

HOMECOMING TALES IN LATVIAN POST-EXILE LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

Latvian exile literature was formed when a part of Latvian society left homeland, when the country was reoccupied by the Soviet army at the end of the Second World War. Exile society and, accordingly, literature maintained both the dream of restoring independence and returning to the homeland as the goal of the exiles. The independence was regained after 45 years and this makes the concept of return problematic. This motif is one of the essential ones in post-exile literature. This research examines the representation of the return experience in two prose texts – Agate Nesaule' novel "Lost Midsummers", in which return can only be a visit, and Margita Gutmane' documentary text "Life is one devil's invention", in which the clash of experiences is depicted from the position of a person who has come permanently.

Keywords: belonging and longing, alienation, encounter, A. Nesaule, M. Gutmane

INTRODUCTION

The term post-exile is not very widespread in the humanities and social sciences. This is also logically understandable. In order for there to be such a significant, widespread phenomenon as post-exile, then there must also be a thorough, stable position in the collective memory of the situation of exile, which must last for many years and create a significant collective experience and the tension created by this experience, resulting from the differences between the countries of origin and exile communities. Fortunately, prolonged and thorough exiles are not too common. However, they have been known in the history of civilization since biblical times, and in cultural studies related to the post-exile phenomenon, most attention has been paid to the Jewish experience. The Baltics' long experience of exile after the Second World War and its end, regaining independence, makes the post-exile a significant phenomenon in the paradigm of Latvian literature and culture as well similarly to other Baltic nations. The focus of this research is the Latvian post-exile phenomenon that occurs after regaining independence in 1991. The purpose of the article is to examine the most essential and characteristic reflections of this phenomenon in the texts, which can be called post-exile literature. One of the cornerstones of the ideology of exile is the recovery of the lost homeland, or homecoming. Already at the beginning of the exile, during the period of refugee camps in Germany, one of the Latvian public organizations, the Central Council of Latvians, published the manifesto "Latvian position as a foreigner". It stated that the meaning and purpose of the exile's life is to return to the homeland: "I will always think and act as it is for a Latvian