

Representation of Memory of Forced Displacement in Central and Eastern Europe after World War II in Polish and German Cinemas

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Abstract : The aim of this study is to analyze the representation of memories of the forced displacement of Poles and Germans from the eastern territories in 1945 as depicted by Polish and German feature films between the years 1945-1960. The aftermath of World War II and the Allied agreements concluded at Yalta and Potsdam (1945) resulted in changes in national borders in Central and Eastern Europe and the large-scale transfer of civilians. The westward migration became a symbol of the new post-war division of Europe, new spheres of influence separated by the Iron Curtain. For years it was a controversial topic in both Poland and Germany due to the geopolitical alignment (the socialist East and capitalist West of Europe), as well as the unfinished debate between the victims and perpetrators of the war. The research premise is to take a comparative view of the conflicted cultures of Polish and German memory, to reflect on the possibility of an international dialogue about the past recorded in film images, and to discover the potential of film as a narrative warning against totalitarian inclinations. Until now, films made between 1945 and 1960 in Poland and the German occupation zones have been analyzed mainly in the context of artistic strategies subordinated to ideology and historical politics. In this study, the intention is to take a critical approach leading to the recognition of how films work as collective memory media, how they reveal the mechanisms of memory/forgetting, and what settlement topoi and migration myths they contain. The main hypothesis is that feature films about forced displacement, in addition to the politics of history - separate in each country - reveal comparable transnational individual experiences: the chaos of migration, the trauma of losing one's home, the conflicts accompanying the familiar/foreign, the difficulty of cultural adaptation, the problem of lost identity, etc.

Keywords : forced displacement, Polish and German cinema, war victims, World War II

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