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Home from the perspective of spouses staying in long-term emigration. Analysis of autobiographical narratives of Poles living in Great Britain

Dom z perspektywy współmałżonków przebywających na emigracji długookresowej. Analiza narracji autobiograficznych Polaków mieszkających w Wielkiej Brytanii

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Abstract

Introduction. Home is an ambiguous concept that can be analysed from many different perspectives. This concept is considered in the following dimensions: material, social, axiological, cultural and emotional. The experience of emigration may initiate reflection on the category of home.

Aim. The aim of the article is to describe and explain how emigrants understand the concept of home and how they present it.

Materials and methods. The empirical material was collected by conducting autobiographical narrative interviews and analysing personal documents. The research group consisted of 20 people (i.e., 10 marital dyads) from Poland, residing in a long-term emigration in Great Britain.

Results. Home in the material dimension is a fundamental element of existence, and its absence – both in homeland and in the country of emigration – is a source of problems. Home is identified by all respondents not only with a roof over their heads, but also with family. Where the closest family is, the respondents believe that their home is there. All of them also reflect on the understanding of the country of origin and the country of the host as (not) home, and their opinions in this regard are varied. They have been characterized by metaphors: metaphor of home in a global village, metaphor of home for the moment, metaphor of being on the road, metaphor of an uprooted tree, metaphor of a door, metaphor of a freely opening door. One couple defined their attitude towards the home identified with the home country and the host country in the same way. There was no such agreement in the other married couples. This is characterized by another metaphor: the metaphor of the negotiated home.

Conclusion. The house does not have to refer to a specific geographical space. A home can be a family home where a person grew up and was brought up. Home can be a home left in the country of origin, to which one misses and returns. A home can be one created in emigration, open or closed to the influence of the culture of the host country. Home can be the homeland, the host country, the world. The house takes on a processual character, it is a dynamic project that "becomes" in the changing circumstances of life.

*Keywords***:** biography, home, emigration, autobiographical narrative, homeland, family, couple.

Abstrakt

Wprowadzenie. *Dom* to pojęcie wieloznaczne, które można analizować z wielu różnych perspektyw. Jest ono rozpatrywane w wymiarach: materialnym, społecznym, aksjologicznym, kulturowym i emocjonalnym. Doświadczenie emigracji może inicjować refleksję nad kategorią domu.

Cel. Celem artykułu jest opisanie i wyjaśnienie, w jaki sposób osoby przebywające na emigracji rozumieją pojęcie *dom* i jakie jest ich wyobrażenie na temat tej przestrzeni.

Materiały i metody. Materiał empiryczny został zgromadzony poprzez przeprowadzenie autobiograficznego wywiadu narracyjnego i analizę dokumentów osobistych. Grupę badanych stanowiło dwadzieścia osób (tj. dziesięć diad małżeńskich) pochodzących z Polski i przebywających na emigracji długookresowej w Wielkiej Brytanii.

Wyniki. Dom w wymiarze materialnym stanowi fundamentalny element egzystencji, a jego brak – zarówno w ojczyźnie, jak i na emigracji – stanowi źródło problemów. Dom przez wszystkich badanych utożsamiany jest nie tylko z dachem nad głową, ale także z rodziną. Tam, gdzie jest najbliższa rodzina, tam jest dom. Wszyscy badani podejmują refleksję nad rozumieniem kraju pochodzenia i kraju przyjmującego jako (nie)domu, a ich

opinie w tym zakresie są zróżnicowane. Zostały one scharakteryzowane poprzez metafory: metafora domu w globalnej wiosce, metafora domu na chwilę obecną, metafora bycia w drodze, metafora drzewa wyrwanego z korzeniami, metafora drzwi, metafora swobodnie otwieranych drzwi. Małżonkowie tworzący jedną z par określili w ten sam sposób swój stosunek do domu utożsamianego z krajem ojczystym i przyjmującym. W pozostałych parach nie było takiej zgodności, co opisuje metafora domu negocjowanego.

Wnioski. Dom nie musi odwoływać się do konkretnej przestrzeni geograficznej. Domem może być dom rodzinny, w którym człowiek dorastał i się wychował. Domem może być dom pozostawiony w kraju pochodzenia, do którego się tęskni i wraca. Domem może być ten utworzony na emigracji, otwarty bądź zamknięty na wpływ kultury kraju przyjmującego. Domem może być ojczyzna, kraj przyjmujący, świat. Dom nabiera charakteru procesualnego, jest projektem dynamicznym, który „staje się" w zmiennych okolicznościach życia.

***Słowa kluczowe*:** biografia, dom, emigracja, narracja autobiograficzna, ojczyzna, rodzina, współmałżonkowie.

Introduction

Increased social mobility is a feature of modern times, which can be called the epoch of migration. The person living in it becomes a wanderer, unable to remain still (Bauman, 1993). However, no matter where a person resides, she or he looking for a home where one can live and feel safe, while at the same time having a memory of the home in which he or she grew, developed and shaped one's identity. Living in a global village full of challenges and countless opportunities makes "people need not only wings, but also roots" (Dionne, 2001, p. 16), or at least anchors enabling them to temporarily settle in ever new havens (Bauman, 1993).

The concept of *home* is close to every human being, yet ambiguous and difficult to define. In the classical understanding proposed by Alfred Schütz (1945, 2008), a home is a place that provides a sense of "being yourself," familiarity and predictability. Home is the place from which one comes and to which one returns. In turn, following Andrzej Siciński (2001), it is possible to distinguish three dimensions of the notion of home: material, social, and axiological. In the material dimension, a home is a concrete space, commonly referred to as the "four walls," together with its surroundings and the objects that constitute its furnishings. These objects often have a sentimental and symbolic meaning for the householder. In social terms, the home is a community of people living in a given space, linked by ties of kinship, affinity, or other relationships. These people perform specific social roles and build a bond among themselves. In the axiological dimension, the home is a symbol of one's roots, a space for the cultivation of values and the satisfaction of needs. The symbolism of the home can be both secular and sacred (Ladysmith, 2017).

A slightly different perspective was proposed by Krystyna Romaniszyn, who based her concept on the assumption that "home is a multidimensional reality" (Romaniszyn, 2021, p. 77). In the author's view, home consists of several circles. The narrowest is the home of the first circle, which consists of the household members and the dwelling with its furnishings. Householders are connected by feelings and bonds built up, and material possessions often have symbolic value and are kept even for several generations. The home of the second circle "encompasses the 'hometown', i.e., the family space with its cohabitants" (Romaniszyn, 2021, p. 84). As in the first circle, the social (i.e., contacts and builds relationships with the people who make up the local community) and material (i.e., nature, landscape, and people's creations) dimensions of home are included here. The home of the third circle is the homeland, which consists of three dimensions: human, spiritual (cultural), and material. The three circles of home (i.e., private, local, and homeland) are fulfilled through the fourth circle – the spiritual circle, which is love. "It is love of place, of people, of landscape, of homeland that builds us our Home" (Romaniszyn, 2021, p. 91). In doing so, the author points out that the home of each circle is constantly in danger of being lost.

In the literature, there are also critical analyses of the concept of *home*, often done from the perspective of postmodern or feminist thought (Trąbka, 2016). According to them, home is not always a refuge and a haven to which one returns in search of safety (Massey, 1992; Ahmed, 1999). It can be a place of coercion, violence, oppression, suffering, and harm (see, for example, Jarosz, 2001; Gelles, 2003; Dąbrowska, 2012; Hardesty, Haselschwerdt, & Johnson, 2012). This problem was particularly evident during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which forced social isolation condemned many victims of domestic violence to stay with their abusers around the clock (see e.g., Bradbury-Jones, Isham, 2020; Sharma, Boarah, 2022). Furthermore, home does not have to be associated only with the household, as for many people who live in a variety of institutions (e.g., orphanages, care homes for seniors), they are home (see e.g., Kurzynoga, 2012; Golczyńska-Grondas, 2012; Cudak, 2017). Finally, a home does not have to be a "spatially localised place" (Trąbka, 2016, p. 168). A contemporary person's sense of familiarity and continuity can be experienced in many places while remaining on the move. This problem seems to be particularly significant in the context of migration processes.

Migration is associated with leaving one's home, crossing borders and physically moving away from the familiar. Following the traditional understanding of home, migrants' home was assumed to be the place from which they started their "wandering" (Parutis, 2006). Migration in this view was therefore synonymous with the loss of a safe haven. However, contemporary research (see e.g., Kozielska, 2014; Trąbka, 2016; Adamczyk, 2021) indicates that the problem is more complex and multicontextual. The determinants of migration processes have changed over time. Contemporary

Polish emigrants differ from emigrants leaving the country in historical emigration waves (see Słowik, 2011, 2013; Cieślińska, 2012). The post-accession emigration wave initiated in 2004 consisted mainly of young Poles who speak foreign languages, have experience in living and working in Western countries, are ready for change, open to new challenges, and are somehow familiar with cultural diversity (Słowik, 2011, 2013; Kozielska, 2014; GUS, 2020). Due to globalisation, their identities and lifestyles were similar to the inhabitants of other countries (Melosik, 2003), so it can be concluded that they moved geographically, while culturally they were among people similar to themselves (Kozielska, 2014). At the same time, dynamic technological advances and easy access to means of transport contributed to a change in the experience of migration, for which it was characteristic to maintain links with the country of origin despite living in the country of new settlement (Cieślińska, 2012; Kozielska, 2014). Transnationalism refers to the migrant's functioning separately from territoriality, disregarding national borders, while constructing their identity about more than one country (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995; Trąbka, 2009, 2016). Consequently, this influences the formation of bi-nationality (Kyle, 2000), or bicultural identity (Kubitsky, 2012). The question of how contemporary expatriates understand and locate home is still relevant.

Research methodology

The research results presented in this text are part of the findings obtained within the framework of the research project carried out for the preparation of the doctoral dissertation of the first author of this article[1]. The research aimed to learn about the life history of Polish emigrants in Great Britain and their families, and to explain the process of their (re)construction of family narrative identity. In the narratives of the respondents, the category of home occupied a significant place. Hence, our goal in this paper is to describe and explain how expatriates understand the concept of home. In the course of our deliberations, we want to provide answers to the following questions:
 – What is home for expatriates? Where do they place it? How do they describe it?
 – Do expatriates have a sense of "being at home"?
 – Do expat spouses describe home in the same way? If not, what are the similarities and differences?

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[1] The doctoral thesis entitled: "Rodzinna tożsamość narracyjna polskich emigrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii [Family narrative identity of Polish emigrants in Great Britain]" was written by Karolina Kupis, MA, under the scientific supervision of Professor Alicja Kalus and the assistant supervisor Dr Emilia Mazurek.

The research was conducted in the United Kingdom. Ten married diads, i.e., twenty people of Polish nationality between the ages of 31 and 51 (average age 38), participated in the study. The vast majority of individuals declared a university education (N=13). The remaining individuals declared secondary/secondary education (N=5), vocational education (N=1), and primary education (N=1). All couples had children. All of the respondents had emigrated from Poland to the UK after Poland's accession to the European Union and had been in exile for at least twelve months. The most common reason for emigration was the earnings motive (N=14). Other motives included personal (N=4), academic (N=1), and emigration traditions in the family (N=1). The respondents lived in the southern part of the UK, in the South East England region. Seventeen were economically active, while the others were economically inactive due to childcare and childrearing. In emigration, five people were engaged in professional work consistent with their qualifications acquired in Poland (i.e., cosmetologist, accountant, IT specialist, teacher, and software engineer), seven people were working in a profession other than their learned one, while five people were working below their qualifications.

The research was conducted using an autobiographical narrative interview (Schütze, 2012; Kaźmierska, Waniek, 2020) and analysis of personal documents, i.e., photographs selected and described by the narrators. Each interview was conducted individually, i.e., separately with the husband and wife. Everyone began by formulating a request to stimulate an autobiographical narrative: "Please tell me the story of your family's life." Only after the subject's spontaneous narrative was clearly completed were questions asked to clarify or elaborate on the points made in his or her statement. Additional questions were also asked based on an interview guide that had been developed in advance, which included questions about the following areas:

– family of origin (lifestyle, values, and family traditions),
– getting to know your spouse(s) decision to marry,
– own family (lifestyle, values, and family traditions),
– life before emigration (significant life events, significant people, and plans),
– decision to emigrate, life in emigration (significant life events in emigration, significant people, attitude to homeland and Polish traditions, interpersonal relations in the UK, and attitude to host country).

A few weeks before the interviews began, the respondents were asked to choose six photographs that were important to them, both those of their life before emigration and those depicting their life in emigration. During the interview, the respondents presented the photographs and talked about them. The interviews lasted from about one and a half to three hours. They were recorded using a Dictaphone and then tran-

scribed. After transcription, the autobiographical narratives were sent to the respondents for authorisation. They were then analysed and interpreted.

The ordering of the empirical material was based on a scheme for developing narrative-biographical data from multiple Narrators (Dubas, 2011), enriched by graphic visualisations of lifelines (Gramling, Carr, 2004). As a result of the analysis of each autobiography, we reconstructed their overall organisation (Kaźmierska, Waniek, 2020). The resulting material became the subject of a contrastive comparison (Urbaniak-Zając, 2001; Kaźmierska, Waniek, 2020). In the first order, we compared the narratives according to the chronology of the interviews conducted. In the second order, we compared the narratives of the spouses constituting one couple. After completing the analysis and interpretation of the empirical material, we prepared a final report containing the results of the research.

The research was conducted by the ethics of research involving human subjects. Before starting the research, all (potential) participants were made aware of the purpose and conduct of the research, the planned publication of the results, and informed about the storage of the acquired data and possible secondary use. Each participant was assured of the anonymity and confidentiality of the research, as well as the possibility of withdrawing from participation at any stage of the research process without giving a reason. All participants gave written consent to participate in the research, as well as to the publication of the results.

Results

Home and reflection on its meaning occupy an important place in the autobiographical narratives of the emigrants who took part in the research. The life of an emigrant is a "life in suitcases" (Łukasz, 34 years old), moving frequently in search of better living conditions, and therefore, in the narrators' opinion, one has to get used to it and be ready for changes, while visiting favourite places. In the surveyed group, two oppositional attitudes towards attachment to place can be distinguished. The vast majority of respondents (18 people) declared an attachment to their place of residence. Conversely, two people (Marta, 40 years old and Daniel, 37 years old) stated that they do not become attached to places, and in the case of one of them this attitude emerged as a result of emigration. However, regardless of whether or not they declared being attached to a place, all narrators emphasised the importance of having a home understood as a material space. Home in material terms was defined as:
  – a roof over the head (Grzegorz, 51 years old),
  – a shelter (Tomasz, 34),
  – a domestic hearth (Emilia, 32),

–   the foundation needed to start a family, providing a sense of peace and security, enabling one to live freely according to one's principles and cherished values.

The lack of one's own home in the home country caused many problems and tensions, i.e., difficulties in planning offspring, conflicts between spouses, an endangered sense of masculinity as a result of not being able to be a homemaker and head of the family, the need to adapt to the lifestyle of the parents with whom one lives. In turn, the lack of one's own home in exile was associated – at least at the beginning of the stay – with constant moving, wandering, and living in substandard houses. Therefore, buying their own home became an important goal for the emigrants. This was realised by two married couples participating in the research. The others lived in rented houses or flats. The houses created by the emigrant respondents – although far away from Poland – resembled Polish houses in terms of interior design, furnishings (e.g., furniture imported from Poland), and used appliances, complemented by Polish media and Polish food products. The home was a space where the emigrants surveyed felt at home, even when they felt alien in their host country. Home was a shelter, an enclave of Polishness in a foreign world. Four respondents talked about the house of their dreams, the appearance of which was in line with Polish architectural designs (e.g., a house with a sloping roof, a large house resembling a manor house situated in a country garden, a house in a "Polish climate" with a beautiful view of the trees, a large house for several generations). The narrators expressed their readiness to possibly build a house in this style in the United Kingdom. A house in the material dimension as understood by the respondents is also its surroundings, i.e., nature, landscape, and products of human activity.

The material dimension of the home coexists with various non-material aspects, which, in the opinion of those interviewed, form a whole. In a narrow sense, home is the family, in a broader sense it is the country(s) of which the immediate environment and the local community are an important part, and in a broad sense, it is the world. All narrators equated home with family. All also addressed perceptions of home and host country in terms of (not) treating it as their home. Perceptions of the world as home and the self as its inhabitants were present in the least number of narratives.

Home, in the view of all narrators, is primarily the immediate family (i.e., spouse and child/children), which was expressed in the oft-cited statement: "My home is where my family is" (quoted verbatim from the narratives: Daniel, 37, Marta, 35, Łukasz, 34, Lucyna, 49, and Tomasz, 34). One narrator used the metaphor of home as an asylum, a shelter that can be provided by family members caring for each other.

[...] I repeat that you can have a stressful job, but a home cannot. You need to have a place where you can relax. If you have a stressful house, where are you going to have a place to come back to? What will you go back to? To the church you'll go, they'll close and you'll come back. You go to the meadow, someone will chase you out too. [...] When you're coming down from the mountains, it's pouring rain and you see a hut from afar, you only think of two things: that there are walls where you can take shelter from the rain and that there's warmth, a fireplace. And those walls are the husband, the fireplace is the wife, and that's what home is (Tomasz, 34).

Despite living in emigration, a group of 18 respondents maintained frequent contact with their family living in their country of origin. They were in regular contact with their relatives, visited their family members (mainly on the occasion of holidays, family celebrations, or as part of holiday trips), felt materially responsible for their homes left in their home country and contributed to the costs of renovation or maintenance. It can be concluded that these respondents had binary (bi-partite) homes in social and material terms. Two people in the study group were reluctant to maintain contact with their families of origin. This contact was rather occasional, limited to occasional meetings or telephone contact. The reluctance to maintain contact was most often due to the difficult circumstances surrounding the decision to emigrate, the dysfunction of the family of origin (e.g., the parent's alcohol addiction) and the treatment of emigration as a kind of escape, a release from the influence of the parents and the opportunity to live according to one's vision. The home created with the nuclear family created a sense of being at home for the respondents despite living in emigration. It was here that respondents fulfilled their needs for security, respect, recognition, closeness, and love. They also cultivated family traditions, took care to communicate in Polish in the family and taught the language to their children, nurtured Polish culture and the Christian religion. They also introduced elements of British culture:

There are also elements of English culture that have influenced me for sure. For example, we do a roast dinner quite often, on Sunday or the first day of Christmas. I've also borrowed a lot of English vocabulary for myself, I interject it sometimes. I think it comes from the fact that it's easier for me this way (Marta, 35).

While the narrators agreed on the perception of family as home, their opinions on the perception of home and host country as home varied. The results are presented in Table 1. To illustrate their opinions, we use metaphors, the names of which either come directly from the respondents' statements or were created by us based on our

analysis of the empirical material. The characteristics of the metaphors are included in Table 2.

Table 1

Perceptions of home and host country as home by married couples in emigration [2]

	Mother country (Poland) as home	Host country (England) as home	A house in England as a home, but England not as a home
Grzegorz (51 y.o.)	+	-	+
Lucyna (49 y.o.)	+	+	-
Daniel (37 y.o.)	+	+	-
Anna (31 y.o.)	-	-	+
Przemysław (39 y.o.)	-	-	+
Katarzyna (37 y.o.)	+	-	+
Łukasz (38 y.o.)	+	-	+
Marta (35 y.o.)	+	+	-
Tomasz (37 y.o.)	+	+	-
Katarzyna (32 y.o.)	-	+	-
Dariusz (40 y.o.)	+	-	+
Anna (38 y.o.)	-	-	+
Tomasz (34 y.o.)	+	-	+
Iwona (38 y.o.)	+	-	+
Daniel (40 y.o.)	+	-	+
Marta (40 y.o.)	-	+	-
Mariusz (40 y.o.)	+	+	-
Aleksandra (40 y.o.)	+	-	+
Łukasz (34 y.o.)	+	-	+
Emilia (32 y.o.)	-	-	+

Source: Authors' own study.

For five respondents, both the home country (Poland) and the host country (England) are perceived as home. This opinion is illustrated by two metaphors of home. One is the metaphor of home in the global village, which implies the possibility of living anywhere on the globe as long as it provides adequate living conditions for the

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[2]   A plus (+) indicates the narrator's identification with the category, while a minus (-) indicates the absence of such a declaration.

moment. In this perspective, any place can be a home if the whole family resides there and it can meet their current needs. Technological advances and civilisational and cultural changes help people to move and build a home constantly in new locations, in line with the conviction that the world is a global village and man is its inhabitant. The country of origin is not mentioned with fondness here, rather it is treated as one of the stops on one's journey. The host country, on the other hand, represents the value of the here and now, being the place of present residence, but can be left without any regrets when the need arises:

> To be honest, I have never missed Poland and I do not miss it. I don't get particularly attached to a place. I think it would make no difference to me where we would live. It doesn't matter whether it's Poland or England. [...] I feel at home here. Although I don't particularly care about that. I don't think about where my home is. We simply live here, and if we need to go somewhere, we will (Daniel, 37).

The second metaphor present in the narratives of emigrants viewing Poland and England as their home is the home for the moment. It is characterised by looking at the host country as a home for some time. The emigrant feels comfortable here but considers returning to the homeland (usually in old age) or does not rule out returning. At the same time, he misses his country of origin and when he visits it, he also has a sense of being at home. The life of an emigrant is a life at the crossroads of two cultures, and so cherishes Polish traditions, cultivates Polish cuisine, uses the Polish language in the family, and at the same time incorporates British customs into family life. Both countries are seen as having their own scenic and cultural qualities.

In contrast to the above is the position of the four female narrators, who are convinced that neither country – emigration and immigration – gives them a sense of being at home/being at home. To describe the situation of these narrators, we used the metaphor of being on the move, for which the lack of a sense of belonging to the country of origin and the host country is characteristic. Exemplified by the words:

> I don't feel at home in England. My home is nowhere now – neither in Poland nor here. I'm going to Poland now and I feel I'm not part of it anymore (Anna, 31).

> I'm so torn, I don't feel at home either here or here. [...] I feel on the way, not sure where, whether here or there (Emilia, 32).

> I don't know what it's like to feel at home (Anna, 38).

The narrators emphasise that they have no one/thing in Poland apart from their family, they did not leave anything there, and at the same time, their return to the homeland makes them reflect that they no longer feel part of Polish society because their stay in exile has changed them. They are convinced that if they returned, they would probably be perceived as foreign by their compatriots. At the same time, they also feel uncomfortable and foreign in England, and describe England itself as a "foreign world" (Anna, 31). When they are in Poland they miss England, and when they are in England they miss Poland. The feeling of being lost, torn apart, and suspended inherent in this metaphor is an experience that often affects emigrants (see Bron, 2000; Słowik, 2011, 2013)[3]. For the aforementioned female narrators, home is the home they created with their own family in exile. There they feel safe and at home; when they leave, they feel like a guest in a foreign country. They do not treat any country in terms of their own home.

Another way of defining home in the context of living in two countries was to identify the country of origin as home and reject the idea of the host country as home. This position was held by nine research participants. The most characteristic features of these narratives were a strong longing for the country of origin and remembering Poland with a certain nostalgia, primarily in the context of describing Polish nature, weather, seasons, landscape, and finally history, culture, and traditions. The host country, on the other hand, despite its perceived qualities, was described as "country number two" (Iwona, 38), which "will never be home" (quoted verbatim from the narratives of Iwona, 38, Tomasz, 34, and Łukasz, 38). The metaphor of a tree torn from its roots emerged in the narratives of this group of respondents, signifying the necessity to live separately from the culture in which one grew up and the family in which one was raised. Home rests on strong and stable foundations, and these are precisely the culture and family of origin. Respondents find it difficult to perceive the host country as home because these foundations are missing. For these people, home in exile is only the home they create with their own family. The metaphor of the door is referred to here. The door of the home separates it from the outside world and opens or closes access to a different culture. This is illustrated by the statement: "We feel comfortable in our house, but we know that we have to leave the house several times a day and it tires us out a lot" (Aleksandra, 40).

In their homes, the narrators communicate freely in Polish, cook Polish food, cultivate Polish traditions, and so create a world familiar to them, a substitute for their homeland. Opening the door means entering a different world in which they feel like

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[3] This issue, based on an analysis of the autobiographical narratives of the same married couples, is described in more detail in the article: "Emigracja a proces uczenia się małżonków [Emigration and the learning process of spouses]" (Kupis, Kalus, & Mazurek, 2022).

guests and are convinced that even perfectly mastered English will not make them feel at home. The narrators seem convinced that the door of the house has to be opened sometimes, but they seem not ready to permanently swing it open.

A different point of view is characteristic of two female narrators who perceive the host country (England) as home, while they no longer treat the home country (Poland) as home. In the narratives of these respondents, the metaphor of a free-open door, illustrated by the statement, is revealed: "When I open the door to the outside, I also feel at home" (Marta, 40).

The narrator emphasises a certain change that has taken place in her perception of the country where she has settled. Initially, she found it difficult to find her way in the new reality, but with time she adapted to the new living conditions. She has become accustomed to changing her place of residence frequently and sees the benefits of this. Her several years of emigration and the fact that her parents adopted her former room in the family home as their bedroom caused her to lose her attachment to Poland. The metaphor of the free-open door signifies an uninhibited functioning among the English, while not treating the homeland as home.

Table 2

Metaphors of home to country of origin and host country in expatriate narratives

	Mother country (Poland) as home	Host country (England) as home	A house in England as a home, but England not as a home
the metaphor of home in the global village the metaphor of home for the present	+	+	-
a metaphor for being on the move	-	-	+
the metaphor of a tree uprooted the metaphor of a door	+	-	+
the metaphor of a freely opening door	-	+	-

Source: Authors' own study based on the empirical material analysed.

Our comparative analysis of the narrators' statements indicated that each married couple perceives their immediate family as home. Where there is immediate family, there is, in the belief of the respondents, their home. They feel at home in the house inhabited by their family – regardless of where it is located in terms of location on the globe. In contrast, we noted differences in how spouses described home in terms of their experience of emigration and living in two countries: Poland and England (see Table 1).

One marital dyad (Iwona and Tomasz) described their attitude to home as identified with the country in the same way. The spouses were unanimous in stating that their home is Poland and the home they created when they emigrated, but that England as a country is not their home despite twelve years of living there. Respondents are convinced that, despite Britain's many strengths, they will never feel at home in Britain. This is due to the cultural, religious, and geographical differences they perceive. Iwona states:

> I have never felt at home in England [...]. It will never be my home and I will never feel like home. [...] My place is definitely Poland. I miss the silence. All my life I've been surrounded by forests and meadows, there was always silence there, and here I was terrified by the noise, the hustle, and the crowd. I miss the silence, the stillness, I miss the smells. [...] In Poland the seasons have a smell, in England, they don't.

Iwona's husband makes a similar statement, although he adds that he will miss England when he returns to his homeland: "In England, I don't feel that I am at home. [...] When I return to Poland, I will miss the people and the places. [...] To England, I would like to return. [...] I'd certainly like to take my grandchildren to the cliffs one day and show them which way we used to go on the nightly Stations of the Cross along the cliffs".

In the remaining married couples, we did not note the consistency in spouses' opinions regarding perceptions of Poland and England as home. Three couples (Lucyna and Grzegorz, Marta and Łukasz, as well as Aleksandra and Mariusz) agreed with perceptions of the homeland as home but differed regarding perceptions of the host country as home or non-home. In contrast, three couples (Katarzyna and Przemysław, Anna and Dariusz, and Emilia and Łukasz) declared a non-perception of England as home, but their opinions differed regarding perceptions of their country of origin. Meanwhile, two couples (Anna and Daniel, Marta and Daniel) diverged in their opinions in (not) perceiving both countries as home. One couple (Katarzyna and Tomasz) were unanimous in their perceptions of England as home but were not unanimous in considering Poland as their home. Based on this analysis, we created the metaphor of

a negotiated home, which means seeking answers to questions:
  – Which country is our home?
  – Which country do we feel at home in?
  – Which country will be the right place for our children to live?

These questions take on particular importance in a situation of conflict regarding the (in)desire to return to Poland, which arose and continued at the time of the research between Katarzyna and Przemysław. In addition, it was exacerbated by Britain's planned exit from the structures of the European Union at the time (the so-called "Brexit") and uncertainty about the situation of emigrants. The other couples, although different in their opinions, did not argue about returning. Despite their longing for their homeland, they accepted the fact of being in emigration as a (temporary) solution that creates better living and development conditions for them and their children than living in Poland. However, some spouses expressed the belief that they would return to their homeland in their old age:

> [...] And I can't imagine myself here in my old age as a person who will live here at a very old age. Then I would like to live in Poland, because here we are lonely, even though we have our family here (Emilia, 32).

Discussion of results

Home is a value, especially when emigrating and having to build a new home in completely new conditions. Emigration, however, does not have to mean breaking contact with the country of origin and the people left behind. People can have several homes on the globe where they will feel at home and to which they can return. In the context of the problem addressed, it seems important to acknowledge the concept of a de-territorialised understanding of home (Gupta, Ferguson, 2004; Trąbka, 2016), according to which home does not have to be a place located in a specific space. Home is people building a community of close people, living together, but at the same time mobile, able to move around. Magdalena Nowicka, as a result of her research among United Nations workers, concluded that home can be understood as a dynamic relational process, i.e., "a space that becomes" (Nowicka, 2007, p. 82). This understanding of home is also appropriate for the narrators participating in the research presented here. Home for the respondents is primarily about the immediate members of the family they have created (i.e., spouse/cohabitant and children). Therefore, all respondents feel at home in their emigration home even though not all perceive the emigration country as their home.

According to research conducted so far (Nowicka, 2007; Trąbka, 2016), it is clear that geographical remoteness from the place of origin fosters the conscious construction of one's own home. Home becomes a symbol of connection to the past, a symbol of continuity, duration, and the nurturing of traditions and values (Dyczewski, 2003). In a situation of migration, the sense of settling in is based on celebrating holidays and practising traditions, transferring practices and customs to one's new place of residence, maintaining routines undertaken in the country of origin, preparing meals characteristic of the native cuisine (Trąbka, 2016; Ślusarczyk, Pustułka, 2016). These practices help to sustain an already formed cultural identity or to construct an identity concerning two countries – the old and the new settlement (see e.g., Kubitsky, 2012; Kozielska, 2014; Trąbka, 2016). Being a transnational migrant, i.e., functioning in isolation from national borders and maintaining constant contacts "across" borders, is now possible thanks to technological advances providing fast movement, easy contact with people from all over the globe, remote handling of formal matters, etc. Modern migration is no longer unidirectional as it used to be, but multidirectional (Kubitsky, 2012). Its finality and irreversibility is also disappearing (Kozielska, 2014). Therefore, some of the expatriates in the research presented here feel at home in both their home and host countries, or have a sense of being on the move, as it is difficult for them to identify where their home is. Home is therefore not necessarily associated with one location (see also Trąbka, 2016). Research indicates that the word "home" is most often associated by Poles with family and a safe haven, much less frequently with a residential building, a place of permanent residence, or a homeland (Podkowińska, Duda, 2022).

Joanna Kozielska (2014) points out that young Poles who decide to emigrate post-accession demonstrate resourcefulness and cope well with everyday life abroad. The researcher, referring to the considerations of Zbyszko Melosik (2003), explains that:

> Perhaps since they have "practised" their "life" in different cultural conditions (if only), watching popular American and foreign film productions, listening to music, or playing computer games, or with the help of the Internet they have "clicked" to visit Dublin and London. [...] A young Pole, by changing his/her place of residence, moves in a geographical sense, but in a cultural sense, he/she finds himself among similar ones ("global teenagers") (Kozielska, 2014, p. 31).

Among the people taking part in the research presented in this text, some individuals were comfortable with the new reality. Britain had become their home, if only for a time. Some did not regard it as home and were convinced that it would never become one. It can be assumed that they too (despite their age) went through the aforementioned "cultural training," but experienced difficulties in adapting to life in new

cultural conditions. Empirical research (Nowicka, 2007; Trąbka, 2016) confirms that some people show a greater readiness for mobility and settle more quickly in a new place, while others need more time to adapt. Although the issue of the determinants of the process of adaptation and settling in the country of emigration was not the subject of our research, we would like to mention that age is only one of the factors that can determine attitudes towards this issue. Other factors mentioned in the literature include environmental factors (e.g., attachment to place), social factors (e.g., attachment to people co-creating the place of residence), cultural factors, and personality factors (Lewicka, 2012; Kozielska, 2014; Trąbka, 2016).

Conclusion

Home is a value in itself – both in material and non-material terms. Emigration involves leaving home and thus moving to a new socio-cultural environment and the need/necessity to create a home there. Home understood as a certain material space providing a roof over one's head, is the foundation necessary to satisfy one of the basic needs, which is the need for security. However, the non-material dimension of the home, understood as "the totality of relationships and interpersonal relations and related emotions, feelings, moods, or sentiments" (Kubacka, 2018, p. 196), is equally significant.

Home is usually identified with family (Podkowska, Duda, 2022). However, the experience of emigration prompts reflection on the perception of the country of origin and the host country as home. Home does not have to refer to one place or country, it does not have to refer to a specific geographical space. Home can be the family home in which one grew up and grew up. Home can be the home left behind in one's country of origin, which one misses and returns to. Home can be the one created in emigration, open or closed to the influence of the culture of the host country. Home can finally be the homeland, the host country, the world. Home takes on a processual character. It is a dynamic project that "becomes" in the course of the changing circumstances of life. At the same time, it is an important place, providing a sense of security and continuity in the trajectory of migrant life.

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