

Summary

This dissertation examines the representation of postwar Jewish life in contemporary German and Austrian cinema, focusing on films produced from the 1990s to the present. The research corpus comprises both feature fiction and documentary films distributed in cinemas. The central objective of this study is to analyze how these films depict Holocaust survivors and their descendants, with particular attention to the interplay between cinematic portrayals of the Jewish minority and the politics of memory in Austria and Germany. Special emphasis is placed on the representation of survivors and subsequent generations of Jews, as well as on the contexts in which cinema engages with the postwar diaspora. A key research question addresses the roles attributed to Jewish characters within these narratives. The primary theoretical framework is Y. Michal Bodemann's concept of 'memory theatre,' which provides a lens through which to examine how Austrians and Germans conceptualize their national identities in relation to these cinematic narratives.

The dissertation is structured into three chapters. The first chapter outlines the research methodology, drawing on theories from memory studies, as well as concepts related to the study of stereotypes, antisemitism, alterity, and otherness. This methodological section also includes reflections on cinematic strategies for encoding Jewishness. The second chapter presents the social, historical, and cultural context, with particular focus on the relations between the Jewish diaspora and the majority society in Austria and Germany (accounting for differences between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic) and on the emergence of the memory theater. The analytical chapter introduces a typology based on a memory studies perspective.

The analysis of selected films reveals that portrayals of postwar Jewish life remain closely linked to discourses of Holocaust remembrance and the confrontation with the past. In the majority of the examined works, memory, or post-memory, of the Shoah constitutes either the central theme or one of the dominant motifs. Although this study is not strictly comparative, it draws attention to similarities and differences in cinematic narratives about Jewish life in Austria and Germany. Employing a framework grounded in memory studies facilitates a nuanced exploration of the distinctions between portrayals of survivors and those of later generations for whom the events of the Second World War are no longer part of lived experience. By combining neoformal film analysis with contextual analysis and elements of

reception studies, the dissertation also shows how cinematic representations of Jewish life are received and how they contribute to ongoing debates surrounding memory politics.