Chapter 5
Mediatization of Solidarity Myth at the Permanent Exhibition of the European Solidarity Centre

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ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to define the concepts of myth and of mediatization in the context of building great historical narratives. Modern historical museums and narrative exhibitions are treated in the publication as new media whose main task is to communicate narratives about the past to mass audiences, using digital methods of recording, saving, storing data, as well as of creating and transmitting messages. The chapter describes a short history of the creation of the European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk and the permanent exhibition. In the main part, the text also describes how the ECS (and the permanent exhibition located within) attempt to both present the myth of solidarity and to mediatize it.

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INTRODUCTION

This text first of all attempts to describe and define the concepts of myth and mediatization as well as narrative exhibitions. Secondly, basing on these concepts it attempts to prove that modern historical museums are like new media that communicate with the visitors in an interactive way. Their main task is mass communication of the narrative about the past, using digital methods of recording, saving, storing data, creating and transmitting messages. The text also answers the question what modern myths are and if they are really necessary. The means employed by the European Solidarity Centre and its permanent exhibition to present the Solidarity myth and mediatize it are also analyzed. The text is a voice in the discussion on whether contemporary narrative museums (including the ECS) contribute, like the new media in general, to the mediatizing of history and culture or to a myth-building process as such.

MYTH

Myths can be considered in many contexts, including religious, philosophical, anthropological, historical, literary, and even psychological ones. Izabela Trzcińska (2011, p.37) reminds us that the concept of myth is ambiguous, multidimensional, and the definitions themselves are infinite.

The Dictionary of the Polish Language (Dictionary of the Polish Language online, 2019), Wikipedia (Myth, 2019), or Kopaliński’s Dictionary of Foreign Words (Kopaliński’s Dictionary of Foreign Words online, 2017) define myths as stories about the lives of gods or heroes, designed to explain the birth of the world, man, as well as the sense of individual or collective experience, including false opinions about something or someone, and also false stories. One of the most famous definitions – an ethnoreligious one – was offered by Mircea Eliade (2017). For him, the myth tells a sacred story, describes an event that took place in a distant, originary period – in the legendary time of “beginnings”. It also expresses a longing for paradise and is an expression of nostalgia or regret for the lost past: “subjected to the process of mythization, transformed into an archetype, that ‘the past’ – regardless of the regret for the
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