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First Lithuanian Museum – Baublys in Dionizas Poška's Garden

ABSTRACT

This article discusses Baublys – a nineteenth-century garden pavilion in Lithuania, Samogitia, established in the trunk of an oak tree by Lithuanian boyar and writer Dionizas Poška. Because of its ambiguity, Baublys has attracted considerable scholarly attention and, for the same reason, remains forgotten, generating a relatively small number of texts. Although interpretations vary, the place of Baublys in Lithuanian culture is still unclear. What is it? Is it a regional curiosity or a proto-museum? This article looks at Baublys through its *function* and aims at demonstrating that Baublys is not only a proto-museum, but also a prototype of today's interactive museum, containing the analogues of modern practices of museology: interactivity, communicational features and performativity. My methodology is constructed invoking the conceptual metaphor of the *mask* and referring to the theories of Hans Belting and Mikhail Bakhtin. According to the Bakhtinian dialogic imagination and literary concepts of the epic and the novel, the analogy of the mask and the monument is used. The research question is what Baublys *does* as a mask during Poška's lifetime and what it *does* as a monument today. How did its semantics and agency change after "becoming" a monument? The article shows that for Poška Baublys is a theatre of historical and personal memory, *activated* by structure, a set of finds, analogues (Sibile Temple, other garden pavilions) and performance. An empty Baublys is a monument – a reference to the past, which lacks the collection of the museum – Poška's finds. Baublys is not only a museum, but might be perceived as a monument to museums, even a monument to the idea of a museum.

Keywords: Baublys, Dionizas Poška/ Dionizy Paszkiewicz, first Lithuanian museum, proto-museum, monument, mask, performativity, communication

Słowa kluczowe: Baublys, Dionizas Poška/ Dionizy Paszkiewicz, pierwsze litewskie muzeum, protomuzeum, pomnik, maska, performatywność, komunikacja

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Introduction

Key Facts

Baublys – a 19th century garden pavilion in Lithuania, Samogitia, established in the trunk of an oak tree, which grew in the land of Dionizas Poška, Barzdžiai, a place named Mountain of Cherries.

Dionizas Poška/Dionizy Paszkiewicz (1764–1830) – Samogitian boyar, amateur scholar and writer, graduate of the Jesuit Gymnasium in Kražiai/Kroży; 1786–1820 held the office of clerk, notary, lawyer at the Raseiniai Land Court; in 1790 bought Barzdžiai manor and devoted increasingly more time to intellectual activities: wrote poems in Polish and Lithuanian, compiled a Latin-Polish-Lithuanian dictionary, was engaged in archaeological excavations, described local customs and pagan remains, commented on history, historical geography, and historical-comparative mythology and linguistics. Poška's authorities, scholars he admired: Xavier Bohusz (1746–1820), Joachim Lelewel (1786–1861).

In 1812 Poška cut a centenarian oak and hollowed out its trunk into a garden pavilion, where he established a rarity cabinet, a library, a gallery of portraits of famous people, and a collection of archaeological finds. This garden pavilion offered the writer a shelter and a 'home' open to guests and visitors. The pavilion was named *Baublys* after the Lithuanian pagan god of bees. On the walls of *Baublys*, Poška wrote poems commenting on the purpose of the pavilion and its content. He hung a bardon above the entrance and wrote below in Polish:

Baublys, if you are grateful for me, take part in good care of the Memory,
Of my Bardon humming within you, post death of mine.²

Baublys, rather than poetry made Poška a prominent figure in Lithuanian history. In 1815, the description of Poška's pavillion appeared in the weekly "Kuryer Litewski" earning it a wider renown.³ The antiquities stored in this only museum of this kind in Europe were described in "Dziennik Wileński", from 1823, Vol. III, and *Baublys* was described in "Dziennik Warszawski", Vol. IV, 1826.⁴

² "Baublu! Jeśliś mnie wdzięczny, Choway po mym zgonie, Dla Pamiątki żem w Tobie brząkał na Bardonie"; D. Poška, *Raštai*, Vilnius 1959, p. 528 (DP, Scriptures).

³ "Kuryer Litewski", 4.09.1815, No. 71(198), front-page column of local news, see: G. Mickūnaitė, *Manufacturing a past for the present: Forgery and authenticity in medievalist texts and objects in nineteenth-century Europe*, Leiden–Boston 2015, p. 269.

⁴ D. Poška, *O dębie mającym przeszło lat tysiąc zwanym 'Baublis', który rósł na Żmudzi w majątności Bordzie należącym do Dyonizego Paszkiewicza* [About an oak called 'Baublys' which is over a thousand years old and grew in Samogitia in Bardžiai, owned by Dionizas Poška], "Dziennik Warszawski" 1826, Vol. IV, No. 11, pp. 37–46; reprint: D. Poška, *Sylwan. Dziennik nauk leśnych i towarzyskich* [in:] *Encyklopedia tradycji*, Poland 1827, Vol. IV, pp. 97–107, <https://tradycja.fandom.com/wiki/Baublis> [accessed: 1.09.2020].



Fig. 1. Photo of Baubllys from: D. Poška, *Raštai*, DP, Scriptures, Vilnius 1959, pp. 512–513

It is “the most extensive account”⁵ where Poška tells how he discovered Baubllys barely alive in 1811 and the story in detail⁶ of cutting it a year later with the presence of Bishop Juozapas Arnulfas Giedraitis of Samogitia (Józef Arnulf Giedroyć, 1754–1838) at the memorable event. After Adam Mickiewicz (1798–1855) admired Baubllys in his epic poem *Pan Tadeusz* (1834), thus inscribing it into the pantheon of nostalgia, Baubllys became widely known and commented by his contemporaries, also outside Europe.⁷ Sławomir Majoch in the article *Baubllys – a forgotten museum from Pan Tadeusz* (2019) notes that in 1839, at the meeting of the Polish Literary Society in Paris, Poška was called

⁵ *O Dębie ‘Baublisie’ w Bordziach Dyon. Paszkiewicza* [About the oak “Baubllys” in the Barzdžiai [estate] of Dionizas Poška], “Dziennik Warszawski” 1826, Vol. IV, pp. 37–46, reprinted with parallel translation into Lithuanian in: D. Poška, *Raštai...*, pp. 508–537, see: G. Mickūnaitė, *op. cit.*, p. 269.

⁶ Baubllys seems very important to Poška even before the establishment of a museum within its trunk. The decision to cut a centenerian oak was not easily made: he told that foxes lived in-between the oak’s roots and the son of his neighbour nearly set a fire trying to catch them by burning straw. One can say that Poška attempts to justify cutting of the tree, as the only way of saving it – protecting from “destiny of being burned by some local shepherd”, in: D. Poška, *Raštai...*, p. 513.

⁷ *Longevity of trees*, “The American Journal of Science and Arts” 1832, Vol. 22, p. 379, see: S. Majoch, *Baubllys – zapomniane muzeum z Pana Tadeusza*, “Sztuka i Krytyka” 2019, No. 11 (86), p. 39, Polski Instytut Studiów nad Sztuką Świata.

the “Prophet of Samogitia” and compared to Jan Kochanowski,⁸ but had only one Polish author from the inter-war period – Michał Brensztejn who compared Baublys to the Temple of Sibyl and referred to it as a miniature museum in Samogitia. Nevertheless, among Polish researchers of the beginnings of museology, Poška’s work is not even mentioned, and the “oak museum” is sometimes analyzed only in the context of sightseeing, nature or literature, while its creator is considered a “semi-moving figure, semi-comic.”⁹ Baublys is discussed by biographers Vytautas Vanagas, Vincas Laurinaitis and especially museologist Nastasija Keršytė, who recognize the importance of Baublys in the history of Lithuanian museums.¹⁰ Two contemporary Lithuanian researchers of Baublys should also be noted: Brigita Speičytė has inscribed Baublys within literary studies in the article *Who planted Poška’s garden?* (2005),¹¹ and Giedrė Mickūnaitė has conceptually discussed Baublys as an ambivalent phenomenon, subject not only of art criticism, but also of the philosophy of art in the article *Imagining the Real: Material Evidence and Participatory Past in Nineteenth-Century Lithuania.*¹² Because of its ambiguity, Baublys attracts scholarly attention and, for the same reason, remains forgotten, generating relatively few papers. It is on the edge between the comic and the sublime. Thus it seems its ambivalence or multitude of meanings remains an ultimate feature. Majoch (in the article written in 2019) also asks whether Poška was an amateur freak looking for applause, an antiquarian, or a precursor of today’s museum worker? Should Baublys be treated as a regional curiosity or as a form of proto-museum?¹³

Although interpretations vary, the place and character of Baublys in Lithuanian culture is still a question. This article aims at demonstrating that Baublys is not only a proto-museum, but also a prototype of today’s interactive museum, containing the analogues of modern practices of museology: interactivity, communicational features and performativity. My argument is that for Poška, Baublys is a theatre of historical and personal memory, *activated* by structure, a set of finds, analogues (Sibile Temple, and other garden pavilions) and performance. An Empty Baublys is a monument – a reference to the past, which lacks the collection of the museum – Poška’s finds. Baublys is not only a museum, but might be perceived as a monument to museums, even a monument to the idea of a museum.

Methodology: The conceptual metaphor of the *mask* is invoked referring to theories of Hans Belting and Mikhail Bakhtin. According to the Bakhtinian dialogic imagination and literary concepts of the epic and the novel, the analogy of the mask and the monument is used. Belting’s theory of “face and mask” allows discussing the ambivalent representations of Baublys: understanding it as the one and the other, an exposed, and at the same time, hidden face of the public person. A “dynamic” perception of the mask is chosen here to open up and emphasize the performative potential of the object. As a mask Baublys *interprets* the past and history, memory (and oblivion), time, place and

⁸ *Ibidem.*

⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 39–40.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

¹¹ See: “Metai. Literatūra. Kritika. Eseiistika” 2005, No. 1, <http://www.zurnalasmetai.lt/?p=617> [accessed: 25.11.2019].

¹² See: G. Mickūnaitė, *op. cit.*

¹³ S. Majoch, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

shares *experience*. The concept of a mask in this case refers to the performative potential of a tree trunk: a representation of Baublys as a medium. Baublys also unveils itself as a monument, and appears as a work of art. Baublys as a monument *testifies* to the same concepts that the mask *interprets*: the memory of the past, history, place and the life of its owners. The interpretation does not claim that Baublys is a work of art, but exposes conceptual similarities.

As a museum, Baublys not only collects and distributes information, but also because of its uniqueness contains memorable aesthetical features and, thus, is close to a work of art. This article looks at Baublys as a museum through its function, establishing and emphasizing parallels to museums of today. The research question is what Baublys *does* as a mask during Poška's lifetime and what it *does* as a monument today. How did its semantics and agency change after "becoming" a monument. In both cases, it reveals the aesthetic potential: the mask – pre-Kantian, and the monument – Kantian. The pre-Kantian mask is on the verge of inexplicability, covers the variety of interpretations; the monument might be seen as a task for a viewer – aesthetic judgment becomes a part of the subject's consciousness and has one meaning (this aspect will not be developed further as it goes beyond the main problem of the text).

Communication through the mask – interactivity and performativity of the museum

There has to be a performer to wear the mask, this is why the mask is connected with the *now* of Poška's lifetime and his activity as of the "head" of the museum, the owner of the *kunstkamera*. The museum is not only the place for collecting and storing *things*, it is also a pulpit – a medium, a place from which information is distributed, interpreted, shaped according to the concept of the museum. The oak tree became the shelter (and later, when things are brought in, a museum) by being cut. In this case, cutting down is a *rite de passage*, ritual of irreversible transition, crossing the borderline between nature and culture, the beginning of nature's culturing ritual. The oak becomes culture – the shell for and the exhibit of the museum. Material object embodies the *possibility* and inspiration to communicate; to speak out to community, and as a mask it is a medium, which provides relative safety, creates distance. It offers a possibility to hide, to mask the owner's persona and to shape the message – talking from a disguise and pretending: in his texts Poška uses a lot of diminutive adjectives characterizing himself in rather humiliating way. On one hand this might be considered as a manner typical of neo-classicist literature, on the other it could be a position, a strategy of masking the sayings under the light veil of joke with a purpose to soften it and to remain in between of serious and flimsy, frivolous – ambivalent. Here one can refer to the theory of Mikhail Bakhtin, especially to the dialogical nature of the literary process, where he emphasizes the role of the joke and creative nature of "popular laughter."¹⁴ On the other hand, as Poška makes efforts to contribute in different sections of Lithuanian culture: language (working on

¹⁴ In popular laughter Bakhtin sees authentic roots of the novel, in: M.M. Bakhtin, *The dialogic imagination, four essays*, ed. M. Holquist, trans. C. Emerson, M. Holquist, Austin 1985, p. 21.

a Polish-Lithuanian-Latin vocabulary), regional studies (executing archaeological excavations) and possibly had chosen such a “disguised” way of expression because of being in doubt about a value of his input himself. Although he did acknowledge his amateur enthusiasm, ambiguous relationship with the community could be a reason – he was misunderstood by some of his contemporaries.

Discussing his activity one can inquire whether Poška speaks for a group or just for himself? How is witnessing constructed? Thomas Hobbes makes a difference between “natural person,” when somebody represents himself, and “artificial person” – the one who represents a group in public. It might be an actor or a speaker or anybody else.¹⁵ In context of this article, Poška’s voice represents Samogitian cultural movement, voices of many people – Baublys participates in Poška’s taking and changing roles, it is a mask to speak through as a public person, same function it has in representing Poška’s identity as of “natural person.”

Are we Lithuanians and Samogitians or mere cattle?

Are we going to abandon the language of our parents?¹⁶

Poška as an “artificial person” represents a plurality just as “natural person” represents his individual identity. How does the trunk “become” a mask? The reasons of Poška taking different roles in literature and in life may be various, but without natural creativity and artistic imagination of the literates, educators, and archaeologists, the primal cause (which justifies the *need* of the mask) might be his complicated relationship with the community. In the beginning of the 19th century, he has established a prototype of interactive museum of today, a pulpit for witnessing – an artefact too archaic and hence advanced thus too awkward and eccentric for the contemporaries. In addition to being valued by academics because of historical research, Poška earned the reputation of a weirdo in his neighbourhood and was mocked in press. He often covers up under the mask of ploughman, villager, who does not know much about history, literature etc. He speaks for the trunk, about him and on behalf of himself as artificial personality, someone else. Baublys served as a medium for expression, not only in the powerful transcendence of nature, as in the translation of life into art.¹⁷ Poška’s creative nature required a pulpit, a pedestal – a platform for taking action: performing and thus becoming a nurturer of culture, with the face exposed despite of or because of the mask. Ancient multipurpose mask provided a possibility of changing roles to negotiate social situations, and Poška’s case might be an example of how a mask helps to be heard.¹⁸

The Garden Pavilion (if Poška’s Baublys is understood as such) is far from being a novelty in the early 19th century. The landscape was historicized by the construction/

¹⁵ Paraphrased, original quote of Thomas Hobbes in: H. Belting, *Face and mask: A double history*, Princeton 2017, pp. 28–29.

¹⁶ “Litwyni i Źmuydzini czyż z bydląt się wzięli?”

Scyliż Oyczystey mowy niebędzim umieli?; D. Poška, *Raštai...*, p. 86.

¹⁷ H. Belting, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

¹⁸ On this subject see: *ibidem*, pp. 26–27; T. Wilsher, *The mask handbook: Practical guide*, London–New York 2006, p. 32, <https://epdf.pub/the-mask-handbook.html> [accessed: 25.11.2019].

simulation of Roman ruins, Druid temples, mystical caves. The rotunda, the Temple of Sybil, built by Izabela Czartoryska (1746–1835) in Pulawy in 1801 was also acclaimed the Temple of Memory. Moreover, Czartoryska's treatise on gardening emphasized the importance of old trees in the landscape. Understanding nature as a representation of memory is also particular of the time period: Brigita Speičytė mentions that Poška saw his garden as a memory map, which is typical of perception of the garden and landscape in that time

Originality in this case lies not in the idea of a garden as microcosm, *modus vivendi* of a noble culture, not in the pavilion as such itself (despite the exclusivity of Baublys), but rather through communication: *performativity as the transmission of a certain experience through the material body and place*. Here the situation of Baublys and Poška's garden offers parallels to the context of contemporary art and is close to the site-specific art or environmental (land) art, to the "works of art exploiting a place as a medium, using elements of that place, taking into account its character, its historical context, its particular situation and characteristics."¹⁹

Poška's garden combines personal vision with the reflection of the past. Poška shares the lived experience of the past, real or imagined, the one he believes, which is most important. David Carr names it "lived sense of the past," as we have a very full and concrete sense of the past in our own lives and in that of the communities we belong to. Our sense of who we are, whether as individuals, as families, as institutions, as societies, or even as nations, is very much a function of our sense of where we have come from and where we are going to. This lived history, rooted in our experience, is our first and abiding awareness of the past.²⁰ For example, it is important for Poška to highlight Lithuanian pagan tradition, with the Herul origins.²¹ According to Eugenija Ulčainaitė, Poška corrects the myth of Lithuanian Roman origins by claiming that not the Romans came to the Baltic coasts and settled there bringing their customs, religion, certain forms of coexistence, but the other way around: Lithuanians in their own country implemented traditions they have seen abroad. Culture is not given by others, but selected and brought by themselves.²²

¹⁹ A. Trakšelytė, *Ivjetintas vaizduojamasis menas: teorinis diskursas ir raiška Lietuvos šiuolaikiniame mene*, doctoral dissertation, Vilnius 2012, p. 8.

²⁰ D. Carr, *Experience and history: Phenomenological perspectives on the historical world*, Oxford 2014, p. 75.

²¹ This is not my guess or a fairy tale, but it can be confirmed by the tariffs of the three counties of Samogitia – Raseiniai, Telšiai and Šiauliai. Finally, as a person who knows the geographical location of my country, I can name almost every manor mansion in the Duchy of Samogitia, the oldest of which ones have survived to this present day. According to their etymology, names of many estates in Samogitia are derived from the word "giria" (forest), "gerulis" as well as the word "medis" (tree) have (D. Poška, *Raštai...*, p. 295). In Polish: "Puszczę las/Gire Gierulis/ puszczowy lezny:" (D. Poška, *Rašta...*, p. 294). Direct reference to Herul origins is in D. Poška, *Raštai...*, pp. 292–293: "Czyż nie widno: że ci to Gierowie albo Gerulowie nad rzeką Gierrus łączącą się za granicami Scytów ulokowani są istotnie Antecesorowi Litwinów – a kray ich czyż nie widno/: Jak się powyżey rzekło:/ że od morza Baltyckiego aż do Dniepru rozciągalsię? –".

²² E. Ulčainaitė, *Lietuvos Didžiosios Kunigaikštystės paveldo metamorfozės XIX amžiaus Lietuvos literatūroje*, "Literatūra" 2006, No. 48 (1), p. 114.

How does the mask work? It helps to execute the rite of witnessing and to perform a performative action in the living environment well before the performative breakthrough occurs, that is before 7–8th decade of 20th century. The concepts of *staging*²³ and *aesthetic experience* are also suitable for Poška's activities. *Staging* in Poška's case is changing the space, giving the object a new status and name and animating it. According to Erika Fischer-Lichte, "aesthetic experience" is not only an experience related to various arts, but also specific experiences arising from any phenomenon or process that can be attributed to aesthetic function, including urban and garden planning, phenomena and processes of nature. Staging is not a strategy of depicting, representing (*Darstellung*) but of manufacturing (*Erzeugung*).²⁴ Poška makes present what he is showing, he does not represent/illustrate, but performatively *produces* meaning, which is constructed with an aid of the object. Community reaction to Poška's activity is considerably important: visitors of Baublys or those who react to publications in press, gain status of an actor by getting involved in the game.

Baublys could be perceived as an autochthone embodiment of land – Poška is a megaphone of Lithuanian culture, spreader of ancient, pagan traditions, keeper of an ethnic background and nurturer of nature. In his narratives and rewritten songs he witnesses glorious times gone and the deeds of important personalities, enlighteners of former times. Witnessing can be a sensory experience – the witnessing of an event with one's own eyes and ears. But witnessing is also the discursive act of stating one's experience for the benefit of an audience that was not present at the event. Witness serves as the surrogate sense – sensory organs of the absentees. Hence, Baublys as a witness is a medium: the means by which experience is supplied to those who cannot access the original.²⁵

Baublys as a cut down tree preserves its physical form, but its content is neither here, nor now. On the other hand, Poška's 'settlement' into the oak fills the object with life and – the centenarian tree becomes present. It is a material and metaphorical threshold: on the one hand it means Poška's holding, *habitat* and on the other – signifies *media*, the beginning of the communication or the source witnessing comes from. The communicative perspective exempts Baublys from linear time of history translating it into diachronic piece of memory. The hollowed-out trunk of Baublys functions as a mask enabling Poška to perform the rite of witnessing. One can say that Poška speaks for lack and uncertainty of that time, he is worried about the culture of the country, that "nobody's interested to write the proper history of Lithuania" and brings together listeners – interlocutors – witnesses around himself, inspires the community thus activating national cultural movement. The rite of witnessing covers the complexity of relationships Poška tried to establish with the community of his time: academics, scholars, and ordinary people, neighbours as well as strangers, visitors of his shelter–museum.

²³ The exact meaning of this term used by Fischer-Lichte is given as – *Inszenierung*, in German staging as directing, its strategies. The term applies to non-artistic performance as well as to any theatricalization and aestheticization of everyday life; in: E. Fischer-Lichte, *The transformative power of performance: A new aesthetics*, London 2008, p. 183.

²⁴ On this subject see: *ibidem*, pp. 181–207.

²⁵ According J.D. Peters, *Witnessing [in:] Media, culture & society*, London–Thousand Oaks–New Delhi 2003, Vol. 23, pp. 707–723.

Poška acts in different ways: he ‘lives’ in his museum and meets visitors personally, writes *about* the Baublys and *in his* name. Baublys participates in the discourse of memory not only physically, but also as a protagonist, main character of Poška’s verses; Poška spreads the news about it as wide as possible. Poška defends Baublys from critics in local press and updates his literary stories according to what happens in reality. The audience (visitors) witnesses the events, which were later described in Poška’s writings and letters – thus private experience becomes universal. This object is paradoxically discursive and finite at the same time. Because of the complexity of roles (tree/pavillion/museum etc.) it resembles an artwork, *objet trouvé*, and a mask, which provided Poška with faces of literates and educators thus adding authority to his voice.

Why this trunk was so important to Poška? And why it is still significant to Lithuanian culture? Through Baublys (and the other trees) Poška attempts at constructing the narrative and translating it in to representations of things immemorial – he seeks continuity, stability, personal and national ‘grounding’. He participates in discourse of memory through the identification with the language and culture of the country. One of most important Poška’s tasks seems to be the maintenance and construction of memory. He reaches/attempts to *remember* himself and to *remind* to the world. Baublys is a communicative tool to address the world. Poška’s ‘headquarters’, established in it, are meant not just for pleasure or convenience, but becomes his operating condition, which defines his relationship with the world. Baublys is a mandate to speak out, ‘permission’ for speaking (or legitimation of speaking), the opportunity for freedom. Baublys might be perceived as an artefact – document, which reveals elasticity between the lived and retrospective past – written and told. It introduces a vector towards the future, thus showing the characteristic of memoirs: the texts inscribed in to his ‘body’ and surroundings (other trees of Poška’s Garden) bear orientation towards future. He inscribed notes on the trees – sometimes personally important dates (like that of his marriage) and other facts for the strangers to know, “strangers who would come when he would be lying in his tomb,”²⁶ to enhance memory of the generations to come. This way Baublys (and the Garden) acts as a witness of history, prosthesis for memory, and document as a material substitute, denying the disappearance of the past. Document as a trace, signifier which creates the illusion of stability and reliability: “I witness therefore I exist.”

Baublys witnesses not only the glorious history of the country, but becomes Poška’s *silva rerum*. It replaces house chronicle, a specific type of the book, multi-generational chronicle kept by many Lithuanian and Polish families through 16th to 18th centuries, a history of the family manor he didn’t had. By cutting the 750-year-old oak Poška replaces its natural roots with the cultural ones – lasting even longer. On the one hand the object thus becomes finite, on the other – acquires “liveliness” as performative potential, maintains discursive regime across time. Today, Baublys also speaks to us by witnessing Poška’s activities. It is the memorial of natural, cultural, and family history. The past remains inscribed in to material, the tree trunk. The inscriptions give/provide life, but they do not penetrate in to the future, rather they lay in layers thus ‘demanding’ the chronicle to be continued. Because of this gesture towards the future, the open question “and what’s next?” Baublys is peculiarly / distinctively eclectic (diachronic). Through

²⁶ D. Poška, *Raštai...*, p. 527.

the contact with the present we face the world *in making*, the semantic stability is lost, different contexts unfold. Baublys – a mask, a witness and an agent shows up as a material representation of time and as a medium of memory.

Communicational features of a museum as a monument

After Poška's death communicational focus of Baublys has changed: it shifted from the country to the person. It tells of Poška's persona, represents his life even more than during the poet's lifetime. Baublys as material witness with a verses inscribed by the poet's hand is a trace, evidence of the action taken by human being, interaction with nature. Or it could be perceived as an imprint in to development of Lithuanian culture – if we focus not on the act of carving but on the meaning of verses, the message itself.

Witnessing is related with the awareness of certain duties, to witness the event is to be responsible for it.²⁷ Here one can claim that Poška took on the role (responsibility) of the Baublys owners/masters: as speakers, witnesses of history, chroniclers of the present, writers – a relatively public and visible person. Poška testified his world view and the system of values by the way of living. He created/constructed memory combining accidental personal recollections with interpretations of historical events. Baublys by performing double role – of the object and the media falls within the hermeneutical triangle, which “implies an open dialogue between the object, the maker, and the consumer in constructing meaning.”²⁸ But what happens if to eliminate the maker, he dies? How does the meaning of the message change, is communication still possible?

The image of Baublys consists of changing states: epic, as the natural state of the centenarian oak tree which transforms to performative state of headquarters of the poet, the pulpit and a mask, a communicative tool during Poška's lifetime. And finally it returns to the epic state again, this time – the state of the cultural monument. Baublys definitely retains its power, now it is famous historical object, memorial in attendance and centre of attraction. This attention changed its dynamics several times, but continued for a two centuries. Because of the obvious, but tacit force and “life” it might be compared to Warburgian *Nachleben*, survival that exposes its *afterlife* as a museum and monument. Another feature specific to *survivals* is an ambivalent relation to time. To *which* time exactly does Baublys belong? To 1812, when Poška established his pavilion? Or perhaps to those 700 years when the oak grew before being cut? Is there a particular date of its birth and death, marking not only the vanished stage of society's history, but also the vanished stage of nature? Is it vanished, if we can touch it, feel the bark *ex materia*. It might be considered finite, as it doesn't have natural roots; on the other hand its continuity is obvious, as today Baublys functions as interpretative problem in the fields of history, memory, communication, and, of course, museology. So assuming that Baublys survived different stages of being, was transformed from nature to culture (paradoxically still remaining in both of them) we can infer that *Nachleben* is its principle

²⁷ According to John Ellis, in: J.D. Peters, *op. cit.*, p. 708.

²⁸ Marius Kwint in: W. Kansteiner, *Finding meaning in memory: A methodological critique of collective memory studies*, “History and Theory” 2002, Vol. 41, p. 197, Wesleyan University.

characteristic. Apparently, there is no “right” time of Baublys, but multitude of times that exist within it.

Emphasizing the actuality of Baublys one can unfold it as a foreground, the prototype object in culturing nature. The history (legend, myth) of Baublys might be called one of Warburgian “ghost stories for grown-ups.” It has this paradoxical “liveliness” and “animism” Warburg saw in Florentine portraits. It bears “physical relationship with death” and “psychical relationship with the inanimate.” Baublys unfolds like ancient sarcophagus, the casket of death, which not only carries fossilized formulas of life, but has a voice of a dead poet. More than that Baublys could be seen as phantom of history, a *survival of what we might call a “pre-birth”* – a cultural artefact that even without being a work of art, can become the forefront of the latter. During Poška’s lifetime the Garden is a place for a transmission of experience – aesthetic, personal and historical experiences are shared through the objects (Baublys and the other trees of the Garden). If in this state it can be equated with the art of a dialogue or art-based communication, after Poška’s death the dialogic movement stops, or, to be more precise, one figure is removed from the hermeneutic triangle and the meaning becomes more defined – monument is always for somebody (or something) – has clear meaning.

Baublys participates in the discourse of memory not only physically, but also as a protagonist, main *character* of Poška’s verses and as an *object*, an image of the shell left, the mask, which is taken of with the hidden side exposed. Today it might be even tried on: by entering an empty pavilion and looking outside from the same perspective its owner used to look. Woolf Kansteiner²⁹ emphasizes close interaction of *words* and *images* in construction of collective memories and claims that namely because of such interaction, memories can be reached and studied through its discursive and narrative foundations. It opens another aspect in the studies of collective memory. Baublys as a discursive element, after the death of his owner performs through Poška’s written words and those inscribed on the trunk (and other trees) and images: certain materia, specific form, or forms as Poška established another cabin in the trunk of smaller oak naming it the brother of Baublys. He used to spend time in both of the trunks waiting for visitors, communicating actively and directly when they approached and indirectly – spreading the story of Baublys and the history of the country through Baublys in his articles, letters, and poems.

Baublys as a pavilion, housing is still the same facade facing the stranger, a carnival mask – theatrical illusion in harmony with the direct experience. The threshold of Baublys still could be a landmark of the theatrical stage: if during Poška’s lifetime all the visitors/spectators participate in the performance with the owner of the museum communicating with him in “real” time of his lifetime, now they are coming to the same place as to an empty home – to a *place of memory*. Poška himself granted the status of a family home to Baublys by writing on its ceiling “Dionizas and Uršulė, two lucky people, live in abundance in my care,”³⁰ so now as a museum it represents a settlement of the noble family as well. As Poška had not inherited his family manor, but bought his estate, this inscription (as well as other inscriptions on a trees signifying personal dates like of his marriage) shows that *rooting* in Barzdžiai was very important to Poška. Possibility to

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 192.

³⁰ In Lithuanian: “Mano priglausti gyvena pertekę malonės Dionizas ir Uršulė du laimingi žmonės.”

walk around the Baublys, across the Garden, all the place, the manor territory with an old watermill, apple trees and a pond could be perceived as walk on a memory map – as an outside museum, landscape as a museum, a place for remembering and imagining, creating, interpreting the past gone. Such “walk of honour” resembles the rite devoted to commemorate former owners and their way of living. It creates an imagined representation: each object along the entire *place* signifies the habits, values and a tradition of noble living in 19th century. At his presence Poška created ancient atmosphere using an exponents, objects, fragments of the past and telling stories, now the *place* does this itself, the communication and witnessing still proceeds, the museum shapes the message. Today the participatory, interactive aspect of the museum remains of the same importance. Earlier visitors and spectators were not only engaged into the *dialog* with the owner but had direct influence to the museum: some of them helped to form the collection. For example, an oldest article about Baublys written by anonymous author five years after it was cut states, that the collection was eagerly multiplied by Samogitian citizens, for example, Ignacy Dyrda submitted copper sheet with engravings³¹ to Poška’s oak museum. Today the role of community in building an exposition about his owner and sending the message as wide as possible is still significant. Museum became an attraction centre for the community, a *place* for rituals. After Poška’s death the collection of Baublys was distributed to certain institutions in Lithuania, partially according to his will; Baublys turns to an empty dwelling: when the host dies, his belongings are apportioned. After majority of the antiquities were lost during World War I, Baublys became a museum without exhibits. In the end of 19th – beginning of the 20th century it gained new tectonic features: the roof was replaced; the cement foundation was laid, as if it has finally rooted in Poška’s Garden. Baublys was covered with slabs, preserved several times (first in 1956). It became a matter of public concern and interest.

Hence the transformation of Baublys into a monument occurs as public attitude towards this object changes: after the death of its discoverer and founder Baublys began to be perceived as a monument, because “not the works themselves [Werken] have a monumental meaning because of their original purpose, but we as current entities attribute it to them.”³² After Poška’s death, his Garden remains relevant to the community; the museum is being restored since 1949. In 1971 Baublys was covered with the glass enclosure and became a building in a building or a museumified memorial. Paradoxically, it is also a museumified museum. Baublys as an exhibit can serve as an example of a proto-museum – visitors can satisfy their curiosity and to see a preserved exhibit under the glass. Baublys is also a memorialised museum – in 1969 Baublys (and his brother) have been declared a historical monument of republican significance. In 2008 the Bijotai Manor has been declared as cultural monument, thus the place, the Garden was officially memorialized. In 1990 the “real” monument to Poška was also erected. A white marble sculpture

³¹ “Portret na blasze rytowany teologa pomorskiego Jakóba Fabriciusa, zachowujący się w zbiorze zabytków starożytnych litewskich Pana Dyonizego Paszkiewicza”, “Dziennik Wileński” 1817, t. 6, nr 35, s. 50, in: S. Majoch, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

³² The quotation of Riegl is taken from an article of A. Sverdiolas, *Paminklo vertės: Aloisas Rieglis*, “AAAV, Restauravimo laboratorija” 2019, No. 92–93, p. 18; A. Riegl, *Neue Strömungen in der Denkmalpflege* [in:] *Der moderne Denkmalkultus: sein Wesen und seine Entstehung, Gesammelte Aufsätze*, Berlin 1995, p. 148.

(by Vaclovas Krinys), which personalizes former intentions of the poet: there is unknown how exactly Poška looked like, what were his physical characteristics, except that he was a man of the great stature. Therefore the monument built in the territory of the manor is relative, conditional representation – a mask, as the portrait was cast according typical physiognomical features of a nobleman of the region. This way Baublys, which itself is a monument (to Poška), was duplicated with another monument.

No matter how to name Poška's Garden, a monument or a museum, is clearly a place of memory. It corresponds to the concept of *le lieu de mémoire*, as a place where collective or national memory is embodied, and thus the place most people in a state (region or city) identify with. Poška's Garden is a place of ritual as well, if we agree that rituals, important for historical narration (or its rewriting) could be such actions as memorial unveiling ceremonies, mass commemorations of dates and figures (or) display of state symbols.³³ Hence Poška's garden with Baublys is a place of ritual in all stages of its existence: during Poška's lifetime guests visit Baublys, and we can equate the collection of antiquities displayed to them to national symbols. During the years of national revival in Lithuania numerous tours, politicians and heralds of the period also visited Baublys, song festivals were hosted in former Poška's Garden, annual choir performances in May, and now it is an official gathering and visiting venue.³⁴

In retrospect, the establishment of Baublys seems to have been a remarkably successful step: personal (hiding family history), natural and cultural, co-human and magical (as much as a work of art), Poška's garden seems to be resistant to time. As a monument, it is not imposed by any political power, but is (by Pierre Nora's definition) "an organically formed container of local collective memory," which retains linguistic diversity till the present day.

Conclusion

The pavilion's performative potential and its later reputation of being the very first museum made Baublys evocative item. Poška's authorship and ownership of Baublys has been framed by his point of view and behaviour, the hollowed-out trunk becomes "alive" through performance, in which witnessing and communication are the key roles assigned to it. The most important characteristics of Baublys unfold through performance: interaction with the community of Poška's lifetime and with the community of the present/today. For Poška it was necessary to maintain a dialogue, in order to make his original object understandable to the 19th-century audiences, Baublys functioned as interactive museum of today. Natural roots of an oak were substituted with cultural ones, physical medium – with words and experiences.

³³ R. Antanavičiūtė, *Menas ir politika Vilniaus viešosiose erdvėse*, Vilnius 2019, p. 28.

³⁴ Baublys actively participates in the discourse of contemporary culture of memory. Such "activity" echoes with the Bakhtinian theory, as he argues (discussing the novel and epic) that modernity or contemporaneity which is not characterized by the concern for the future's memory is formed from clay, but modernity for the future (that is bearing a note for it's descendants) is casted from marble or bronze. My interpretation suggests in this article that Baublys eventually turns to such type of marble/bronze monument (M.M. Bakhtin, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–19).

The message of the museum unfolds through diachronic communication and performance of witness – Baublys is the means by which experience is supplied to others who lack the original.

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