The topic of this paper is one of the frequent motives in Macedonian contemporary drama: a voluntary exile from one’s own country and the desire for better and more fortunate life. “A desire for distance” (Walter Benjamin) is attractive and frightening at the same time. The myth of the attraction of the other place is one of the oldest myths in history. From Homer to the Romantics, from the philosophy of Existentialism to a feeling of being a stranger today, this myth has not lost anything.

Working away from one’s native place as a condition of Otherness reveals certain relations between home and foreign country, but also, between Me and not-Me (Me as the Other). The problem of a person’s identity, but also the problem of national and gender identity, have transformed the myth of the other place into the myth of the home. Paradoxically the exile in space becomes an exile of human soul.

The literary practice of the contemporary Macedonian dramatic authors: Goran Stefanovski, Kole Chashule, Jugoslav Petrovski and others, illustrate the already mentioned stereotypes and images of the “self” and the “other”.

“Scuffled man, tired from his frame, from his Surroundings, from his country – suffers”
Tzvetan Todorov, Anti-native man

The issue of identity is as old as mankind and is in tight correlation with the issue of alterity or otherness; a paradigm in this view is the mythical Narcissus and his encounter with “the I” (the reflecting image in the water) which, in itself, inevitably implicates consciousness for the existence of the Other. Thus, already in the mythical belief, the identity is formed and determined by way of or through the prism of the Other. (Much later, the psychoanalytical criticism will interpret the very unconscious as the inherent otherness.)

Great importance in the further development of the consciousness for the identity/otherness lies in breaking up the predominant feudalistic image of the world and the formation of the civil cultural model (the epoch of romanticism), which means democratisation of the way the world is perceived, as well as equal participation of all the individuals (both I and the Others). The phenomenon of otherness, even though it has existed as a practise throughout history, becomes a subject of a more extensive scientific analysis only in the framework of the comparative literary studies at the be-
beginning of the nineteenth century. Later, imagology experiences harsh criticism and for a certain period of time lies forgotten and ignored before the influx of the immanent critical methods of studying and interpretation of literary work, and experiences renewed actualisation in the last two and a half decades, redefining its status, especially under the influence of the increasing interest in cultural studies all over the world. It can be said that the current cultural phase in comparative literary studies modifies the imagological research into an even wider area – reception and hermeneutics of the Otherness in general as explication and interpretation of the Other/foreign text, script, speech, character, ethnicity, religion, or worldview.

On a literary level the aspect of Otherness experiences its emanation, among other, through contra-cultural entities (individual or collective) – those who deviate from the main social currents and as such we have the marginal social groups. They are the second subjects in the line of the established relations such as: rich-poor, civilised societies and cultures (the West)-uncivilised, wild (the East), domestic-foreigners, men-women, parents-children, and the like. These antagonistic pairs which function according to the principle of inclusion/exclusion and which discuss the status and the image of the Other, are quite impressively presented in the plays which have the economic migration, that eternal Macedonian subject, as a pillar motif. On this occasion, we shall dwell on the plays: A Twig in the Wind (1957) by Kole Chasule (1921), a play in 3 parts, Tattooed Souls (1985) by Goran Stefanovski (1952) and Eleshnik (1997) by Jugoslav Petrovski (1969). Simultaneously, this is typically our national problem: the treatment of the disturbed personal and cultural identity under conditions of a life in a different, foreign environment, receives a universal character and develops into subject that knows no boundaries of time and space.

In the plays that deal with the phenomenon of economic migration the space is two-fold and separated into: here (home) and there (in foreign parts) or here (in foreign parts) and there (home), depending on the character’s perspective and their spatial location. Specifically, the spatial bound in A Twig in the Wind and Tattooed Souls is America, and in Eleshnik the two topoi, Ohrid and America are entwined. Poetically, the space resembles the specific scope of fairy tales: happiness, warmth, security, harmony … are typical markers of home, opposite the space out of home and its characteristics: foreign, hostile, frightening, and perilous.

The thing that all characters, including the migrant worker Velko in Chasule, the whole gallery of characters in Stefanovski, and Stefan in Petrovski have in common is the distinctive myth of home, which transforms the geographical space from real into imaginary, from external – into internal, which implies that the artistic topos of the home becomes a peculiar resonance of the soul, and uncovers the curse of the migrant worker as a psychological-social phenomenon: to live in two worlds, one of the daily routine and the other of the memory. “We all are, while alive, here only with the body, and there with the soul,” says Velko. Thus we have the essential marker of this type of people as creatures of the yearning. The paradox is that all of them leave voluntarily, pursued by the discontent of their own social status: the load of the hard financial conditions, and life in great poverty precisely at home. Magda in Chasule even marries an