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IMAGINING LITHUANIANS, REPRODUCING AMERICANS? *Nationalism, Religion, Exile: Algimantas Mackus's Poetry*

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They must stay naked,
their love must burn like a pyre...
Before the great journey
they must try the fire,
so that the immolation
would not be too painful for them.

Algimantas Mackus, "Dedications to Death and Love."¹

Theory at the Crossroads: Religion, Nation and Exile

Exile is one of the major archetypes of modern civilization. However, an exilic identity became especially important in the modern Western culture of the last century. As John Cawelti writes, "Exile is, perhaps, the central story told in European civilization: the human estate as exile from God, the garden of Eden, the homeland, the womb, or even oneself."² Many famous writers of the twentieth century, be they from America, Africa, or Europe, were working and writing in exile. According to Edward Said, the last century is especially painful because it leads to the formation of entire communities of exiles:

Exile is one of the saddest fates. In premodern times banishment was a particularly dreadful punishment since it not only meant years of aimless wandering away from family and familiar places, but also meant being a sort of permanent outcast, someone who never felt at home and was always at odds with the environment, inconsolable about the past, bitter about the present and the future. [...] During the twentieth century, exile has been transformed from exquisite, and sometimes exclusive, punishment of special individuals... into a cruel punishment of whole communities and peoples.³

The identity of exile is created through the articulation of loss. There is always a sense of not belonging to the nation one is exiled to and a longing for home. The identities of exiles combine contradictory feelings of being both marginal and nationalistic, as well as the desire to preserve cultural differences on the one hand, and the (in)ability to assimilate on the other. As Said notes, entire communities are forced to experience the fate of exiles and to try to reproduce their old traditions in a new place. This "punishment" (even in Said's understanding) is closely related to the loss of a combination of the national and the familial and an inability to ensure the continuation of what was considered normal. What is more important, this loss of the nation (or of the motherland) is told using the language of religion. In Western civilization, the nationalistic exile invokes the story of Adam and Eve and their punishment as the main existential archetype that exile is about to imitate. It is important to notice that exile, as God's "punishment," allows one to combine the longing for what is lost and the feeling of guilt into one existential feeling better than other religious stories of exile (such as the exile of the Jewish nation).

Since exile happens because of political circumstances and is expressed through religious metaphors, it also draws attention to the question of nationalism and religion. Although many theorists claim that religion has become secularized and that some of its elements are used for creating national identities, the important role of religion in creating modern identities has not yet been fully recognized. Since modernization was understood partly in terms of secularization, it is believed that some functions played by the church in a premodern world are now performed by other institutions. For example, Louis Althusser, in his article "Ideology and the State," observes that the domination of educational apparatuses

(schools) replaced the domination by church apparatuses in the modern state.⁴ However, the most recent studies reveal that the mechanisms through which religion and nationalism produce particular group identities and accelerate ethnic and religious conflicts (e.g., the former Yugoslavia) remain unexplained. Most theorists working on questions of nationalism claim that nationalistic identities are formed in the state or on behalf of the state. For example, Althusser's understanding that schools replaced churches in forming the relationships of individuals within the power system is based on the presupposed unity of nation and state in maintaining and modernizing state apparatuses. Althusser writes about a modern secular state, but does not take into account the possibility that nationalism and the church (i.e. faith) can (co)exist without a state and have a slightly different function in constituting one's identity. The formal separation of church and state does not ensure the exclusion of the church from the formation of national identities, nor does it explain the phenomenon of religious identities.

If we examine Lithuanian exiles in America up to 1990, the question of nationalism, religion, and identity appears complicated because there is no national state to initiate or control the reproduction of the displaced "nation." Some theorists suggest the family is the means through which nationalism operates. According to them, the mechanisms of reproducing one's nation are embedded in the family. For example, Anne McClintock sees that traditional narratives about the nation contain all the semantics of family, including such terms as, "family of nations," "motherland," "fatherland," or even "naturalization" (inclusion into the family).⁵ She analyzes these narratives as making the family into the "organizing figure for national history and its antithesis."⁶ McClintock likens inclusion in a particular nation to belonging to a family. It follows that, through reproduction in the family, one reproduces one's nation as well. However, even this theory does not explain multiethnic and multiracial states, where a broader national identity embraces different ethnic and religious identifications. Although some theorists talk about postnational and transnational, multicultural states allow different ethnic movements while at the same time assimilating the nonnational through reproduction. In other words, the nation remains intact, as families of exiles assimilate rather than reproduce their marginalized nationalism or ethnicity.

In this process of assimilation, religion plays a crucial role in maintaining the national identities of exiles in many communities by providing them with certain institutions. For example, early on most of Lithuanian cultural life and education in Chicago was institutionalized through religious organizations and the Catholic church. As mentioned before, religion also offers a set of symbols and images to make exile less painful. It inscribes into the human being an exilic identity through the Bible, making the punishment of Adam and Eve into the penalty for every human being and expecting him or her to long for a promised heaven, which is necessarily national for an exile. When it comes to the question of reproduction, it becomes a divine imperative.⁷ However, religion does not necessarily ensure the reproduction of the national, often replacing it by the universal, and that is the point where religion and nationalism come into conflict.⁸

Broadly speaking, religion, as well as nationalism, presupposes a set of actual ties among the members of a nation and tools to manifest and control them. According to Martin Marty, religion "gives people an identity and sense of belonging, and, in most cases, a network to which to belong."⁹ In other words, religion is more similar to nationalism¹⁰ in the function it plays in the society of exiles than is the school. A school itself might be merely one of the instruments through which religion is transmitted. Besides that, Christianity presupposes national consciousness - it was revealed through a nation that was predestined to exile and a promised land. After nationalism loses its dominating position in a state, a turn towards religion might be one of the few possible ways to resolve the problems of this loss. In exile, religious institutions enable the transmission and reproduction of ethnicity instead of nationality (after the collapse of the "Soviet Union, when anyone can come to Lithuania, the exilic nationalistic identities of Lithuanians living abroad should be replaced by ethnic identities). As Adrian Hastings argues, ethnicity separates the group within which one is expected to create a family, but ethnicity itself does not necessarily provide nationalistic identifications.¹¹ In exile, the church provides a space for ethnic communities. In that case, religion prevents assimilation as much as nationalism does. It might be argued, however, that in the U.S.A., by providing a space for ethnicity, religion also becomes one of the instruments of assimilation.¹² As Adrian Hastings claims, "Religion provided both the mythic core in the particularization of each local ethnicity and a universalizing bridge in its networking with wider ethnic circles."¹³ Christianity, operating through different groups of believers and different churches, although it might seem to be the biggest globalizing force, in reality is not simply global but a combination of the local and universal. It makes itself local in a particular place and gives a sense of belonging to communities, whereas nationalism is more concerned with the global community of a state. As Friedland notes,

Religion is also today perhaps one of the only available languages in which ordinary people can reach the public sphere. [...] Their extensive services, which function as an alternative welfare state for their members, are offered and consumed within the context of a moral community, quite unlike the distant, bureaucratic, and often officious services offered by the state.¹⁴

As religion ensures the public space for an ethnic community, it also attempts to control its sexuality and offers hope of eternity. Religion employs the concept of sin and norms of sexual behavior to ensure proper reproduction. In his *History of Sexuality*, Foucault expanded Althusser's idea that power structures reproduce themselves by saying that the power structure encourages the forms of sexual relationships needed to reproduce the power structure itself. In other words, it establishes sexual norms and punishments for their violation. It also assigns gender roles and maintains them. According to Foucault, secularization gives the state, instead of the church, control over the sphere of sexuality. However, the "nationalized" system of maintaining heterosexuality and controlling sexuality might not be valid for a religious community

of exiles, reproducing their ethnicity. If reproduction as described by theorists, is first of all directed toward reproduction of the national, the power systems might repress "other" (exilic) bodies from this reproduction. And even allowed to reproduce, exiles might see no sense in it, since any reproduction in exile is assimilating. In this situation, religion might open a space for such minoritized communities, where the problem of belonging to a nation is replaced by belonging to a group of believers; and the "eternity" of nationhood (achieved through reproduction) is replaced by the religious concept of eternity, which does not require reproduction at all.

In addition, since reproduction of the nation is related to reproduction in a family, it has something to do with "norms" of sexual reproduction. As Foucault notes, certain religious forms (like confession) were secularized for the production of the concept of sex in the modern state. Since the archetype of exile is drawn from the Bible, in the process of secularization in exile, the problem of an exilic body becomes very important. This body was expelled from both the "native" and the "divine." The exilic body doubts the possibility of reproducing the national and, because of that, questions sexual reproduction as well. After religion becomes unable to ensure eternity (due to the secularization of society), without an illusion of the reproduction of the national, a human being loses all the possible identifications that ensure some continuity after one's death. In such a situation, an "exilic" body—central in Western culture and embedded in human alienation and modernity—finds itself facing the crisis of death without the belief that something will continue afterwards.

Lithuania in Exile

One of the greatest writers in exile, T.S. Eliot, wrote "The Waste Land" during his first years abroad, when he could not return to the U.S.A. from Europe because of World War I. This poem, bearing the metaphor of an unproductive life in the very title, became a manifesto of literary modernism— and of its responses to the cruelty of a modern and aggressive civilization. The very symbol of this inability to reproduce emerges with an image of an exiled Lithuanian whore who does not want to admit her exilic and ethnic identity. "I am not from Russia, I was born in Lithuania, I am pure German," says this woman, although she speaks German with an accent that contradicts her statement of origin.¹⁵ After her denial of national (and exilic) identity the following discourse jumps to the image of impossible rooting and growing, and through that of impossible reproduction: "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/ Out of this stony rubbish?"¹⁶ As Friedland puts it, "the poem [...] introduces the theme of the ultimate failure of love to overcome the despair of homelessness."¹⁷

As the Lithuanian (mostly Catholic¹⁸) example shows, the relationship between nationalism and religion in constituting a person's identity and tying it together with a particular nation (or state) was especially productive. It took less than a century to turn the myth of Lithuania as the last pagan nation in Europe into the land of the Virgin Mary. Religious symbols were used in nationalistic writings to express not only the existential, but also the national. After Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union and many people were forced into exile,¹⁹ the question of preserving Lithuanian identity was tied up with the question of preserving the faith. The transmission of nationalism and religion from one generation to another became the central problem.

As mentioned before, the traditional understanding of nation presupposes a certain ethnic group or groups occupying certain territory and reproducing itself within it. Although history knows some Utopian plans to buy land in the jungles of Honduras to establish another Lithuania, in reality the largest "national" place for Lithuanian exiles became Marquette Park in Chicago. In this neighborhood, it was possible to live without speaking English. According to some memoirs, people watched American TV just so they would not forget their English. Looking at the situation of that time, it seems that there was a Lithuanian ghetto—with Lithuanian radio programs, newspapers, and clubs, Lithuanian churches and cultural centers, a gymnasium, businesses (and even institutions in Washington, DC, such as The Supreme Committee for the Liberation of Lithuania and representatives of independent Lithuania performing their duties abroad).

Being highly patriotic, these exiles preserved what they considered their national traditions and culture and reproduced "national" Lithuanian culture abroad. Ideologically, these people would never consider themselves or their children to be Americans. Since members of the Lithuanian patriotic community separated themselves from the citizens of the country they lived in, they also refused to recognize the emigre reality as a process of assimilation. Instead, they continued the creation of imagined national traditions and culture.²⁰ As the poet Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas puts it, "we are not immigrants that left [Lithuania] looking for another home country and luck... We remain in our nation in the same intensity as ever before starting with our birth and up to now, so emigration for us is a temporary 'living in a different place'."²¹

The illusion of return was always present in the writings of the older generation of Lithuanian exiles, and the imagery of the home country dominated their work. It seemed that the questions of reproduction and sexuality had nothing to do with their exile. In 1955, Algirdas Julius Greimas chided/complained: "Writers and poets! Give us more women in literature. But real ones, with body and blood, and more love—and real love, so that our coming generation would want and know how to love, and would have a happier and brighter future!"²² However, Greimas's complaint itself signaled some kind of crisis. The more exilic an identity, the more complicated are the notions of reproduction and nationalistic identification. With later generations, the feeling of an inability to reproduce became central in literature. As Czesław Miłosz writes, "I was afraid to become an exile, afraid to condemn myself to the sterility and the *vacuum* (Vytautas Kavolis uses the word impotence in his translation—R.Ž.) that are proper to every emigration."²³

Notions of the reproduction of exiles were troubled by numerous deaths in the exile community. These deaths influenced Lithuanian literature as well. Two of the best examples are the plays of Kostas Ostrauskas, "Once Upon a Time There was an Old Man and an Old Woman" and "Oh, Mushrooms, Mushrooms."²⁴ In these plays, Ostrauskas tackles the question of national reproduction in exile using the elements of absurd theater. He depicts a family of two old people, who live in a room full of newspapers containing articles about political tensions between the East (Russia) and the West (Western Europe and the USA), and perform a ritual for the loss of their son. They lost their son, Jonukas, many years earlier in a car accident,²⁵ and for revenge, they need to kill someone. The first project of revenge included the author (or director), who (since it is a theater) could easily be understood as God. To kill the author, however, is to kill the very existence of the characters, since it is the will of the author, or God, that creates these very characters. In other words, God (or the author) is not only responsible for their loss, but also created them, and that's why it is impossible to kill Him. The second project of these old people is more secular. They rent a room in their house to a student named Petriukas, and they kill him. As Petriukas lies poisoned and dying ("Oh, Mushrooms, Mushrooms"), it turns out that this is their own son Jonukas, wearing a mask. In other words, it is an allusion to the Lithuanian exilic community—not only united in loss, but also articulating its identity by making this loss constant. As part of an identity, the loss violates the natural cycle of reproduction and imprisons the subject in a certain nationalistic ritual of remembering/ reexperiencing. It is clear from the third part of the trilogy, "Valse triste," that rebellion against God is impossible without losing the very ritual that might heal the trauma of exile.

The younger generations of exiles found themselves in such a vacuum—where reproduction of the nation was impossible. For example, Algimantas Mackus understood that process of assimilation very clearly, saying that even if the Soviet Union had collapsed, not all exiles would be eager to return to Lithuania.²⁶ The danger of assimilation signaled a crisis in the identity of exiles and the inability of nationalism to secure a set of identifications for coming generations. The generational line between people who are still reproducing the Lithuanian nation and those who are producing the American one is very clear. In the generation between these two, however, it is very problematic. Mackus's discoveries about assimilation were painful, since his poetry contains several projects for the creation of an exilic identity, some aspects of which were never discussed in Lithuanian literary criticism. Mackus's poetry continued to address the main existential questions provoked by nationalism, but the problem of nationalism in exile turned into the problem of marginalization in a new country. The inability to assimilate led to criticism and the deconstruction of dominating power structures. That is the point at which Mackus exceeds the Lithuanian discourse of exile and enters the discourse of American nationalism.

Algimantas Mackus: Three Projects for an Exilic Identity The Space for an Exilic Body in Literary Criticism

Algimantas Mackus (1932-1964) describes his generation this way: "the generation of the '30s is one of the most dramatic generations in the entire history of our nation. It is the unfortunate generation of the crossroads, *which did not take root in any land* and sustained psychological trauma, while living the most beautiful time—childhood"²⁷ (emphasis added, R.Ž.). By saying that the generation didn't take root in any land, Mackus emphasizes that this generation was the first to find itself not only in the Lithuanian culture of painful memories, but also in the culture of the USA. By playing with the metaphor of origin (roots), he clearly says that his generation lost the ability to be a part of the Lithuanian tradition (not enough was retrieved from the national culture to be able to survive and continue creating the nation abroad). What is more important, this generation was not allowed to reproduce itself as an American one because it was too old to escape being marked as an immigrant one.

This generation (if it can be called that) was very unique in Lithuanian exile. Sociologist Vytautas Kavolis published a series of articles about Mackus's generation, calling it "The generation of the diminished /separated from the land."²⁸ Since he identified with the same generation, Kavolis tried to write a manifesto for it using Mackus's poetry as one of his major texts. But the paradox is that his sociological analysis lacks an American context for the problems the poetry raises. Mackus's formulation of the subject of "the generation of the diminished /separated from the land" can now only be contextualized as American. Vytautas Kavolis, himself a member of this generation, failed to articulate its identity fully. Kavolis invented the term "personality of crisis" to describe individuals who experience problems identifying themselves with the major power structures.

Although there was a clearly articulated identity crisis, Lithuanian literary critics never recognized that the drama of exile had turned into the drama of the (impossibility) of assimilation. Although the criticism of nationalism and the problems of reproducing the nation could have opened Lithuanian nationalism to new thinking, nationalism itself censored the impossibility of national reproduction, focusing the discourses about Mackus's poetry on ideas of a fading language and a criticism of fetish-like nationalism. Up to now, literary critics²⁹ read this poetry as a memorial to the vanishing nation and national community in exile, foreshadowing the tragic fate of the poet. Referring to Mackus's identification with national exile, Delija Valiukenaite states: "from the point of view of his work, Mackus's problem to the very last poem, remained the fact that God, death and exile were his only realities."³⁰ The possibility of expanding this understanding beyond national literature is seen as disconnected and depoliticized in all societies: "People in exile understood these lines [of poetry] as their fate. We, in Lithuania, read and understood this as our fate, as well as the fate of the Lithuanian nation and language. I can imagine that a foreign reader would find here the very universal motifs of death,"³¹ writes Sigitas Geda.

However, before putting this poetry into the Lithuanian tradition or separating it from its social and historical context, there are several facts to be considered. First, Mackus was very disappointed that theorists made him a central figure for their manifestos,³² second, literary critics had enormous difficulty placing his work in the Lithuanian tradition.

Although his poetry was read as a requiem to the national[istic] culture in exile,³³ the drama of the community without its own land can be understood as a narrative of problematic assimilation into a new (in Mackus's case, American) culture. Lithuanian literary critics were reading his poems from the point of view of exile. Exile and nationalism were the core of their existential feelings. This was one of the reasons for them to talk only about the Lithuanian side of the story of Mackus's poetry. Although the intellectual life of the exiles was very rich (in comparison with their Soviet contemporaries), their texts served the needs of the exile community and focussed on the creation of their "national" culture. However, Mackus's poetry was transcending the discourse of the national community and criticizing all colonizing powers and civilizations. It was comparing European nationalism with American racism. Contemporary critics noticed the emphasis on the death of national culture in exile that was so important in their own existential situations. Nevertheless, critics have not noticed that the problem of death in Mackus's poetry is rooted in the inability to reproduce, and that the very question of reproduction and eternity is the central theme of his poetry. Engaging the question of reproduction, his poetry synthesizes several paradigms of nationalism. Lithuanian critics had already discussed the conservative, but marginalized, Lithuanian exilic nationalism (containing fading memories and the language of the occupied country and dying cultural traditions). However, racialized American nationalism (expressed through the criticism of race-based inclusion in the dominant power-structure as well as the expansion of Western colonizers) was not discussed. This theme was absolutely new to Lithuanian literature.

The First Two Books: Religious Identity, the Exilic Body, and Reproduction

Mackus started with poetry that did not reflect the promise of his talent. Instead it was rooted in the nationalistic tradition and patriotic clichés that illustrated the sadness of the loss of his native land. His first book, *Elegies* (1950), is full of recycled Lithuanian images (like Vilnius and other images of the homeland) and motifs. What is more important, it offered a Catholic understanding of eternal life after death as a substitute for the lost land. Belief, as another form of social identification and an existential system still related to the national sense of belonging (to the "Land of Mary"), was seen as the solution to the drama of homelessness. In one of his poems, he dreamed: "We will find a wonderful world, mother, /far from the earth and from this terrible flow of days." This book inscribed him into the patriotic Lithuanian tradition as a traditional exile, and it was practically impossible for him to escape from it later.

Mackus used the same symbols that were present in traditional Lithuanian nationalistic narrative. It appeared to him that religion could replace his national identity. Mackus's poetry, however, was evolving. In his next book, *His is the Land* (1959), the question of religion as a substitute for national identity becomes even more obvious, along with the discovery that living in a foreign land, the stereotypes of nationalism no longer suffice. The title of this book refers, not to the homeland (which was occupied by the Soviets at the time, and the title might reflect that fact as well), but to his own existential situation—living in a land that is not his nation. Religious and nationalistic discourses were intermingled in an attempt to rearticulate his own national identity by deconstructing nationalistic discourse and searching for something to replace it.

As a solution for exile, God's family—as a new source of identification—had to replace the kinship of nationhood. The title "His is the Land" in Mackus's poetry refers also to God's Land. The religious turn and desperate quest for a relationship with God, and even identification with Christ, reads as nationalism transformed. References to religion in other poets' texts usually meant stereotyped references to Lithuania (e.g., "Where the house of God is"). Catholicism emphasized the significance of kinship for creation of the ethnic community, but Mackus raises the idea that religion itself might substitute for a national identity. Together with that, Mackus raises the problem of the exilic body and the reproduction of this body. In his book, *His is the Land*, the main motifs are centered on the problem of self-sufficiency on earth. The leitmotifs of repetition, reflection, self-sufficiency, waiting for God, and identifications with Christ create the very image of exile: living only within reflections of real objects and trying to find his or her peace in transcendence. On the other hand, while separated from his native land, Mackus declared a project of self-sufficiency on earth: "Let's not seek anymore— // we won't find anything / until we be earth and spring / to ourselves." However, the self-sufficiency in Mackus's poetry is possible only if one is able to reproduce oneself physically. In his poem, "River, Father, River," he emphasizes the more obvious biological continuity of life: "My river is approaching the sea of death / (...) I do not leave you anything that has not existed before / (...) My son, take at least one wrinkle from my face // And I will remain alive."

What Mackus discovers is that reproduction is necessary for eternity.³⁴ And not only is humanity reproduced but religion and religious identities are produced through the reproduction of humanity. He sees this as predestined by God in giving birth to Christ ("From your body, that has never given birth / Today your God is satiated / You insensibly nestle with your child / Everyone of us is the mother of his own God" he writes in the poem "Mother of God").³⁵ According to Mackus, religion encourages reproduction in order to be transmitted from one generation to the next through language possessed by a particular nation. This is one of the major discoveries that he will come back to in his last book, *Chapel B*. The

conclusion that the exilic subject is not destined for reproduction became an axis of his poetry. The subject of his poetry complains about his infertility as compared to Christ: "when you came—it was raining / when I did—the drought was searing." The inability to reproduce and the inability to meet with God grow into the problem of a meaningless life. In his poem "Dead Guests," Mackus writes: "In the green water / (it is approaching the black twilight forest) / our tired bodies are reflected. //In the green water / (the silver bend of the moon has pierced its surface) / The soul of our little boy plays. //In the green water / Our bodies are cold / And in the green water / The soul of the little boy is dead too." Since the little boy (or his soul) is dead, the bodies' passion for reproduction becomes meaningless. The bodies did not leave anyone to live after their deaths, so they are dead in advance: "In the green water / Our bodies are dead fire. / And in the green water / We are dead guests." The very same notion of the inability to reproduce biologically and, through that, save life for eternity dominates his poem, "Reality in the Detail of Childhood."

This poem is like an answer to the poem "River, Father, River," quoted above: after a human body is in the coffin, nothing on earth continues his life: "The faces and hands will lie down in our coffin / and the birds will be seeing it off while crying. (...) / They will lie in our coffin—all the memories and the splinters of toys, / the smoke of tobacco, the first "mama" and the first trampled / frog, (...) // Only the words, stuck to the wall of the house will remain: / "Apartment for rent. Furnished apartment. / Water and heat paid by landlord. / Call from 12:00 to 24:00 / or from 24:00 to 12:00 o'clock." Although some critics recognize this quotation as a stylistic figure copied from modernist poetry,³⁶ it is important to note that this advertisement could also mean that no property is owned (referring to the social status of a Lithuanian immigrant) or transmitted to an inheriting subject, which usually is a family member or descendant.

The Third Book: The Colonial Subject

The failure to reproduce the exilic body forced Mackus to reconsider the religious project of assimilation just a few years later. In his next book, *The Generation of Unornamented Language and the Foster-Children* (1962), Mackus modifies the religiously motivated story of assimilation³⁷ and reproduction. The major change is that now he sees assimilation not only as unlikely, but also as impossible—the exiled body is marked as "other," or adopted. Instead of the project of assimilation, Mackus starts looking for a global identity for an exilic (or colonial) body. Isolation from the homeland and impossible reproduction exist as codependents. There is no way to escape from one's national identity, a powerful force that leads to a hermetic existence and self-destruction: "I'm eating myself / For my joints—I am a condor / For my joints—I am a hyena // Dedicating pain to myself / I dream about homosexual angels/little lesbian Therasas."

Many Lithuanian critics (Rimvydas Šilbajoris, Greimas, and others) noted that homosexual angels and lesbian Therasas tended to shock religious elderly Lithuanians. However, the image of homosexual angels is more important than Lithuanian literary criticism admits. It plays a very important function, since it connects religion with the inability to reproduce.³⁸ It emphasizes that the bodies of the main symbols of religion were deprived of their reproductive sexuality. Mackus sees this as a paradox: religion cannot reproduce itself without human beings who are reproducing themselves sexually, but the very reproduction of religion is desexualized. As another exile of the twentieth century, James Joyce says in *Ulysses*: "in the economy of heaven... there are no more marriages, glorified man, an androgynous angel, being a wife unto himself."³⁹ Mackus is different from Joyce, because he sees the reproduction of religion in language. Language also reproduces the nation or allows people to assimilate into a different nation. The nation in exile cannot reproduce itself, and Mackus coined the term "foster children" to express the nonfamilial ties that should enable the process of assimilation, but mark these people as "others" instead. Since physical reproduction is impossible, and the reproduction of the nation is not possible, desexualized religion gives another option for the exilic body to survive—the eternity of heaven.

The religious system cannot explain the troubled system of reproduction to an exile, since its reproduction is mysteriously desexualized. However, an assimilating exilic subject has a need to restore heterosexuality and the reproductive powers of the body.

Although exile is an existence within two nations, reproduction in any case means assimilation. In other words, if sex is reproductive, it is assimilative, transnational. In Mackus's case that kind of reproduction is also a move toward assimilation, toward changing into an American family (the nation and the national language is dying in exile). That is where sexuality comes into conflict with nationalism, since assimilation also means the death of Lithuanianess. Mackus sees the warmth of foreign bodies as a danger, as he writes:

I fell asleep for the eternal
Honeymoon with death.
Unnoticed winter came
Unnoticed snow fell
(It is snowing, angel, it is snowing)

Winter is the time to give birth
It is the time in the tortured space
It is the time in the cold of the months
to feel and sense

the approaching warmth
of foreign seasons and bodies

Foreign seasons and bodies ensure reproduction that is deprived of the national, they ensure assimilation. Sex with foreign seasons and bodies, however, is seen as a danger, since it erases the national (the nationalistic). For exilic identities it is a drama because they do not identify themselves as just an ethnic group—they consider themselves a nation in exile. But Mackus's project for the nonreproductive adopted body of an exile reflected the changing situation of Lithuanian exiles. The major change was that Mackus now saw an exile as excluded from the reproduction of the dominant national state. He calls one of his books *Foster children*, showing in the very title that the means of heterosexual reproduction of the nation-based state no longer existed for his subject. In the cycle of poems *Foster children*, he changes the nostalgic nationalistic subject of his earlier poetry into an oppressed immigrant in a foreign state.

Many critics have noted that Mackus wanted to make the problems of his generation more global. As Kavolis suggests in his study, Mackus makes a definite move towards sympathy with all the oppressed people of the world. However, critics were reading Mackus's book without noticing the major transformation in the identity of the subject. One of the most important changes in the new country, after the separation from one's native (dominating) land and the ensuing marginalization in a foreign society, happens through the change in one's race:

In the *light of black moons*,
The raging silver plants thrash about,
Silver animals lie down
to devour themselves.

Look carefully at that hour,
Foster son
*Silver blood is flowing
into a new race.*
[...]

Look carefully at midnight,
Foster son:
What is dead today—was alive yesterday
In the country of the white moon.
(Emphasis added—R.Ž.)

Playing with the figures of the black and white moon and with blood as uniting two different races, he speaks of the evolving status of the American nation. The situation of the subject changes from one of domineering nationalism (in Lithuania, the country of the white moon) to one of oppressing racism (the country of the black moon). Oppressive nationalism turns a white immigrant into a black one and prevents this immigrant from reproducing the dominating nation using the racialized mythologies of blood and kinship. Since the immigrant is neither allowed to participate in the dominant nationalism nor to assimilate, the only option is the reproduction of the marginalized "black race"—the Lithuanian community of exiles. However, from the point of view of a nationalism that wants to dominate the state, such reproduction loses its meaning. As reproduction is not possible, every instance of life is predestined to death:

No one comes here to live anymore
They come to listen to the moan of the coyote
The raptorial monologue of the wings of the condor
The mortal laughter of the hyena.

The uninhabited island was abandoned
By tigers, panthers, and lions
The uninhabited island was abandoned
By noble raptors

No one comes here to give birth anymore
They come here to moan painfully, without hope...

"No one comes to give birth anymore" because reproduction is impossible. The dominating power structures that possess the language are reproducing religion and a different nation and refusing to reproduce the nation of exiles. Society invents a god to fulfill its needs and further oppresses the powerless elements of that society as well as other societies. Power structures made God become the Almighty, and that kind of all-powerful God justifies only the power structures that invented him. Being the Almighty, this God reproduces everything through the bodily practices of passion:

No one comes here to live.
They come here to learn about the perversity of the earth
To castle on the perfectly divided board

Once and only once
Before only one perfect tension;
They came here to simplify
Before the tribunal of heaven
Pronounces the sentence in advance

Full of omnipotence coyotes
Full of omnipotence condors
Full of omnipotence hyenas
Before a new passion of our Lord
For a new absurd creation!

In this ritualistic context of sex, Mackus talks about "Foster children"—those who were marginalized by political, social and economic powers, who are left outside of the colonizing "passion of our Lord." He takes two stories—the exploitation of Africa by the Western world and Christianity and, the death of a little Jewish boy named Jurek in Vilnius during World War II. Both stories tell the narrative of the exile's situation in the USA.

"The Ballad about John the Good" is a story of African colonization mixed with a Lithuanian nationalistic story of battles with crusaders. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania emerged as an attempt to resist the invasions of crusaders. Mackus takes this moment from Lithuanian history to tell the story of the cultural and economic colonization of Africa. He clearly defines the Western world through religious vocabulary: it is a world which used religion to oppress an entire continent. Although such an understanding of religion emerged from the nationalistic Lithuanian story about the battles of the Grand Duchy against the Crusaders, African or African-American scholars usually see Christianity as bringing literacy and education, and not as a colonizing force. In other words, Christianity is associated with the colonial not through African, but through Lithuanian nationalistic identity, since in the very process of colonization, Christianity spread a civilizing, not a conquering force in Africa. According to Mackus, John the Baptist or John the Good is trying to enforce belief; however, this belief is shaped by the expansion of the Western world, assigning different fates to different lands:

Twelve gates to the East,
 for heaven's forests
Twelve gates to the North
 for heaven's singing birds
Twelve gates to the West
 for heaven's moon
Twelve gates to the South
 for the bronze African voice

On the map of the continent, belief spread through the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem and through the twelve tribes of Israel. Religion, as an excuse for colonization spreading from Israel to the South, leaves only the gates for the oppressed bronze African voice. The African voice is not black anymore—it is bronze. "Bronze" refers here to the lighter color of skin, which, if it is seen from the American context, is a result of race mixing. In one of his earlier poems, Mackus used "bronze" to point to the changing color of skin: "their young bodies / will wait while the sun / after slowly climbing up to the horizon / will bronze their shoulders, / hands and faces." ("Dedications to Death and Love")⁴⁰ "Bronze" also refers to racism, since race is not erased in bronze (American society had a "one drop" rule to define the race of a "colored" person—even if Negro racial traits are not visible), and bronze skin is excluded from the nation of whites. Rimvydas Silbajoris noted that by bringing this context into his poem, Mackus talks about both Western and Communist empire-building powers as oppressive.⁴¹ In other words, his narrative is emerging not only because of the loss brought on by exile, but also because of race-based American nationalism and the colonial nature of the Western world.

Colonizer John becomes a Foster son in Africa when he realizes that the difference of skin color does not carry in itself white supremacy, or when he fails to identify with the oppressing power structure. In other words, by deconstructing the mythology of skin color, John situates himself more in American society than in African society:

At the midnight hour, he undressed his body for the African moon.
At the midnight hour, John spoke of God being above color.
At the midnight hour, John offered his scalp to God. That midnight hour, John became an foster son.

Being "above color" meant the changing understanding of the rights of black people in the U.S.A., but it also meant the refusal to reproduce the supremacy of whiteness, to marginalize oneself in a racist society. The poem, "Jurek," is connected to the poem, "John the Good/" in two ways. First, Jurek is a member of an oppressed nation in Lithuania. Mackus, taking the story of a Jewish boy, killed by Lithuanians, is criticizing Lithuanian nationalism, which abetted the complete destruction of the Jewish community in Vilnius, once called "the Jerusalem of Europe/' On the other hand, he shows the fate of a member of the culture that gave rise to Christianity and was so oppressive in Africa.

Through Jurek, Mackus offers an understanding of nationalism, human life and exilic identities. According to Mackus, a human being is born into history, and after that, he cannot escape his fate.

the mother carried the fatal judgment
in her body, piously kneeling.
Nine months you lived separated by the unfulfilled time.
Nine months the sea became the earth,
nine months the sun didn't set
and nine months the earth was becoming civilized
[...]
The white voices in the ward
called for a green and red meeting
when the screaming mother gave birth
to a victim for a pittance of history.

A human being is born as a victim of history's plea. The nation, biologically interpreting the fact of being born outside of the dominating community, outside of the national family, excludes Jurek from its welfare and marks his fate by refusing to provide anything that ensures his survival: "Why did they sell you a coffin, / and me, Jurek, they sold bread?" By asking this question, Mackus probes the very principle of exclusion and puts it in the context of his own nation. Jurek's death is shown through the inability to take root in a foreign land, the inability to avoid being the unassimilated "other." Jurek rides a wooden horse, and this horse represents both the inability to take root and the inability to escape one's fate:

Angry men are coming to the yard.
—ride, Jurek! ride, Jurek!

the wooden horse neighs in the yard,
strikes the concrete with its hooves.

—But how can I ride, but how can I ride—
my horse is wooden!

—The wood was alive too, the wood screamed too
the wood ran for help too!

[...]
—How can I shout, how can I scream—
they hacked my speech out with their axes!

By taking the examples of Jurek and John, Mackus deconstructs the combination of nationalism, racism and religion that results in violence and oppression. If, in John's case, Mackus sees religion as expanding and oppressing; in Jurek's case, religion plays a different role. Mackus suggests that belief was one of the reasons for Jurek's death. As religion separated Jews from other nations, it also forced them to reproduce their nation within a certain community of believers. Jurek was killed because he was not assimilated: "It is not the shots that echo by the forest, / it is the tribes of the Old Testament / helping me to hammer the nails / into your green coffin," writes Mackus.

At the end of this book, Mackus says directly that the only fate of an adopted son—a racially marked human being who is excluded from the dominating nation—is a homeless, landless fate and that this is the fate of his generation.

There is no homeland!
No softly flowing Nemunas,
and the oats no longer beg to be sown.
There is for Jurek, the silver, and the green.
There is for John, the black-skinned dream,
so there could be a murmuring, breaking heart
in a foreign land, on foreign soil

The colonial world, expanding its powers and creating ideologies that ensured the functioning of these powers did not leave any space for the reconstruction of oppressed nations and countries. That is exactly the point where Lithuanian literature formulated the thought about a post-colonial time for the very first time. In his poem, "After the Foster Children," Mackus clearly formulates the intended program of recovering from oppression, writing it down as a program of rebuilding the dignity of African-Americans as sons and daughters of one nation. In other words, Mackus sees postcolonial time as the restoration of the means of the reproduction of the adopted in a territory free from oppressing powers, controlling the timeline of history:

In the direction of the Northern ocean
The burial hymn soughs.

It waits for an echo.
[...]
If there is still some unallotted time—
From the remainder left from yesterday
You will be sons and daughters.

According to Mackus, postcolonial time is the time when the certain set of identifications is secured in a certain group, and it is transmitted through reproduction from one generation to another. For Mackus the freedom of the oppressed is expressed through the familial and colonization through rape or violent sex. Since he sees this group as a family and identifies with groups of oppressed peoples, Mackus's postcolonial project is not for the individual exilic body, but for the oppressed nation. In other words, his poetry still exists within nationalistic Lithuanian discourses, although it plays with American cultural symbols as well.

A Requiem for the Vanishing Nation

The book, *The Generation of Unornamented Language and Foster Children*, is the first Lithuanian text that synthesizes Lithuanian and American nationalism—and the kinship of nation acquires the content of race based inclusion/separation from the society.⁴² By making "foster children" black, Mackus opens a very wide range of questions about an exilic body and exilic identity for consideration. One of the most important transformations of the exilic body happens through its racialization. By making "foster children" black, Mackus clearly shows that white immigrants can acquire a racially different status in a racist society.

Many American critics have noted the unusual status of Jews in the American nation. According to some of them, a Jew assimilates into American culture by performing in "blackface." In other words, a Jew performs blackness in order to separate from this race and articulate his or her whiteness. The Jewish inquiry into blackness was part of defining oneself. Waldo Frank wrote in 1922: "I felt with a Negro. This empathy was startling. Lying in dark sleep I would dream I was a Negro, would spring from sleep reaching for my clothes on the chair beside the bed, to finger them, to smell them... in proof I was white and myself."⁴³

To perform a black person also meant to assimilate into whiteness.⁴⁴ One of the best known stories of Jewish assimilation is the movie "Jazz Singer," the first movie featuring voice ("a talkie"). This movie entered history not only because of its technical innovation, but also because it brought up the question of the assimilation of Jews into the American nation by performing as black people. The main character is a young Jew,⁴⁵ the son of a rabbi, who decides to become a singer and abandon the old traditions of his father. He runs away from home, starts his career as an actor, and plays a black singer on stage. When the Jewish ability to perform ensured their assimilation, the Jewish immigrant community, through the performance of "blackness" separated itself from the Negro race. Mackus's understanding of blackness is clearly different, since for him race is something that cannot be performed, an identification created by power structures and not by an individual. By making blackness into part of an immigrant's identity (as in Mackus's case) one is describing his or her inability to assimilate, and exclusion from the American nation happens through a racialized body.

In his last book, *Chapel B* (1964), Mackus goes further with his investigations of religion, history, and race and develops his idea of racial predetermination in the American state. In this book, he continues the theme of foster children—the theme of the impossibility of integration into the dominant society. In the shadow of awaiting death, as a final exile to eternity or nowhere, he rethinks the question of religion, power structures, oppression, and the exilic body.

Oppression is seen not only as physical, it is seen as the power of discourse. It becomes the voice of a continent, crying for expansion (or colonial adventure):

The voice of the continent prays for voyagers
the voice of the continent invokes adventure.
Round as water, and salty as salt
I raise the season of death to my lips.

As Mackus earlier explained the changing racial status of an immigrant, he now uses the parallels of race to describe the changing status of the Blessed Virgin Mary from the symbol of a nation in the Catholic world view to an ordinary woman in the Protestant faith. He sees Mary as a woman used by God to reproduce Himself. For that reason, Mackus turns Jewish Mary into a negress, saying that the very principle of Western Christian-based civilization and colonization was built on the superiority of the white heterosexual male and reproduction was based on that superiority. Since religion cannot reproduce itself, sex becomes a machine for the reproduction of religion and the nation. Mary, destined by God to give birth to His son, is indeed produced by religion for gender and sex. Through this statement, Mackus equates forced sexual reproduction to colonization and oppression. The image of Mary, as a metaphor of mixing two races (supposedly a superior, white race represented by God, and an inferior, black race, represented by human beings and Mary in particular) deconstructs the American model of religious nationalism, which is based on white supremacy and male dominance:

Mary, created for gender
Mary, that emerged from the truth

Mary, the negress
bloody

Inscribed in the very image of Mary, is the reproduction of a "superior" nation by religion or by ideology. Mary's blood marks an oppressed race. Her body reflects the story of colonization and exclusion based on economic interests and accomplished through ideological and physical rape. Mackus repeats again that the colonial powers operate through sex:

Death is the maps of the colonies
Expanded towards the wealth of the earth:
Mary laid her body down into the rape
She laid her body down into the baptism

Chapel B echoes Mackus's previous book by showing not only Mary's racially marked body as tortured and raped, but also by recalling a powerful national archetype of exclusion of the "other" from a certain ethnic/religious society in Lithuanian culture. One of the most famous Lithuanian fairy tales "Eglė, the Queen of Serpents" now becomes an archetype to deconstruct the oppression of minorities. The serpent, Žilvinas, killed by Lithuanians, becomes as much an adopted son as Jurek, John or the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Mackus uses only one phrase—"Žilvine, Žilvinėli" to express the drama of the impossible assimilation and homeless existence between two societies. Eglė, whose family killed her husband, the Serpent King, pronounces it in a moment of desperation. In this phrase, there is the meaning of losing both homes—the world of her family (who killed her husband) on land and the world of her husband ((impossible to return to) in the sea. The same phrase, used in a triptych by Antanas Škėma (Mackus wrote his *Chapel B* as a memorial to Škėma, who also died in a car accident) marks the moment when the protagonist loses his mind. Mackus echoes that phrase in his poem, saying: "Now you have avoided / the lunacy of exile."

What Mackus does by using this fairy tale is to replace the agrarian cycle of the growth and rooting of a nation with a linear understanding of being born for death and nonre-production as one discovers herself as an exilic body:

What is given? What is chosen?"
"Earth given. Death chosen."

"What is given? What is chosen?"
"Nothing given, just everything is chosen."

After the failure to reproduce the body, or to achieve immortality, Mackus's poetry turns towards language. As he writes about Škėma's death:

Former citizens of the state
Memorize his death:
The body turned into the word
Not the word turned into the body

Turning back to the problem of language is also turning back to the problem of nationalism and exile. A nation lives as long as it possesses language: "They will collect the bones, but won't put them together / like a word, letter by letter," writes Mackus. Religion is within the language, and as the language of religion becomes foreign, religion itself becomes foreign and constructed. In other words, differences in the same faith produce an awareness of differences in religiosity and an understanding that language (as it is possessed by a power) is alone able to invent and kill a god, to justify oppression and colonization. For example, in one poem, Mackus says that God might be revoked by the Pope through language (in this case, his understanding of language is similar to Foucault's "regime of truth"). The figure of Christ, offered by Christianity as the path to eternity, is indeed imprisoned in our existence through language, and dies again with our death: "When, tired from resurrection / Christ, you will be looking for rest / I will be a comfortable coffin," writes Mackus. God, as it were, is not only invented by society, he is also used for oppression. According to Kavolis, "One is no longer able to make devotions to God, embedded in the structure of civilization, who is no longer participating in the existence of man..." [46](#)

In this context, Mackus comes back to the questions of a nation in exile. He now sees the nation clearly as a product of reproduction and expansion within a defined territory, through language and ideology. He articulates the changes the nation experiences in exile:

Our sex is over
"We no longer have land for the children.
Our buried family will scatter
into bones and dust
Father will lament out loud the inheritance
left in the Vilnius church.

Dampness drips and drips
into the empty family sarcophagus.

We speak in the waning words
of our dying language
Water streams into the boats
Our family sailed away in them
On the empty dismantled quay
no one waits for their return.
We speak in the rescued words
of our dead language.

After the territory is lost, the discourse cannot reproduce itself (although for the moment it is saved from oppression), and so it cannot reproduce the nation. Mackus raises the questions of the biological and historical (ideological) notion of nation/race, showing that any nationalism or other ideology (Lithuanian nationalism, which, according to Mackus, resulted in the death of Jurek, as well as American racist nationalism, which resulted in the marginalization of African-Americans and Lithuanians) produces power structures and imposes them on society through language. He raises the problem of the fate of being born into oppression and nationalism and the inability to avoid it for those who are not in power or whose language is fading. The power structures reinterpret meanings to keep their power and there is no way of escaping from them. Oppression is rooted in our language, which is the only tool to build an identity and to transfer a message about our nationalized existence for future generations.

What Mackus discovered exceeds the limits of nationalistic exile. He sees the nation as an ideologically motivated construct of kinship and sexual oppression because of power dominance. Traditional sexual identities used for heterosexual reproduction do not suffice in exile, since heterosexuality becomes assimilating. Since reproduction is perceived within the model of a nation, it is in doubt—especially because of the trauma of the exilic body, which is not able to return or allowed to assimilate. Only when assimilation becomes possible, or when a nation obtains its state, sexuality and sexual reproduction come back to the heterosexual norm.

In exile, Mackus turns to religion as a substitute for nationalism. However, he finds the following paradox: although the sexual relationship is repressed from representation in the traditional Christian worldview and the divine family has no sexuality (except for the stereotype of nonsexual reproduction), together with nationalism it enables and even forces heterosexual reproduction in attempts to expand and dominate. The paradox of religion and nationalism is that both are reproduced within humanity and through sex ("And death won't be defeated / Women will cry for sex as for rain,") and are contained in the language. Both of them offer specific ways to achieve immortality by replacing the individual with something broader—a nation, a linguistic community or a religious group. However, all of them operate through family, through physical reproduction, and as Mackus clearly sees, through certain power systems.

Closure: The Burial of the Denationalized Body

A small country such as Lithuania and a small ethnic group such as Lithuanians are under constant threat of insignificance. Mary Gembicki sees the problem, complaining about "The inability of the smaller communities to incorporate their historical narratives into larger social histories."⁴⁷ However, this inability is rooted not only in the size of the smaller communities, but also in the interpretative discourses that these communities produce. As Mackus's case shows, certain contents of his poetry, so important for American society, were not brought to the attention of international critics because the interpretative community didn't see them as important or credible. One reason this happened is that Lithuanian literary critics invested in the nationalized body and did not make any inquiries into what makes this poetry transnational nor inscribe it into the tradition of a different culture. It likely happened because some Lithuanian exiles didn't want to describe themselves as an ethnic group in the U.S.A. and saw themselves as "punished" exiles that were "reproducing" "the national" culture. In most cases, being Lithuanian or being involved in Lithuanian culture was possible only outside of one's main job, as a hobby or as charity.

However, Mackus's poetry is a perfect example of the attempt to transition from one culture to another, unnoticed by most critics, even though this transition was clear to the poet himself when he stated in his articles that not all exiles would return to Lithuania.⁴⁸ In this case, all of Mackus's poetry can be reread as different projects of assimilation that proved to be unsuccessful and led to a critique of the Western world and its colonial powers.

An exile, after losing her state, has language, religion and ethnicity to prevent assimilation. But even an exile who desires to assimilate cannot make decisions about it since a minority can only be naturalized by the group in power. Nationalism not only encourages nonassimilation on the part of the exile, it also prevents assimilation of the "other" into a dominant community in the state. If Lithuanian exilic nationalism meant saving traditions and hoping to return to Lithuania, American nationalism in the 1950's and early 1960's operated as racism, enforcing a lower caste status on immigrants. That is why the subject in Mackus's poetry acquires a new racial status while becoming an immigrant. This racial status not only shows the status of an immigrant—it shows the move to prevent assimilation.

"Nationalism becomes, as a result, radically constitutive of people's identities through social contests that are frequently violent and always gendered,"⁴⁹ writes Anne McClintock. In Mackus's understanding, religion is as violent and gendered as nationalism when it operates through colonial power and when it alters and strengthens the set of identifications with one's state. Both nationalism and religion tend to control sexuality and to encourage reproduction. In this context, Mackus asks the question about the reproduction of minorities and the meaning of life. The reproduction of what could be called his ethnicity happens through language. According to Mackus, a native language is reproduced in the same way as religion and nationalism—through sexual reproduction, although it is not necessarily the product of a state. That is why he sees the world as constructed in language and human beings as predestined to reproduce forever. A native language is the third component, along with nationalism and religion, that operates within specific groups of people through heterosexual relationships. It becomes the most important to the exilic body, whose sex is directed towards assimilation and whose religion turns a former nation into an ethnic minority within the broader network of a global faith.

Mackus obviously is one of the first modern Lithuanian authors (if we ignore the ones that wrote to please the Soviet government in the USSR) who defined Western power as colonial and started talking about the major power systems that oppress in different nations and different continents. According to this understanding, nationalism and religion play a crucial role in forming the colonial identities of believers. The revolt against the colonial was a revolt against the colonial power and language that manipulates the individual and forces her to perform a particular colonial identity. Mackus's poetry doubted that kind of performance and is situated between the impossibility to reproduce national (Lithuanian) culture and unattainable assimilation into American culture. By being between the two powers, it contributes to theories of race, nationalism and religion, with very rich insights about European nationalism and American racism. It also echoes Western theories on race, nationalism and postcolonial studies. The project for saving ethnicity and the project for assimilation were contradicting each other, and this was of benefit to his poetry because of the similarity of racism and nationalism in excluding individuals from a nation.

Mackus's drama was the drama of a person not-yet assimilated. In his own words: "I am staying in exile. A citizen of two nonexisting states."⁵⁰ According to Marius Katiliškis, another Lithuanian writer in exile, this drama looked unusual even in the Lithuanian community: "the forger needed fire, and the fire was fading. He was coaxing it. [...] His apprentices ran away looking for more comfortable occupations." As Kavolis notes in his study "The Generation of Those Separated from the Land," while others were comfortable within a new nation, Mackus defined his nationality by sympathizing with those "disadvantaged by history" (Kavolis's term), and the loss became the main archetype of his poetry. The loss (caused by colonial expansion) united two oppressing systems—the Western and the Soviet—into one painful blasphemy that Mackus was destined to lament.

1 Mackus's poetry in my literal translation can be found on the Internet (<http://anthology.lms.lt/texts/54/turyns.html>). These poems are used here —R.2.

2 John G. Cawelti, "Eliot, Joyce, and Exile," ANQ, Fall, v 14 i4 (University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 38.

3 Edward Said, "Intellectual Exile: Expatriates and Marginals," *The Edward Said Reader* (London: Granta Books, 2001), 369-370.

4 Louis Althusser, "Ideology and the State," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press), 153-154.

5 Anne McClintock, "No Longer in a Future Heaven," *Imperial Leather* (New York, London: Routledge, 1995), 357.

6 McClintock, *Idem*.

7 Genesis 1:28. After creating the first man and woman, God commanded, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it."

8 In the Catholic faith, the first sin is clearly sexualized, since Adam and Eve became aware of their naked bodies. On the other hand, as Foucault notes, sin becomes central to the confessional and is inscribed into the religious identity of the believer.

9 Martin E. Marty, "Cultural Foundations of Ethnonationalism: the Role of Religion," *Global Convulsions: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism at the End of the Twentieth Century*, ed. Winston A. Van Home (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), 123.

10 As history shows, religious identity helped such communities as the Jews to maintain their national consciousness in exile.

11 Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood* (Cambridge University Press, 1999) 34.

12 It is very important to note that Catholicism, which was the main religion in Lithuania, accelerated the process of forming national identity and is different from the mostly Protestant churches of America. It is possible that the abundance of various Protestant churches in the United States ensures public (communal) space for ethnic (and local) communities, replaces their nationalistic identities with ethnic ones, and through that not only prevents different nationalisms, but also helps people to assimilate.

13 *Op. cit.*, Hastings, 175.

14 Roger Friedland, "When God Walks in History," *Tikkun* Oakland; May/June (1999), Volume 14, Issue 3, 17-22.

15 H.A. Mason, "The Lithuanian Whore in The Waste Land," *Cambridge Quarterly*, 18.1 (1989), 63-72.

16 T.S. Eliot, "The Waste Land," T.S. Eliot. *The Waste Land and Other Writings*. (New York: The Modern Library), 20.

17 Friedland, "When God Walks in History," 17-22.

18 If we turn to the beginning of the last century, the nation kept and developed its national identity in part because of Catholicism, which was opposed to Russian orthodoxy and was concerned with national culture. Priests made up a large majority of the intellectuals participating in the national awakening, and the role of religion was crucial in the formation of national identity and the development of nationalism (Baranauskas, Maironis, Valančius, Tumas-Vaižgantas, Vienažindis, Strazdas, and many others were priests and embedded their religious identity into their writings).

19 After independence was established in 1918, Lithuania existed as an independent state until 1940, shortly after the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact divided Europe anew and Soviet troops invaded Lithuanian territory. There were mass deportations from throughout the country at that time. The German army invaded Lithuania in 1941, and the Soviets reoccupied Lithuania by the end of World War II. By the end of the war, knowing that Soviet occupation was inevitable, around 70,000 people, for fear of more deportations (mostly intellectuals and successful businessmen or farmers—ones that would likely be considered *kulaks* by the Bolshevik government), emigrated to the West—a large part of them to the United States. It is important to note, that this emigration strictly speaking was not voluntary, being political rather than economic in nature.

20 Although their accent and cultural differences made the process of assimilation complicated, these people to a certain degree assimilated into American society. In the course of time, Marquette Park lost its ethnic significance, when many Lithuanians moved away from it to look for better housing.

21 Alfonsas Nyka-Niliūnas, "Emigracija ir kritika," *Temos ir variacijos* (Vilnius: Baltos lankos, 1996) 414.

22 A. J. Greimas, "Lytingumas" lietuvių literatūroje," *Iš arti ir iš toli* (Vilnius, 1991), 425.

23 Czesław Miłosz, *The Captive Mind*, 168.

24 Kostas Ostrauskas, "Gyveno kartą senelis ir senelė," *Kaliausės mirtis* (Vilnius: Lietuvos rasytojų sąjungos leidykla, 1996), 175-220.

25 A reference, in my interpretation, to the deaths of several famous Lithuanian writers in exile in car accidents (among them Algimantas Mackus and Antanas Škėma, mentioned in this paper).

26 Algimantas Mackus, *Ir mirtis nebus nugailėta* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1994), 467.

27 Ibid.

28 This is a play on words. In Lithuanian "nužemintas" means both "diminished" and "separated from land."

29 Lithuanian literary criticism of exile made Mackus a key poet of the entire generation of the so-called "homeless" or "separated from the land," and literary critics promptly turned his texts into the manifesto of that generation. At the same time (primarily because Mackus made death and religion his central topics), Soviet literary criticism in Lithuania rejected him as totally negative, and almost nobody knew or interpreted him in his homeland until the 1990s. His early book published in Soviet Lithuania contained only selected (that is, censored) poems and did not draw the attention of critics. Even now Mackus's poetry, although highly valued, is still difficult to interpret and canonize in Lithuanian literature.

30 Delija Valiukėnaitė, "Dievas, mirtis ir egzilė Algimanto Mackaus poezijoje" (God, death and exile in Algimantas Mackus's poetry), *Metmenys* (1981), Nr. 41, 24.

31 It is interesting that Sigita Geda like many other post-Soviet literary critics, while refusing to interpret Mackus's allusions to American society, sees the only possibility of its interpretation as the universal existential problem of death. Geda, "Neornamentuotos kalbos poetas" (The Poet of Unornamented Language). *Šiaurės Atėnai* (1992.02.27).

32 "It is too bad that the correspondence started before we made a final decision (...) and Kavolis began to force his unfortunate [term] 'separated from the land' [that's how Kavolis called this generation in his theoretical work 'The Generation Separated from the Land']," writes Mackus to another Lithuanian writer Kostas Ostrauskas. Mackus, *Ir mirtis nebus nugailėta*, 584.

33 What happened to Algimantas Mackus's poetry cannot be understood without some biographical detail. He lived for only 32 years (spending less than 10 years in Lithuania and some time in displaced persons camps in Germany, having been forced to leave Lithuania when the Soviets occupied the country after World War II. He died in a car accident in Chicago. Before that, there were several other tragic deaths of writers that shocked the Lithuanian community. Mackus was affected by that tragedy when he was writing his last book. He dedicated "Chapel B" to his friend, Antanas Škėma, another famous Lithuanian writer in exile, who died in a car accident. After Mackus himself was killed in an accident less than three years later, this book was interpreted as predicting his own fate.

34 Since Christianity does not stress physical reproduction as a path to eternity, it is possible that the desire and inability to reproduce in Mackus's poetry might have a personal or nationalistic character. Nationalism, as McClintock notes, operates through family more than religion does.

35 It is possible that the national symbol of Lithuania and one of the key divine figures in Catholic faith, Mary, was reduced to her reproductive function in Mackus's poetry because he was criticizing the Protestant Church for excluding her from the divine family and assigning a gender role for her instead.

36 See: Robertas Keturakis, "Avangardizmo pėdsakai lietuvių išeivių poezijoje," *Literatūra* (2002), Nr. 43 (1), [http://www.literatura.lt/TXT/43\(1\)/keturakis_av.htm](http://www.literatura.lt/TXT/43(1)/keturakis_av.htm).

37 In exile, religion turns into an assimilating force, and nationalistic identity resists this. Aldona Juškaitė writes: "When asked why one has lost one's national identity, I have often heard it said: 'First we must be human and then Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian' and so forth. Although I do not deny that everyone's primary aim is to develop as a human being, I cannot accept the much expounded idea, which is voiced by a loud minority in the Lithuanian community, that belonging to a country does not play an important part in the development of the human spirit. I cannot accept assimilation justified and defended in the name of humanity or Christianity." Aldona Juskaite, "The Contemporary Identity Problem of Baltic Youth in Australia," *Lituanus*, http://www.lituanus.org/1980_4/80_4_02.htm.

38 Later, he develops the parallel between home and reproduction: "but... I wish I would not be so foolish / I wish I would not look for my home at night / for the entire cursed and lost generation / I wish I would not dream about homosexual angels / and lesbian Therasas."

39 James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961), 213.

40 In his last book Chapel B, he calls Mary a negress (or black) and puts stress on her "function" in the Christian religion—to give birth to a superior God. The relationship of (supposedly white) God and (black) Mary could be seen as a miscegenation that causes bronze milk: "Mary stayed alive / She outgrew the grave / Her earthy breast / is full of bronze milk." Milk, which feeds God, is indeed the result of mixing two races—divine and human—embodied in the very figures of Mary and Christ.

41 Rimvydas Šilbajoris, "Perfection of Exile," *The Perfection of Exile* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1970), 206.

42 Mackus criticized Lithuanians for their attitude towards African-Americans in his article "The Spirit of Salem" (1964): "We can only be surprised as to how insensitive we are to injustice toward others. And despite that, in a moral sense, the negro from Mississippi, who is fighting for his own rights, and the oppressed Lithuanian, both are brothers in the same fight." Algimantas Mackus, "Salerno dvasia," *Ir mirtis nebus nugailėta* (Vilnius: Vaga, 1994), 546.

43 Memoirs of *Waldo Frank*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (Amherst, 1973), 107.

44 See Michael Rogin, "Black Face White Noise: the Jewish Jazz Singer Finds His Voice," *Critical Inquiry* (Spring 1992), Volume 18, Nr. 3.

45 It is interesting to note that the actor who performed the Jew was Al Jolson, one of the most popular singers of the first half of the last century, a Jewish immigrant to the United States, born in Seredžius, Lithuania.

46 Vytautas Kavolis, "Nužemintųjų generacija," *Žmogus istorijoje* (Vilnius, 1994), 86.

47 Mary A. Gembicki, "Research and Reference Tools—Lithuanian Religious Life in America: A compendium of 150 Roman Catholic Parishes and Institutions: Eastern United States (Vol. 1) by William Wolkovich-Valkavicius. *The Journal of American History* (Bloomington, March 1994.)

48 Mackus, "By the Independence, and by the Generation that didn't Grow into Land," Algimantas Mackus, *Ir mirtis nebus nugailėta*, 440-441.

49 Anne McClintock, "No Longer in a Future Heaven," *Imperial Leather* (New York, London, 1995), 353.

50 Mackus, "From Notes About Exile," Algimantas Mackus. *Ir mirtis nebus nugailėta*, 520.