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GLOBAL ASPECTS OF LITHUANIAN AMERICAN IDENTITY

Annotation. *The features of the American Lithuanian identity are prompted by different historical dramas and the fate of the refugees of the Soviet occupation after WWII unfolding on the American continent. Here, the catastrophe of forced loss of homeland and state, American globalism, colonial pains of racism and enslaved peoples, and archetypes of Lithuanianness – the forest, the quietly flowing Nemunas river, the village, the Vilnius antiquarian, the historical archives and memory of photographs – intermingled. This safe image of the native home, with its snowdrifts and the greenery of the birches, was being changed by the ocean, the continent, and the accident. It is the intersection of catastrophism and lyricism's connections with nature, where the new globalism of Lithuanian American longings, empathy for enslaved nations, left on the outskirts of the world, and "non-family members" forgotten by the world's oblivion. So, during the upheaval, the Lithuanian transformation of Christian values acquires the wings of suffering. The poetic phenomenon of an American Lithuanian is born in the poetry of Algimantas Mackus (1932–1964) and the prose of Antanas Škėma (1910–1961). Meanwhile, the dimensionalism of the sea and space, born in the works of Vytautas Bacevičius (1905–1970) in the thirties in Lithuania, crystallises into cosmism in music, its transcendental waves and rays, voicing the "cosmic soul of music" in America that outgrew its temporality. The spreading of the Lithuanian American identity takes the most unexpected turns in philosophy, photography and imagery of experiences, emerging phenomenism, exploring the depths of the consciousness of the peoples of the world like Algis Mickūnas (*1933) and Alphonso Lingis (*1933). And with the greatest paradox, it returns to Lithuania, as a kingdom of metaphors, to "defeat Russia" – to destroy the Soviet Union through absurdity in its system. This way, George Mačiūnas' (1931–1978) trickery personal expression takes place through the Fluxus avant-garde art movement and the minimalism inspired by the poet and film avant-gardist Jonas Mekas (1922–2019) and discovered by Lithuanians. The changes hidden in the details and intonation cells of their work as a "crumbling time" lead to a "quiet turn of the world", a paradoxical Jungian synchronism that inspired the Baltic mind of the present day (according to the Estonian thinker Jan Uldusk) and led to the liberation of Lithuania and other Baltic countries. This global convergence of identities is also a peculiar American invasion into Lithuania through culture – poetry, literature, music, cinema, phenomenism and political emigration, which has become the essential actualisation code for a Lithuanian, one of those who cut through the citadel of Sovietism and its iron curtains with the unique swing of the axe of the Fluxus scene.*

Keywords: *America, Lithuania, globality, catastrophism, cosmic soul, freedom, Fluxus, maps, invasion.*

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ГЛОБАЛЬНІ АСПЕКТИ ЛИТОВСЬКО-АМЕРИКАНСЬКОЇ ІДЕНТИЧНОСТІ

Анотація. *Риси литовсько-американської ідентичності зумовлені низкою історичних драм та долею біженців від радянської окупації після Другої світової війни, що розгорталася на американському континенті. Йдеться про переплетення трагедії вимушеної втрати батьківщини й держави, американського глобалізму, колоніальних травм расизму та поневолення з архетипами "литовськості" – ліс, плавна течія Неману, село, старожитності Вільнюсу, історичні архіви та пам'ять, закарбована у світлинах. Саме на перехресті катастрофізму та ліризму, пов'язаному з природою, виникає новий глобалізм литовців у США – їхні прагнення, емпатія до уярмлених народів, залишених на узбіччі світу та тих, хто не є "членами родини", забутих світом. Поетичний феномен американців литовського походження народжується в поезії Альгімантаса Макуса (1932–1964) та прозі Антанаса Шкеми (1910–1961). Водночас, обшир моря та простору, виражений у творах Вітаутаса Бачевічуса (1905–1970) у Литві 1930-х років кристалізується у космізм музики, її трансцендентальні хвилі та промені, висловлюючи "космічну душу музики" в Америці, яка вийшла за межі свого часу. Розвиток литовсько-американської ідентичності набуває несподіваних поворотів у філософії,*

фотографії та образності пережитого, феноменалізму, що досліджує глибини свідомості громадян світу, таких як Альгіс Мікунас (*1933) та Альфонсо Лінгіс (*1933). І, що найбільш парадоксально, вона повертається до Литви як царство метафор з метою "перемогти росію" – знищити Радянський Союз через абсурдність його системи. Так, Джордж Мачунас (1931–1978) знаходить особисте вираження своєї трикстерської природи за допомогою авангардного руху "Флуксус" та мінімалізму, на який надихнув поет та кінематографіст-авангардист Йонас Мекас (1922–2019), що їх відкрили для себе литовці. Це глобальне сполучення ідентичностей постає також як присутність американське вторгнення до Литви через культуру — поезію, літературу, музику, кінематограф, феноменалізм та політичну еміграцію, яка стала суттєвим кодом самореалізації для литовців, що пробивалися крізь цитадель радянщини з її залізними завісами.

Ключові слова: Америка, Литва, глобальність, катастрофізм, космічна душа, свобода, "Флуксус", мапи, вторгнення.

The context of catastrophism in Lithuanian culture emerged after the understanding of the fortified establishment of the Soviet occupation, ultimately perceived as the destruction of the state. Its consequence was a loss of the state. Then, the **call to the nation** rises. It should be noted that even before World War II, Lithuanian intellectuals, who perceived themselves as part of the Western world, sensed this era of tragic changes and tried to warn politicians. They were not believed as always. Geographer and geopolitician Kazys Pakštas (1843–1960), professor of the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, sounded the alarm in advance. As early as 1938, he wrote about necessity to take the entire cultural and intellectual treasure of Lithuania, as well as young talents and the Lithuanian thinkers – students and creators to a safe place in the world, a place, possibly in Africa or the Middle East, for example, to the island of Madagascar where Lithuanian culture and spirit could experience its intellectual maturity, deep inspirations, and reach civilisations heights (the contemporary play *Madagascar* by the playwright Marius Ivaškevičius, (Ivaškevičius, 2012), ironically talks about it too). Israel, which was created after the war, to some degree, can stand as an example of such a state. However, Pakštas' aspiration not only went unanswered, he was accused of "spreading panic"... (Valiušaitis, 2018, p. 81) And later, when both he and a large part of the Lithuanian elite found themselves in an alternative safe space – the *Free World*, his ideas were realised in their own way in the post-catastrophic reality of state creation, precisely in America. Here, a new concept with deep transatlantic identity roots was born, the concept of the *Lithuanian American* identity, which is especially related to cultural signs, new archetypes, contexts, literature, and memoirs, even with the continuation of state structures, with politics, and with the justice of history (Aleksandravičius, 2014). It is in

this stratum of the Lithuanian intellect where the depths of political and cultural creativity merge, new currents emerge, and the unexpected *Baltic Dawn*, the inspirational sources of the identity of the three nations that have experienced the blow of occupation, breaks through being connected with the diverse American identity. Here, we can say that national modernism gains momentum to restore freedom in the three Baltic states, absorbs global trends, and transforms the codes of Lithuanian identity into the context of the New World. Geography becomes the primary threshold of that context – essential ocean and shore – sailing away ships, homes left behind, burned archives, family, the yearning to return, and forever losing the land. A foreign continent that should become their own. It is how the continental generation of Lithuanian American poets, *Bežemiai [the Landless]*, appeared. The *landless generation* consisted of the 'former citizens of the state' after Algimantas Mackus (Mackus, 2001, p. 144). Here, a big tectonic break is taking place in the consciousness of Lithuanians, a cut in the state's history, which cuts off the roots and instead of the *land* – the land of white snow, snowdrifts, homeland birches... – the concept of a whole *continent* opens up, and it is America. The Old and New worlds meet in the soul of a Lithuanian who has crossed borders, where unprecedented changes in the global drama are taking place. All of them flow to creative heights in political criticism, music, literature, visual arts, as well as cinema, and philosophy. It remains seemingly hidden in an invisible historical transcendence coded for a long struggle in the essential geopolitical reality. It is how 'Lithuania outside of Lithuania' comes into being, whose brightest creative poles, breakthrough idealism values and historical leadership can already be found working in a global context.

The constant of catastrophism in the poetry of after-war modernism. Algimantas Mackus

(1932–1964). It is necessary to highlight the fundamental changes in Lithuanian self-awareness caused by occupation and emigration. Meaningful codes appear when the fatal historical significance of violence is understood, and a transformation of consciousness occurs. The first opening of its dimension is the *ocean* – the image and the concept of the essential word that separates the nation from the state, the language from the archive, the homeland from the continent, the paternal family that has sailed from their land, from homes and ancestral songs. The poet of such a break in consciousness is Algimantas Mackus, who tragically died in a car accident, as if he summoned the reality of catastrophism into his fate, covering the red sky of Lithuania, naming the global wound of war as a sense of the intercontinental dimension and the cold shadow of loss:

Nėra gimtosios žemės. Nėra kad tyliai plauktų Nemunėlis Ir aviža prašytų būti dailiai pasėta.	No homeland. No Nemunėlis that flow quietly and no oats ask to be neatly sown.
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Šiaurės vandenio kryptimi Ošia šermenų giesmė. Ji laukia aido, Bet jūra mirus. Jei dar yra laiko – nuo vakar likusios gražos, būsime sunūs ir dukterys.	Towards the northern waters, The song of the funeral rustles. It waits for the echo, But the sea is dead. If there is still time – from yesterday's returns, you will be sons and daughters.
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(Po Augintinių)

(After Foster Children)

(Mackus, 2001, p.126, 127)

The feeling of the black wing of fate, embracing the land and the identity of total divergence by a foreign language, almost cuts the “landscape” with red lines. When reading Mackus’ poems, one gradually sinks into the inevitable depth of darkness and loss, naming the constant of doom and rupture in history: burned archives and “erased rivers up to the seas” from maps. The metaphor of the vanishing state could be compared with globally recognisable images in art, like Edvard Munch’s *The Scream* and Pablo Picasso’s *Guernica*. In Mackus’ poetry, this cry is unmistakable, imbued with the existential bitterness of a condemned *citizen of a state without a state*, the renunciation of sacredness, the nascent modernist sarcasm versus longing for the old Christian world order: ‘Resurrected somewhere God wades around in the white snowdrifts’ (Mackus, 2001, p. 76).

Specifically, geography determines the essential transformation of images here, the fatalism of changes. Therefore, the map is mentioned many times, and the erased rivers – the total arbitrariness of errors in the existential discourse. It is a rare example of political pain in poetry. It could only appear in the texts of an émigré, a war fugitive, after entering a new category of the stateless citizen and *unornamented* language (so Mackus named his poetry collection).

Tai įtamos kupinas laikas Tai laikas mirties nepaaiškintos Tai šauksmas išklydusios generacijos Tai atšauktas prisikėlimas Tai pirštai ant vėstančio kūno Tai išdidumas prieš kojų mazgojimą Tai šauksmas išklydusios generacijos Tai atšauktas prisikėlimas	It is a tense time It is a time of unexplained death It is the cry of a lost generation It is a cancelled resurrection It is fingers on a cooling body It is pride over washing the feet It is the cry of a lost generation It is a cancelled resurrection
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(Untitled #11)¹

Generation of unornamented language. Foster Children as in Mackus Neornamentuotos kalbos generacija. Augintiniai. Chicago: Santara, McMKXII. (Mackus, 2001, p. 68).

Iš visur sugrįžtu neišėjęs, Naktimis ieškau gimtųjų namų. Jeigu rasčiau gimtuosius namus, - Niekas manęs iš jų neišneš, Nė karste, nė mirty.	You come back from everywhere without leaving At night, I look for my native home. If I found my native home – No one will carry me out, Neither in a coffin nor in death. ²
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(Mackus. Neornamentuotos kalbos generacija. *Hermetiškoji daina. #5. p. 76*)

Generation of unornamented language. Hermetic song. (Mackus, 2001, p. 76)

In the collision of transformation, a new understanding of the modernist turning point in history is born: homelessness, fragmented speech (*unornamented language*), lost generation, the raised Foster Children – not sons and daughters, God’s descent from the cross, the de-sacralisation of tradition, and the closeness of his wounds, and the global feeling of blood in the cuts of poetics. Being Lithuanian is becoming a part of the world’s martyred Jews, black people, and other outcasts.

Mackus’ catastrophism is based on several codes of loss: God, homes envisaged by the north,

snowdrifts, green birches, archives, and erased rivers. The poetic transcendentalism of geography and well-understood geopolitical expediency – river, map, state, foreign, language, and archives lie in this metaphor. And archetypes of sacrality – Churches. Irreversibility, body confinement, and loneliness are everywhere. Mackus' physicality takes an irresistible blow. The tragic death of his friend, the brilliant writer and playwright Antanas Škėma (1910–1961), in a car accident significantly strengthens the poet's drama and vision, turning it into reality. At that point in time, Mackus wrote his last and most powerful work – the poem "Chapel B" dedicated to Antanas Škėma. It is the ultimate cry of catastrophism, in which the political pain of occupied Lithuania and the existential pain of the death of a close friend are interwoven, gaining a universal level and purposefully sculpturally recorded in the loss of the state. More accusative rhetoric for Sovietism and disappointment for the mistakes of the West cannot be imagined. Its piercing word was a sign of distant historical recovery, the hope of truth.

Buvę valstybės piliečiai, Įsidėmėkit jo mirtį: Pirštais jis buvo suvokęs Aklųjų raidyną – egzilę. <...>	Ex-citizens of the state, Look closely into his death: His fingers understood The alphabet for the blind – exile. <...>
Buvę valstybės piliečiai, Įsidėmėkit jo mirtį: Grįždamas nebesugrįžo, Negrįždamas neatsigrįžo. <...>	Ex-citizens of the state, look closely into his death: there's no comeback in his return and with no comeback, no turning back. <...>
Buvę valstybės piliečiai, Įsidėmėkit jo mirtį: Kūnas pavirto į žodį, Ne žodis pavirto į kūną.	Ex-citizens of the state Look closely into his death: It was flesh changed to word Not the word made into flesh. ³

(Untitled #VI) Chapel B

(Mackus, 2001:144,145)

Lithuanian archetypes emerging in this light give the works by Mackus and other authors of his generation a particular dimension similar to a geopolitical bridge across the ocean. This connection becomes the paradigm of the state – the line of presence – memory – loss – transformation, which transfers the Lithuanian sense of the limitlessness of nature to the geopolitical dimensions, thus giving it a modern structure filled with thick graphics of blood colour and dark pain. It is precisely formed in the accents of "Chapel B" poems – the actual codes of the new catastrophic modernism,

which occupied Lithuania being blocked by the Soviet ideology yet did not have. It is how an adequate manifesto of the loss of freedom map is formed – *Lithuania outside of Lithuania*.

Žalios, žalios! Aš noriu tik žalios Uždengti blankančiam Beržų sentimentalui, Šiurkščios kaip milas Šiaurės mėnesienos	Green all green as I want the green to cover a fading pale bathos of birch in the coarse homespun of a northern moon. ⁴
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(Untitled #I) Chapel B

(Mackus, 2001, p. 132)

And American call:

Žemyno balsas meldžiasi keliautojų Žemyno balsas šaukias avantiuros <...>	The voice of a continent prays for explorers the voice of a continent cries out for adventure. <...>
Likimine ranka išraižytam žemėlapy Žemyno balsas stiebiasi iš ūkanų, Žemyno balsas auga iš Nedievo.	The map a fateful hand etched finds one voice growing and towering out of fog, once the voice of a continent cries out for explorers: the voice of a continent emerging from non-God.

Šaltos, šaltos, aš noriu tik šaltos, Žalios rugsėjo mėnesienos Ir vario plokštėje – intaglio– Žemėlapio, į kraują įsiliejusio	Cold, so cold I want only the cold green September moonlight, and that map (copper) inscribed intaglio, to blend in with the blood. ⁵
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(Chapel B.)

(Mackus, 2001, p.134)

The new archetypes of Mackus' poetics, opening up the lost statehood paradigm, fractured by the stigmas of emigration, are the map, the continent, the north, the ocean, the old coat of arms of history, archives, race, and death. The last two archetypes connect the fate of Lithuania and the global world in a rough graph of violence.

In this opening poem of the cycle "Chapel B" (it is the chapel where the poet's friend and writer Antanas Škėma, 1910–1961, who died in a car accident, was laid out to pay respects), Mackus' coded archetypes, which connect his Lithuanianess and globalism in the face of catastrophism, are as if they are carved with hard stroke: maps, manuscripts, destroyed states, traps of the history, drought, Africa, Mary, Black or white, erased rivers. With such a figurative word, the poet structures the absence of the state – the homeland – the emptiness of emigration in different continents. It seems they could possibly be filled with archetypes of longing – reminiscences of Lithuanian songs and church hymns:

Mirtis yra pasenęs ir nuvėsęs
Saulėlydis virš Lietuvos
gamtovaizdžio pavasary saulužė
ištekėjo
Už svetima kalba prašnekusio
mėnulio.
<...>
Mirtis yra pageltę manuskriptai,
Senųjų knygų tituliniai lapai:
Pelėsių kronikon ir išnykimo
daton
Surinko žilas Vilniaus antikvaras.
Mirtis yra į patį žemės turtą
Ištįsusių kolonijų žemėlapiai
<...>
Mirtis yra sunaikintos valstybės,
Žemėlapiuos ištrintos upės iki
marių:
Dainuoja sausrą negrė Marija
Lelijų, ledo ir lietaus kalba.

Mirtis yra spalvoto stiklo ir
vandens,
Archyvuose neblunkantis
koliažas:
Su saule atsikėlė mergina,
Su saulužė atsigulė į patalą.

Death's this aged and faded
sunset across the Lithuanian
landscape
sweet sunshine, back in spring,
set up with
the moonman first spoke a
foreign language.
<...>
Death's the manuscript sheets
turned yellow
along with title pages to old books
a gray-haired Vilnius antiquarian
set down
in the chronicle of mould with its
date for vanishing.
Death's the maps to colonies
reaching
right through to earth's yield,
<...>
Death's all the states wiped out,
all rivers that reach to the sea
erased from maps,
a drought black Maria sings of
in the idiom of lilies, ice and rain.

Death's a collage of water and
stained glass
kept from fading in museum
vaults:
one girl rose at dawn and along
with sweet dawn lay down in her
down bed.⁶

(Chapel B)

(Mackus, 2001, p. 130,131)

Kaip Nemunas plaukia
Dainuoja per naktį Marija <...>
ir laukia pilkoj atvirutėj
labanakt iš Vilniaus Marija

To sing the Nemunas flowing
Singing goodnight Maria
Waiting for a gray postcard
with goodnight from Vilnius Maria⁷
(*Mirtiškoji* [In Dying]) *Chapel B*,

(Mackus, 2001, p. 139)

Even so, after experiencing the transformation of global violence through race, continent, through the “sacrament of blood with the earth” (Mackus, 2001, p. 130), they become fragments of themselves without scale, scattered by the wind, dried in the drought in the faith, like of a pet, fatal strikes of bare words:

Ir aš nenoriu matyti
Šiurpaus pavydo sprendimo,
Ir aš nenoriu matyti
Iškreiptos būtinumo raidės.
Ir aš nenoriu matyti
Mirties supaprastinto braižo,
Ir aš nenoriu matyti
Į svetur išmetimo žinios.
Ir aš nenoriu matyti
Egzilo ironijos galo,
Ir aš nenoriu matyti
Kruvinos išdidumo baigmės.
Ir aš nenoriu matyti
Egzilo tuštėjančių rankų
Ir aš nenoriu matyti
Jų finalinio šauksmo krypties.

And I do not want to see
the harsh judgement envy insists on,
as I do not want to see
necessity's twisted letter.
And I do not want to see
Death's reduced script,
as I do not want to see
the notice of deportation.
And I do not want to see
an end to the irony of exile,
as I do not want to see
a bloody finish to pride.
And I do not want to see
the hands of exile emptying out,
as I do not want to see
any trend in the final cries.⁸

(Raudiškoji [In Mourning], Chapel B.

(Mackus, 2001:149–151)

Critics and comments

Two dimensions – exile and the vision of Lithuania, like the global transformation, thirsty for the intersection of the space of bipolar archetypes, re-define every existential meaning measured by the blood of the heart of the Lithuanian and American poet. A fundamental change in Lithuanianness is emerging where American catastrophe modernism is equivalent to an existential cry. Mackus' poetry can be compared to the poem of Paul Celan's *Death Fugue*. *Chapel B* was evaluated with the important insights of literary critics of Lithuanian Americans to look at it in the sense of global contexts. Zina Katiliškienė-Liūnė Sutema (American Lithuanian poet) writes about Chapel B: 'Never before in our poetry has death been so naked, so robbed. <...> "Black morning milk", which Paul Celan recognised by carefully tasting it, and which Algimantas Mackus tasted and drank until the last sip' (Metmenys, 1965, see in Mackus, 2001, p. 166). The essential message that the poet conveyed to the struggling generations of Lithuanians in the world was formulated by the famous expatriate literary critic Vytautas Kavolis:

"Today, we are all part of the tortured landscape he left to us. <...> It was necessary to spread the "madness of exile". The very basic <...> truth is the duty of human solidarity to those whom only we can remember. <...> The life no longer present cries out for an echo in us. Forgetfulness cannot betray the unfinished significance of past lives, which transcends the limitations of life. It is all that we have that belongs to us, even more than we ourselves belong to ourselves.

The second vision left to us by Algimantas Mackus: the dedication of the human dimension obliges like the most eloquent hymn to the partisans and poets who fought for the fate of their nation, which still exists in our memory.

<...>

Algimantas Mackus' third vision to reach us: innocent martyrs oblige <...> patriotism is a universal value. By not giving up anything Lithuanian, he did not betray anything human. <...> ... this solidarity cannot be betrayed <...>, it is our duty to live not only for ourselves but also for those whose existence, which moves us, remained incomplete in the plane of human-crushing history, still calling for completion.' (Vytautas Kavolis. Word at the covered coffin, 01.01–02, 1965, see in Mackus, 2001, p. 163–165).

We are witnesses of this incompleteness of history even today, 60 years after Mackus' death, a poet whose words can be understood in Ukraine

and the whole of Europe, everywhere we call anew for this human solidarity, for the *completion of this crushing history*.

Thus, the special code words with which modern American Lithuanian catastrophism enters the literature are cry, exile, madness, map, continent, shore, ships, and the otherworldly Lithuanian landscape of white snowdrifts, silver moon, God's steps, boats' footprints, and birch green leaves.

BUT THE HISTORY IS NOT OVER YET,

Dabar tu esi kaip laivas, Užplaukęs ant sekumos: Nuskuba upė pro šalį, nekeitus Neklaidingumo vagos.	Now you are like a boat run aground in the shallows the stream hurries past without changing its inevitable course.
Dabar tu esi išvengęs Egzilės beprotiškumo: Įteiki dokumentus Monarchinei santvarkai.	Now to avoid mindlessness of exile you present your credentials to a sovereign crown. ⁹ (<i>Raudiškoji</i> . [In Mourning]. Chapel B. #4) (Mackus, 2001, p. 153)

With this graphic, Mackus carves a monument not only to the exile but also to the fate of Lithuania, not the end of history, the dimension of human solidarity, global and national, crowning its archetypes with royal, sacred and existentially unornamented language. The depths of Lithuanianess lie in the roughness and abundance of the words of the national texture (homespun tweed, laments, green, Žilvinas' bloody foam, silver moonlight). Meanwhile, the global transformation pours on the landscape of pain, the coat of arms of history, the continent, rivers and ships, furrowed by the emptiness of erased lines from the map and the script of the disappearance of states. Such uniqueness of poetry sounds like a politically twisted cry both in the context of the 20th century and the 21st century and invades the existential reality of states with its prophetic revelations. By now, in a homeland, the becoming converts one's identity into ashes; when continents emerge, when states are erased from the map, this modern post-war apocalyptic landscape becomes the soil of Lithuanian poetry, where death is sown, and the wounds of pain flourish. A poet, the demiurge of American-Lithuanian destiny, was wading in such a battlefield left to smoulder. His changed dimensions scale is expressed in the strike of the word when speaking about the global authenticity of experiencing historical injustice.

Existence of Modernism in Exile. Antanas Škėma (1910–1964) and his Lithuanian drama in America. The Lithuanian transformation of literary archetypes into the American vault of globalism, which caused an integral of the existential-political transformations of depth and leap, opens up in Škėma's stream of Western modern literary allusions. This rush moves with the speed of Icarus toward Franz Kafka's and Albert Camus' marginal sense of the world's emptiness, alienation, guilt, and the suffocating closeness of death. In contrast, the dark sides of human nature are revealed in line with the direction of Sigmund Freud's philosophy (according to Loreta Mačianskaitė, Institute of Lithuanian Literature and Folklore, February 2018, Introduction, in Antanas Škėma. *White Shroud*. Translation by Karla Gruodis. Glasgow: Vagabond Voices, 2018, p. VII–VIII). So, the Lithuanian global modernism was born. Antanas Škėma's extreme experiences are related to the gruesome images of the *bloodlands* – red occupations and the subconscious depth of European literature, connecting the 20th-century palette of human experiences – existential and military, and geopolitical black soil lands. It led to the individualistic detachment of the playwright, the outsider's challenge of literature, which in the retrospective view of the present is discovered as the Lithuanian identity of the modernist classics. Existence in between realities. Precisely, it is his most outstanding work – the novel *Balta drobė / White Shroud* is the most memorable work in the sense of Lithuanian literature both in teaching programmes and in international forums (for example, *Das weise Leintuch*, 2017, which triumphed at the Leipzig Book Fair).

The hero of *White Shroud*, émigré, war refugee Antanas Garšva, as if imbued with the introspection of the author's own experiences, lives in some fictitious world being stuck between realities: working as an elevator operator of a New York skyscraper, meeting and accompanying groups of various social strata, though in his diary on existence in Lithuania becoming a watchman of own self in continuously restored level of coincidences, and in an existential dead-end in his love to a married friend Elena where the acuteness of observing the world is incredibly painfully confused. For an immigrant to America who travels between several realities, it is also an extremely elastic dream of integrity with an indefinable identity dominant, a borderline de-

pression, a hybrid feeling of being permeated by evil and Kafkaesque guilt. It is a constant error script that pulses through the universe. Here is how entering the world stage happens:

‘BMT Broadway Line. The express arrives. Antanas Garšva steps onto the platform. Six minutes to four in the afternoon. He strides along the half-empty platform. <...> It is August in New York, but his fingers and toes are cold. He climbs the stairs.

<...> I need to warm up my fingers and toes. It isn't good to get chilled before work. There are some pills in my pocket. Good. Most geniuses were ill. “Be glad you're neurotic.” A book by Louis E. Bisch, MD, PhD. Two doctors in one. Because double Louis E. Bish contends that Alexander the Great, Caesar, Napoleon, Michelangelo, Pascal, Pope, Poe, O. Henry, Walt Whitman, Moliere and Stevenson were all neurasthenics. A convincing list, ending with Dr. L.E. Bish and Antanas Garšva. Ant Antanas Garšva turns to the right. More stairs. There are too many stairs; they're repetitive. The fall of surrealism? So be it. I'll erect Saint Anne's Church in Washington Square (Napoleon, who wanted to transplant it to Paris, can rage), and pretty nuns will file in yellow candles in their virginal hands. In 1941, in Vilnius, Elena saw a group of nuns being deported by the Bolsheviks. They were taken away in a dilapidated truck along a poorly paved street, so the little truck shook, and the nuns kept falling down; they weren't athletic. Guards stood in the corners, pushing away the tumbling nuns with rifle butts. They split open one nun's forehead, and the nun didn't wipe away the blood; maybe she didn't have a handkerchief. (Škëma, translated by Karla Gruodis, 2014:5, 6).

The constant feeling of guilt because, after being a partisan, he did not stay in Lithuania to defend his homeland leads the writer to a typical question of modernism in the Western world about the *emptiness* or *transitivity* of space, about the metaphor of occasional moving from one level to another, about a meaningless cycle of movements, changing one meaning to another, a carousel of centres (further quote Škëma, 2014, p. 79–80).

Škëma's archetypal images and New York contexts, mixed with memories of the experiences of occupied Lithuania, lead the curve of literature to the transitional permanency of reality, the tearing of the world into quilts – the fragmentation of the depths, as if in a dream stepping through the red lines into a new parabola – the constant transformation of creation into betrayal, guilt, and the resurrection of memories at the same time. Škëma's own experience (refusal to remain a partisan in Lithuania) pushed him into a lifelong dialogue

with his “betrayal of the motherland”, error and Kafkaesque fateful universalisation of inevitability. It had the Lithuanian effect of sustainability, which spilt out in the context of another Selfhood – his essential love for Elena, in the field of capturing, gathering and centring its fragments – new American depths in the search line.

‘The elevator goes up, the elevator goes down. Not all of his memories return. A partial amnesia remains. The polyphonies and the nightingale have travelled to the depths of his unconscious. The spring has now melted. No more footprints in the steaming earth. But a new craving to retrieve the damp fragrance of the acacias, the nightingale, the ancient signs. I am like a scientist who has lost his formulae. And I don't want to write a popular pamphlet. I must start again. Wait for a winter consciousness, for snow.

I want to go back to that evening in Aukštoji Paneunė, to the veranda. I need geometric mercy. Mysticism. Judgment.’ (Škëma, 2018, p. 97)

This surrealism of reality merges in the transit of pasts, a continuous map of action, gesture and memory, where things change places and new fields of meaning emerge. The becoming and importance of the detail turn the wheel of Škëma's creativity in a new direction from the *bloodlands* to the continental elevator. But there will be no more home, say the Lithuanians of the fostered generation. So, a new transitional Lithuania outside of Lithuania and a rethink of the world is born.

The soul of the cosmos – Lithuania in music. **A new dimension.** In the sense of music, there are other fundamental transformational changes, such as liberation from all identity problems and opening even to the idea of the cosmos, not only of the global world. Composer Vytautas Bacevičius (1905–1970), who left Lithuania before the war began and where he created according to his modern sense of the musical universe, already living in America, New York, remained here as a typical European intellectual, giving music lessons. Almost mystically immersed in his creative visions, he implemented his idea of space music, the unfolding of the cosmic soul in music. By the way, he wrote thousands of letters to his relatives in Poland and Lithuania, already occupied by the Soviets; he wrote in Polish, he was from a mixed Lithuanian-Polish family, and his sister was a famous 20th-century Polish composer, Grażyna Bacewicz. Even in Soviet Lithuania, the news about his work raised incredible feelings and faith in the

victory of the cosmic idea over evil – occupation, iron walls, censorship of personalities, destruction of creative thought and freedom. Bacevičius' idea of cosmic music was the best *American style, an easy path to truth and freedom*, which any human power cannot deny, and any violence here is powerless. His works that reached Lithuania, even discovered unprinted manuscripts, letters and texts, were a sign of the liberation of creative thought and a code for overcoming “stagnant time”, how the era of Soviet occupation was called later. Bacevičius' work is mainly symphonic, majestic in sound and absolutely liberated from the boundaries, be it of classical tradition or modernist rationality of the dodecaphony system, as if created to destroy walls and myths, trespass boundaries, and experience a transcendental other space. It is about the power of the human spirit, the wings of flight that lift to the stars, and the mystique of poetic freedom. Some of Mykalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis' (1875–1911) ideas seem to be repeated in Bacevičius' work – the Lithuanian *non-finito* code, the courage of the action of the impossibility of connection between abysses, the idea of universality in art. His works, already created in America, continue the perspective line of those created in pre-war Lithuania. They are *Vision*, op. 62, 1958, *Poeme de la mer* [Poem of the Sea], 1934, op. 26), *Septeme mot* [The Seventh Word], op. 73, 1966), *Elysium*, p. 70, 1964, *Graphique*, op. 68, 1964, *Sixtème mot* [The Sixth Word] Op. 72, 1963, *Cosmic Rayons*, Op. 71, 1963, *Symphonie cosmique*, no. 6, Op. 66, 1960, *Poeme cosmique*, op. 65, 1959, (Janycka Słysz, 2005:406). The idea of liberation in music took the form of a cosmic soul, as an inspiration released into the universe, and was grasped as the integration of the Free World and Lithuania into a reality beyond the time's control. It becomes possible in the pursuit of the absolute in creation. This idea of cosmic *liberation in the world* has disseminated itself as a unique genome gene of Lithuanian emigration.

Philosophy of freedom. The interdisciplinary paradigm of Lithuanian identity leads to the empathy of minor nations, opening up to the peoples of the world through phenomenology. Here, we can mention Alphonso Lingis (*1933) and Algis Mickūnas (*1933), American philosophers of Lithuanian origin who write in English. ‘Philosophy is not historical,’ says the latter. Mickūnas aims to liberate philosophy, the text, like any other narrative of humanity's existence, from confusing historical

concreteness, from parts of materiality, from systematic structuralism of science and present an authentic sense of the free flight of thought, the logical basis of the phenomenon's existence. **The subject is imprecise**; his choice is free, becoming happens into “whatever it wants”. Mickūnas' ideas find their special significance in present-day Lithuania, freeing oneself mentally from the Soviet legacy in thinking and opening up to the freedom of the world, which is in the nature of the phenomenon... Mickūnas says:

‘We don't see the world, we construct it. We construct ourselves. It is called metaphysics of the will. Modern transcendence is taking place; reality is inaccessible; it is our reflexive discovery. The subject does not discover the construct but creates it. We calculate the whole world according to mathematical laws... math is a subjective construct that we apply. It is a *doing*; we construct things; it is the material world, and we construct mathematical formulas by which we “have to rule the world”. We construct ourselves, and we think that we will create a discourse, but it is a pity that we did not find that discourse... Modernity requires one discourse, but it does not exist...

We don't satisfy any of our desires with this kind of our creation; we just create more of it...’ (Mickūnas 2023a).

The philosopher turns our thinking in the direction of criticism of the Western world. Frees attention to “non-self”. Mickūnas speaks on the most relevant topics of the present, such as ‘About the time after the truth’, ‘After democracy..., after everything...’ (March 15, 2023, the XTV programme *Towards the truth, The Logic of the Interaction of Imperial Forces* (Mickūnas, 2023b).

Mickūnas liberates his audience from the *Werkprinzip*; this need is especially evident in Lithuania, from hybrid games that obscure the essence of “truth” to heroic political passions and conflicts in the scenes of Mickūnas' words, like descending “from the sky”, from the very Lithuanian soul, natural-cosmic intricacies, enveloping us in a kind of mysticism and its intonation magic, which in the post-traumatic land brings back the harmony of the world, at least the sense of its freedom as music. Such gesture is also tightly connected with the very idea of emigration, America as a dimension, the ease of liberation, being “without war” and the fate of quilt, a sense of the world as a whole, a kind of Eucharist, never expected by the poets of the post-war tragedy, who found themselves in Amer-

ica, but reborn with some virtuosity, and hard to believe in the integral union of Lithuania and the United States.

Philosophy is not historical; there is a modern transcendence of times, Mickūnas says in the lecture “Tool-based (Instrumental) Consciousness and Monologic Confrontations” (Mickūnas, 2023a).

It is crucial because Mickūnas’ speech names the present, which covers more than the conflicts and political transformations of the Western world but also the overall problems of the world, covering both the global South and the Orient... There is a lot of truth because there is no single content; there is no dialogue... It is a post-factual world after the truth... Mickūnas infuses this American worldview into Lithuanian post-traumatic self-reflection, into the identity line of statehood, Lithuania in the context of the world, and into the constant flow of thought and ideas.

It is important that Algis Mickūnas has many followers in Lithuania. He is probably the only influential contemporary philosopher in terms of living philosophy. Such practice was absent in Lithuania except during the first year of Independence. This return comes from America.

Another pilgrim of the global depths, unknown in the Western world centres of forgotten nations, is the philosopher, professor, translator, writer, and photographer Alphonso Lingis (*1933). His ideas are loosely connected to the experience of phenomenology, the human relationship as the joy of giving, and the natural sciences and social anthropology. Nature and life are the light of the discovery of Lingis’ philosophy. Lingis elaborates at the lecture at Vilnius University on February 25, 2010:

‘In the history of philosophy, life was perceived negatively; it was judged that a living being is a material system that constantly lacks energy. And it is this lack that makes living things move. However, it seems to me the opposite: a living organism is an energy producer. It produces more energy than it needs to survive. <...> I walk in my garden almost every day, and I see things that simply amaze me <...> If you want to understand what maternal instinct or maternal love is, you can see it in its pure form in the behaviour of birds or other species.’ (Lingis, 2000).

The philosopher keeps many white doves in his garden house. He notes the mystery of the senses between free nature and humans.

Here are his thoughts about the religious tradition:

‘I think the experience and meaning of what is called “blasphemy” is powerful even among non-believers. However, this concept itself may disappear from modern religious discourse. <...> We feel that there are things beyond the profane world. Calculation and consumption of things that are not intended solely for benefit.’ (Lingis, February 25, 2010. Famous philosopher of Lithuanian origin Alphonso Lingis. *The Tradition of Philosophy is a Great Asset*. Vilnius University Faculty of Philosophy, February 25, 2010, <https://naujienos.vu.lt>).

The paradigm of Lithuanian philosophy in America, judging by the insights of Lingis and Mickūnas, opens itself up in the sense of self-creation of the world, denies the theories of tradition, the conventions of boundaries and forms, as if it paves the way for Lithuania to the global space, to the reconstruction of history, to the absolute, anti-systemic power of freedom and the sustainability of life. It is a fundamental change in the survival paradigms of Lithuania’s state, giving it the power of deep dimensions, the centrism of light and timelessness. It negates imperial darkness and barbarism, their dissolution in the waters of the absolute, and belief in the cosmic soul of music as in the transcendentalism of Vytautas Bacevičius’ work. This time, it is not the scale of the infinity of soundscapes and non-literary sequences but the charging of the thought itself – the philosophical idea and the global context in the direction of the present. The very concept of national modernism is already becoming unnecessary because it leads to a global collision of concepts with the historical space. Although the philosophy of both Mickūnas and Lingis has an undeniable code of Lithuanianness – the attraction of the depth of nature and the discovery of the meanings of life, a specific metaphysical connection between the pulsation of the future and the past, which creates trust in the universe and the continuity of unbroken time. It is trusting in what may not be there, who “fills the void” without nurturing the illusions of modernism.

The Lithuanianness of minimalism. Jonas Mekas (1922–2019). The existential paradigm of homelessness in the self-consciousness of Lithuanian Americans’ war refugees gradually transformed into a new worldview – *I had nowhere to go*. (Mekas, 2017). It is some system of meanings, which was embodied by the poet and film director Jonas Mekas (1922–2019) in a unique existential step in the literary and visual plane. Here, the transfor-

mation of the world has become some measure of crumbling time, an upside-down image, and an innovative reading of reality based on a modern game of absolutism. Jonas Mekas, also a war refugee who experienced the dimensions of American freedom and democracy and also an unbroken, strong living connection with the land of Lithuania, became a global phenomenon in the sense of the new poetic cinema. His literary poetry texts allow us to feel the true nature of this transformation into minimalism, the Baltic phenomenon in music, in the sense of the disintegration of the structure of the world of mirrors. This way, the words in Mekas' texts are crumbled into dots and letters. Such is the visual nature of the text and the philosophical pursuit of the certainty of reality, surrounded by waves of feeling. He writes:

be žo	Be žodžių	Without words
džių	Be žodžių	Without words
žodžiai	Mes ėjome	We went
jau	Ėjome	Went
pasi	<...>	<...>
baigė	Be žo	Without wo
tik	Džių	Rds
rai	Žodžiai	Words
dės	Jau pasi	Have now
l	Baigė	Ended
i	Tik	Only
k	Rai	Let
o	Dės	Ters
	L	L
	I	E
	K	F
	O	T
	Galų	At
	Gale	Last
	Viskas tik	Everything only
	Raidės	Letters
	Ant	On
	Balto	The white
	Popierio,	Paper,
	Kaip	Like
	Sapne	In a dream

(*Žodžiai ir raidės [Words and Letters]*.
Mekas, 2007, p. 26–27)

Mekas' intonational disintegration purposefully affected the imagination of Lithuanian composers, its Baltic line, and its discovery of minimalism in the 1980s. The fall of words unfolded a map of associations, and this is one of the most striking examples of the profound influence of Lithuanian Americans entering Lithuania through the bridge of timeliness of global literary texts. The most famous modern creators of Lithuanian music, like Bronius Kutavičius (1932–2021), created song cycles with the words of Jonas Mekas, which greatly

affected the psychological self-awareness of Lithuanian art in the sense of space and freedom of expression. More precisely, it brought Lithuania closer to the Free World and the deep restoration of Selfhood.

Fragmentation of Mekas' words is also a game with time when all boundaries are blurred.

Dabar	Now
Tik	Only
Da	N
Bar	Ow
Jau ne	Not anymore
Ta	Th
Da	En
Tą	At that
Kart	Time
Kaip nie	As ne
Kad	Ver
Ir	And
Nie	Not
Kados	Ever
Tik	Only
Da	N
Bar	Ow
<...>	<...>
Tik.	Only
Ko	Wh
Dėl?	Y?

(Mekas, 2007, p. 22, 23)

This alternative way of seeing meaning has flourished especially vividly in his film art, where the constant transformation visualises reality and strange falling-down pulsation.

Invasion of the avant-garde king. Another specific American-Lithuanian phenomenon related to Mekas is the general game of art with the world called *Fluxus*, born by avant-garde creator George Maciunas (1931–1978), Mekas' close friend, also coming from the generation of war refugees. It is a provocative avant-garde movement capable of undermining "absolute in eternal" totalitarian systems like no other. His family was forced to flee from the Red Army, first to Germany and then to America, where they successfully settled in New York. Here, George, who graduated from design and architecture studies, started communicating with Jonas Mekas and created designs for the new *Movie Journal*. He was also greatly influenced by the music of the American avant-garde composer John Cage, his experimental works of "silence", inversions of musical codes and meanings, participation in which led him to start the *Fluxus* movement, together with the Japanese Yoko Ono and her husband, the Beat-

les member John Lenon. Here, the political aspect prevails, the author of which is George Maciunas himself (Mačiūnas, 1963). The pompous theatre of the political absurdity of imperialist states, such as Soviet Russia at the time, suits this image. George Maciunas is unique in that he was able to concentrate people on his idea – the crowning of the significance of the “greatness” of political systems; among his followers around the world were Lithuania’s future leader, in the person of Vytautas Landsbergis (*1932), his friend from his school days in Kaunas. The traditional thinking in its destruction had its own visions, as if an absurd act, for example, breaking an old piano on stage, when it was unknowingly transferred to totalitarian and occupied countries, became the destroyer of their ideological absurd as a theatrical script. It partly explains the collapse of the Soviet Union, which began in Vilnius when Vytautas Landsbergis, one of George Maciunas’ friends and a fluxist, became the chairman of the Restorative Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania. It happened after voting for Lithuania’s withdrawal from the Soviet Union on March 11, 1990, a day before the start of the general assembly of the Supreme Council of the Soviet Union on March 12. The assembly happened without the delegation of already independent Lithuania, which had withdrawn from participation. So, we can safely say that the culmination of George Maciunas *Fluxus* was the collapse of the Soviet Union. Thus, the artist realised his idea in reality – he “accidentally” restored a lost state. Of course, many other historical-political contexts led to the break. However, the intervention of *Fluxus* in the global theatre of the absurd cannot be ruled out either. Maciunas is now called a visionary who brought the Free World, i.e. America, to Lithuania and inspired the state reconstruction project here on an imaginary scale. He was a master joker of irrelevance who began with letters to dictators on how to achieve a real victory for communism and implement an uncompromising revolution, first, of course, in culture. The supporters of the *Fluxus* movement began to turn the idols of totalitarianism into perpetuation of the absurd. The process turned out to be extremely smooth; it was purposefully matured. It became another impossible mission perfectly realised by the friends Jonas Mekas and George Maciunas – the *American invasion* into Lithuania.

Conclusions

The creative development of the American Lithuanian diaspora was of fundamental importance in restoring Lithuania’s statehood.

First, the paradigm of the loss of the state was named, a historical transformation that turned into a tragedy for the *homeless generation* (Mackus), a painful move to the *Free World in a state of transit*, as if working as an elevator operator (Škėma), with *nowhere to go* (Mekas).

Second. Empathy, the global openness to the nations of the world related to the paradigm of pilgrimage and the survival of philosophy in true humanism in reality for other nations was awakened, together with revived worldwide attention and a paradigm of freedom and trust in human rights values (Lingis) that had to be finally destroyed by the Bolshevik’s imperialism and terror state.

Third. There is a strong attraction to transcendentalism related to Lithuanian archetypes – nature, animal life, freedom of phenomena, emotional longing and sacredness, which sometimes acquires the depth and vision of cosmic consciousness and the spirit of cosmic music (Bacevičius, Mickūnas, Lingis);

Fourth, the special importance of the phenomenal minority, intonation details, the permissivity of word-letter combination, penetrating the artist’s creative consciousness like a Baltic genome, acquiring a vision of Baltic minimalism, first of all in music, which is also related in its own way to the Northern Line – architecture, mythology, and geopolitics (Mekas).

Fifth. An all-changing gesture emerges unexpectedly in the form of a paradox, a joke, or a trick called Fluxus.

The successful *Fluxus* movement (George Maciunas) lost its politically correct aspect and expanded into a political dimension because of the significant influence of the tricky easiness of Lithuanian Americans. Then, the actual political return of the “army of freedom” of Lithuanian Americans to Lithuania began and resulted in the person of Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus (*1926) (presidencies in 1998–2003 and 2004–2009). It began with texts – letters, witty ideas, quiet insights, then harsh provocations about the absurdity of the world order, talking about trickeries and finally explaining what the spectre of barbarically dictatorial Russia’s phantom that

had frightened everyone was. And in some way of *mission impossible*, maybe with its paradox, it was then defeated. It is, without a doubt, one of the merits of global Lithuania, which has spread in America, when the dimensions of freedom, modernity and ancient Lithuanian archetypes of the vital depth of nature are combined.

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