

Identity in a Notion of the Eastern and Western European Cinema¹

If there is a distinctive trait of European cinema, it could be seen within an attitude towards the category of identity in most representative and intellectually challenging feature films. The very notion of identity opens a field, where we encounter a number of relevant meanings as far as films are concerned. There are common features between different approaches to identity in the European cinema in different periods. The notion of identity concerns a number of its enunciations that touch upon philosophical subjectivity, psychological subject, an ethnic entity, the political agent, and so forth. All these different aspects of identity, which naturally are, in most cases (but not necessarily so) inscribed in a constructions of characters, are manifested in films from different periods of European cinematography. Modernist movements of 1960s and 1970s both in Western Europe (as in the French *nouvel vague* or young German cinema) and Eastern Central Europe (especially Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Yugoslavia) addressed the theme of identity in a manner that could be read as ideologically subversive. At the end of this chapter, I conclude that after the political turmoil's in 1989 the theme of identity emerges in a new context.

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