

## ABSTRACT

### From “rooted out” to “rootless”: Images of Emigration in Lithuanian Drama

Since the early 1990s, when the Iron Curtain was lifted after over fifty years of Soviet occupation, approximately 800 000 citizens of Lithuania have emigrated, leaving a population of less than three million. This article addresses the phenomenon of emigration from Lithuania and analyzes how the issue of emigration and the experiences of the emigrants are reflected in Lithuanian drama. In the first part of the article, two plays – *Without Conscience* (*Be sumnenės arba kaip ant svieto einasi*) by Antanas Turskis and *America in the Bathhouse* (*Amerika pirtyje*) by Keturakis – will be analysed focusing on how the late nineteenth century plays shaped a critical attitude towards emigration, deconstructed the myth of the foreign *land of gold* and proposed a romantic image of the motherland as one’s native soil where one needs to return. The second part of the article analyses the plays *Goodbye, My Love* (*Antoškos Kartoškos*) by Marius Macevičius and *Expulsion* (*Išvarymas*) by Marius Ivaškevičius and points out how reflection on the contemporary experience of emigration helps to explore deeper problems of post-Soviet society and the individual such as a sense of placelessness and fragmented identity. A comparative analysis of these texts makes it possible to analyse the dynamics of the different conceptions of emigration, emigrant’s identity and self-perception as well as their artistic representations.

Keywords: Lithuanian drama, migration, emigration, post-Soviet identity, fragmented identity, images of emigration.

## BIOGRAPHY

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# From “rooted out” to “rootless”

## Images of Emigration in Lithuanian Drama

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Since the early 1990s when the Iron Curtain was lifted after over fifty years of Soviet occupation, approximately 800,000 citizens of Lithuania have emigrated, leaving a population of less than three million.<sup>1</sup> The high level of mass emigration from Lithuania has not only turned into a dominant issue in the public sphere and political discourse but has also gradually entered the artistic field. A growing number of contemporary Lithuanian artists have addressed the issue of (e)migration, using artistic forms to raise questions about the causes and outcomes of this social problem, exploring the effects of (e)migration on ordinary life in Lithuania and representing the complex experiences of contemporary emigrants. The purpose of this article is to discuss the phenomenon of emigration from Lithuania and to analyze how the issue of emigration and the experiences of the emigrants are reflected in Lithuanian drama.

In fact, since the late nineteenth century, that is since “the age of transatlantic mass migration”<sup>2</sup>, Lithuania has provided the world with the highest numbers of emigrants from Eastern Europe (in proportion to its population).<sup>3</sup> This indicates that, as emigration researchers suggest, contemporary Lithuanian emigration should not be treated as some “uniquely post-Soviet behavior”<sup>4</sup> or exclusively contemporary phenomenon. The scientific literary resources on the issue of emigration generally recognize three major waves of Lithuanian emigration.<sup>5</sup> The first wave of emigration from Lithuania (which was by then a part of the Czarist Russian Empire) from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth

century amounted to 600,000 to 700,000 people. Although the first wave of emigrants included some representatives of the intelligentsia and some priests or fugitives of the Czarist army, the majority were underprivileged and poorly educated peasants and workers, the so-called *Grynoriai* (Greenhorns or new, inexperienced).<sup>6</sup> The second wave of emigration sprang up as forced emigration after World War II when the Republic of Lithuania was re-occupied by the Soviet Union, with people trying to escape the very real threat of Soviet persecutions (the representatives of intelligentsia, politicians, artists, scientists), leaving the country on a massive scale. There were more than 60,000 such *Dipukai* (Displaced persons, or emigrants located in the Displaced Persons Camps of WW II and after in the Western part of Germany), who, for some time, still cherished the belief that their emigration was temporary and that they would soon be going back.<sup>7</sup> The third (contemporary) wave of emigration started in the final years of *perestroika*, and increased after the reestablishment of independence in Lithuania in 1990, and further expanded after Lithuania’s entry into the European Union in 2004 and joining the Schengen Area in 2007. Due to the fact that these people emigrated from the former Soviet country, earlier emigrants (*Grynoriai* and *Dipukai*) recognized them as *Tarybukai* (Little Soviets or being marked by the Soviet Regime).<sup>8</sup> Although there have been three major waves of Lithuanian emigration since the late nineteenth century to this day, this article focuses on the first and the third waves only as both of them are considered voluntary and economically based.

The second wave of emigration that took place right after World War II was forced due to the political situation and its reflection on stage is deliberately left out of the reach of this essay.

Although, according to Paul White, who has researched the links between literature and migration, “the theme of migration *per se* is extremely common in writing produced over the last century”, reflections on this social problem on the twentieth-century Lithuanian theatre stage are scarce. It is not that the issue of emigration was totally avoided by Lithuanian theatre artists and playwrights. The authors of the first plays on the issue of emigration (e.g. Antanas Turskis and Keturakis<sup>10</sup>) reflected the importance of mass economic emigration by Lithuanians in the late nineteenth century. Subsequently, in the second half of the twentieth century the painful experiences of forced political emigration were convincingly depicted by such playwrights of Lithuanian exile as Antanas Škëma and Kostas Ostrauskas. At the same time, the playwrights of Soviet Lithuania (e.g. Albertas Laurinčiukas), who wrote under the influence of Soviet ideology, formed a negative and ideological attitude towards emigration and emigrants. In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as a result of the most numerous wave of emigration ever, the issue entered Lithuanian dramaturgy once again. Although the artistic representations of emigration have been quite well reflected by literary critics, the similar issue in drama has remained almost unexplored. This article focuses on the drama texts of the late nineteenth – early twentieth centuries and late twentieth – early twenty-first centuries, and raises the question how the subjects, narratives and images of emigration have changed from the very first reflection on this social issue in early Lithuanian plays to the most recent reflections of emigration in contemporary Lithuanian drama.

In the first part of the article two plays – *Without Conscience* (*Be sumnenės arba kaip ant svieto einasi*) by Antanas Turskis and *America in the Bathhouse* (*Amerika pirtyje*) by Keturakis – are analysed focusing on how the late nineteenth century plays shaped a critical attitude towards emigration, deconstructed the myth of the foreign *land of gold* and proposed a romantic image of the motherland as one’s native

soil where one needs to return. The second part of the article analyses the plays *Goodbye, My Love* (*Antoškos Kartoškos*) by Marius Macevičius and *Expulsion* (*Išvarymas*) by Marius Ivaškevičius and points out how the reflection on the contemporary experience of emigration helps to explore deeper problems of post-Soviet society and the individual, such as a sense of placelessness and fragmented identity. A comparative analysis of those texts makes it possible to analyse the dynamics of the different conceptions of emigration, the emigrant’s identity and self-perception as well as their artistic representations.

#### EXPERIENCES OF *GRYNORIAI* (GREENHORNS) IN THE FIRST LITHUANIAN PLAYS

The first appearance of plays touching on the topic of emigration is noticeable in the late nineteenth century together with the first wave of *Grynoriai* (Greenhorns), whose main aim was to earn money abroad (mostly in the USA) and return home or support their own families’ journey to the foreign country. Most of the emigrants of this period stayed in the USA, where they would cling together, form Lithuanian parishes, friendly societies, found various organizations, publish newspapers and try to preserve the Lithuanian language and ethnic traditions.

As a matter of fact, two stagings of the plays on emigration written at the time are included now as being among the most significant events in Lithuanian theatre history. The play by Antanas Turskis, *Without Conscience* (*Be sumnenės arba kaip ant svieto einasi*), performed by the Lithuanian theatre society in Plymouth, USA in 1889, is considered to be the first theater production performed in Lithuanian and marks the beginning of the theatre of American Lithuanians. Moreover, the production of Keturakis’ comedy *America in the Bathhouse* (*Amerika pirtyje*), performed in the town of Palanga in 1899 while the prohibition of Lithuanian print was still in force, was not only the first public Lithuanian language performance on Lithuanian territory but also an important event for the whole movement of national revival.

Both Antanas Turskis and Keturakis analyze the issue that was very relevant at that time, namely em-

igration to the USA. Their texts not only reflected the climate and the sentiments of the general public looking for possibilities to emigrate (such as misfortune, disappointment in the current situation in their homeland and great expectations about life in the USA), but they also tried to subvert the myth of America as a *golden land*. It is important to note that at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century there was a huge anti-emigration campaign, carried out by the leaders of the national rebirth of Lithuania (such as Jonas Basanavičius, Vincas Kudirka or Juozas Tumas-Vaižgantas), members of the first Lithuanian political parties, intellectuals and other distinguished people of the time. As the historian Daiva Dapkutė points out in her article “Overview of the Emigration Processes of Lithuanians”, “the Lithuanian press urged Lithuanians to remain in their homeland and not leave for the United States. Emigrés were urged to return to Lithuania with their savings. [...] Priests were encouraged to talk people out of emigration during their confessions. [...] Lithuanian political groups, especially the Catholic stream, published literature that urged readers not to emigrate and warned them about the weary journeys, the difficulties and potential misfortunes.”<sup>11</sup> In this respect the play *Without Conscience* written by Antanas Turskis, an emigrant himself and an editor of the American Lithuanian newspaper *Vienybė lietuvininkų* (*Lithuanian Unity*), can be considered a very important contribution to the anti-emigration movement.

The play *Without Conscience* tells about “Jokūbas, a loser who has drunk all his possessions in Lithuania and come to America looking for a new life but going down even further there”.<sup>12</sup> However, the three act play, based on the “true life story of one Lithuanian”<sup>13</sup> has a happy ending: “brought back by friends to his native village, Jokūbas stops drinking, gets some money from his son-in-law and redeems his farm”.<sup>14</sup> According to the theatre historian Bronius Vaškėlis, over four hundred spectators of this performance, most of whom were the hard working *Grynoriai* from the coal mines around Plymouth, PA, easily recognized the stage production as a representation of their own difficult life experience.<sup>15</sup> As theatre historian Vytautas Maknys noted, this comedy “with a relevant and perform-

ative story” had no “extra literary or theatrical value”. However, “it was familiar and understandable to the uneducated American Lithuanians and based on contemporary painful emigrant reality”.<sup>16</sup> So, even if the Lithuanian theatre society in Plymouth ceased to exist shortly afterwards and the production was never performed again, and Turskis’ play was staged “only a few more times here and there in America”,<sup>17</sup> this text has left deep traces in the memories of the American Lithuanian diaspora, reminding them of “their own journey to the USA, the things they went through in the foreign land and their unfading hope to return home”.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to the play by Turskis, which was neither published nor performed in Lithuania (probably due to its low literary value), the Keturakis play *America in the Bathhouse*<sup>19</sup> is not only considered to be among the most successful premieres of early Lithuanian drama,<sup>20</sup> but also remains to be one of the most popular comedies of all time. The story of the play is simple, but well-composed. It is centered around a true-to-life development: a smart village tailor Vincas, dreaming of emigration, cheats the ruined and debt-laden farmer Bekampis and his light-headed daughter Agota, and the thrifty farmer Antanas who is looking for a wife. After persuading Antanas to lend Bekampis (his assumed father-in-law) a few thousand rubles, Vincas seduces Agota with the promise of taking her to America. He then talks her into stealing the money her father has just borrowed and orders her to wait in the bathhouse for him to come back with the horses while he takes the money and flees.

Keturakis’ play *America in the Bathhouse* is based on a rather typical occurrence of deception from those times (often described in detail in the Lithuanian newspapers published abroad<sup>21</sup>). It is worth pointing out that at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, emigration was officially prohibited by Czarist Russia. As Lithuania was part of the Czarist Russian Empire at that time, only very few Lithuanians were able to emigrate legally, while illegal emigration was a very widespread occurrence. As historians of emigration note, “the conditions for emigrating secretly were especially favorable: a far-flung network of agents (constituting a profitable business) was well

developed. People were encouraged and then organized to cross the border for carriage to the United States and other countries".<sup>22</sup> It goes without saying that in such a context, many elaborate *America in the Bathhouse*-style deceptions were planned and implemented by shrewd men.

Written in a rich, lively realistic style, Keturakis' comedy became an extremely popular play in those times: by World War I, it had been performed over 100 times, had been published in several new editions and had been translated into Russian and Belorussian. Moreover, it has also become a classical Lithuanian play, often performed in local theatres (and some productions of the play have remained in the repertoire for decades<sup>23</sup>). The historian of Lithuanian emigration Egidijus Aleksandravičius points out that this comedy by Keturakis was not only the best reflection of the world view of Lithuanians of the *fin de siècle* but it also "took a solid place in the canon of Lithuanian literature" and "with its imagery influenced the self-awareness of Lithuanians for generations".<sup>24</sup>

Like Turskis' and Keturakis' plays, other Lithuanian dramatic texts of the late nineteenth century, dealing with the emigration experiences of *Grynoriai*, are charged with didactics, moral guidance and direct criticism of emigration. It was exactly what the Lithuanian theatre practice of the time, inspired by the ideas of national revival, needed most: plays that would be close to ordinary people, relevant and truthful, and that would encourage national consciousness and patriotism. But how are the issues of emigration reflected in the plays of today's writers? What dramatic narratives are inspired by the experiences of the third wave of emigration and the experiences of *Tarybukai* (Little Soviets)?

#### NARRATIVES OF TARYBUKAI (LITTLE SOVIETS) IN CONTEMPORARY DRAMA

Considering that we live in times that sociologists have called "The Age of Migration"<sup>25</sup> and that are so visibly shaped by the march of globalization, Lithuanian emigration seems to be but a natural part of that global migration course. As Aleksandravičius puts it: "along with numerous other nations, both big and small, notable and almost forgotten, histor-

ical and new, Lithuanians are players in the perpetual history of migration of peoples. Everything that concerns the global mobility of nations also concerns us, Lithuanians."<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, we should also consider a point of view that is gaining popularity under the influence of the idea of transnationalism, that migrants of today are really transmigrants, or in other words migrants that do not cut the connection with their homeland but rather make their native country and their present society of residence into one stage of social action.<sup>27</sup> From this perspective, the mass emigration of Lithuanians can be seen as a positive challenge to rethink the meaning of diaspora and to develop the idea of "global Lithuania". According to Dalia Venslovaitė, the director of the social network Global Lithuanian Leaders, which seeks to unite leading Lithuanian professionals (e.g. executives, entrepreneurs, current and future leaders in their professional field and "people with an affinity for Lithuania who are outstanding in their field"<sup>28</sup>): "We see the process of migration as a two-way street. That is not a merely negative matter. We want to highlight also the useful backwards traffic. We do not appreciate the very word emigration, as it does not reflect the real developments on the global scale, called 'brain circulation'. The people, leaving for other countries, are growing in international experience, which is positive. Especially if by using contemporary media communications this experience can be shared among fellow-countrymen all over the world."<sup>29</sup> Such an attitude towards emigration reflects the positive view expressed in the latest research on migration, proposing that, as the political and economic borders between the states are dissolving, the new technologies of transport and communication are increasing and turning the world into a "Global Village". Thus, the "delocalization" of the nation should be taken not as an anxious time of national extinction but rather as a possibility and a new stage in the nation's evolution.<sup>30</sup>

However, when it comes to the trend in emigration in recent years, Lithuanians do not show any of that optimism. Even acknowledging the inevitability of migration as part of globalization, researchers from different areas point out the massive extent of Lithuanian emigration. The very fact that in a period of approximately twenty years about

twenty percent of the Lithuanian population have left the country, led Lithuanian public and political figures to declare emigration to be the “ultimate non-military threat to Lithuania”<sup>31</sup> and the public at large to see emigration as “evacuation”<sup>32</sup>. So, both the politicians and the general public in Lithuania tend to think of the unrelenting wave of emigration not as a free individual choice or an unavoidable result of globalization, but rather as a direct outcome of the wrong political decisions. The historian Daiva Dapkutė notes that “the word ‘emigration’ is constantly used in a negative manner, as in ‘a dying Lithuania’, ‘an extent of emigration that is startling Europe’, ‘an irretrievable loss to Lithuania’, ‘the danger of national extinction’, and other similar phrases that the news media emphasize nearly every day.”<sup>33</sup> Among the people, the belief prevails that emigrants are “foot voting” (meaning, that by leaving the country they express their opinion on Lithuanian politics) and that emigration itself is a “survival strategy”<sup>34</sup>. Public representatives and intellectuals in the meantime insist that emigration is “one of the most painful wounds of the Lithuanian state” and point out that the “extremely high numbers of individuals leaving their home country is a testimony of the moral bankruptcy of the state, pushing it further into an awkward social situation”.<sup>35</sup> Just as the issue of emigration has been prevalent in the public space and political discourse in the past ten years, it has also penetrated into the artistic field and theatre in particular.

The play *Goodbye, My Love* (*Antoškos Kartoškos*)<sup>36</sup> by the novice playwright Marius Macevičius, that had its first reading in the *Panorama of Contemporary Lithuanian Drama* (*Lietuvos dramų panorama*) in 2006, is considered to be the first among contemporary plays to touch upon the issue of new Lithuanian emigration. Created on the basis of autobiographical material, Macevičius’ play was acknowledged by the spectators to be the most wanted and relevant. Consequently it was at once included into the repertoire of Kaunas Drama Theatre. The same year the play was acknowledged to be the best debut in drama at the National Festival of Dramaturgy *Versmė* (*Source*), in 2008 it was staged at the Southwark Playhouse in London (directed by Simon Usher), and in 2009 it was published in

Lithuanian, English and Russian.

The play *Goodbye, My Love* deals with a simple and almost typical story of the times, involving an emigrant Birutė who has just returned for a short time from England. Seduced by her Turkish lover, she is ready to sell her house on the seaside that also belongs to her son Antanas so that her lover can invest the money into some ‘business’, which is an obvious deception. At first sight, the story as well as the style of the play does not really differ from the plays about the experiences of *Grynoriai* at the end of nineteenth century: the same witty form used to convey a familiar situation, pointing out the negative sides of emigration. On a closer look, however, it turns out that the play by Macevičius is not only about emigration. This “documentary theatre”, to use the term of the author himself, also reveals the negative experiences of the characters’ (as well as the theatre publics’) life under Soviet rule.

The prologue presents a short family scene informing the reader about the events before the central story line starts to unfold. It takes place in the Soviet years (“fifteen to twenty years ago”<sup>37</sup>) in the house of Olga (Baba), Birutė’s mother and Antanas’ grandma. On a late evening, Birutė with all her belongings in a suitcase and Antanas who is apparently sick knock on Olga’s door. Although Birutė’s marriage has just broken down, she does not get any motherly help or compassion that one might expect. Olga does not only bitterly scold her daughter in Russian but also refuses to let Birutė and Antanas into her house. Olga: “You have your own home, so stay there! [...] Take your things, your child and march right back there. You have a place to live, so live there. And if you don’t know how to live – then don’t live at all.”<sup>38</sup> Only after Birutė threatens to kill herself and Antanas cries out in terror, does the ‘grandma’ (*baba*) agree to shelter them for one night and immediately starts making calls to get them a place in a dormitory.

Although the further development takes place in our day (“today”) and is not related to the Soviet past, the prologue of the play is centered around the grotesque representations of typical experiences of contemporary emigrants. The prologue of the play straightforwardly suggests that the reasons for the mass emigration of *Tarybukai* are not only related to

the post-Soviet economical situation but also (and even more so) to the Soviet system and its negative effect on human relations. As the director of the play Ramunė Kudzmanaitė has rightly pointed out, “the drama reflects our Soviet experience”, the experience, in other words, that “arguably constitutes one of the reasons why life in Lithuania now seems so unattractive and evokes a wish to run away”.<sup>39</sup> According to the artist, the play also raises issues of emigration which are not directly presented in the text. For example, “why more and more often the aged single parent or the children are left with the relatives while their parents [or children] are working abroad? What is happening to my homeland? Why do an increasing number of people feel that nobody needs them?”<sup>40</sup>

Macevičius’ text suggests that the Soviet past has conditioned irretrievable deformations of both personal relationships among people and the perception of home and Fatherland and that those deformations not only make people emigrate but also restrain the emigrants from coming back home. While Jokūbas and other *Grynoriai* of Turskis’s play eventually return home to their villages and families, Birutė (and other *Tarybukai*) represented by Macevičius have nowhere to return to: as the play reveals their particular track of “emigration”, of life without a native home started in their earlier years with their forced journeys around Soviet communal apartments.

This insight suggested by the play corresponds to the recent research on emigration, that gradually turns from purely economic, social and political explanations to the psychological aspects of emigration and especially those that relate to post-Soviet existence. The researchers of emigration point out that mass emigration might partly be an effect of the traumatic Soviet experience, namely, the feeling of placelessness, of lack of roots and attachment to the national past as well as of the shattered post-Soviet identity. As Daiva Dapkutė puts it, contemporary research on the migration phenomenon armed with postcolonial theory finds the explanations of emigration “in the common traumatic experiences of war, the Soviet period, and postcolonization”. According to them “people do not know how or are unable to love their children so they unwittingly

push them out into the world”.<sup>41</sup>

A similar trend in the reflections on contemporary emigration can be traced in the play of the most interesting (according to theatre and drama critics) playwright in Lithuania today – Marius Ivaškevičius *Expulsion (Išvarymas)*.<sup>42</sup> The play was staged in 2011 in the Lithuanian National Theatre by the famous Lithuanian director Oskaras Koršunovas. Defined by the critics as an “epic of mass emigration”<sup>43</sup> it tells the story of three young emigrants – an ex cop, infiltrated into the gang Benas Ivanovas, a gang “torpedo” Vandalas and a beginner photographer Egle – during the twelve years that they have spent in London. Based on the real stories of emigrants in London that he collected, Ivaškevičius shapes a grotesque “collective portrait of Lithuania in emigration”<sup>44</sup> and shows desperate attempts by the emigrants to find their place in an alien society and culture. The characters of *Expulsion* do not dream of going back to their homeland. In fact, they don’t even speak about it (except for Vandalas, who, being a typical Lithuanian emigrant, practices self-deception and tells stories of how he is building a house in Lithuania). On the deeper, non-narrative level of the play Ivaškevičius refers not so much to emigration, but rather to the attempts of the characters to become “normal people”, to overcome something inside themselves, that Benas calls “Mongol”, “East” or simply “shit”.<sup>45</sup> At this point, Ivaškevičius also reflects the outcome of the Soviet experience and reveals the aggression, rage and self-destructive emotions lurking inside *Tarybukai*. Delineating multiple divides between East and West, between Genghis Khan and Christ, between animal and man, Ivaškevičius reveals the fragmented identity of Lithuanians as post-soviet Eastern Europeans. This is the reason why the play, based on authentic experiences of Lithuanians, becomes important not only in the local context but can appeal to a much wider public. In 2013, the performance toured Poland and was appreciated by Polish critics including Roman Pawłowski who wrote: “I am waiting for the Polish version: eventually all of us Eastern Europeans are in a certain sense emigrants pushed away from the paradise of their old home lands.”<sup>46</sup> At the beginning of 2014 it was also staged at the Riga Dailes Theatre in Latvia.

It is important to note that while apparently disrupting the traditional dramatic form, Marius Ivaškevičius nevertheless paradoxically remains faithful to the clichés of the representation of emigrant experiences that took root in the times of Antanas Turskis and Keturakis. One of the clichés is an inclination that became apparent in the late nineteenth century to represent Lithuanian emigration not as an individual self-determination but rather as a result of deception from “dishonest people”. For example, the first part of Antanas Turskis’ play *Without Conscience* represents, to put it in the words of the priest Antanas Burba, who took part in the staging of the play, “how the Jews are cheating Lithuanians into emigrating to America”.<sup>47</sup> The comedy by Keturakis *America in the Bathhouse* shows how the smart tailor Vincas, pointing to other ostensibly successful emigration stories, persuades the young and naive country girl Agota to emigrate for a better life. In the same manner the emigration stories of the characters in Marius Ivaškevičius’ play *Expulsion* starts with the moment when, after a long journey to London in a small minibus stinking of “sausages and gas”, they eventually find out that the promise by the agents of a job and a place to stay was a fraud. The characters, still “sticky, smelly and wasted on the journey”, spend the first day mowing and cleaning some park in East London until they eventually realize that they are left without “documents, future, money or any clue where we are and what we should do now”.<sup>48</sup> Here Marius Ivaškevičius not only represents the authentic experiences of the first *Tarybukai* with illegal employment and fake agencies, but he also follows the long tradition of Lithuanian dramaturgy to start the emigration narrative from a situation that is *a priori* wrong, based on fraud and bluff.

Another model of representation that is apparent in the play by Ivaškevičius and relates to the traditional representations of emigrant experiences in Lithuanian drama is to present in the play a wide range of characters pictured in sharply grotesque and tragicomic colours. Similar to Keturakis’ comedy *America in the Bathhouse*, the play *Expulsion* presents the reader with a number of characters who, although realistic in nature, are still depicted in a sneering manner, pinpointing their unique features

so that eventually the reader begins to laugh at them and distances him/herself from the characters. The play, in the words of theatre critic Valdas Gedgautas, “exposes a panopticon of motley outsider character-types”, including an ex-cop Benas, who was once a promising undercover officer and was later disclosed; Vandalas, a small-time thug, colorful, flat nosed and full of a joy for destruction; Eglė, a naïve photographer who is willing to try out a whole variety of life styles in London; Edis, a good-hearted but failed physicist; Olga, a black faced gothic anarchist; a sanctimonious and grotesque family of Lithuanian emigrants from the first wave; and a number of other characters hanging around in the metropolis.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, there are also clear distinctions between the earlier plays and *Expulsion* by Ivaškevičius in the way the portraits of the main characters are constructed. If the plays by Turskis and Keturakis presented the audience with stable and unchanging characters, the key characters in Ivaškevičius’ play try out a number of new facets of personal identity as the play unfolds. Thus, *Expulsion* artistically embodies not only the contemporary understanding of dynamic, shifting, process-based identity but also the attitude, popular in contemporary migration theories, that the identity of the migrant, formed under the circumstances of emigration and deterritorialization is particularly multi-layered, “always under (re)construction” and its “content is always changing as it is gradually segmenting into a growing number of divergences”.<sup>50</sup> As sociologists point out, the emigrants of the first generation of *Grynoriai* were deliberately trying to acquire a one-dimensional, steady and stable identity (which is why they tried to preserve and repeat traditional rituals). In the early Lithuanian plays reflecting the topic of *Grynoriai* one can see exactly the same understanding that the identity of the emigrant is unchanging. The person condemned to emigration is represented as “rooted out”, “unable to naturalize” or at best – “painfully naturalizing” in a strange soil. This understanding of identity is where the didactic stories, such as the story of Jokūbas from the play by Antanas Turskis, take their origin. They suggest that only after their return home to the native land can an ex-emigrant successfully construct

his/her life and future. Meanwhile, contemporary drama corresponds to the attitude characteristic to contemporary migration theories, suggesting that the major aim and challenge of every emigrant, living between two cultures is to find and define one's own identity most often using both the elements that were brought along and the ones that were acquired.<sup>51</sup> As theatre scholar Una Chaudhuri argues, "the new drama taking social instability as its basic norm, traces the difficulty of constituting identities on the slippery ground of immigrant experience".<sup>52</sup> In *Expulsion*, the most revealing example is the dynamic shift of the main character Benas: he is forced to make a fresh start a few times as the play unfolds. He changes his name, occupation, and nationality (as he pretends to be Polish, then English), trying every time to construct an identity that will help him to survive under conditions of emigration. In this way the play by Ivaškevičius represents a complex process of (self)identification in emigration and exposes the contemporary understanding of unstable and changing identity.

#### FINAL REMARKS

It is possible to conclude that, responding to an urgent problem in society, contemporary Lithuanian playwrights touch upon the issue of emigration not only to "frighten Lithuanians away from mass emigration"<sup>53</sup> as did their predecessors, the playwrights of the late nineteenth century. The discussed plays also show that the reflection of emigrant sentiments and experiences in contemporary drama calls for the analysis of much deeper problems of Lithuanian post-Soviet reality, such as a sense of placelessness and fragmented identity. In this respect the play *Expulsion* can be considered as a very important contribution.

Claiming that with this play he was aiming not so much at the "documentation" of the stories of emigrants, but rather at an "analysis of what we call identity",<sup>54</sup> Ivaškevičius confirms the conviction of the literary critics that the issue of emigration is inevitably forcing writers to reflect on the questions of identity.<sup>55</sup> Different from the playwrights of the late nineteenth century, who represented the idea of a stable and unchanging personal identity, Ivaškeviči-

us suggests that identity is process-based, constructed and reconstructed in relation to changing social factors. Although the issue of the formation of an emigrant's identity could offer an opportunity to represent the understanding of *hybrid identity* as reflected in postcolonial theory (Homi Bhaba or Stuart Hall), Ivaškevičius' play does not embrace the positive aspect of hybridity. The characters of *Expulsion* feel they are in between two experiences, two cultures. However, they are unable to harmonize their transitional state or to find a proper relationship with it, which would allow them to experience the positive aspects of the liminal existence of the emigrant. In this aspect, Lithuanian drama coincides with the rest of Lithuanian literature. As Dalia Sutkaitytė claims about the authors of Lithuanian literature in general: "in their texts on emigration Lithuanian authors are often relating to identity as something unchanging as they look for the roots and see emigration only as a threat. Speaking of emigration discoveries or its positive effect on identity would probably be considered improper."<sup>56</sup> Still, one has to admit, that even this way of reflecting on the issue of emigration, characteristic of contemporary Lithuanian theatre, is an appropriate way to highlight one of the major problems in contemporary Lithuanian society and to involve the audience in a discussion on contemporary social dynamics.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- 4 Egidijus Aleksandravičius, *Karklo diegas. Lietuvių pasaulio istorija*, Versus Aureus, Vilnius 2013, p. 19.
- 5 Daiva Kuzmickaitė, *Between two Worlds: Recent Lithuanian Immigrants in Chicago*, Versus Aureus, Vilnius 2003.
- 6 Ibid., p. 20.
- 7 Even as the years passed, *Dipukai* saw Lithuania as their true homeland that they were ready to return to immediately in case independence was won back, in order to help their fellow countrymen to “turn back into Lithuanians” after they had spent years under hard Soviet ideological pressure. Ieva Kripienė, *Identitetų konstravimas transnacionalinėje migracijoje: šiuolaikiniai imigrantai iš Lietuvos Jungtinėse Amerikos valstijose*, Daktaro disertacija, VDU, Kaunas 2012, p. 19.
- 8 As the sociologist Ieva Kripienė accurately remarks, “the nickname *Tarybukai* (Little Soviets) is related neither to the aspects of displacement in the recipient country (as *Grynoriai*) nor to the provisional settlement before leaving for one’s destination country (like *Dipukai*) but to the political order of their own home country” which in the eyes of the emigrants of the earlier generations “determined the political and cultural beliefs of the new emigrants”. Recently however, the continual flow of *Tarybukai* is often referred to as the Third-Wavers, New-Wavers and Newcomers as their social characteristics and the ways and aims of emigration grow increasingly complex. See Kripienė, op. cit., p. 20.
- 9 Paul White, “Geography, Literature and Migration” in *Writing Across Worlds. Literature and Migration*, R. King, J. Connel, P. White, eds., Routledge, London and New York 1995, p. 5.
- 10 *Keturakis* is a pseudonym used by two brothers Vilkutaitis, namely Antanas Vilkutaitis (1864-1903) and Juozas Vilkutaitis (1869-1948). Literary researchers still argue which one of them is the real author of the comedy *America in the Bathhouse*.
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- 18 Petrauskaitė, op. cit., p. 153.
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- 21 Vincas Kuzmickas, *Antanas Vilkutaitis-Keturakis*, Mokslo, Vilnius 1981, pp. 174-7.
- 22 Dapkutė, op. cit.
- 23 For example, the production *America in the Bathhouse* directed by Valdas Lencevičius in 1974 is still present in the repertoire of Kaunas National Drama Theatre.
- 24 Aleksandravičius, op. cit., p. 42.
- 25 Castles, de Haas, Miller, op. cit.
- 26 Aleksandravičius, op. cit., p. 18.
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