

The Deconstruction of National Identity in Lithuanian Literature: Marius Ivaškevičius' Plays

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Abstract. A *heating* national identity that makes use of romantic myths from the Golden Age of Lithuania creates the necessary “emotional glue” that can bring harmony to a social group. A coherent narrative of national history together with collective memories are inseparable from the ideology of nationalism that flourished in East Central Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Benedict Anderson). But we also have to emphasize that the impact of patriotism on a society can be compared to the ambivalent deconstructionist idea of the *pharmakon*, suggesting that medicine used in too great a dose may become poison. Therefore, the deconstructionist’s suspicion of national mythology and static national identity does not weaken national health, as may appear at the first glance, but may actually strengthen it.

The two plays by Marius Ivaškevičius, *Madagaskaras* (Madagascar) and *Išvarymas* (*Expulsion*), still find a great resonance with readers and theatre audiences and are the subject of this article. I will consider how the deconstruction of national identity is based on the transformation and rewriting of national myths in Ivaškevičius’ plays. The deconstruction of identity, as I call it, emerges as a result of the interplay between opposing types of static *heating* and dynamic *cooling* identities. Having rejected extreme notions of national identity (i.e. these which are overly optimistic or utterly pessimistic) we enter into the field of the intricate semantics of identity, which leads us to the acknowledgment that nothing at all is self-evident and permanent, and everything depends on the perspective of each era.

Madagascar (2004) is a symbolic memory text where the author not only rejects the Lithuanian myths concerning national identity but also renews them from the contemporary point of view by adding lots of irony. Mocking the past and the idea to create a “reserve Lithuania” on the island of Madagascar allows him to speak of the ongoing national identity crisis: the old myths are no longer valid in our rapidly changing world and we cannot find a clear-cut answer to the question of who we are.

In the next play, *Expulsion* (2011), the author keeps investigating the same problem of national identity: “From the geographical point of view, London is located on an island. But if we were to abandon geographical thinking, all of us are islanders. Humanity still consists of islands called nations.” (Ivaškevičius) In the postmodernist global world there is no such thing as total isolation and islands are indeed interconnected by the seas rather than remaining isolated entities.

This applies equally to postmodernist nations and peoples. The play depicts the dramatic integration of Lithuanian immigrants into an alien culture. Benas, the protagonist of the play, and some other young Lithuanians are brought to London as cheap illegal labour. However, the golden grindstone of the free market crushes them all. In order to survive, they must adapt in an alien culture. But are there limits to how much they are actually able to adapt? The writer describes only the destructive cases of integration and sets very relevant social and moral problems about the integration of poor emigrants from the Eastern Europe into rich Western societies.

Critics like to call Ivaškevičius an anthropologist of the nation and writer of relevant political drama (Vaidotas Jauniškis, Ramunė Balevičiūtė, Valdas Vasiliauskas, Kristian Lupa). We must not perceive the crisis and deconstruction of the national identity in Ivaškevičius' plays as merely a rejection (or destruction) of past national creation myths, but rather as their ironic recreation, because, in this time of dynamic globalization, our modern national consciousness and culture needs them.

Keywords: deconstruction, national identity, immigration, cultural memory

In the age of globalisation, national identity is becoming more problematic than ever before. We have observed an increased interest in the problems of intercultural dialogue and a clash between *heating* and *cooling* approaches to the question of national identity in modern Lithuanian literature. This trend can be observed in such books as Valdas Papievis' *Vienos vasaros emigrantai* (*One Summer's Emigrants*, 2005), Dalia Staponkutė's *Lietumi prieš saulę* (*Rain vs. Sun*, 2007), *Iš dviejų renkuosi trečią* (*Of the two, I prefer the third*, 2014), Sigitas Parulskis' *Mano tikėjimo iltys: tekstai, atsiradę iš stebėjimo, patirties ir vaizduotės* (*Fangs of my Faith: Texts Born from Observation, Experience, and Imagination*, 2013), Paulina Pukytė's *Bedalis ir labdarys* (*The Underdog and the Benefactor*, 2013), Juozas Erlickas' *Išeinu iš krašto* (*Going out of Margins*, 2013), Janina Survilaitė's *Pašnekesiai su Helvecija* (*Conversations with Helvetia*, 2013), Undinė Radzevičiūtė's *Žuvis ir drakonai* (*Fish and Dragons*, 2013), and others.

The *heating* approach to national identity is created by mythologizing and romanticizing the origins and history of the Lithuanian nation. Here I have identified the four most popular myths, legends, or stereotypes (in this case I make no distinction between genres) concerning national identity.

The first national myth is the legend about Lithuanians (esp. the Lithuanian nobility) as descendants of the Romans. This legend can be found in the chronicles of Lithuania from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (*Bychowiec*

Chronicle)¹. This vision of Lithuania as the *Athens of the North*, delivering a moral rebirth to Europe, was resurrected in the books *Ars Magna* (1924) and *Les Arcanes* (1926–27) by Oscar Vladislas de Lubicz Milosz, idealist from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, French symbolist, and an active supporter of Lithuania's independence in 1918. The image of Northern Athens as the place of origin for the Lithuanian people is still alive and well in the Lithuanian cultural consciousness as a poetic and strongly emotional image. Following the restoration of independence in 1990, the first independent cultural weekly was named *Šiaurės Atėnai* (*Athens of the North*).

Two more creation myths for a Lithuanian cultural identity were imagined and disseminated in the works of the romantic writers (Adam Mickiewicz, Ignacy Kraszewski, S. Daukantas, Maironis, Vincas Krėvė). One myth glorifies the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the 13th–16th centuries, the time of King Mindaugas, Grand Duke Gediminas, and the Jogjellonian dynasty. The other suggests a conception of Lithuanian culture as a synthesis of Western and Eastern cultures. Polish and Lithuanian poet Mickiewicz promoted the romantic stereotype of Lithuanian national culture as a synthesis of Western and Eastern cultures in his lectures (*Collège de France*, 1840 - 1844). His ideas originated from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania² and received great support in the works of

¹ This legend tells us that Palemon fled Caesar's revenge and started the dynasty of Grand Dukes of Lithuania; Lithuania itself was called the Land of Palemon: "Prince by the name of Palemon, [...] brought along five hundred Roman patricians with him. [...] Palemon had an astronomer on board his ship who could read the stars. They left the Mediterranean, headed north, bypassed France and England, and reached the Kingdom of Denmark. Then they entered a sea wide as an ocean and finally arrived to the delta of the river Nemunas" [*Lietuvos metraštis: Bychovco kronika* 1971: 42–43]. In this article, all quotes from Lithuanian texts are translated by Diana Guogienė. Mathias Casimir Sarbievius (1595–1640) developed a mythical narration that Lithuanians originate from the Romans in his famous book *Lyricorum libri tres* (*Three books of poems*), published in 1965, in Cologne. He called Lithuanians inhabitants of Rome, and Lithuania 'the kingdom of great Palemon', 'the dominion of Palemon', and compared Gediminas Castle in Vilnius with the Capitol of Rome.

² This conception was related to the theory of the origin of the Lithuanians from India. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, German linguists and historians were interested in Indian (Sanskrit) as the parent language and origin of the European languages. They argued that the Lithuanian language and customs are best preserved in the archaic features of the Indo-European original parent language. German linguist F. Bopp published *The comparative grammar of Sanskrit, old Persian, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, Gothic and German languages* in 1833 in which he stated that the Lithuanian language is the closest language to Sanskrit among the modern languages. The correlation of the Lithuanian

the famous Lithuanian ideologists of the beginning of the twentieth century including Stasys Šalkauskis, Juozas Girnius, and others. Šalkauskis wrote: “Merging the two [i.e. Eastern and Western – A.J.] worlds [...] is a high calling of the nation worthy greatest efforts and substantial sacrifices” (Šalkauskis 1938: 6). He saw Lithuania as having absorbed the surrounding influences of the rational West (Germans) and mysterious East (Slavs) and able to maintain the balance between the two major cultural influxes. We can identify the manifestation of this idea in many literary works of various authors and in the paintings of Mikalojus Čiurlionis (e.g. *Rex, Serenity* – works that show nature as a living being). Many Lithuanian artists see themselves as living “on the edge of two worlds and continuously affected by the winds from both the East and the West” (Kubilius 1983: 66).

The fourth myth is based on the ideals of rural culture, visions of a golden age of the ancient Balts, and on the collective folk imagination. Vydūnas, Stasys Šalkauskis, Juozas Maceina, and Lindė-Dobilas created an apologetics of rural Lithuanian culture and introduced such national symbols as the Ploughman, the Mounted Knight, and the Pensive Jesus. The following writers are some of the most prominent champions of these myths regarding the golden past and rural cultural ideals, i.e. the great architects of the *heating* identity: Maironis, Vydūnas, Vaižgantas, Vincas Krėvė, Jonas Aistis, Antanas Miškinis, Bernardas Brazdžionis, Kazys Bradūnas, Justinas Marcinkevičius, Marcelijus Martinaitis. A romanticized national identity was particularly appreciated during the period of Soviet occupation and these literary works therefore remained sentimental and melancholic, and invoked feelings of deprivation and longing. Since, in the minds of Lithuanian poets, modernization was equated with Sovietization, they countered by singing hymns to their native farmhouses.

I acknowledge that *heating* the national identity with myths and legends from a Golden Age creates the necessary “emotional glue” that brings harmony to social groups. Collective memories, images, and coherent narratives of national history are inseparable from the ideology of nationalism (Anderson 1983).

But conceptions of a national identity can also be *cooling*. This alternative way of viewing national identity was presented by Vytautas Kavolis. He relates a *cooling* identity to critical and objective self-interpretation, and engaging the creative powers of a nation (Kavolis 2006). A critical interpretation of static national identity has been developed in Leonidas Donskis’ article *Globalizacija ir tapatybė: asmeninės pastabos apie lietuviškuosius tapatybės diskursus* (*Globalisation*

mythology with Indian culture as noted by Mickiewicz was later affirmed in the works of Norbertas Vėlius *Mitinės lietuvių sakmių būtybės* (*Mythical Creations in Lithuanian Legends*, 1977) and A. J. Greimas *Apie dievus ir žmones* (*Of Gods and Men*, 1979).

and Identity: Personal Observations Regarding the Discourse on the National Identity, 2006) and in Nerija Putinaite's book *Šiaurės Atėnų tremtiniai* (*Exiles of the Athens of the North*, 2004). Tomas Venclova, Lithuanian emigrant, professor of Yale University, and poet, has heavily criticised *heating* the static identity with romantic stories, because such an approach encourages the creation of un-self-critical anachronistic national mythologies:

According to him [Girnius – A. J.], every nation has some defects as well as some virtues. But Lithuanians who live in a dangerous stretch of land where the Slavic world comes into contact with the Germanic world in fact represent a healthy balance. They do not have the defects of their neighbours, but only their virtues [...] The world of the Slavs represents a chaotic mist, a kingdom of entropy; the German world represents inhuman *Ordnung*, a sphere of lifeless automatism; the small Baltic world, however, is actually the only plot on the Earth which has preserved the original Christian spirit that has remained essentially intact from the pagan times to this day. People who live in this area do good and only good, as naturally as a silkworm producing silk. (Venclova 2007: 291)

Venclova emphasizes that it is important for a modern person to feel that he or she belongs, not only to a nation, but also to the whole world. Not to self-defence, but to the modern view, open to dialog. Such an identity promotes thinking out of the box and encourages national self-criticism, pluralism, and a dynamic way of being in the world.

We must also emphasize that a nationalist ideology, when used too trustingly, can foster chauvinism, intolerance, and ethnic conflicts (95% of Russians supported the occupation of Crimea in 2014). The impact of patriotism on a society can be likened to the ambivalent deconstructionist notion of the *pharmakon*. The word refers to any biologically active ingredient, but the idea is that medicine used in too great a dose may become poison. Therefore, a deconstructionist's suspicion of national mythology does not necessarily weaken the health of the national identity, as it can appear at first glance, but may actually strengthen it.

We can find such a *cooling* identity in the works of Antanas Škėma, Tomas Venclova, Ričardas Gavelis, Juozas Erlickas, Sigitas Parulskis, and Marius Ivaškevičius. A *cooling* identity manifests itself as the deconstruction of *heating* identities and uses parody to neutralize their toxicity. Two plays written by Ivaškevičius, *Madagaskaras* (*Madagascar*) and *Išvarymas* (*Expulsion*), still find great resonance with readers and theater audiences and will be the subject of my paper.

In Ivaškevičius' plays the deconstruction of national identity is based on the transformation and rewriting of the national myths previously described in this article. The writer uses parody to neutralize the toxicity of the heating identity. Deconstruction of identity, as I wish to call it, emerges as the result of the interplay between opposing types of *heating* and *cooling* identities. Having rejected extreme notions of national identity (i.e. those which are overly optimistic or utterly pessimistic) we enter into the field of the intricate semantics of identity, which leads us necessarily to acknowledge that nothing is self-evident and everything depends on the nature of our language. As Jacques Derrida claims, the permanent interplay of two different languages – the rational (structural, constructive) and the irrational (rhetorical, deconstructive) – is inherent in any language (Derrida 1978: 278–293). From a deconstructive approach, language acts like the archetypal Joker (or conjurer) simultaneously creating an imitation of life (self-realisation, truth to nature) and a pastiche (self-preservation, artificiality, falsity). Although the old identities are no longer validated, they are nevertheless indispensable when reflecting the nature of modern nationalism. The writer transforms the painful problems of a small emigrating nation into a deconstructionist performance. National problems are not solved in this way (Indeed, are we capable of that?) but they are exposed and sedated.

Madagascar (2004) is a symbolic memory text about interwar Lithuanian writers and intellectuals where the author not only rejects all of their old myths concerning Lithuanian national identity, but also rewrites them from a contemporary point of view, adding lots of irony. By mocking the past the writer brings the current identity crisis to the fore: the old myths are now invalid and nobody can definitively answer the question of who we are.

In the play *Madagascar* the main character is a parody of a national intellectual and idealist. He is named after a historical figure, Kazimieras Pakštas, but one letter from the name Pakštas is changed to create a new name, Pokštas, which in Lithuanian means 'joke'. Language plays a significant role in *Madagascar*. There were given vivid historical forms for the language of the characters, not only copying historical sources (interwar press), but also creating them. Such language mostly created from quotations was named "the post-modern language" or "talent generated as the linguistic adventure" (Sprindytė 2006: 217). Such language also awakes to reader's sense of deconstructive ambiguity, duplicity and indeterminacy: on the one hand, historical authenticity of language strengthens plays realism and dramatism, while on the other hand it negates, causing laughter and creating perspective from a distance. The writer tells history of nation with a nostalgic hot love and with ruthless irony at the same time. In Ivaškevičius' plays the problem of national identity has to be debate in

such language context eliminating all opposition-based valuation and offered diversity.

The main character Pokštas (Joke) makes his appearance on stage with a grand geopolitical idea: since Lithuania is so small and it has no place in the midst of mighty Russia, Poland, and Germany, it needs to seek a safe refuge in an uninhabited part of Africa or on the island of Madagascar. Lithuanians must turn to the West to achieve this goal – they must become an agile maritime nation, rejecting all negative traces of Eastern passivity. The Joke even travels to Paris to meet with the Lithuanian ambassador, Oskar (modelled after Oscar Vladislas de Lubicz Milosz, who moved from his native home in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to France and became a French symbolist) to convince him to move from Paris to Angola and to prepare himself to receive the Lithuanians Pokštas (Joke) would send from Lithuania. Excited by the Joke's idea of a reserve Lithuania in Madagascar, Oskar reveals a vision of his own that is even more bizarre and outlandish. He discloses that he receives visions of the future from the Moon. These visions tell him, among other things, that half of the moon will fall on Russia, freeing a vast territory in which to restore Lithuania's former grandeur. Moreover, Oskar retells the myth of Palemon, which suggests that Lithuanians originate from the ancient Romans. He even argues with great passion that it is not the Lithuanians who originate from the Romans, in fact it is the Romans themselves and even the Ancient Greeks (such as Sophocles and Socrates) who are descended from Lithuanians. According to him, Lithuanians lived on the island of Atlantis and after it sank they sailed to Greece. It was only later that their descendents supposedly moved to Rome and from there sailed to the shores of the Baltic Sea.

In this play we encounter bookish individuals, whose ideas are attractive on the outside, but fail to match reality and are, therefore, tragic. The relationship between them is deconstructive, because they can't understand and communicate with each other. Twice Pokštas (Joke) visits the people of his native village. Alas, he is misunderstood and rejected, and having given his spectators a good laugh, he bursts into tears. The playwright means to tell us that the village, idealized by many preceding Lithuanian writers as a pristine environment for national souls, is too inert, too conservative, and unable to respond to historical challenges. It is obvious that a rural identity cannot keep pace with the modern Lithuanian nation, but it is still unclear what might replace it.

National ideologists who promote their crazy visions to the people are not only laughable, but sometimes dangerous. It is no accident that Stefan Moretti, the Italian director, who staged *Madagascar* in Turin and focusing on the conflict between utopia and dystopia, was shocked to notice the resemblance of the

Pokštas (Joke's) insights into a nation's living space to the speeches of fascist leader Benito Mussolini.³

Pokštas (Joke), who orients his nation toward the West, has the chance to meet a charming lady from an opposition political party named Salė (named after the famous poet Salomėja Nėris). At first she claims romantically that all women fit into one word *love*, but by the end of the play, when she has had enough 'intercourse' with dragons (modelled after four communist activists and literary contributors to the leftist magazine *Trečias frontas* (*The Third Front*, 1930–31)), she is reduced to a suffering lovesick woman who dedicates her poetry, herself, and her nation to the Over-human called Omni-Devourer (modelled after Stalin). These two characters (and the same can be said about all of the characters in this play) cannot possibly understand each other. Their suggestions, absolute alternatives to East or West orientations for their nation, mock the romantic abstract idea, popular during the interwar period, of Lithuania as a synthesis between the West and the East.

At the end of the play Pokštas (Joke) bursts into tears for the third and final time because his enthusiastic idea about the relocation of the nation to a better geographic location was unexpectedly fulfilled in a paradox manner: the hasty exodus of Lithuanians fleeing to the West from the Communist terror and Russian occupation. Pokštas (Joke) finds himself among them. Such a deconstructivist reversal of the idea of national relocation to a more congenial geographic location reveals just how indiscernible the future of a nation and the horizon of national identity really are.

Although Ivaškevičius' *Madagascar* is a commemorative text depicting the interwar period of the twentieth century, in fact he is addressing his contemporaries, who are at times still naïve enough to believe in one of the romantic myths of a perfect Lithuanian nation (that Lithuanians originate from the Romans, that they are on an exclusive national mission to unite Eastern and Western cultures, or that Lithuanians thrive on their rural identity) and who believe that with the re-establishment of independence and Lithuania's membership in the EU and

³ The play *Madagascar* by Marius Ivaškevičius enjoyed its debut performance in "Garybaldi" Theatre in Turin on 14 May 2011. The play was translated into Italian by Toma Gudelytė and by director Stefano Moretti. *Gli Incauti* (which means 'inconsiderate' in English), a theatre company of young independent Bolognese actors formed in 2008 on the initiative of students from the Piccolo's Theatrical School in Milan, headed by young director Simone Toni. Since 2010 *Gli Incauti* has implemented a theatrical project that includes both classic and modern plays investigating the subject of utopia and dystopia: 'new worlds', islands of utopia, real and imaginary places where the existential drama of human beings unfolds, where social fears lurk and at times are transformed into various forms of hatred (Gudelytė 2011).

NATO, the nonsense of the world will be a thing of the past. The play's parody of pre-war idealists is intended to counter the naivety of such people today. Unless we stop building our lives and our hopes of a better future on a mythologized national identity, we are no better than the dreamy idealists who lived before WWII. By looking at Pokštas (Joke), the main character of the play, we are meant to see a reflection of ourselves with all of our worldview distortions.

The topic is so relevant today, that soon after *Madagascar's* premier in the Small Theatre of Vilnius the playwright received a request from the Lithuanian National Theatre to write a play about present-day emigration. In his next play, *Expulsion* (2011), he keeps on investigating the same problem of national identity as he did in *Madagascar*, but only in another historical time: "Taking it from a spatial point of view, London is on an island. But if we disable geographical thinking, all of us are islanders. Humanity still consists of islands called nations." (Ivaškevičius 2012: 7). But in the postmodern global world there is no such thing as total isolation, and islands are interconnected by seas rather than being isolated entities. The same can be said about the postmodern subject and the postmodern nation.

In spite of focusing on the problems and ills of emigrants, neither the playwright, nor the director provides a definite answer to the question of what emigration is. *Expulsion* provides many options for answering that question. According to Oskaras Koršunovas, the director of the play, "It is essentially a horizontal spiritual journey in pursuit of happiness, but it often descends into a vertical precipitous journey, leading to disaster." (Koršunovas)

The play dramatically depicts the integration of Lithuanian immigrants into an alien culture. Benas, the protagonist of the play, leaves for the West in a van in search of a better life together with some other young Lithuanians. They all end up being crushed by the golden grindstone of the free market. They are brought to London as cheap illegal labour. Their documents indicate that the van is carrying apples, and the illegal immigrants are vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, deceit, and mockery. In order to survive, they must adapt to the alien culture. But what are the limits to how much they are actually able to adapt? For example, one character, Edis, is very proud that he has got a good job with a rich English family. The master takes him hunting where he has to collect the ducks. The audience understand that this emigrant is taking the place of the family dog. But does the character himself understand it? On the other hand, what does this say about the morality of the upper class in England? The writer sets very relevant social and moral problems about the integration of poor emigrants from Eastern Europe into the rich Western societies. Benas, the protagonist, has to go through various stages of integration into the new society (He becomes Marek, a security worker at a night club, and then Robert, a policeman.), because he wants to raise

himself from the humiliation of feeling like a loser and seeks revenge on the Englishman, Coolface, who had previously beaten him up. He is lost among his changing masks and torn between the two forces of Western culture (Christ) and Eastern Mongol-type barbarism (Genghis Khan). This is evident from a conversation he has with his friend in emigration, Vandalas:

Benas: Vandalas, what has work to do with it? I am telling you the essential thing...

Vandalas: What the fuck do you mean?

Benas: The very essential one. If you have Mongol in you, Christ does not love you.

Pause. They were able to come to terms before. Not any longer. Now it looks as if they are at odds with each other.

Vandalas: Genghis Khan?

Benas (nods): With Christ. Christ wants us for himself, Genghis Khan does not let him have us.

Vandalas: You mean Lithuanians?

Benas: Mongols. His offsprings.

Vandalas: Fuck you, where did you get that from? From books?

Benas: It's in the air, you drumhead. Don't you feel how they are fighting each other? [...]

Vandalas: Fighting with what? With words? For fuck's sake!

Benas: With us, in place of swords. (Ivaškevičius 2012: 112–113)

In this context, Ivaškevičius debates by using artistic means against popular national myths and especially against the perception that the Lithuanian identity is a unique synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures. On the contrary, the conciliation of these two forces in the global world where the Eastern Genghis Khan and the Western Christ rattle their swords against each other is all too distant. What is the real identity of Lithuanians today, with their constant changing of social roles and masks? We couldn't see what the outcome of that permanent struggle between the contradicting parts of their identity is going to be. The same can be said of the national identity.⁴ Deconstructive identity problems raised by Benas, and by Pokštas (Joke) too, are becoming part of the social agenda today.

Critics, such as Vaidotas Jauniškis, justifiably refer to Ivaškevičius as an anthropologist investigating the problems of national identity, and as a creator

⁴ For comparison: Virg. Savukynas, *Lietuvių tauta išgyvena tapatybės krizę, in 15 minučių*, 11. 03.2014.

of relevant political drama. Krystian Lupa, a Polish critic, called *Expulsion* a 'Lithuanian saga' or the new national epic. Ivaškevičius' plays receive controversial reviews from critics. The main point, however, is that both opponents and sympathizers of Ivaškevičius' works have drawn the same conclusion – that his plays are about the deconstruction of national myths. But the deconstruction itself is perceived and evaluated differently by different groups. Some critics, such as Silvestras Gaižiūnas, perceive his work as the destruction of the most sacred cultural foundations, overthrowing the past; others, such as Ramunė Balevičiūtė, Jūratė Sprindytė, and Valdas Vasiliauskas, see it as rescuing their national identity from static clichés and as an intriguing reworking of the perception of what it means to be Lithuanian. I agree with the latter, because the interplay between *heating* and *cooling* national identities, especially the deconstruction of the idea of Lithuanian culture as a synthesis of Eastern and Western cultures, in the texts of Ivaškevičius allows us to get closer to aspects of present-day reality that are difficult to read correctly.

We must not perceive the crisis and deconstruction of the national identity in Ivaškevičius's plays as merely a rejection (destruction) of past myths, rather as their ironic recreation, because our modern national consciousness and culture needs them now, in this time of dynamic globalization. Is it possible to speak about a postmodern Lithuanian nation unified by a new deconstructivist national identity? Why not?

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