

Summary

The dissertation focuses on the works of Danuta Mostwin, an émigré of post-war Poland, who left a double legacy: sociological research on the Polish diaspora in the USA and literature reflecting the evolution of the identity of the Polish emigrant.

The dissertation consists of four main chapters, introduction, conclusion and bibliography. In the first chapter, the author introduces the reader to the topic of Polish emigration to English-speaking countries, presents the most popular emigration writers of these destinations and briefly describes the literary output of Danuta Mostwin. The second chapter is devoted to the issues of identity - from more general concepts, through the national identity of Poles and Americans, the identity of an emigrant, and finally the identity of the *third value* - a category that was coined by Mostwin herself. Then, in the third chapter, *From Lublin to London*, complying with the chronology of historical events, we get to know the protagonists of Mostwin's works starting from the writer's background presented in *Father Peter's Shadow* and ending with *The House of the Old Lady*, i.e. her first novel written in exile in London. The fourth chapter is the path that leads the reader *From London to Baltimore* and deals exclusively with the identity of Mostwin's characters in exile.

The work uses the hermeneutic approach of Paul Ricoeur, with elements of anthropology of everyday life, employing also the category of narrative identity and imagology - that is crucial for analysis of social groups. Responding to Ricoeur's call, the author of the dissertation "has been living in the world of Mostwin's texts" for a long time, searching together with her characters for answers about migrant identity that bother them and herself as well.

The discourse concerning Mostwin's texts inevitably led the author of the dissertation towards the *third value* the characters try to find in themselves and which is understood by Mostwin - first in more general terms - as energy generated in result of the confrontation of individuals and their values with a new system. Over time, Mostwin refines this definition and sees the regularity examined as "the result of the autonomous identity process that is most progressive in the subconscious." This phenomenon is variable, never fixed, and as "inner continuation of oneself" it requires constant self-reflection and self-development to be sustained.

The road leading to the *third value* was very uneven for Danuta Mostwin herself, which was depicted on the pages of her autobiographical novels but the writer managed to achieve this

state. However, the characters she creates fail to accomplish the goal, and they exemplify pilgrims on the bumpy road towards an idyllic state of equilibrium that they are unable to reach.

The family in exile, as the most delicate structure, most susceptible to traumatic experiences, quickly becomes Danuta Mostwin's main research subject, which is also reflected in her literary works. Following Mostwin's characters it is easier to understand the challenges faced by families raising children in exile, how many vectors of opposing forces impact them, and finally why Mostwin herself believed that raising a child being a migrant is an act of heroism. Consequently, her decision to devote her expertise and knowledge to the work in The Family Mental Health Centre founded by her in Baltimore till last days of her life becomes clearly understandable.

The identity of *third value* in case of Polish émigrés will be different with each generation, not only depending on their individual situation but also on new challenges that the world will set for those who want to experience life abroad. Six months ago, the author of this dissertation would have written that fortunately nowadays migrants can consciously prepare for this step in advance as they are less frequently refugees. Today, these words sound like bitter irony. The world has come full circle and this time on the border of our country, Poland, we meet refugees fleeing from a real threat to their lives. Considering that we will soon see extensive literature on this traumatic experience, a new research field opens for literary scholars. It seems really worthy and challenging to compare the way in which the emigrants presented by Mostwin used to struggle for the *third value* when they were adapting to life in a culturally foreign country, where the language barrier was hard to overcome even after many years, with the protagonist of the literature that has already started being created – focused on refugees in a culturally close land. The research on the ways in which the *third value* is manifested in these two different cases can be a very inspiring continuation of Danuta Mostwin's heritage.

A. Stavros