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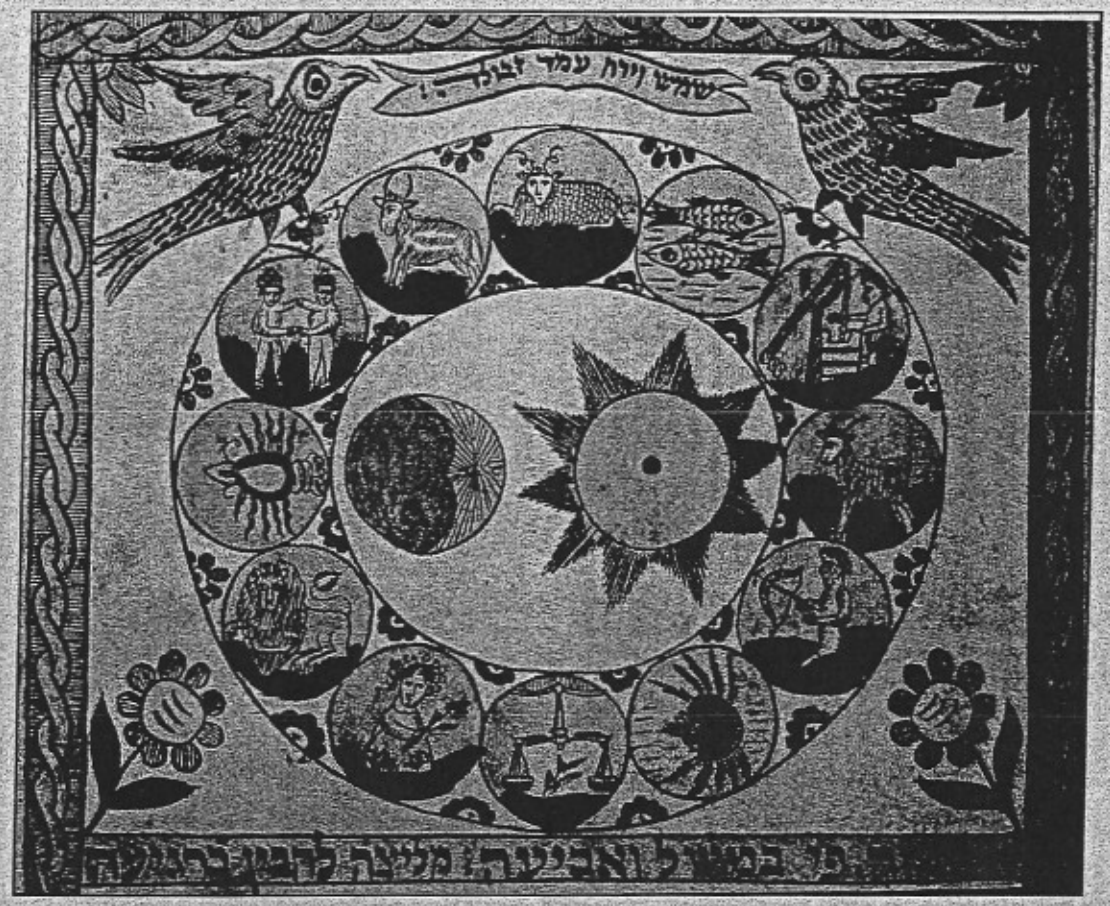

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Images of Jewish identities in Lithuanian literature of the twentieth century: Grigorii Kanovich and Markas Zingeris

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This paper deals with the identity concept of two Lithuanian Jewish writers, Grigorii Kanovich and Markas Zingeris. Kanovich, as a member of the Holocaust generation, writing in Russian, depicts his protagonists as spiritual and hardworking people with strong self-confidence, resting on religion and custom. By means of the narrative technique of memory, Kanovich creates a literary resurrection of the Lithuanian Jews as a people which was almost completely exterminated during the Holocaust. Omnipresent pictures of cemetery and grave transform the Lithuanian space into a metonymy of death and, grotesquely, to the only place of home, being the "shelter" for the killed bodies of the Lithuanian Jewry. Markas Zingeris, growing up in post-war Soviet Lithuania, represents the concept of open identities, changeable in time and place. Calling himself a Lithuanian writer who has been raised within a Lithuanian, Jewish, and, not least, Soviet milieu, Zingeris depicts his protagonists in in-between situations. Writing in Lithuanian, speaking several languages fluently and working as translator, Zingeris embodies the cosmopolite. At the same time, though, he is a writer of collective memory. He comments on the apparent loss of the great utopia of an autonomous identity with ironic melancholy, pointing instead to the rich variety of hybrid identities.

Keywords: Lithuanian Jewry; Jewish identity; autonomous/hybrid identity; collective memory; Lithuanian-Soviet literature

> Our country … is not a Russian land and it is not America. It is our memory. In it we also live all together: the leaving and the dead and those who have not yet been born, but will be born under our roofs.[1]

> Let us give blood to the Red Cross laboratories. My instrument, the media, the country, the audience, and, if you like, cow milk … determined the fact that I am a Lithuanian writer.[2]

Lithuania in its historical multiculturality is a primordial East European space. But as a consequence of the Holocaust, this place, where before World War II there lived about 250,000 Jews, turned into an almost ethnically homogeneous country.[3] Until recently, however, writers of Jewish origin left their traces in Lithuanian cultural discourse.

Lithuanian Jews who remained in post-war Soviet Lithuania usually wrote in Lithuanian. The Jewish topic was thoroughly determined by the Holocaust, as depicted in autobiographical memoires of Jews hidden during the German occupation. The post-war period was full of new tragedies. After barely surviving the Holocaust, Lithuanian Jews were prevented by Soviet antisemitism from rebuilding their own identity, wider Jewish culture and life. Accused of promoting Jewish nationalism and cosmopolitism, the Yiddish language was banished and only used secretly.[4] In 1996, the self-reflections of the Lithuanian Jewish

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writer and intellectual Jokubas Josade were published, and they mirrored his painful conflict between the confession of his Jewish identity and the struggle for social acceptance during Soviet times. Together with his interviewer and editor, the Russian-Jewish writer Evsej Cejtlin, Josade analysed the reasons for his own denial of his Jewish descent as he attempted to understand the relationship between Lithuanians and Jews from a psychological point of view:[5] "Two people lived next to each other, peaceful in general, at the same time they almost did not know each other; didn't they in fact divorce tragically? ... Neither the one nor the other ever developed a need for speaking with each other."[6]

After the twentieth party conference of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956, when, initiating the so-called "thaw," Nikita Khrushchev made public the crimes of Stalinism for the first time, novels and stories of the Lithuanian-Jewish writer Itshokas Meras (born 1934), who survived the Holocaust while hidden by a Lithuanian farmer, were published. Meras's Jewish protagonists are, first of all, depicted as equal to other strong and brave people, but not in the uniqueness of their culture and traditions. The Jewish people's fate has to be understood universally – as the fate of man under persecution. And like every people the Jewish people had to defend their dignity by armed resistance.[7] The novels of Mykolas Sluckis, another Lithuanian author of Jewish descent, have similarly to be understood as Lithuanian literature. Representing the "Lithuanian novel of inner monologue" and writing about social and moral conflicts in Lithuanian-Soviet society, Sluckis mentions Jewish topics only incidentally.[8]

The rich culture of Lithuanian Judaism did not become the subject of literary narrative before the international recognition of Grigorii Kanovich (born 1929) at the end of the 1970s. Growing up in a traditional Jewish family with Yiddish as his mother tongue, Kanovich became familiar with the Russian language during his war-time evacuation and, after he had studied Russian philology at Vilnius University, Russian became the language of his creative writing.[9] For the first time after the Holocaust, there was a writer who established Lithuanian Jews as a people within their original Lithuanian-Jewish identity. Years before perestroika and glasnost', he raised a problem that hitherto was a taboo; the treatment of the "other" in Soviet society. To begin with, his novel *Sveči na vetru*, published in Vilnius in 1979, was read following the usual model of dealing with Judaism in the Soviet Union: self-esteem had to be founded on active humanism and emancipation from fatalism, which was traditionally ascribed to Judaism. According to the politics of that time, Judaism included itself in the "stream of the human history of liberation." But Kanovich depicted the Lithuanian Jews from yet another side; neither as the victim, nor as the combatant, but as the "concrete other" with its history and tradition. Hence, his protagonists present themselves situated in their Lithuanian-Jewish history and closely attached to the culture and nature of the Lithuanian–Polish–Belorussian space they understand to be their home just as much as do their Lithuanian fellow citizens.[10]

Parallel to the Lithuanian movement of national independence (Sąjūdis), Lithuanian Jewish culture started its sweeping revival at the beginning of the 1990s. It was not only autobiographical memories that broke the silence.[11] When in 1991 Kanovich, then the leader of the Jewish community in Vilnius, made a speech in his mother tongue, Yiddish,[12] on the 50th anniversary of the genocide of Lithuanian Jews, this was the signal for the beginning of a new self-confidence amongst Lithuanian Jewry.[13] This process was, however, not a linear one. In 1993, Kanovich emigrated to Israel, designating the end of the twentieth century as the beginning of a new period of exile for Lithuanian Jews, whose only other alternative was the death of Jewry – either in the cemetery or through assimilation.[14] Today he remains engaged within Vilnius's Jewish community, acting upon its behalf in both Israel and Vilnius.

A new generation of Lithuanian-Jewish writers who knew the Holocaust only through their parents, but had sufficient experience of Soviet times, began to make their voices heard in the early 1990s. Their forefathers' idea of autonomous identity seemed to them just as outdated as "unity in God."[15] Rather, the focus of their interest was events and figures of pre-war or post-war times. At the same time, the intonation of the narrative began to change. The emphatic and tragic tone was often replaced by a humorous irony. An interesting example are the texts of Markas Zingeris (born 1947). But, in contrast to the general tendency to deconstruct and even destroy the myths of Lithuanian national identity in recent Lithuanian literature,[16] works written by Lithuanian-Jewish authors are distinguished by an unique significance of memory, recalling the lives of Lithuanian Jews and their influence on Lithuanian culture.[17]

In what follows I will focus on the different approaches to the concept of identity in the works of Grigorii Kanovich, probably the most famous Lithuanian-Jewish writer of his generation, and of Markas Zingeris, presumably the most representative Lithuanian-Jewish writer in contemporary Lithuanian literature. They represent either the concept of preservation (Kanovich) or the concept of integration (Zingeris), both of which will be the focus of my analysis.

One of the socio-anthropological functions of memory is the establishment of personal and community identity. It is in this context that contemporary cultural discourse pays increasing attention to the narrative of memory and the role it plays in the survival of cultures under threat of extinction. One of these cultures is that of East European Jews, in particular the culture of the Litvaks, an extraordinary Jewish-Lithuanian identity in terms of religion, behaviour, culture and language.[18] In his work Itshokas Meras paid more attention to the universal aspect of persecution and the expulsion of human beings in a hostile environment, especially in his writings of the 1960s on the fate of Lithuanian Jewry in World War II.[19] In contrast, Grigorii Kanovich confirms Jewry in its "concrete identity."[20] Kanovich's Jewish protagonists perceive themselves as Lithuanian Jews of multi-generational origin[21] and have a clear self-belief in terms of religion, tradition, culture and language.[22] The novels written by him between 1983 and 1992 comprise a unique tetralogy on the history of Lithuanian Jewry over almost two centuries. The world depicted in this work reminds us of the times when, following the Polish rebellions of the nineteenth century, Lithuania was occupied by the Tsarist state, later by the Soviets until the German invasion of 1941 and of Soviet and Post-Soviet times.[23] Encountering the same literary characters throughout these texts reinforces an impression of a sort of saga or a family clan, which cannot be found in the works of other contemporary authors of East European Jewry. In 1991, Kanovich noted in an interview that he was not able to present his people because Lithuanian Jews were without their own soil. His works, however, bear witness to the fact that within Lithuanian Judaism the idea of a people belonging to a country is quite alive.[24]

The history of Lithuanian Jews, as narrated by Kanovich, and its successive phases of creation, birth, life and death, reminds one of the Old Testament. Family history is national history. It culminates in the final scene of the novel *Ne otvrati lica ot smerti* with the death of the final descendant of the Dudak family, the dominant clan of the Lithuanian Jewish shtetl in which Kanovich's work is placed. The date of the baby's death, 15 June 1941, is significant. One week later, on 21 June, the German army occupied Lithuania and initiated the genocide of Lithuanian Jews in collusion with Lithuanian collaborators. Among these victims would have been the members of the fictional Dudak family.[25] In continuation of this thought, the protagonist in Kanovich's last novel, *Park Evreev*, remains childless, while the people in his stories of the 1990s live only in memories ("Prodavcy snov," "Liki vo t'me"). Most of the time, the literary perspective is tied to older people, deeply rooted in the

country of their origin, living within their memories and reflecting upon death. For the younger generation, changing their place of residence is part of modern life. In the story *Vera Il'ichna*, written in Israel, the life of a Russian widow of a Jew is depicted. Her grandson easily switches from a Lithuanian to an Ethiopian girlfriend, effortlessly learns Hebrew and, by serving in the army, integrates himself into his endangered country. He faces a grave injury with the composure of a survivor, while worrying about his life accelerates the death of his grandmother, Vera Il'chna. Israel is to be his homeland. For the older generation, however, the homeland will always be Lithuania.[26]

As the German researcher Jan Assmann has noted, collective memory is based on a particular group's knowledge of its cultural heritage and history.[27] Cultural memory[28] as one component of collective memory is understood by Assmann to be a reservoir of national knowledge, which particularly crystallises in "figures" of recollection.[29] In this context, Grigorii Kanovich's credo can be seen as the recollection of his nation's cultural memory, simultaneously preserving the Lithuanian-Jewish collective identity. For Kanovich, one of the main characteristics of the Lithuanian Jewish group identity is their union with God. By being put in contrast to the "other culture," religion becomes a conscious normative self-identification and fortifies the "mémoire collective."[30] The biblical imagery of Kanovich's narrative style is permeated with traces of biblical fables and psalms. At the same time, the author makes religion familiar. A synagogue is portrayed as a place for discussion, contemplation and meeting; "The house of prayer … was … not an island, but a motherland."[31] In contrast to these positive connotations of Jewish self-perception, the Holocaust constitutes the tragic new myth of Lithuanian-Jewish self-identification in the twentieth century. The Lithuanian homeland acquires the connotation of a collective grave.[32]

Kanovich's speech of September 1991 expressed an idea that can be regarded as central to his work. He talked about the obligation to remember death as one of the three pillars in the life of a nation (the others being cradle and destiny).[33] Although the Holocaust is never an outright focal point, the implicit references to it determine the whole atmosphere of his narrative. Even though in every new story he rebels against death and forgetting, graves appear to dominate his whole oeuvre.[34] His dedications to the members of his family at the beginning of each novel testify to a personal, authentic attitude towards the continuation of Lithuanian-Jewish national life – for example, to his father in *Kozlenok za dva groša*, to his mother in the first part of *Sveči na vetru*, to his wife in *Sveči na vetru* (third part), to his grandson (*Ne otvrati lica ot smerti*) and to his granddaughter (*Park Evreev*). For Kanovich, the Lithuanian-Jewish group identity is determined by the union of the living and dead and, in addition, by the bonds to their "homeland" – the Lithuanian villages and towns, inhabited by both Lithuanian and Jews. The novels and stories are set in the residential area Zhmud (Žemaitija), in the district of Rasèiniai on the bank of the Neman, or the village Ionava on the river Vilia, a tributary of the Neman, near Kaunas.[35] This peculiar territory is occupied by the Russians, lies next to the German lands alongside the Memel and allows visits to Vilnius, the "Lithuanian Jerusalem," which replaces the shtetl in his latest works (*Park Evreev*, *Son ob isčeznuvšem Ierusalime*).[36]

The world of the Litvaks recalled by Kanovich is a very concrete world of everyday existence; a world of crafts and labour, of living in harmony with earth and nature. The pre-war protagonists are healthy and proud Jews; undertakers and stone-workers, water-deliverers and night-guards, shop assistants and pub owners, tailors and shoemakers, destitute factory owners, rabbis and revolutionaries, synagogue assistants, naïve searchers for miracles, mad people and those suffering under the authorities' rule. Being subjected to exclusion (although not yet to horrible pogroms and humiliations like their brothers and sisters in the Ukraine and Russia), they are proud of being Jewish. As the literary critic

Gejzer writes on the peculiarities of the Litvaks, it would not occur to the Lithuanian Jews to distance themselves from their Jewish origins, and this is precisely what constitutes "the source of the free spirit" in Kanovich's works.[37]

In the novel *Liki vo t'me*, written in his Israeli period, the narrator (the author's alter ego of Kanovich's boyhood years during the evacuation in Kazakhstan) is irritated and depressed more by the denial by his Russian-Jewish comrades of their Jewish identity than by the omnipresent horror of the war. The boy is furious that the Jewish doctor who saves his life puts so much energy into precautionary measures in order to not be suspected of a "Jewish conspiracy." "Where does it happen that a Jew, a superior one, forbids another Jew to say that he is Jewish." The boy is not yet able to evaluate the actions of the doctor in real terms; an adaptation to the subliminal and often blatant antisemitism of these years. Quite the contrary; having grow up in Jewish Lithuania, he, like his mother, believes in the unity of the Jewish people and their mission to make shoes and dresses instead of being soldiers, just as they are longing for Lithuania as their home because there is only one home – like there is only one life.[38]

The Jewry recalled by Kanovich did not live in symbiosis with Lithuanian culture, but constituted a wholly independent cultural and national group. This contrasted, of course, with the painful temporary symbiosis of Jews with German culture[39] Contemporary academic discourse questions whether shtetl people can be understood as a homogeneous ethnic unit, as described in earlier research.[40] In light of more recent analysis, self-identification seems to depend more on political ideology and various living and social conditions than on sheer ethnicity.[41] The Jewish world as recollected by Kanovich is that of the Litvaks. We meet their distinctive characteristics in almost every theme. It is interesting to notice that even Kanovich no longer belongs to the "homogeneous identity" of the Litvaks. Although his native language was Yiddish and his culture and religion were Jewish, he regards himself today as a Russian writer.[42]

Confirming that the problem of Jewry in his works is his "springboard for philosophical and general contemplation on mankind as a whole," Kanovich sees himself, however, as the only Russian author of his time for whom the "Jewish theme is the *only* one."[43] But even after his emigration to Israel[44] he continued to write the history of the Litvaks – with a nostalgia for Lithuania.[45] Thus, the landscape of memories is for Lithuanian Jews much more the "mnemotopos of Lithuania" than the "mnemotopos of Palestine."[46] The fewer Jews are left there, and the further away from Lithuania a Litvak lives, the more Lithuania takes the place of the Promised Land. This aspect becomes especially significant in an essay that Kanovich wrote for the journal *Lithuanian Jerusalem* and which he dedicated to the Jews who died abroad, away from Lithuania, or live in Israel today but were born on Lithuanian soil. "Let it be the case," Kanovich writes, "that light and truth illuminate our steps … and the steps of the Lithuanian people who have at last gained their long-sought independence and whose name was given not to little groups of people, but to hundreds of thousands of those who were born on this land under a Jewish roof." Recalling the moving scene where Israeli Kibbutzniks sang the Lithuanian anthem, Kanovich emphatically confirms the Litvak's traditional love for Lithuania: "Instead of a farewell, the Kibbutzniks stood up, as if by agreement, and – you would not believe it – first in Hebrew … and then without pauses and hesitations in an unforgotten language of Basanavičius and Maironis, started singing the anthem of their small motherland – Lithuania."[47]

Analysing the significance of cultural memory for national identity, Jan Assmann, with a reference to Lévi-Strauss, discusses the difference between "cold" and "hot" societies, classifying Jewry in the Middle Ages as a "cold society."[48] Rejecting the dichotomic understanding of the opposition between primitive = cold and civilised = hot, however, he

describes positive aspects of both. The significance of memory in Jewish communities can therefore be understood as a preserving force. Hence, Assmann's position concerns not only the productive function of myths for the self-identification of a nation, but also clarifies the connotation of the autonomous identity in Kanovich's oeuvre.[49] He is apparently not interested in a differentiation of the Lithuanian Jews or the undoubtedly heterogeneous nature of the Jewish nation.[50] What is important for him is an urge for existence.

In comparison with Kanovich, Markas Zingeris can be seen as an example of a "Western Jew,"[51] who comes from a family that was part of the "educated bourgeoisie" in Soviet times.[52] He ironically tells of their household where there was a nanny and a home tutor for teaching foreign languages. In contrast to Kanovich he perceives himself as a Lithuanian author writing in Lithuanian. The Lithuanian language is his means of communication, his place of action is the Lithuanian land, and his readers are Lithuanians, as he confirms in an interview, emphasising that he was nourished by Lithuanian milk and helped to enter this life by a Lithuanian midwife.[53] Regardless of this, his works are reminiscences of a narrator of Jewish origin who grew up in Lithuania and contemplates these Jewish roots. But these roots originate in a rather ambiguous notion of Jewishness. The lives of the mother and uncle of the narrator are separated by a philosophy of caution in Lithuanian Jewry and by the militant Zionist utopia.[54] At the same time, however, the family is united by the fate of the European Jewry of the twentieth century, by the Holocaust, but also by the everyday traditions of Jewish living. Both mother and uncle, who are survivors of concentration camps, passed on something decisive to the protagonist; a feeling of belonging to the overall sadness of Jewry, to the traditions of Jewish festivals, to Jewish cuisine, Jewish humour and Jewish family solidarity. The depicted parallelism of private (Jewish family) life and social (Soviet political) life highlights the parallel existence of these Lithuanian-Soviet Jews: "Although we were citizens of the country of the future, we were always happily visiting our uncle Mendel to celebrate the archaic *Shabbes*."[55]

In contrast to contemporary Lithuanian authors without a Jewish background, Zingeris does not blame his father's generation for cowardice or responsibility for the deformation of Lithuanian society during Soviet times.[56] Instead, he tries to understand their lives through their ideals. In this context, the image of the father plays a special role. The narrator perceives his roots as a Soviet Jew as embodied in his father – with all the illusions, delusions and errors involved. When he reflects on his family as continuing "the history of mankind's illusions" which "could not be broken even by the totalitarian system,"[57] he puts his father's ideals in context with an eternal human longing for justice and happiness even though these ideals might seem to be "out of fashion" nowadays.[58] In the images of his father, the "sparkling eyes"[59] of a dreamer and idealist, his "ever present cheerful smile" as well as his "fractious superstitions," respect is connected with love and with criticism.[60] It is significant that the narrator, integrating himself into the history of the country, shares the delusions of the generation of the fathers and acknowledges repeating their mistakes. Citing his father, who, in a debate with his brother-in-law on abiding Jewish laws, boasts about his son's social equality and his selection as best pioneer ("Who can tell, he is a Jew? He is a pioneer; the best pupil in his class"), the former excellent pioneer adds from his current point of view, "I was his barefooted little son … a future envelope of the journal 'Soviet Union'; equally red and brown in colour; equally swift."[61]

Zingeris as a writer denies any obligation to explain or defend political positions. He is not driven by a philosophical idea but rather by love and compassion for his characters, he confesses in an interview: "Everything starts straight away with love and compassion, although I, as a writer, can never see my father with a child's eyes. To show love for one's father is always easier from a distance. But in love, distance does not exist. I want to show

that my hero accepts both sides of the life of his people whom he loves and understands."[62] Family is the material basis for Zingeris's artistic world. He stresses that he only writes about people whom he knows best, i.e. members of his family.[63] This closeness to his characters as members of his family distinguishes him from Kanovich, who writes about his people.

Zingeris calls the above-mentioned story "Repatriantai" a "farewell to childhood memories." These memories are embedded in the smells of Jewish cuisine as a symbol of family festivals (Teiglekh, Imberlekh, Heimlekh, Shabbes, Pendsl), in the laughter of his noisy father and also in the trauma of antisemitism in Soviet colours. The parallel lives of his protagonists that were mentioned above are mirrored by the artistic structure of Zingeris's writing. In the farewell scene, when the uncle's family is leaving for Israel from Brest railway station (the last territorial point of the Soviet Union), images of barbed wire and barking police dogs create the atmosphere of a concentration camp. The narrator, standing on the Soviet side before the fence, i.e. on the officially proclaimed "free territory", is paradoxically viewed from the perspective of someone who has already left, who is behind the fence, as being on non-free territory. The reader is thus exposed to experience the position of a Soviet Jew between all fronts. For those who have left and are behind the fence, he remains there, parting with traditions, but for those who stay in front of the fence, he is here, a falsely free and an equal Soviet citizen – free, at least, from the "old" group tradition. However, he feels the sense of belonging to both sides. As we see, the integration of a minority into the majority of a national state as a leitmotif of East European Jewish writing is questioned here once again.

"Repatriantai" ends melancholically. The sons of the uncle who left for the Promised Land all die in the Six-Day War, his daughter is ill and so the uncle is left without descendants. The passionate father is lying in his grave and his grandchildren have become Lithuanians. This is a sad end but the author renders it by means of irony. "Irony is my language. I can't speak seriously about serious things," Zingeris says.[64] The usage of the word "curse" in this context shows at least a self-ironic sadness of the narrator with respect to his disappearing self-identification as a Litvak. "They, oh curse, eat pork, and this will be their god, if they remain in Lithuania and have offspring," he writes. The feeling of loss is complemented by the tears of the narrator who receives a letter from his lonely uncle ("I blow my nose from tears"), but these tears are provided with a self-ironic comment. "This is forgivable. I am not that young anymore, either, and in my soul, I have to admit, the winds are blowing."[65]

Intonation for Zingeris is the most productive approach to artistic creativity, because it supposedly allows the writer to be authentic.[66] We encounter not only the traditional "Jewish laughter through tears" and a constant shifting from sadness to irony but also the apparent love of the writer for his characters. Irony, in the author's opinion, is a very dry instrument, if the writer does not love the protagonist. Zingeris signifies love as the "golden key" to his creativity. Irony and love constitute a distinctive feature of his writing style.[67]

While contemplating the future of the Lithuanian Jews at the end of the story, the narrator testifies a sad love towards his people:

> Other generations argue about the Promised Land, but, unfortunately, the children of my children will know nothing about it. Or maybe nobody argues about the Promised Land anymore? Maybe nobody, in any kitchen, in any spoon is looking for answers, bitter as salt, to the question of life? I know nothing, the time will pass, the world is changing.[68]

Nevertheless, Zingeris is not predicting an end of Jewish life through assimilation into the majority. Describing people like his father "adventurers" and "wooers," he supports their dreams as having always been connected to the public interest, and he defends their naïve

historical optimism.[69] "Hey, you, adventurers and wooers from *Laisve alleja*, who is offering you reparation? Where is your Promised Land? Is it in the pale sky of Lithuania?"[70]

Everything in these texts exists in close proximity to everything else and everything is interwoven; the great hopes and sad experiences of the parents, the memories of happy and painful times of one's own life as well as the unexpected nature of today. It's not self-sufficient characters who are of interest to this writer but characters "between two stools," "in between,"[71] not to be found in "pure pedigree encyclopaedias."[72] For Zingeris, identity is a spiritual motherland in which different ways of thinking and ways of life enrich one another. Identity is also the knowledge that every decision for something means one against something else. In his novel *Grojimas dviese* (Playing Duo), the author integrates the plotlines and motifs into a quest for identity. Its main character, the Lithuanian historian Rastinis (*rasti* is Lithuanian for "to find") has found himself and, simultaneously, has been found by his dead mother. Searching in the libraries and second-hand bookshops of New York for data on the musician Erwin Gast, a German half-Jew who perished together with his Jewish wife Lilė in the Vilnius Ghetto, Rastinis finds a letter by this Lilė to her son. This son will later turn out to be Rastinis himself. Saved from the Vilnius Ghetto by a Lithuanian woman and brought up by a Jewess who he had hitherto regarded as his mother, Rastinis perceives himself as a son of many mothers.[73] With a German father on top, he imagines himself as a carrier of many cultures – Jewish, Lithuanian, German – and, ultimately, world culture. Thus identity mirrors not only the hybrid character of the hero's upbringing but also a mutual union of cultures in which the dichotomy between "one's own" and "other" is abolished.

In the process of learning about themselves, Zingeris's characters create a specific spiritual place. This place shows many signs of the "third space" described by the British post-colonial academic Homi Bhabha.[74] This space is constantly winning because its "carriers," knowing many cultures, live in all of them, whoever they might be; Jewish, Lithuanian, Russian, Zionist, socialist or cosmopolitan. Zingeris's way of thinking leads us from the wanderer between worlds to the person in whom different worlds coexist, mutually interacting and enriching one other. Zingeris becomes, in Bhabha's words, a "productive parasite," while the above-mentioned Jokubas Josade was emotionally broken by his in-between situation which he never could accept; "I am like a human being who swam away from one bank but did not arrive the other."[75]

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Within a number of Lithuanian-Jewish writers who did not become well known or could not maintain their recognition in Lithuanian literature because of political circumstances like exterior emigration (Itshokas Meras) or interior emigration (Jokubas Josade), Grigorii Kanovich and Markas Zingeris represent the prototypes of two different ways of Jewish self-understanding. One – Kanovich's – is represented by the autonomous identity as a whole, fixed in his/her people's history, place, origin, religion, tradition and language. Although autonomy is continuously dismembered in his figures' tragically narrated life stories, the author artistically obligates them to resist any conversion. After emigrating to Israel, Kanovich, confronted with many different pathways of Judaism, indicates an opening of Jewish group identity in his portrayals. Staying in close connection with Vilnius's Jewish community, he continues his influence on keeping the memory of Lithuanian Judaism alive.

The other prototype is represented by Markas Zingeris. He also goes a long way towards keeping this memory alive but, living in Lithuania and writing in his mother

language, Lithuanian, he unhesitantly confesses to his double and even hybrid identity, which he reflects as a "normal" reaction to contemporary changes in the relationships of life, nation and culture.[76] He depicts his protagonist's "in-between" positions as both a chance and a loss of both treasure and an archaic burden.

Notes on contributor

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Notes

1. Kanovich, *Kozlenok za dva grosha*, 128.
2. Zingeris, "Speaking Simply about Complicated Matters," 48.
3. Eighty-one per cent of the 3.5 million population are Lithuanians. See De Munck, "Primary, Secondary and Metamagical Constituents of Lithuanian Identity," 211.
4. See Lustiger, *Stalin und die Juden*. The loss of Yiddish results less from assimilation than from repression, especially in Soviet Russia. See "Lenin and Stalin on the Jewish Question," 46; "The Jewish Cultural Revival," 71ff; "On Trial: A Language," 244.
5. See Cejtlin, *Dolgie besedy v ozhidanii schastlivoi smerti*, 52: "After the war, I changed my name. Was Jakov. Became Jokubas. Thought and wrote in Yiddish – now in Lithuanian. Even the diary. Even the letters to the daughter in Israel … How is it, however, to explain that J. consciously kept the language once spoken by their grandparents from his children? … He shut on them the door to the world of Judaism."
6. Ibid., 170. The originality of the book's creative form, between diary, interview and record, excited the cultural scene. The book's problems, so far never discussed in Lithuania, provoked the Lithuanian cultural community in the late 1990s. Josade was harshly criticised by the media and the Jewish community for the denial of his Jewish identity.
7. This is also been pointed out in Meras's reply that the Jewish rebellion in Warsaw's ghetto saved "the Jewish people's honor" (*Mėnulio savaitė*).
8. See Sluckis's novel *Laiptai į dangų*, whose plot is located in post-war Lithuania. The farmer Indriunas, comparing Soviet and Nazi occupation in Lithuania, says the latter only harmed the Jews, not the Lithuanians. The author gives his comment with the reply of the farmer's wife: "Aren't these also human beings?" In the novel *Adomo obuolys*, the protagonist, representing the ostracised geneticists in Soviet times, remembers the disastrous development when his younger brother became a member of the shooting squads that killed the town's Jews.
9. Kanovich grew up in the small town of Jonava, near Kaunas, where he studied in Cheder. Evacuated to Kazakhstan as an adolescent, he encountered the Russian language (see his novella *Liki vo t'me*). I refer to the literary critic Valerii Shubinskii, who stresses Kanovich's excellent knowledge of Russian, seeing him as the "only outstanding Russian writer so far who truly studied the Russian language" and whose correct Russian would give us much more of a natural impression than the jargon of Odessa in which almost all Jews in Russian literature communicate (Shubinskii, "Dom zhizni – dom smerti," 2).
10. The idiom "home" is barely mentioned in recent cultural discourse. This is understandable, taking into consideration its irrational use throughout history but also the postmodern objections to the authentic. Western discourse, however, does not weaken the significance and actuality of "home" and "homeland" for the newly constituted or reconstituted national states in Eastern and Southeastern Europe and their search for the "authentic."

11. See Cejtlin, *Dolgie besedy v ozhidanii schastlivoi smerti*, which records Jokubas Josadė's experiences; the memoirs of Katz, *Von den Ufern der Memel ins Ungewisse*; and Ranaitė-Čarnienė, *Neveroiatnaia Pravda*, the notes of Grigorij Šur, "*Die Juden von Wilna*," and others.
12. Kanovich's presentation to the Jewish community of Vilnius on 23 September 1991, on the 50th anniversary of the extermination of Lithuanian Jews in Paneriai.
13. See *Books about the Holocaust and Judaica in Lithuania*, edited by Lithuanian Publisher's Association and Markas Zingeris, with a preface by the latter. See the anthology of poems *Šiaurės gėlės* (Northern Flowers), edited and with a preface by the Lithuanian politician Emanuelis Zingeris, who emphasises this book's meaning as a memory of Lithuanian Jews' lively life, dominated by work and hopes, not death.
14. See Kanovich, *Park Evreev*, 257; Basche, "Des Menschen Kopf hat keine Federn."
15. See the remark of the narrator's father about God as the "pure betrayer of Jewish people" in Zingeris's story "Kaip buvo dainuojama Laisvės alėjoje."
16. See Marius Ivaškevičius on the deconstruction of national myths (Ivashkevichius, *Malyish'* and *Zhali*), and Sigitas Parulskis, *Trys sekundės dangaus*, on pronouncing the generation of the fathers guilty for the Soviet system.
17. Lithuanian Jewry differs from Central European Jewry as described by Milan Kundera as the "intellectual cement of Europe" (Kundera, "A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows out"). Lithuanian Jews, who have lived on Lithuanian land since the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, are said to be more connected to the earth. Living poorly, they have been craftsmen, working in "every possible trade" (Levin, *The Litvaks*, 10, 11). Settled in an area that nowadays extends over Lithuania and parts of Latvia to Belarus, living in small towns but also in the countryside together with Lithuanian peasants, Litvaks were characterised as patient, reserved and stubborn (Lempertas, *Litvakes*, 7) – the latter being one of the "much-trumpeted character features of the proverbial Litvak of Yiddish folklore" (Katz, *Lithuanian Jewish Culture*, 199). Dovid Katz, professor at the Yiddish institute of Vilnius University, understands his studies on Lithuanian-Jewish culture as an investigation into "various cultures of Lithuanian Jews, or Litvaks (Yiddish, *Litvakes*)," sometimes equating "Lithuanian Jews" with "Litvaks," sometimes accenting the difference (13). Being religious opponents of the Chassidim in the Ukraine and Poland, Litvaks, also called Misnagdim, were seen as rational people, "mind rather than feeling-oriented" in religion and daily life, devoted to the study of Tanach and Talmud (Lempertas, *Litvakes*, 8). The importance of Lithuanian Jewry "in its intellectual, rational approach" and its scepticism "regarding false messianism" is also confirmed by Levin, *The Litvaks*, 10, 11; and Katz, *Lithuanian Jewish Culture*, 80: "But the major attribute of Lithuanian Jewish society is, in one word: learning."
18. Referring to Eliyahu ben Shlomo-Zalmen, the Gaon of Vilna, Dovid Katz defines a characteristic of the Lithuanian Jewry (Litvaks) as follows: "a certain personal distance in general came to be one of the folkloristic attributes of the Litvak. Others include stubbornness, an intolerance for wanton innovation, an obsession to get to the bottom of every mystery confronted, a dislike of crowds and commotions and overt emotional outpourings, and an all consuming passion for simplicity of lifestyle, honesty in daily life and above all: learning, learning and more learning, a non-stop lifelong endeavour to study. All of these personified the Gaon, and his people who tried as much as they could to follow him, the Litvaks – Lithuanian Jewry" (Katz, *Lithuanian Jewish Culture*, 89). Izraelis Lempertas, a researcher on Yiddish studies in Vilnius, uses geographical, linguistic and religious criteria to describe the Litvaks' personality, stressing the Yiddish language as the dedicated spoken mother tongue of Lithuanian Jews (Lempertas, *Litvakes*, 7). Katz, *Lithuanian Jewish Culture*, 18, 128, 145, emphasises Lithuanian Yiddish as "the only language to have *ever* been spoken throughout any phase of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania." Otherwise "Litvakness" would go deeper than dialect into the "concept Litvishkayt," which invokes "a host of associations, values, memories and attitudes," including the literally "good Lithuanian heart" and, first of all, the religious aspect "in the context of a new dispute." "In the larger sense, they were all Litvaks who spoke a *litvishn yidish* (Lithuanian Yiddish). But in a narrower sense, Litvak and its adjective *litvish* came to mean 'Misnagdic' in discussions of religious matters or in style of Talmudic scholarship."
19. See Meras, *Geltonas lopas*; idem, *Lygiosios trunka akimirka*. Meras was a very famous author in the Lithuania of the 1960s. After having left for Israel in 1973, he became temporary chairman of the Union of Emigrant Writers from the USSR. He continued to write in Lithuanian but could not revive his former success.
20. The American philosopher Seyla Benhabib claims that the main principle of the "generalised other" leaves the "concrete Other" with his/her history and individuality unnoticed. This, in turn,

results in new exclusions ("Der verallgemeinerte vs. der konkrete Andere"). Kanovich claims this concreteness for Lithuanian Jewry.

21. In this respect memories correspond to the "communicative memory;" see Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 50. In *Kozlenok za dva grosha* we become acquainted with the Dudak family over four generations, beginning with Efraim Dudak, the stonemason and his three sons, the interpreter Shachna, the revolutionary Hirsh and the Purim clown Ezra, each of them representing Jewish careers at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century – socialism, assimilation or show business. Ezra's bride Danuta will give birth to their son Jacob and, after Ezra's death, she will have a second son, Aaron, with Shachna. The novel *Ne otvrati lica ot smerti* shows her and her sons' life on the eve of the Soviet occupation in 1940 and the Nazi occupation in 1941 and ends with her and her grandchild's death. While Jacob stays the grave-digger of the shtetl, Aaron becomes a KGB official and will lose his just-born first child at the end of the plot – an anticipation of the tragedies of Lithuanian Judaism in the Holocaust. The two novels are the third and fourth parts of a tetralogy beginning with *Slezy i molity durakov* and *I net rabam raia*, which are connected or identical with the places depicted in the later works: the residential settlements Zhmud (Žemajtija), the district of Raseiniai on the river Neman or the village Ionava on the river Vilia.
22. "Lithuanian soil" is to be understood in its historical and cultural meaning, determined by geopolitical changes, but in general as a space located in present-day Lithuania, Belarus and Latvia where Lithuanian Jews settled over centuries. Levin distinguishes the history of the Litvaks into an ethnic, a historic and an inter-war Lithuania. Levin focuses his studies on the territory of "inter-war Lithuania" with its capital Kovno but also deals with historic and ethnic Lithuania and mentions "other important Lithuanian communities, such as Vilna – Lithuania's historic, and contemporary, capital." Ethnic Lithuania, in his understanding, represents "an area of some 70.000 sq. km. to the east of the Baltic, mostly covering the Žematija … region as well as the Nemunas (Niemen) and Neris (Vilija) basins and settled very largely by ethnic Lithuanians." Historic Lithuania applies to the height of Lithuanians' power in the fourteenth century, when Lithuania encompassed "a vast expanse of territory stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea." The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its cultural and religious tolerance towards minorities, seen as Lithuania's Golden Age, influenced society over centuries to a comparatively communal tolerance. This is praised by Katz as the basis for the attachment and love of the Lithuanian Jews' to *Lita* as their geographical and cultural homeland (Katz, *Lithuanian Jewish Culture*, 18, 63). Katz refers to the "'conceptual stability' of places for a stateless culture" and, in that respect, for Lithuanian Jews, for whom "geographic concepts" have been more durable than for classic national states (63). He also mentions the importance of Lithuania's multiethnic society (63), which diminished the pressure on Lithuanian Jewry even during the Tsarist occupation after the three partitions of Poland, when Lithuanian Jews became part of Catherine the Great's Russian Empire (299). See also Atamukas, *Evrei v Litve*: 10, 11: Atamukas refers to five communities (Brest, Grodno, Trakai, Luke, Vladimir-Volynsk) at the end of fourteenth century in the united kingdoms of Poland and Lithuania where Jews were both peasants and city dwellers, especially traders and craftsmen. The decree of Prince Vytautas (1388–9) established privileges that formed the foundation for regulating judicial, industrial, economic and social relations between the ruler and the Jews and between the Jews and the Christian population. This time, when Jews as free citizens were only subjugated to the prince, is inscribed into Jewish history as the "Golden Period." After Vytautas's victory over the crusaders at the battle of Grunvald (1410), the state "Poland/Lithuania" had a Jewish population of 6000.
23. In quick sequence the novels *Slezy lezy i molitvy durakov*, *I net rabam raja*, *Kozlenok za dva grosha* and *Ne otvrati lica ot smerti* were published. His last novel, *Park Evreev*, came out in Jerusalem in 1997.
24. Julia Kristeva analyses the history of European national states and the processes of exclusion of the minority which accompany the constitution of national identity. In the tradition of the French Revolution, Kristeva demands the priority of civil rights above birth rights. Following this position, Lithuanian Jews, living for centuries on Lithuanian earth, should have had civil rights as well as birth rights. See Kristeva, *Fremde sind wir uns selbst*. On Kanovich's work see also Parnell, "V poiskach priiuta dlja dushi".
25. See Kanovich, *Ne otvrati lica ot smerti*.
26. See Kanovich, *Vera Il'ichna*
27. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 34–48.
28. Ibid., 48–66.
29. Assmann submits these figures referring to the topics of exodus and exile in Jewish history.

30. See Assmann on Maurice Halbwachs (*La mémoire collective*, Paris 1950) (*Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 34).
31. Kanovich, *Park Evreev*, 29. I refer to a remark in literary critique regarding Kanovich's "modernisation" of the psychology of his figures. The author criticises Kanovich's inaccuracy in religious details of Judaism but comes to the conclusion that he may have consciously modernised his figures' way of thinking to make them more current – a position with which I agree (Shubinskii, "Dom zhizni – dom smerti," 4).
32. "Paneriai [the site near Vilnius where Lithuanian Jews were murdered between 1941 and 1944] belongs to me, not to Lithuania. Maidanek is not Polish land. Dachau is not German. Babii Iar is not Ukrainian. It is ours" (Kanovich, *Park Evreev*, 140).
33. Kanovich, presentation to the Jewish community of Vilnius on 23 September 1991, on the 50th anniversary of the extermination of Lithuanian Jews in Paneriai.
34. Assmann speaks on this occasion about the "retrospective memory" of a group, constructing the image of unity and integrity (*Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 61).
35. In Russian – Neman; in German – Memel; in Lithuanian – Nemunas.
36. See the meaning of Vilnius as the "lost dream" in Kanovich's novel *Son ob isčeznuvšem Ierusalime*.
37. See Kanovich, "Schitaiu sebia russkim pisatelem. Besedu vel M. Gejzer": "Kanovich is a descendant of free Jews," Gejzer adds. "Even tragedies which are so frequent in the destinies of Kanovich's heroes do not turn them into moaners who have lost hope and memory of the past."
38. See also his fellow student's denial of being Jewish in Kanovich, *Liki vo t'me*, 39, 46, 112, 33: "'I am, Girsh, not Jewish, not Jewish,' Levka spoke vehemently. 'Why everybody thinks that I am – well, I am not. My mother is Armenian, but father is of pure Russian blood. Nikolai Anatol'evich. And as to you – I am not bum-bum.'"
39. Hermand, *Judentum und deutsche Kultur*, 1.
40. Daxner, "Schtetl-Faszination," 170.
41. Pankau, "Elias Canetti – das Selbstbewusstsein des Außenseiters," 335–58.
42. Kanovich, "Schitaiu sebia russkim pisatelem. Besedu vel M. Gejzer."
43. Ibid. According to Shimon Markish, Kanovich turned out to be the first writer after Isaac Babel' who created Jewish prose in the Russian language. Following Markish, Russian-Jewish literature can only be regarded as such if its author is of Jewish origin and connected with Jewish culture and religion, writes on Jewish themes and applies elements of Jewish narrative tradition. See Markish, "Religioznaia stikhiia kak formoobrazuiushchii element russko-evreiskoi literatury." I also refer here to a paragraph, written with Shimon Markish's participation, on Russian-Jewish literature in the *Short Jewish Encyclopedia*, 551: Kanovich is mentioned here as one of the most profiled Russian-Jewish authors.
44. Kanovich talked about the reasons for his emigration to the literary critic Azovsky in the journal *Vilnius* in 1994. He gave personal reasons (his son lives with the family in Israel) as well as reasons of artistic creativity (as a Russian-speaking writer in a new national state of Lithuania he would have been left without readers). See Kanovich, "Neobchodimo posmotret' na sebia storony," 4–16.
45. He described this problem in an interview of 1995; see Kanovich, "Budto sled ptitsy v vozdukhe," 4–10.
46. For the concept of "mnemotopos" see Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 59.
47. Kanovich, "Ikh ni na kakuiu Vstrechu uzhe ne priglasish."
48. To clarify these concepts: cold societies resist any change in their structure, while hot ones have "intense longing" for a change; see Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 68–70 (here Assmann quotes Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage*, 1962).
49. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 52. See also Assmann's thoughts about myth as the "truth of the highest degree" and about the special role of historical myth in Jewishness.
50. The permanent longing of his protagonists for their Lithuanian land in Kanovich's work of the Israeli period gives one an idea about the relativity of identity criteria. Thus, the protagonist of the novel *Park Evreev* looks with self-ironic amazement at the daughter-in-law of his old friend – an Ethiopian Jewess, a stranger to Lithuanian Jews. Differences among Jewish people deconstruct the understanding of the autonomous and united Jewish identity. "Israel as it lived in my imagination, in my heart, is not fully identical with that which I encountered in real life," the author says. "Here, in Israel, I am going through a personal drama … when I lived in Lithuania, I thought that I knew Jews well, knew their character, their life. Here it turned out that I am not such an expert with respect to my nation. Which is surprising to me, as I was born into a traditional Jewish family" (Kanovich, "Schitaiu sebia russkim pisatelem. Besedu vel M. Gejzer").

51. Regarding the concepts of "Eastern" vs. "Western Jew" see Ahrendt, *Elemente und Ursprünge totaler Herrschaft*, 62, 84.
52. His paternal side is rooted in the well-off educated bourgeoisie of Kaunas, while the maternal side belongs to the poor Litvaks of the shtetl. One can read about their life in the stories "Mano vargse, vargshe teta rozaliia and "Didzhioii vakariene."
53. Zingeris, "Speaking Simply about Complicated Matters," 48. On the function of language as a binding organ of group education see Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 139. For Zingeris, the Lithuanian language is his instrument of creativity. Yiddish in his memories has more of a meaning of a native dialect, thus fulfilling the function of national and cultural identity in the historical context. See Zingeris, "Markas Zingeris Answers Questions by Christina Parnell."
54. The narrator in Zingeris's works is mostly the alter ego of the author
55. Zingeris, "Repatriantai."
56. See the motif of parricide in the works of Sigitas Parulskis, where the generation of the sons ascribe responsibility for their traumas to the fathers and blame the latter for a lack of national and moral values (Parulskis, "Trys sekundės dangaus").
57. Zingeris, "Repatriantai."
58. See the quotation of his novel *Grojimas Dviese* (Playing Duo) published in an abbreviated form in the journal *Vilnius* in English: "Like his father, he was able to sympathise with people who had been pushed off the avenues and boulevards" (Zingeris, "Speaking Simply about Complicated Matters," 56).
59. Zingeris, "Repatriantai."
60. Zingeris, "Playing Duo."
61. Zingeris, "Repatriantai."
62. Zingeris, "Markas Zingeris Answers Questions by Christina Parnell."
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Zingeris, "Repatriantai."
66. Zingeris, "Markas Zingeris Answers Questions by Christina Parnell."
67. In Zingeris's opinion, it is especially difficult to convey irony through the Lithuanian language because Lithuanian is a very old language. The paradox, he mentions, is the fact that he, a Lithuanian Jew, brings a new tone into this old language (Zingeris, "Markas Zingeris Answers Questions").
68. Zingeris, "Repatriantai."
69. Scenes of an uplifted mood are always connected with moments of social freedom or hope for it as in 1956, after Khrushchev's speech on the Stalinist repressions, when "it smelled of freedom;" see Zingeris, "Repatriantai."
70. Ibid.
71. See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 219: "What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually … remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular or autonomous sign of differences … Such assignations of social differences – where difference is neither One nor the Other but *something else besides, in-between* – find their agency in a form of the 'future' where the past is not original, where the present is not simply transitory."
72. Zingeris, *Grojimas dviese*.
73. See a version of this image in the novel by Meras, *Ant ko laikosi pasaulis*, where a Lithuanian peasant woman saves children of different nationalities and accepts them as her own.
74. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.
75. Although Cejtlin refers to the productive feature in Josade's tragic splitting which would allow him to see the same event "with his eyes and afterwards with his neighbour's eyes," Josade describes his position between the sides as very painful: "I am a Jewish and a Lithuanian writer. Jewish as well as Lithuanian. At the same time. Actually is this compatible? Is this possible?" For him, it seems to be impossible: "Now I am a stranger for everybody! I cannot understand: why did I 'betray the Jews' and what do I flatter the Lithuanians with?" (Cejtlin, *Dolgie besedy v ozhidanii schastlivoi smerti,* 172, 173).
76. Zingeris is the director of Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum (Centre of Tolerance).

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