files stored in the Poznań archive<sup>49</sup>, which in total contain 233 pages (115 in file 1 and 118 in file 2), documenting his work on the text of the short story. Fifty-four are manuscripts, and 179, typescripts. However, one should bear in mind that a bit over 30 of those pages are only several-verse long sequences which resulted from cutting larger, typed pages. This means that the actual core of the archived documentation is 200 A4 pages, ¼ of which comprise handwritten rough copies, and the rest are typed.

Actually, in this case it is better to talk about a few (at least four) Venetian motifs and consider them against a roughly sketched map of events of the whole story. Such an outline seems necessary in the case of quite an extensive short story (for Odojewski, as well as more generally for short prose forms from the final decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century). The text is 65 pages long, it was not divided into shorter units, and paragraphs are basic compositional units. Ninety-one paragraphs of *Sezon w Wenecji* can be arranged into 10 storylines, four out of which are dominated by Venice. Those are key elements – two make a text-framing device, and the other two provide significant turns in the story and its

<sup>48</sup>Małgorzata Hueckel characterized one of the dominants of the whole *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone...*: “In every story the wave of memories is sudden, unwanted, caused by some internal, coincidental reason: a letter from Poland, a meeting from someone arriving from there”. “The short stories show a dramatic contrast between intensity and clarity of a memory, and the unavailability of its subject”. M. Hueckel, Małgorzata, *O cierpieniu przemijania* [on the suffering of evanescence], in: *Odojewski i krytycy...*p. 167.

<sup>49</sup>AWO, “Spuścizna literacka Włodzimierza Odojewskiego. *Jedźmy, wracajmy*”, file 1-2. Henceforth I will refer to these materials in the following way: AWO, *Jedźmy*, file and page number.



emotional-intellectual layer. The paragraphs opening *Sezon w Wenecji* could get the working title “Venice promised and cancelled”, whereas the closing segments – “Saving childhood Venice; an adult resigning from visiting the real Venice”. The storylines mentioned here are thus the pivotal point of the story whose center lies in two Venetian chains, which I propose to entitle: “A source in Aunt Weronika’s basement” and “Venetian carnival in the underground of a villa”. It should be highlighted that those two motifs are separated by the darkest (several paragraphs long) part of the story, where Marek experiences his war initiation (he is left alone with a dead body of a German soldier).

Next, I would like to analyze the text-forming evolution of the first out of four major Venetian storylines, divided into six paragraphs in the printed version. Similarly to previous sections, here I would also like to focus on analyzing the avant-text of the initial paragraph, which will allow me to show how Odojewski’s idea (which took him a very long time to develop, between 1976 and 1999), abandoned and returned to, gains depth and its message crystallizes due to decisions regarding the shape of the Venetian motif.

The avant-text of the first, Venetian part of the story (“Venice promised and cancelled”) consists of 41 pages (including six autographs). 14 pages documenting the author’s work on editing the very beginning of the story can be excluded from that collection.

Before I divide the avant-text of the opening paragraph of *Sezon w Wenecji* into two basic parts, I would like to stress the fact that the surviving rough copies of the story create an impression of being incomplete, which is reflected in the attempts at reconstructing Odojewski’s work on the whole story, especially its first part. The lack of materials from the final, pre-printing phase of text-editing seems to be the most painful – I do not have access to the final manuscript (or typescript). A clear gap is visible between the final surviving edition of the beginning of the story and its book version. Still, it is possible to distinguish two phases in the work on the opening sentences of the story, to which I give the following working titles: “From the perspective of 1968” (the first one), and “... when he learned that he would not come” (part of the first paragraph of the story) (the second one).

**a) “From the perspective of 1968”** – to which I include six pages from the first file of rough copies of *Sezon w Wenecji*, arranged as follows: k. 1 → k. 4 → k. 86 → k. 85 → k. 84 → k. 76 → k. 77 → k. 78<sup>50</sup>. The first two pages are a special document of the first attempts at the text, characteristic for Odojewski<sup>51</sup>: handwritten notes documenting his initial ideas for the story which take the form of incomplete phrases or complete sentences. Today they can be found scattered across various paragraphs of the printed story. I selected two short quotations from each one of the two pages<sup>52</sup>:

[k. 1] when he found out about the wonderful

[k. 4] Knowledge about that wonderful city emerges from the darkness of the very beginning of its life. For when he had

<sup>50</sup>AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1.

<sup>51</sup>Similar forms of notes of both initial and later lexical concepts or those regarding the shape of the story, physical characteristics of the protagonists, etc. can be found in the genesis *dossiers* of other short stories by Odojewski in his Poznań archive.

<sup>52</sup>AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1.

~~kiedyś do powieści stać o a do  
 co ma z nie powieści...  
 jak o powieści i dniu  
 jak o powieści i dniu  
 co dzieje?~~

~~to pod koniec...  
 i ma do powieści...  
 na pewno...  
 jak o powieści...  
 jak o powieści...  
 jak o powieści...  
 jak o powieści...~~

~~kiedyś do powieści...  
 kiedyś do powieści...~~

Fig. 3. Bottom part of page 1 containing probably the first edition (first verse from the top, just below the horizontal line) of the beginning of *Sezon w Wenecji*.

~~kiedyś do powieści...  
 kiedyś do powieści...~~

1. ~~...~~
2. ~~...~~
3. ~~...~~
4. ~~...~~
5. **nie topere**
6. ~~...~~
7. ~~...~~
8. ~~...~~
9. ~~...~~
10. ~~...~~
11. ~~...~~
12. ~~...~~

Fig. 4. Top part of page 4 containing one of the earliest editions (verse three and four from the top) of the beginning of *Sezon w Wenecji*.

I think that the fact that both phrases are crossed out proves that they were re-used later in the process of writing and editing the text. If we look at what they are about in the context of other notes on both pages, we will see the loneliness of the main, child protagonist – crucial for the work on the story and accentuated by the author – related to the motif of a wonderful city, Venice, and the effort of memory. Further in the first phase of writing<sup>53</sup> Odojewski decided that the childhood memory and the figure of Venice should be preceded by five paragraphs, where the first-person narration from the perspective of the main protagonist focuses on a re-visit to the city of P. upon San and in Aunt Weronika's old villa (i.e. places where the 10-year-old Marek will experience his Venice) soon after the events of March 1968. In the fifth paragraph Marek is standing in front of his aunt's house (now a school)

And then he accidentally looked at basement windows, which glimmered with something black in the gray light of a rainy day, he bent down, looked inside, and in that moment he remembered that ~~distant~~ summer, because the basement was filled with water, and the memory came with such a force to his throat that he heard his own breath, shortened, fast, rapid and tired. And so this is how it was?<sup>54</sup>

We can assume with a high level of probability that such an opening carries clear traces of circumstances in which Odojewski started his work on that text, i.e. 1976 (as can be deduced from his own endorsement under the book version). It is known that at the time Odojewski was working on a novel, which he eventually abandoned, and which left behind three passages which he reworked as short stories and included in the second edition of *Jedźmy, wracajmy: Sezon w Wenecji, Nie można cię samego zostawić o zmierzchu* [You can't be left alone at twilight] and *Cyrk przyjechał, cyrk odjechał* [The circus has arrived, the circus has left]<sup>55</sup>. Clearly the author – if it can be put that way – required an adult protagonist (through whom the story is filtered), a protagonist who is experiencing some sort of a crisis, lonely, or to put it simply, someone similar to an emigrant, i.e. someone whose condition strongly engaged Odojewski throughout 1970s and 1980s. Only after this three-page-long introduction the sixth paragraph appears, containing something similar to the incipit of the printed version of *Sezon w Wenecji*: “He paused to think: when was the first time he had heard of the wonderful city of Venice?”<sup>56</sup>. It is followed by subsequent sentences in which the adult narrator is investigating the origins of his *quasi*-Venetian experience. And only those sentences, starting with the sixth paragraph of phase one, have survived in further work on the text which I classify as phase two, i.e.:

<sup>53</sup>The remaining six pages from that phase of work on *Sezon w Wenecji* are typescripts, out of which those numbered 76-78 are a version of the very beginning of the story, which resulted from rewriting (and further modifying) an earlier version, documented on pages 84-86.

<sup>54</sup>AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1, k. 78.

<sup>55</sup>G. Czerwiński, *Po rozpadzie świata. O przestrzeni artystycznej w prozie Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* [after the world falls apart. On artistic spaces in WO's prose], Gdańsk 2011, p. 268. Czerwiński quotes an interview given by Odojewski to Krzysztof Masłoń, where he explains that decision: “*Bawiliśmy się w żołnierzy*”. [we were playing soldiers] *Z Włodzimierzem Odojewskim rozmawia Krzysztof Masłoń*, „Rzeczpospolita” 2006, nr 205.

<sup>56</sup>AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1, k. 78.

**b) “...when he learned that he would not come”**, whose avant-text consists of six typed pages which I arranged as follows: k. 55 (file 1) → k. 24 (file 1) → k. 84 (file 2) → k. 2r (file 2) → k. 1r (file 2) → k. 108 (file 2)<sup>57</sup>. The first four contain subsequent attempts at writing the first paragraph, opened with the protagonist wondering when he had heard of Venice for the first time. In most of them the text is still entitled *Sezon wenecki* (as in phase one), and the basic tendency in editing was working out Marek’s age<sup>58</sup> and the description of architectural and topographic nuances of a city which he imagined as “floating on water”<sup>59</sup> because of his nanny’s tales. It would seem that the shape of the first paragraph was stabilizing, when suddenly Odojewski once again decided to introduce an almost page-and-a-half long passage at the very beginning, in which he extended the narrative filter in the form of experiences and thoughts of an adult Marek:

He is looking for the right words, but he cannot, so he says: No, I will not go, but only “no”, for she will not understand anything from his explanations, no, no, and that he does not want to, stubbornly again and again, and he becomes silent, turns around, and the woman walks away, he hears her steps, at first hesitant, but after a moment faster, later he cannot hear anything apart from the rain falling on trees, branches and leaves, and he breathes in the sticky, warm breeze of garden fumes reaching the foot of the terrace<sup>60</sup> [...]. No, he will not go, he thinks, he does not have, there is no point. Next he thinks *more* intensely, when he first heard of Venice. And that he would not be able to establish – when. Now, just like *maybe* even then<sup>61</sup>

The passage above comes from the final part of the avant-text of the first paragraph of *Sezon w Wenecji* and it is a final draft (with some minor corrections) of the penultimate part of that avant-text (file 2, k. 1r). It would seem that this return to the perspective of an older man, obviously struggling with a painful burden of the past and lack of understanding from a woman who, as can be suspected, is close to him, had its source in the emigration stigma, which is carried by both the author (assuming that the text was written in 1970s) and his protagonist. It could be that Odojewski returned to his work on *Sezon w Wenecji* (in 1999) having the beginning quoted above as his starting point. If that is the case, then he returned to his old work while having a completely different situation in his life. In the 1990s he often spent more time in Poland (he still had his Warsaw apartment then), and he was in Munich because he wanted to, not because of politics. Highlighting the sense of estrangement of the protagonist due to emigration was no longer important. Indeed, Odojewski kept the perspective of an adult in the final draft, but it is expressed only with one initial verb in the first paragraph: “He is looking for” and “now” (immediately juxtaposed

<sup>57</sup>AWO, *Jedźmy*, files 1-2. Following page number, file number is provided (in brackets).

<sup>58</sup>It is about the moment when Marek’s mother leaves for Venice, leaving him with a nanny. First he is only one year old (AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1, k. 55, 24; file 2, k. 84), next – a year and a half (AWO, file 2, k. 2r), and eventually over two years old (AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 2, k. 1r). In the book edition Marek “had just turned one and a half” (W. Odojewski, *Sezon...*, p. 5). However, Marek’s age in 1939 remains the same – ten years old.

<sup>59</sup>AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 1, k. 55, 24; file 2, k. 84, 2r, 1 r.

<sup>60</sup>Typescript version.

<sup>61</sup>AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 2, k. 108. Here the final version of the title, *Sezon w Wenecji*, appears. I provide Odojewski’s minor corrections in italics.

with “then”<sup>62</sup>), and then with subsequent paragraphs the reader’s attention is entangled in a world of feelings, thoughts and physiology of a boy who is about to experience puberty and has to face the war. All that seems to indicate that there was a third phase of work on *Sezon w Wenecji*, whose only document is the final version of the text from its 2000 edition.

I would like to return to the penultimate part of the avant-text of that story. Below you can see a reproduction of its rough copy:

The image shows a handwritten manuscript on aged paper. At the top left, there are handwritten notes: "i że dyba z tego strasznego człowieka on dostaje sm, a nawet może i kłopot". In the center, the title "Sezon w Wenecji" is written in cursive and underlined. Below the title, the text is written in several numbered lines, with many corrections and additions in different colors and styles of handwriting. The main text is in black ink, but there are many red and blue corrections. Some words are crossed out, and others are written above or below. There are also some small drawings or marks. On the right side, the number "1R" is written vertically. At the bottom left, there are more handwritten notes, including "Wielki", "8. przodem", "9. o dużej", "10. o Wenecji", "11. Parol", "12. mi".

1. Szuka odpowiednich słów, nie znajduje, mówi: nie, nie poja-  
 2. dę, tylko "nie", bo z jego wyjaśnien<sup>omc</sup> tak nic nie zrozumie, nie, nie, i  
 3. że nie chce, milknie zaraz, odwraca się, ~~ona~~ odchodzi, słyszy jej  
 4. kroki przez chwilę. w pierw zwlekające, wahające się, potem szyb-  
 5. sze, w każdym razie energiczne, przyśpieszające, później już ~~nie~~  
 6. nie słyszy <sup>more</sup> więcej deszcz zaczyna jacy miarowo po drzewach, gałęziach i  
 7. liściach, i wdycha lepki, chłodny powiew <sup>wspina się ce go rżan i uderza</sup> ~~ciągnący z grębi ogro-~~  
 8. <sup>do domu</sup> ~~du~~ i dopiero na tarasie, u progu otwartych drzwi, rozpraszając<sup>o</sup> się  
 9. drobnymi pasemkami. Nie, nie pojedzie, myśli, nie musi, nie ma  
 10. sensu, a ~~potem~~ myśli, kiedy to o Wenecji usłyszał po raz pierw-  
 11. szy, i że nie potrafił ~~nigdy~~ ~~ustalić~~ ustalić - kiedy. Ani  
 12. teraz, ani, być może, nawet wtedy, kiedy ~~miął~~ <sup>do Wenecji w 2020 roku</sup> miał dziesięć dopiero lat,

Ilustracja 5. Górna część k. 1r zawierająca przedostatnią redakcję początku opowiadania *Sezon w Wenecji*

<sup>62</sup>W. Odojewski, *Sezon...*, p. 5. Obviously the grownup Marek appears in the final paragraph, however, to my mind, this does not contradict with the shape of the opening paragraph in both phases of work on the text which I analyze here.

I mean especially what is happening with the final verse of the top half of the page. Below you can see its simplified transliteration:

Neither/Both now, noras, perhaps, even then, when /he found out he would not go, when/ he was only ten<sup>63</sup>

I would like to stress the fact that Odojewski decides to introduce one of the most crucial (both in terms for the story and the creation of the main protagonist) information to the initial paragraph – the boy had never been to Venice before – only towards the end of phase two. Thus the reader’s attention is focused on the fact of a child’s painful experience, it is fully concentrated on that fundamental moment in his life. Thanks to that the reader is entangled in the clash of two worlds: childhood and adulthood, whereas the narrative perspective places him or her in the former. If the majority of adults do not understand anything (according to Marek), the story could not begin with stressing the bitterness and pain of an adult man thinking about the past. Magdalena Rembowska-Płuciennik insightfully comments on that:

Hence for Marek Venice is the space constructed from someone else’s memory, implemented as a fantasy [...]. It is a space detached from his individual memory, hence deprived of pain and as such open to creation rather than repeating the experience... Not having memories – in Odojewski this is a blessing and a guarantee of internal freedom<sup>64</sup>.

The analysis of the avant-text of the initial paragraph of *Sezon w Wenecji* allows the capture of the long process which led Odojewski himself to start his revolt on narrative art in his world. The author manages to escape the paralyzing memory, or maybe even more, to escape the pressure of trauma. Both Czerwiński and Anna Skibska stress that in this one short story he manages to “maintain the picture of the world before the cataclysm”<sup>65</sup>. It was possible thanks to granting autonomy to a childlike experience of the world – Odojewski’s goal while writing subsequent editions of the story, especially its opening sentences. In the course of subsequent editions Odojewski shortens both the opening text and the distance between the reader (engaged in the narration led from the perspective of a ten-year-old) from childhood. He levels that distance so that he can turn both himself (a writer) and the reader into if not children, then at least into one of the adult protagonists, Aunt Barbara, who one day (while it is still the beginning of the war, fully engaging the attention of the other adults) says: “Did you know, children...? I forgot to tell you... Tomorrow we’re going to Venice”<sup>66</sup>.

<sup>63</sup>AWO, *Jedźmy*, file 2, k. 1r.

<sup>64</sup>M. Rembowska-Płuciennik, *Miasto zapomnienia. Wenecja Włodzimierza Odojewskiego* the city of oblivion. Venice of WO], in: *Zapomniane, nieuśmierzone... Pamięć*, p 39. Rembowska-Płuciennik also highlights the excellence of Odojewski’s artistic efforts: “This must be one of a few texts by Odojewski where the protagonists manage to forget about the war (and the whole world!). Odojewski’s strategy shows masterfully perverse, for the city is obviously culturally associated with evanescence and death, it pushes death and war from the consciousness of both child and adult protagonists (p. 36).

<sup>65</sup>G. Czerwiński, p. 269; see also. 206-207, as well as Anna Skibniewska *Jedźmy, ktoś woła* [let’s go, someone’s calling], *Arkusz* 2001, No 5, p. 10.

<sup>66</sup>W. Odojewski, *Sezon....*, p. 50.

#### 4. The element of writing

Working with hundreds of pages of the rough copies of Odojewski's short stories, analyzing the nuances, struggles and impasses that can be seen in the avant-texts of the beginnings of those stories, attempts at capturing certain tendencies in the recreated and read text-forming process – all that allowed me to meet a writer deep in editing work, entangled in “the writing process, which – according to Raymonde Debray-Genette'a – defines itself, having no definite beginning nor end”, as well as becomes sensitive “to what is changeable, [...] a system of changes”<sup>67</sup>. Hence the reader and the scholar of Odojewski's manuscripts and typescripts experiences his conscientiousness and passion. We can experience the limitlessness and constant potentiality of the developing text.

The rough copies of the three short stories by Odojewski prove the huge amount of work of a writer whose artistic prose is predominantly about

inquiring, storytelling, whose aim is not to recreate some anecdote rooted in some non-textual reality, but rather to construct such a vision of literature whose sense is the process of storytelling; a vision of history whose prism model this literature is, and such a vision of reality that focuses in this model<sup>68</sup>.

This is how tracing the transformations of the openings of those stories can imperceptibly offer an opportunity to take part in constructing a separate world, yet one strongly related to ours.

translated by Paulina Zagórska

<sup>67</sup>R. Debray-Genette, *Mémoires du récit*, Seuil 1988, cited in: P-M. de Biasi, p. 143-144.

<sup>68</sup>I. Iwasiów, p. 174.

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# KEYWORDS

*m e m o r y*

POLISH CONTEMPORARY PROSE

## WŁODZIMIERZ ODOJEWSKI

### **ABSTRACT:**

The paper reconstructs and analyzes the avant-texts of three short stories by Włodzimierz Odojewski, representing the mature, late phase of his work: *Ku Dunzynańskiemu Wzgórzu idzie las*, *Co słycać w ojczyźnie*, *Sezon w Wenecji*. The paper is based on Odojewski's archive at the AMU Faculty of Polish and Classical Studies in Poznań. Subsequent editions of the opening paragraphs of the three stories mentioned above were selected as a special object of reconstruction and analysis. In the text-forming process of each one Odojewski edited the text several times. In each case a different tendency proved to be a superior characteristic of the writing effort – in one case the aim was to show a suspension of a protagonist's consciousness, in one – to postpone a meeting between the narrator and his old friend, and in one – reducing the temporal and personal distance. The genetics of selected texts by Odojewski provides significant clues and impulses for making new (or deepening and correcting the already existing) interpretations of the studied short stories.

archive of Włodzimierza Odojewskiego

## text genetics

### LITERARY ARCHIVE

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