

Anna Pilarczyk-Palaitis\*

ORCID: 0000-0002-8278-2530

## **BETWEEN REMEMBERING AND FORGETTING – PROCESSES OF CHANGING TOPICALITY OF POLISH HERITAGE IN CONTEMPORARY LITHUANIA**

### **ABSTRACT**

The last century of Lithuanian history and the resulting dynamics of political and demographic change have radically transformed the role, meaning and forms of interpretation of Polish heritage in Lithuania. The purpose of the article is to observe the main directions of changes taking place within the cultural memory of Poles living in Lithuania – the largest national minority group in Lithuania. The report presents the processes of changing topicality of Polish heritage in Lithuania in three main areas of active cultural memory: history, art and religion. The first area is represented by objects related to Józef Piłsudski, the second one by the Pohulanka Theatre (now the Russian Drama Theatre) in Vilnius and objects related to Adam Mickiewicz, and the third one by objects related to the cult of Divine Mercy.

The article analyses official communication of these memory objects (published by the objects' owners or official managers) as well as memory practices and rituals carried out in these objects and described on social media and in news articles published in Lithuania in 2017–2019. Observing various types of storage media, in this case, some selected objects of cultural heritage and rituals and texts accompanying them, it is possible to notice processes of variability, exchange, erasing, redefining memory and hence the dynamics of changes in the Polish collective identity in modern Lithuania.

The analysis of the formal ritualization and communication of these objects has enabled noticing several interesting trends, above all an occurrence of the phenomenon of polylogue of narratives and the process of universalization of Polish heritage in Lithuania and thus Lithuanian and Polish collective memory approaching each other.

The following analysis is valuable as a starting point for reflection on the transformation of the ethnic identity of Poles in Lithuania. The article is one of the first attempts to show

---

\* Vytautas Magnus University (Vilnius, Lithuania), e-mail: [anna.ewa.pilarczyk-palaitis@vdu.lt](mailto:anna.ewa.pilarczyk-palaitis@vdu.lt)

the processes of Lithuanian Poles identity transformations through observations of their collective memory dimension. The article presents the main trends and indicates the further potential research directions.

**Keywords:** collective memory, culture memory, transformations of memory, Polish minority in Lithuania, Polish heritage, heritage communication, cultural heritage, multicultural heritage

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Cultural heritage is subject to the constant processes of remembering and forgetting, destroying and building, losing and finding, meeting and parting (Karpińska, 2004). The observations of particular heritage objects' level of topicality enable studying the interactions between the layers of the palimpsest of collective memory, which, unlike individual memory, has a public, official and generalized relationship with the past (Assmann, 2013; Brockmeier 2002). The theoretical basis for this article are the concepts of communicative and cultural memory created in Aleida and Jan Assmann's theories. According to the scientists, communicative memory is associated with memories that include events of the recent past, this is "the living memory". Cultural memory is associated with events and symbols of the distant past that underpin the existence and identity of a community. The communicative memory – at some point difficult to define, but inevitably of the moment – transforms into the cultural memory. It is a smooth and continuous sinking in to the past boundary, associated with generational change. Jan Vansina called this process a "floating gap" (Vansina, 1985) – that is a gap between the memory of the living people and the distant past, which no living witness remembers. This gap occurs about 80 to 100 years after events that are attributed to "communicative memory". After this period, it becomes the cultural memory. The analysis of the Polish collective memory in contemporary Lithuania enables noticing a transition phase, because the last living witnesses of "the Polish period" of Vilnius and the Vilnius region are just now passing away. In today's Lithuania, there lives the memory of at least three very different generations – the oldest Polish inhabitants of these lands were born in Poland, the middle generation in the Soviet Union, and the youngest generation in independent Lithuania. There is therefore a unique opportunity to observe how the collective memory of Poles living in Lithuania is transforming, and thus to observe how the Polish collective identity in Lithuania is changing. As Janušauskienė (2021, p. 136) notes, "the identity of the Polish national minority in Lithuania is multi-layered". The scholar aptly lists three layers of this identity: the internal, external and trans-sovereign one. The internal layer consists mainly of such shared values as: Catholic faith, Slavic origin (including the use of a language different from the state-Lithuanian language), deep identification with the Vilnius region, the external layer creates civic identification with Lithuania as the country of residence, and the trans-sovereign layer means identification with Poland, resulting from the shared culture (Janušauskienė, 2021, p. 136). In this, of course, very schematic division, the most interesting seems to be the interaction of individual layers, the processes taking place at the point of their contact. Such observations are possible by analysing the processes related to cultural heritage, which are called the "embodied memory" (Graham, Ashworth, & Tunbridge, 2000). Analysing various types of storage media, in this case some selected objects of cultural heritage and rituals and texts accompanying them, it's possible to observe the processes of variability, exchange,

erasing, and redefining of memory, and hence the dynamics of the changes in the social landscape (Kasner, 2017).

The cultural memory is intermediate, and there are specialized institutions responsible for its dissemination. It is based on traditions, rituals and material objects – symbols. In this context a very important fact is that cultural memory is being formed by politicians and politically regulated, therefore its specific feature is its institutionalisation and ritualisation, since “nonpoliticized cultural memory does not exist in principle” (Nikžentaitis, 2011, p. 440). That is why the cultural heritage is such a valuable source of information about social transformations. On one hand, it shows the efforts of official elites and institutions to create cultural memory they need. On the other hand, society does not always respond in a desirable way to particular representations of memory that can be interpreted differently, accepted or even rejected by people (Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, Marcinkevičius, Šliavaitė, & Štutnienė, 2016). As Manžuch (2015, p. 129) notices, Frederic Bartlett has already stated that the content of memory depends on the current social and cultural context, and the ways in which this context influences the images of memory have been explained by the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1992), the creator of the theory of collective memory and the concept of “social framework of memory” (les cadres sociaux de la mémoire). Social frameworks of memory determine the regularities of the process of remembrance, and the state frameworks impact the social environment of individual’s memories.

Hill and Wilson (2003) clarified the distinction between *identity politics* and *politics of identity*. *Identity politics* is mainly concerned with “top-down” processes in which various political and economic beings seek to form collective identities based on ethnic origin, and embedded in relatively stable and naturalized frames. *Politics of identity* is more concerned with “bottom-up” processes in which indigenous peoples negotiate culture and identity, and challenge power structures and its assets that limit their social life. *The identity politics* is a part of formal, structural and public policy practiced in the political arenas of governments, parties and corporations, cities, regions and states, while *the politics of identity* relates to political practices and values in the daily lives of individuals and society. The way in which heritage objects change their topicality involves these two directions of processes, to which memory symbols as important structural elements of ethnic identities are constantly subjected. What objects are transferred from the memory “warehouse” to the active memory is the result of processes operating in two directions – from top to bottom and bottom to top. As Ochman (2020, p. 176) notes, “memory scholars mostly agree that although social memory is culturally constructed, political and institutional actors encounter various constraints when adapting the past to their group’s needs and values”.

Cultural heritage studies are often dominated by social, political and economic aspects of cultural heritage. As a result, the concepts of cultural heritage and memory become synonymous (Manžuch, 2015, p. 131). Collective identities are formations of discourse, they function and collapse together with symbol systems, according to which representatives of a particular culture determine their belonging and identify themselves (Assmann, 2013, p. 149). Heritage objects are symbols and media of memory, and their ritualization is a memory practice for the conscious construction of collective memory. As Laužikas (2017, p. 31) points out, heritage is constructed from present positions, and heritage features symbolic meanings that vary in the context of the present. Heritage begins to function not as a series of “representations of the past” but as elements of modernity, tools of contemporary culture,

an identity construction, a political communication, or even information warfare. Remembering takes place constantly; the past, understood in this way, is the material from which a new present can be created (Assmann, 2013, p. 197). In Čepaitienė's (2009, p. 55) terms, heritage has been and is constantly being "filtered" and "rebuilt". This is the changing topicality of heritage as symbols of memory; moving them from a reservoir that Assmann (2013) calls "a storage memory" to "a functional memory", which consists of what society chooses from its past, while renewing and re-creating its cultural memory. To put it simply, it is a constant process of forgetting and remembering, because memory is not only remembering, it is also forgetting, which is a necessary and constructive part of internal social transformations (Assmann 2013, p. 75).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The subject of this analysis are the transformations of reception of the Polish heritage in contemporary Lithuania in the context of Polish collective memory and Polish contemporary identity. Although the Polish minority in Lithuania has been subjected to some serious research in the last decade, there is still a lack of studies on how the signs of cultural memory are used in the process of creating ethnic, civic and regional identity (Frėjūtė-Rakauskienė, Marcinkevičius, Šliavaitė, & Šutinienė, 2016, p. 32). One of the better studied elements of the collective identity of Poles living in Lithuania is their language. Research conducted by Kinga Geben (Geben 2011, 2012) shows a strong regional identity, identification with the city and the South-eastern Lithuania (called "Wileńszczyzna" in Polish), as well as the phenomenon of Lithuanian Poles using three languages (Polish, Lithuanian and Russian), which means the influence of these three cultural and information worlds on their collective identity.

The specific region of South-eastern Lithuania itself is also quite often a subject of the study, as an area of ethnic processes taking place between the nationalities living here, mostly Poles, Belarusians and Lithuanians. Petras Kalnius (Kalnius, 1998) stated, among others, that founding of Polish schools in this region was a political process and an element of imposed polonization/slavization. Virginijus Savukynas (Savukynas, 2003) challenged these studies already in 2003. The researcher observed a religious, not an ethnic, criterion of identity in this region. An anthropologist, Darius Daukšas (Daukšas, 2011, 2012, 2014) also explored the creation of ethnic and civic identities and meaning of national/citizen identity in this borderland region of present-day Lithuania. In his research Daukšas confirmed, among others, that the age of an informant is relevant to defining one's belonging to a particular nation.

One of the major recent studies investigating sociological aspects of local and regional identities of individual ethnic groups in Lithuania was the study "ENRI-East: Interplay of European, National and Regional Identities: nations between states along the new eastern borders of the European Union". The purpose of this project, in which as many as 11 countries participated, was "a deeper understanding of the ways in which the modern European identities and regional cultures are formed and inter-communicated in the eastern part of the European continent" (ENRI Final Report, 2011, p. 4). Other collective research devoted to this issue was the study "Cultural and communicative memory expression and transformation in the multicultural urban space in XX–XXI century" carried out in 2009 under the leadership of prof. Alvydas Nikžentaitis. On the basis of these studies, an article by Irena Šutinienė (Šutinienė, 2011) was written. It aims to examine the use of symbols of the past in the construction

of the city identity of national groups. However, it should be emphasized that the research was carried out on a very small group (which consisted of 19 people representing 5 different nationalities), so the results of the research are quite hypothetical and outline only the main tendencies of processes taking place around cultural memory of particular ethnic groups.

One of the most important works in this area is the monograph “Ethnicity and identities in South-eastern Lithuania: Expressions and contexts”, that analyses which factors and institutions play a key role in creating ethnic identities (Frėjūtė-Rakauskienė, Marcinkevičius, Šliavaite, & Šutinienė, 2016, p. 165). This work touches on very different aspects – a role of media in creating an image of the inhabitants of this region, historical processes, historical memory policies, and a role of various institutions in creating cultural memory.

The issues related to heritage, such as a collection of memory symbols with clearly created communication are primarily dealt with by Rasa Čepaitienė (Čepaitienė 2009, 2010, 2015), who analyses the cultural heritage in the context of contemporary global culture economics and the search for identity in post-communist countries in conditions of globalization challenges. Problems related to communication of cultural heritage, and more broadly with memory communication are subjects of Zinaida Manžuch’s (Manžuch, 2015) research, which tries to determine strategies of cultural heritage dissemination in the contemporary “memory institutions”, such as museums or archives. Problems related to memory updating, i.e. exploring the use of the past for current purposes, are dealt with Rimvydas Laužikas (Laužikas, 2017). The researcher correctly distinguishes the narratives of cultural heritage objects between narratives of dialogue, non-dialogue and “grey zones”, i.e. objects that are, for various reasons, unnoticed.

It should be emphasized that the reception of the Polish heritage in Lithuania, as well as issues related to the Polish collective cultural memory are still very poorly studied. Individual items of literature relate to narrow aspects, and scientists most often study the Polish minority in Lithuania from narrow perspectives. Neither are there any analyses that would show how the Polish collective memory has been transforming over the last decades.

### 3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The subject of this article is the Polish heritage in contemporary Lithuania, understood as an important material heritage which is the embodied Polish collective memory in the territory of modern Lithuania. For this analysis, there were selected examples of the most canonical sites of memory for Polish culture, from the three main areas of active cultural memory distinguished by Aleida Assmann, i.e. history, art, and religion (Assmann, 2013). The first area is represented by objects related to Józef Piłsudski, the second one by the Pohulanka Theatre (now The Russian Drama Theatre) in Vilnius and objects related to Adam Mickiewicz, and the third one by objects related to the cult of Divine Mercy. The official communication of these memory objects (published by the object’s owners or official managers)<sup>1</sup> as well memory

---

<sup>1</sup> These are official descriptions of these objects published on websites and in traditional publications issued by valid administrators of these objects, information published on the website and in traditional publications of the National Lithuanian Tourism Agency and local government tourist information centres.

practices and rituals carried out in these objects and described on social media and news articles published in Lithuania in 2017–2019<sup>2</sup> have been analysed.

This very initial analysis of selected objects should be treated as an introduction to further anthropological studies. The article presents the main trends and indicates the further potential research directions.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. EXTRAORDINARY IMPORTANCE OF JÓZEF PIŁSUDSKI'S HERITAGE

As it has been already highlighted above, the evolution of collective memory therefore means the evolution of memory media selection. Initially, they are many media and they are not as equivalent. Over time, some of them become almost completely forgotten, others become secondary, while others begin to grow into the role of a symbol and begin to be a factor organizing the structure of collective memory. The rule is to refer to those moments in history that reinforce positive self-image and are consistent with the specific goals of the action (Szacka, 2011). What does not match the heroic image is forgotten. Assmann (2013, p. 174) noticed that already Justus Lipsius spoke of “the spirit of the great ancestors” which were mentioned in order to use the past to add splendour to the present.

This is certainly the reason why the objects associated with Józef Piłsudski, whom Poles consider to be one of the most important figures in Polish history, are invariably the most important heritage for the Polish community in Lithuania. Unveiling of the grave of Józef Piłsudski's mother and his heart at the Rasos Cemetery in Vilnius in 1935 is called by scholars one of the most prominent operations of the memory politic in the interwar period. For Lithuanian Poles and tourists from Poland its importance has not diminished to this day (Antanavičiūtė, 2019). Piłsudski's cult existed while he was still alive, so his own desire to bury his heart with his mother in Vilnius was his conscious creation of a place of his own memory. As Antanavičiūtė (2019, p. 172) writes: “To leave your heart in Vilnius meant to turn the city into the centre of attention of all Poland, a place of pilgrimage, one of the most important sites of Polish national narrative and memory, to bind, symbolically but firmly, the Vilnius region and the Republic of Poland”.

The Mausoleum of Józef Piłsudski in the Rasos Cemetery is undoubtedly the most important symbol in Lithuanian Poles' collective memory. It is also one of the most important sites of memory for Poles from Poland and as a place of remembrance it is regularly updated by frequent practices of collective memory, perpetuating this object in the general consciousness as an object of Polish heritage. In 2018, 13 photo reports of flower-laying ceremonies at the marshal's heart grave, attended by key figures from the country were posted on a Facebook account of the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Vilnius. During the same year, other sites of memory, such as the Memorial Museum of Ponary (Paneriai) and the Military Cemetery in Antokol (Antakalnis), have been visited only twice. In the Józef Piłsudski's Mausoleum various institutions representing the Lithuanian Poles, such as the main Polish political party – the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance, the Association

---

<sup>2</sup> “Lithuanian media” means both Lithuanian-language media and Polish-language media of the Polish minority in Lithuania.

of Poles in Lithuania, other Polish non-governmental organizations, Polish schools, cultural institutions, Polish Scouts, and Polish representatives of the Catholic Church, hold the practices of memory. In addition to the traditional floral tributes to commemorate the most important anniversaries and public holidays, numerous pilgrimages, bike rides and even car rides are continuously organised here. The Piłsudski's Mausoleum completely overcame all other heritage objects (even the Gates of Dawn) and became the main symbol of the Polish cultural memory in Lithuania. This object is not only constantly gaining its topicality as the most important site of memory, but it is also protected from other memories, such as the proposal made by the Commission for the Validation of Lithuanian Traditions and Heritage to the Vilnius City Municipality to place a table with Piłsudski's quote favouring Lithuania's independence there, which was strongly rejected by the Polish community (Mokrzecka, 2014, April 1).

Obviously, the extraordinary importance of this place is primarily due to the significance of Józef Piłsudski in Polish historiography, but in my judgement, it also stems from the convenient location of this site and its associated favourable conditions that are conducive to frequent ritualization in this very location. The grave of Piłsudski's Mother and his heart is located near the city centre, is easily accessible, has a parking space for cars and coaches, and enough space to accommodate many people. Last but not least, it is a very obliging background object for photographic reports, which can then be successfully used in e-politics and e-diplomacy.

Józef Piłsudski, who demanded taking Vilnius from Lithuania and joining it to Poland, fits exactly into the ideology represented by the Electoral Action of Poles in Lithuania – Christian Families Alliance party and the Union of Poles in Lithuania. The collective memory of the mythical “solely Polish” Vilnius and the Vilnius region contributed to the rise of this party ruled by Waldemar Tomaszewski. It clearly positioned its supporters in opposition to the modern Lithuanian state and Lithuanians perceived as unlawful hosts of these lands (Janušauskienė 2016, p. 582). However, what is rather surprising is the fact that not only the supporters of Waldemar Tomaszewski's policy, but also his Polish opponents identify themselves with the heritage associated with Józef Piłsudski. What makes a good illustration of the phenomenon is another heritage site associated with Piłsudski – the birthplace of the marshal, Zulów (Zalavas). There used to stand a manor house of the Piłsudski's family where Józef Piłsudski was born. In 1875 the house burned down completely and the plot of land with remains of the house's foundations belongs to the Union of Poles in Lithuania (cooperating closely with the Waldemar Tomaszewski's party) now. In 2018 its chairman, Michał Mackiewicz, being in a conflict with the authorities of the Republic of Poland, said that the organization would no longer manage the area and even considered selling the plot. A group of Lithuanian Poles spontaneously formed on Facebook reacted quickly to these words and convened several times via Facebook. They cleaned up the area, planted a thousand white and red flowers and removed Polish flags (Mokrzecka, 2018, November 4). Of course, there were Poles in Lithuania who do not identify themselves with the circle of Waldemar Tomaszewski and his policies even before, but their actions and active efforts to organize themselves can be noticed only in the last few years.

It should be noted, as shown in the example, that the modern social media and new technologies also affect the shape of collective memory (Keightley, Schlesinger 2014). Over the past three decades, alongside these national-level divisions, Lithuanian society has been

shaped by global processes driven by rapid changes in information technology. As Elena Esposito observes (2014, p. 41), memory is dependent on communication technologies available in each society and changes when the technologies change. The technologies affect the forms, volumes and interpretations of memory. The new media undoubtedly influence the collective memory as well. Thus, another question of particular importance is how the collective memory of Lithuanian Poles is changing in the context of the new technologies and social media. This certainly deserves separate scientific research, especially because these are relatively young processes. According to Beata Stachowiak (2012, p. 79) it is not until the mid-nineties that the beginning of the development of the information society in Lithuania can be dated.

#### 4.2. UNIVERSALIZATION PROCESSES

Observation of the communication of objects related to Piłsudski enables perceiving another noticeable process – a more dialogical attitude. Although, from the Lithuanian perspective, the objects related to J. Piłsudski's heritage are still predominantly treated as communicative “grey zones”, which Laužikas (2017, p. 31) describes as “historical topics and heritage, which for some reason is deliberately ignored in constructing messages,” some small changes in attitudes can be seen. For example, on own initiative of a Lithuanian historian, Vytautas Musteikis, a monument to the brothers Józef and Bronisław Piłsudski (with inscriptions in the Lithuanian language only) was unveiled at Zułów (Zalavas) in 2018. The change can be also exemplified by the fact that recently Zułów (Zalavas) has appeared among recommended cruise routes offered by the Vilnius Tourist Information Centre. Lithuanians also visit the places related to J. Piłsudski more and more boldly. In the above mentioned cleaning action of Zułów (Zalavas) a former Lithuanian oppositionist and activist Leonardas Vilkas himself participated and came there with the Lithuanian flag. In 2017 a famous Lithuanian journalist Virginijus Savukynas posted on Facebook a picture of himself standing next to the Piłsudski's Mother and his heart grave and commented it with the following words: “Miracle at the Vistula,” was a miracle for Lithuania as well. (...) So today Lithuanians should visit the Rasos Cemetery and pay tribute at the heart of Piłsudski. I was there this morning. May more Lithuanians come and honour him”. This same year a former Lithuanian leader Vytautas Landsbergis visited the marshal's heart grave on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Józef Piłsudski, and said that “[Piłsudski] is not only a part of Polish history, but he is also a part of Lithuanian history” (Jakučionis, Beniušis 2017, December 5).

The fact that the Polish and Lithuanian collective memories are approaching each other is also evidenced by tendencies observable in the study of their ecclesiastical heritage. In Lithuania, a special place in Polish consciousness is occupied by the Vilnius Gates of Dawn and places related to St. Faustyna Kowalska and her vision of the Merciful Jesus, which are part of the cult of Divine Mercy. The first observation is that this heritage is deliberately universalized and its “Polishness” is losing its topicality. The beginning of this process can be symbolically dated back to 2004, when the Archbishop of Vilnius, Metropolitan Audrys Juozas Bačkis, adopted a decree on the transfer of the painting of Merciful Jesus (painted by Eugeniusz Kazimirowski according to the vision of St. Faustyna Kowalska) from the Church of the Spirit to the St. Trinity Church (which was restored and transformed into the Sanctuary of God's Mercy) located 200 meters away. It should be emphasized that up to this point both the image and the Church of the Spirit have been identified as “Polish” (in this church in

Vilnius masses are so far celebrated only in Polish). Lithuanian Poles expressed disagreement with the cardinal's decision. A group of Polish believers has guarded the painting around the clock for over a year and a half. They complained to the Pope, the Lithuanian Minister of Justice and the Minister of Culture about the decree and sent out an open letter addressed to Archbishop Bačkis signed by ten thousand believers and twenty five Polish organizations. On 28 September 2005 the painting was moved to the St. Trinity Church with the assistance of security and police. Although the efforts of the hierarchy of the Lithuanian Catholic Church to universalize the cult of Divine Mercy caused such sharp resistance from Polish believers fifteen years ago, today the conflict is absolutely forgotten. On the official portal of the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus the controversial circumstances of transferring the painting of Merciful Jesus to another church are even described as a great positive advertisement which allowed the painting to be popularized. In other places, such as the official website of the Shrine of Mercy, the Polish-Lithuanian conflict is simply silent. The universalization of the Lithuania's ecclesiastical heritage is evidenced by the fact that the objects of the sacred cult, which still function as individual objects, are included in larger pilgrimage routes, such as the Route of Divine Mercy, the Route of John Paul II, or the European Route of St. James. Universalization means losing the topicality of its Polish character. A good example of the process is the Gates of Dawn, probably the most important place of Polish religious worship located outside Poland. Official Lithuanian publications do not mention the unique significance of this place in Polish culture. This place is mostly described not even as a separate place of worship, but only as an element on the route of the Worship of Mercy and a part of the European Marian Network. Despite the fact that Polish tourists are one of the largest groups of pilgrims and that Polish-speaking believers are an important part of the Lithuanian Catholic Church, the main website for the Cult of Divine Mercy is available only in Lithuanian and English versions. However, it can be assumed that these processes are also accepted by the Polish believers in Lithuania. The objects of ecclesiastical heritage in Lithuania, until now recognized by Poles as 'Polish', are becoming a part of the Lithuanian cultural memory.

### 4.3. POLYLOGUE OF NARRATIVES

Clearly, it is impossible to speak about heritage in Lithuania as of something solely Polish since all the analysed objects also belong to the Lithuanian culture. Additionally, sometimes other nationalities such as Belarusians, Russians, or Jews identify with them as well. Many layers of memory are determined not only by the common history of our nations, but also by many historical and political efforts to rewrite the history of this land, redefine the public sphere, and shape a friendly culture of memory (Antanavičiūtė, 2019). Globalization in culture implies its homogenization, as well as the abundance of micro narratives, defragmentation, and decontextualization of culture (Čepaitienė, 2010, p. 23).

Multicultural, extraneous, inconvenient, or dissonant heritage is a particular problem in Central Europe, where in the twentieth century political borders shifted faster than cultural boundaries. As a result, specific heritage sites may have more than one easily readable meaning. Alongside "the grand narrative" of the titular state, there are parallel "small stories" (narratives) created by ethnic communities, and the processes that take place between the narratives of these groups are mostly an ongoing balancing act between an unnoticeable conflict and a dialogue. In Lithuania however, one more interesting phenomenon can be observed, which could be called a "polylogue of narratives". It occurs when the same material

symbols of memory function in different ways in the collective memory of particular communities, and the communicate narratives are completely dissimilar and do not interact with each other – they simply exist and communicate independently, although side by side, in this same country.

A great illustration of this phenomenon is the Pohulanka Theatre (currently the Russian Drama Theatre). The history of the building is very interesting as it was built in 1913 with the funds collected by the then Polish community of Vilnius. In the Polish consciousness, this theatre is identified as the Polish theatre “Pohulanka”, and it was associated with the names of very famous, even canonical Polish actors and directors. The theatre’s building itself is also very important for the Lithuanian culture. In 1917 there was the symbolic Lithuanian Independence Vilnius Conference chaired by Jonas Basanavičius held in the theatre. The building was as well the seat of the Vilnius State Drama Theatre, later the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, and the State Youth Theatre. The Lithuanian Russian Drama Theatre has been operating here only since 1986, but the message communicated on the theatre’s web page may give the impression that there was never anything important happening in this building besides the Russian Drama Theatre. On its home page, in the section “About the Theatre”, the theatre is identified with the Russian theatre troupe, and the only information about the building itself says: “Theatre building, an architectural monument”. Interestingly, the same information is repeated in the booklet “Russian Cultural Heritage in Vilnius” posted on the official website of the Vilnius Tourist Information Centre (Vilnius Tourism, 2012), where the building is classified as the Russian heritage! One would expect a reaction from the Lithuanians or the Lithuanian Polish community to such a theatre communication, but no trace of it can be found anywhere.

The non-inclusion of Polish memory in the official description of this heritage site does not cause controversy among the Polish community in Lithuania. This could mean losing topicality of this place as a symbol of Polish memory. However, the opposite is true, the memory of this place as a Polish theatre has been gaining its topicality for the last 10 years. For several years already, the largest amateur Polish theatre in Lithuania, the Polish Theatre “Studio,” has been cooperating with the Russian Drama Theatre, and every year there are even two Polish theatre festivals organized here. In 2018 the Polish Theatre “Studio” started a new regular cycle called “Polish Mondays in Pohulanka”. The pre-war Polish name “Pohulanka” is used in modern posters, Facebook events, press releases. However, the name of the cycle is not mentioned on the page of the Russian Drama Theatre. There seems to be again a “polylogue of narratives”, the official Lithuanian, where the theatre is presented as the Russian Drama Theatre, and the inner Polish level, where the theatre still exists as the pre-war “Pohulanka”.

The preliminary observations of Adam Mickiewicz heritage communication confirm similar trends. The growing importance of A. Mickiewicz’s heritage to Lithuanians is represented in Algirdas Šapoka’s article (Šapoka, 2019) about the poet’s museum in Kaunas saying that: “Doubts about the status of the memorial museum are caused by the unoriginal location, the inauthentic interiors, the poor exposition, and a lack of authentic objects belonging to Mickiewicz. The museum is barely advertised, presented only as part of the House of Perkunas.” The impulse to write this article was the neon commemorating A. Mickiewicz, created by Jonas Oškinis and Raimundas Krukonis for the Kaunas Biennale, and symbolically hung in the place where ‘Mickiewicz’s hut’ was. The authors of this installation wrote: “Our Mickiewicz has seen a large wooden model of Mickiewicz’s sculpture in interwar Vilnius, [...] he also saw

Mickiewicz near the St. Anne's Church, and the disorderly overlaid steles of "Forefather's Eve", that was supposed to be on the pedestal of another Mickiewicz monument, in the place where Chernyakhovsky was then, and now stands Kudirka." Traces of the famous poet in Vilnius are among the most visited Polish tourist attractions. Although the poet is still not as important for Lithuanians as for Poles, it seems that Mickiewicz's heritage for Lithuanians is becoming more of "their own". However the communication of this heritage should not be described as a "narrative of dialogue" but also as a "polylogue of narratives", because the Polish and Lithuanian narratives of this same heritage object coexist but are still separate from one another. Poles and Lithuanians "shared" A. Mickiewicz. Poles regard him as the most eminent romantic writer of all time and, most importantly, the prophet of independence, while Lithuanians identify him mostly with his works describing mythologized medieval Lithuania, and the poet himself does not appear to be the centre of their attention. It should be emphasized again that the very seat of the A. Mickiewicz's Museum in Kaunas is called the House of Perkūnas (Perkūnas is the main god in Lithuanian mythology), which in a way confirms the Lithuanians' perception of Mickiewicz as the worshipper of medieval Lithuania. The museum's website greets its visitors with the slogan: "House of Perkūnas. The spirit of the Middle Ages lives here." The description of Adam Mickiewicz Museum in Vilnius on the website of Vilnius Tourist Information Centre may also be a reflection of the dual perception of A. Mickiewicz in Lithuania. Its various linguistic versions are considerably different. The description of the museum provided in Lithuanian language is more detailed, but the general information presents only the exposition, and does not even mention the poet himself, while the descriptions in other languages (English, German, Polish, French, Russian) are short (two sentences) but Mickiewicz is mentioned everywhere as "the great Polish poet and patriot of Lithuania". This heritage is also described in the context of different rituals. The Lithuanian media describe this object as a place where the anniversary of the first anti-Soviet Lithuanian demonstration is celebrated every year. In the Lithuanian Poles media this object is referred to only as a meeting point for participants of annual poetry festival "May on the Wilia river" ("Maj nad Wilią") – the symbolic beginning of the festival.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

As noted by Wawrzyński and Schattkowsky (2017), analysing the effectiveness of memory narratives as a political asset enables diagnosing the state of relationship between memory, national history, government and citizens. All of the observations presented in the article are preliminary, and, as it has been already mentioned, the study should be treated as a starting point for further research, primarily anthropological. However, very interesting trends can be seen already at this stage. The most important heritage objects for the Polish collective memory in modern Lithuania are places related to Józef Piłsudski. They are constantly revised by Poles themselves and the memory of these places is strictly controlled. These objects are used by the representatives of Polish authorities and politicians to create the desired cultural memory, but they are also places cultivated by Poles, regardless of their political opinions. The tendency to open up the Lithuanian collective memory to this heritage is certainly important. It seems that it is possible to approach a compatible Polish-Lithuanian cultural memory with the generational change, and more diverse and comprehensive memory structures would contribute to the strengthening of transnational integration. As Assmann (2013, p. 270)

writes, this is not about a unified meta-narration, but merely about a dialogical attitude and mutual matching of national images of history. Another thesis that can be put forward is that the analysed Polish memory places have more than one level of communication, which is called a “polylogue of narratives”. The narratives of the individual heritage objects function separately, although in one space. Anthropological research would be very interesting, since it could confirm or disprove that Lithuanian citizens belonging to different nationalities are not even aware of the existence of other narratives than their own. Certainly, there is also a noticeable tendency for the Polish and Lithuanian collective memories to approach each other, as evidenced by the process of universalization of the Catholic Church, discussed in this article, in which the objects lose their national character and become part of the universalised world religious community.

## REFERENCES

- Antanavičiūtė, R. (2019). *Menas ir politika Vilniaus viešosiose erdvėse*. Vilnius: Lapas.
- Assmann, A. (2013). *Między historią a pamięcią. Antologia*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego.
- Brockmeier, J. (2002). Remembering and Forgetting: Narrative as Cultural Memory. *Culture & Psychology*, 8(1), 15–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354067X0281002>
- Čepaitienė, R. (2009). Interpretuojant daugiakultūrį Vilnių: kontekstai, problemos ir galimybės. In: A. Bumblauskas (Ed.), *Naujasis Vilniaus perskaitymas: didieji Lietuvos istoriniai pasakojimai ir daugiakultūris miesto paveldas* (p. 49–77). Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla.
- Čepaitienė, R. (2010). *Paveldosauga globaliajame pasaulyje*. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas.
- Daukšas, D. (2011). *Dominuojantis nacijos, teritorijos ir valstybės diskursas lietuviškoje 1988–1991 m. periodikoje*. Vilnius: Liaudies kultūra.
- Daukšas, D. (2012). Lietuvos lenkai: etninio ir pilietinio identiteto konstravimas ribinėse zonos. *Lietuvos etnologija: socialinės antropologijos ir etnologijos studijos*, 12 (21), 167–193.
- Daukšas, D. (2014). Paribio identitetai: Punsko ir Šalčininkų atvejai. *Etniškumo studijos*, 2, 89–106.
- Frėjutė-Rakauskienė, M., Marcinkevičius, A., Šliavaitė, K., & Šutinienė, I. (2016). *Etniškumas ir identitetai Pietryčių Lietuvoje: raiška, veiksniai ir kontekstai*. Vilnius: Lietuvos socialinių tyrimų centras.
- Geben, K. (2011). Wybór tożsamości na styku języków i kultur. In: T. Dalecka, & M. Dawlewicz (Eds.), *W kręgu idei Miłoszowskich*. Vilnius: Vilniaus Universitetas.
- Geben, K. (2012). Kim się czują Polacy z Wilna, Solecznik i Trok. In: Burzyńska-Kamieniecka A., Misiak M., & Kamieniecki J. (Eds.), *Kresowe dziedzictwo: studia nad językiem, historią i kulturą* (pp. 155–165). Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe.
- Graham, B., Ashworth, G.J., & Tunbridge, J.E. (2000). *A geography of heritage: power, culture and economy*. Routledge.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). On collective memory, The University of Chicago Press. Retrieved July 11, 2019, from <https://www.sfu.ca/cmns/courses/2012/487/1-Extra%20Readings/HalbwachsOnCollective%20Memory.pdf>

- Hill, J., & Wilson, T. (2003). Identity Politics and the Politics of Identities. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10702890304336>
- Jakučionis, S., & Beniušis, V. (2017, December 5). *V. Landsbergis ragina vertinti ir J. Pilsudskio nuopelnus, ir klaidas*. Retrieved July 18, 2019, from file: <https://www.tv3.lt/naujienalietuva/936657/v-landsbergis-ragina-vertinti-j-pilsudskio-gimimo-metineshttp://www.faustyna.eu/lt/historia-obrazu-jezusa-milosierneho.htm>
- Janušauskienė, D. (2016). Ethnicity as political cleavage: The political agenda of the Polish national minority in Lithuania. *Nationalities Papers*, 44(4), 578–590. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2016.1156073>
- Janušauskienė, D. (2021). Identities of and Policies Towards the Polish National Minority in Lithuania. *Ethnopolitics*, 20(1), 136–149. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2020.1808331>
- Kalnius, P. (1998). *Etniniai procesai Pietryčiu Lietuvoje XX amžiaus antroje pusėje*. Vilnius: Žara.
- Karpińska, G.E. (2004). Miasto wymazywane. Historia łódzkiego przypadku. *Studia Etnologiczne i Antropologiczne*, 8, 165–180.
- Kasner, M. (2017). *O metodologii badań kultury pamięci miasta postsocjalistycznego (na przykładzie współczesnego Wilna)*. Wilno: Slavistica Vilnensis.
- Keightley, E., & Schlesinger, P. (2014). Digital media – social memory: remembering in digitally networked times. *Media, Culture & Society*, 36(6), 745–747. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443714532985>
- Laužikas, R. (2017). Komunikaciniai Lietuvos valstybingumo atkūrimo 100-mečio iššūkiai. *Lietuvos kultūros tyrimai*, 9, 26–48.
- Manžuch, Z. (2015). Atminties institucijos: saugyklos, teatrai, lobynai ar duomenų bazės? (Memory institutions: depositories, theatres, treasuries or data bases?). *Knygotyra*, 126–147. <https://doi.org/10.15388/kn.v51i0.7894>
- Mokrzecka, E. (2014, April 1). *Litwini chcą zamieścić tablicę przy mauzoleum Piłsudskiego na Rosie*. Retrieved July 18, 2019, from <https://zw.lt/wilno-wilenszczyzna/litwini-chca-zamiescic-tablice-przy-mauzoleum-pilsudskiego-na-rossie/>
- Mokrzecka, E. (2018, November 14). *Oddolna akcja w Żulowie: Ktoś przyjeżdża i sprząta, a ktoś mówi, że to nasze*. Retrieved July 10, 2019, from <https://zw.lt/wilno-wilenszczyzna/oddolna-akcja-w-zulowie-ktos-pryjezdza-i-sprzata-a-ktos-mowi-ze-to-nasze/>
- Ochma, E. (2020). When and why is the forgotten past recovered? The Battle of Warsaw, 1920 and the role of local actors in the production of memory. *Memory Studies*, 13(2), 176–190. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017709874>
- Šapoka, A. (2019). Tikras, sukurtas ir sunaikintas Mickevičiaus memoriališkumas. *Kaunas pilnas kultūros*. Retrieved June 20, 2019, from <http://pilnas.kaunas.lt/2019/03/12/tikras-sukurtas-ir-sunaikintas-mickeviciaus-memorialiskumas/>
- Stachowiak, B. (2012). Socjalizacja studentów do społeczeństwa informacyjnego na przykładzie Litwy, Niemiec, Polski, Republiki Czeskiej, Ukrainy. Studium porównawcze. *Torun International Studies*, 5(1), 77–93. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/TIS.2012.006>
- Šutinienė, I. (2011). Daugiakultūrinio miesto istorija komunikacinėje tautinių grupių atmintyje: Klaipėdos ir Vilniaus atvejai. In A. Nikžentaitis (Ed.), *Nuo Basanavičiaus, Vytauto Didžiojo iki Molotovo ir Ribbentropo. Atminties ir atminimo kultūrų transformacijos XX–XXI amžiuje*. Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos institutas.

- Szacka, B. (2011). Historical consciousness. The empirical research results. *Studia Socjologiczne, 1*, 233–260.
- Vansina, J. (1985). *Oral Tradition as History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Wawrzyński, P., & Schattkowsky, R. (2015). Attitudes towards the Government's Remembrance Policy in Poland: Results of an Experimental Study. *Politics in Central Europe, 11*(2), 73–94. <https://doi.org/10.1515/pce-2015-0012>