

From:

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Rubble, Ruins and Romanticism

Visual Style, Narration and Identity
in German Post-War Cinema

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Traditional criticism on German post-war cinema tends to define rubble films as simplistic texts of low artistic quality which serve to reaffirm the spectator's image of him or herself as »a good German« during »bad times«. Yet this study asserts that some rubble films are actually informed by a type of visual and narrative Romantic discourse which aims at provoking a »critical discussion« on German national identity and its reconstruction in the aftermath of the Third Reich. Considering the lack of previous analyses with regard to the key aspects of Romantic visual style, narration and literary motifs in rubble films, this study points to a major gap in research.

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Introduction

Ruins and rubble in German rubble films (*Trümmerfilme*)¹ set in the aftermath of World War II represent a collective symbol² of defeat. The landscape of destroyed cities, still recalling the recent battles, renders this defeat an inescapable aspect of everyday life for the German population. This image of destruction provoked feelings of shame, sorrow, guilt, anger, and opposition against the prior regime of National Socialism and the victorious occupation forces of USA, England, France and the Soviet Union. Yet these ruins do not call to mind the concept of Romantic ruins: their detachment from reality and their dreamy nostalgia for past times. The post-war ruins represent a reality of painful, traumatic, and catastrophic contextual events and the necessity to reconstruct a new life upon these experiences of crisis (see figure 1).

Figure 1: The Murderers Are Among Us (1946).



Photo: Courtesy of the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin.

German audiences and critics did not appreciate most rubble films and their allegoric images of defeat and crisis. Thus it is not astonishing that the term ‘rubble

1 Rubble films are a subcategory of German post-war cinema dealing with the aftermath of World War II. Most of these films were produced between 1946 and 1951. In general, they were negatively perceived by German critics and audience.

2 According to Link (1988), collective symbols represent a nation in a given historical moment.

films' initially evolved as a negatively connoted nickname³ for films that dealt with past events of the National Socialist regime and the shadow it cast over the post-war period. The traditional, negative view of post-war German cinema tends to define rubble films as simplistic film texts of low artistic quality that lack a serious impact towards the past and present times.⁴ Rubble films are considered to reaffirm the spectator's image of him or herself as 'good Germans' during 'bad times.'⁵

These prejudices are quite justified for those rubble films that refer to the problems of the recent past and present period in a reconciliatory manner without any critical discussion about German national identity and society in the aftermath of war and Nazism. Most of these films were produced in a 'pseudo' neorealist film style. This style seems to represent reality through principles earlier established by French magic realism and Italian neorealism.⁶ Nevertheless, these films also largely depend on principles of classical cinema style, which show a strong resemblance to patterns of Hollywood cinema; that is why I propose to call this kind of style a pseudo neorealist style.

In opposition to these reaffirming and reassuring classical patterns, there is also a category of rubble films that refers to contextual reality quite differently. Style depends here on a stylised realism that creates signification by transcending a representation of external reality. This transcendence works to embody the inner subjective world and feelings of the protagonists in these films. The inner vision of outer reality forms the representation of reality in these films, and a particular use of film techniques shapes its visual form.

These films are made of a stylised realism. As a formalist style,⁷ it relates to and partly originates from, according to Irving Singer, German idealist philo-

3 Compare: Schweinitz (2002), p. 629.

4 See: Brandlmeier (1989); Shandley (2001); Schweinitz (2002); Bergfelder (2007); Fuchs in Fischer (2007); Arnold-De-Simine / Schrey in Böhm / Mielke (2007).

5 Shandley (2001), p. 62.

6 See: Kiefer / Ruckriegel in Koebner (2002), p. 493-499.

7 This distinction also marks the two dominant traditions in cinema during the 20th century, which are realism and formalism. Theoreticians of realism demand that film should copy external reality very precisely. This tradition is often linked to a Marxist point of view on contextual reality. The most well known representatives of this tradition are Siegfried Kracauer and André Bazin. The formalist film theory such as proposed by Sergei Eisenstein, Rudolf Arnheim, Béla Balázs, and others underscores the effects of film techniques for creating a representation of reality that transcends a simple copy of the external world. For more information see: Singer (1998), p. 1.

sophy of Romanticism.⁸ In addition, other visual and narrative elements from German Romanticism can be found in these formalist rubble films: typical patterns of Romantic motifs and themes such as doubles (*Doppelgänger*), doomed wanderers, demonic citizens,⁹ antiheroes, iconic representations of landscapes and ruins (see figure 2). These elements are combined with techniques that invoke other Romantic aspects such as uncanny and fatal atmospheres, irony (between the fictive narrator and the film text), images of ruins and landscapes (evoking the impression of fragmentation), and open-end narration.

Figure 2: The double motif in Staudte's film.



Photo: Courtesy of the Stiftung Deutsche Kinemathek Berlin.

All these visual and narrative Romantic elements contribute to produce a point of view on controversial issues in a contextual society. This point of view accentuates problematic and usually oppressed or tabooed aspects of contextual reality; an aspect that also relates to Romanticism, as we will see in chapter two. In some rubble films the major function of this point of view is to provoke a discussion on German national identity and society in the post-war era. This Romantic

8 Singer writes: 'Formalist thinking about appearance and reality in relation to film issues from philosophical idealism of the nineteenth century.' Ibid., p. 21. Singer's citation refers to two principles of artistic representation that are important for film analysis: first, the principles of mimicry (following Aristotle in classicism); second, a transcendent modus of representing reality that employs artistic forms in order to express the artist's ideas over the external reality rather than only coping it. The latter thus depends on a formalist style. This tradition stands in line with ideas about art proposed by Socrates and Plato and marks strongly the concept of art in Romanticism.

9 I will use the term of a 'demonic citizen or bourgeois' according to Lotte H. Eisner's definition of a 'demonic bourgeois' in *The Haunted Screen* (1956), p. 106.

discourse¹⁰ and its function in a selection of rubble films has not been analysed thus far. In response to the lack of key aspects of Romantic visual style, narration and literary motifs in rubble films, this study addresses a major gap in research.

In particular, the question of the intertextual,¹¹ intericonic, and intermedial references imposed through visual style in rubble films has been misguided. Most researchers and critics have asserted that rubble films mainly represent a reversion to German Expressionist cinema, painting, or literature.¹² Yet I argue that other intertextual devices¹³—ranging from Weimar cinema, the ‘aesthetic of opposition’¹⁴ during the National Socialist regime, and film noir, as well as neo-realism—impose more upon the aesthetics of rubble film than Expressionism.

Earlier approaches also failed to acknowledge the decisive Romantic influence on films of the aesthetic of opposition during Nazism. Consequently, the hypothesis of this study is that intertextual and intermedial Romantic devices from German Romanticism—which reappeared in Weimar cinema as well—represent the most important references to the subcategory of formalist rubble films. In order to prove this assumption, I will first investigate how new narrative and visual devices were developed in Romantic art and literature. Secondly, I will examine how these devices were later revived in German cinema during the post-war period. In doing so, the study is also concerned with the ways in which the impact of a Romantic discourse contributes to a reflection of the historical conditions and national identity in rubble films.

10 The term of discourse is employed according to the definition of the philosopher Michel Foucault, such as presented in *L'Archéologie du savoir* (1969).

11 This study considers film as a text and employs the term intertextual in order to show how film directors quote or refer to other films.

12 For example most recently Fuchs in Fischer 2007 (DVD).

13 Device is a terms of the neoformalist method of film analysis this study employs. It refers to procedures in an artwork that create its style and meaning. Device is the translation of the notion ‘priëm’ that was developed by the Russian Formalists, such as Victor Sklovskij. Compare: Sklovskij in Mierau (1987), p. 11-32 (for more information see chapter one).

14 The term of ‘ästhetische Opposition’ refers to a number of films, which were defined by Karsten Witte in *Lachende Erben, toller Tag* (1995) as the aesthetic of opposition to the propagandist entertainment films of the National Socialist period. For more information see the analysis of *The Murderers Are Among Us* in chapter three.

This research builds on the pioneering work of Lotte H. Eisner,¹⁵ who argued in 1952 that Weimar cinema largely depends on the narrative devices and motifs of Romanticism. Although Eisner briefly discusses post-war cinema at the end of her book, she did not venture to assert that these aspects also occur in many rubble films. Therefore I will further develop Eisner's approach in order to show how a revival of Romantic literary motifs and aesthetics constituted a Romantic discourse well beyond the Second World War.

Although Eisner was an art historian, she only randomly mentioned the central intermedial references from Romantic paintings that were revived in German cinema of the Weimar epoch. Eisner mentions a painting by Caspar David Friedrich as an example of motif continuity, but she fails to engage more closely with the aesthetic devices of this art form and its return via film. Therefore, I will build upon these findings in order to compare the aesthetic patterns in Romantic paintings (in particular the artwork of Caspar David Friedrich) with visual devices from selected formalist rubble films. The central aim of this work is to show that the supposed aesthetic similarities fulfil the same functions.

Furthermore, I aim to analyse whether or not we can define a visual and narrative tradition from Romanticism to rubble films in the aftermath of the Second World War. As already outlined, elements of Romanticism enter German cinema while other art forms celebrated Expressionism. For example, the film directors Stellan Rye and Paul Wegener revived significant Romantic narrative patterns during World War One with *The Student of Prague* (*Der Student von Prag*, 1913). In Weimar cinema, these Romantic patterns later gained a wider recognition with films such as *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (*Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari*, 1919/1920) and *Nosferatu* (*Nosferatu*, 1921). Yet the Romantic patterns established in *The Student of Prague* and, to some extent, in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* and *Nosferatu*, work primarily as a 'vehicle'¹⁶ for suspenseful entertainment. In *The Student of Prague* and *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* these patterns are even consciously imposed as part of a commercial strategy that is aiming to attract the audience through Gothic elements¹⁷ in combination with new film techniques. This Romantic discourse, however, lacks considerable social-

15 Eisner's book was first published in France in 1952 with the title *L'écran démoniaque*. In 1969, the English language version was published under the title *The Haunted Screen*.

16 The word vehicle refers here to a means that represents the narrative and visual impact of Romantic literature and art in Weimar cinema.

17 This study considers Gothic literature as a subdivision of Romanticism that refers to the German term of *Schauerliteratur* (see the beginning of chapter two).

critical intention. This lack of an obvious social-critical intention distinguishes some films of the Weimar Republic from the selected formalist rubble films.

As opposed to the examples above, Romantic patterns in other Weimar films are used intentionally to convey a critical attitude towards aspects of contemporaneous reality. This phenomenon is also developed by the extensive use of ambiguity that mirrors the time context and identity construction within it as a problematic one: such as in *Nerves* (*Nerven*, 1919) by Robert Reiner, *The Spiders* (*Die Spinnen*, 1919/1920) and the *Dr Mabuse* films (*Dr Mabuse, The Gambler*, part one and two, 1921/1922) by Fritz Lang. Just as films of the aesthetic of opposition during Nazism, our selection of post-war rubble films returns to these earlier cinematographic traditions. Beyond the question of a possible tradition, another significant issue in this discussion relates to the significance of the return to Romantic aesthetics; more specifically to what extent this return can be regarded as a serious interrogation of a socio-political crisis in which aesthetic representation can be seen as an indication of aspects of a national cinema style.

Therefore, the key research objectivities of this study are:

- To explore how the Romantic discourse determines the visual style and narration of selected rubble films.
- How intericonic, intertextual, and intermedial elements, as well as visual devices from Romantic painting affect visual style and meaning in rubble films.
- Considering that the Romantic style breaks with the principles of Classicism in art, is it useful to examine to what extent some rubble films break with the classical film style tradition? Is the result of this break a style that creates the impression of visual fragmentation, depicting identities in crisis? To what extent did these representations of fragmentation and crisis turn rubble films into an unwanted national memory of the National Socialist past and the post-war period?
- Finally, does the visual construction of a controversial 'national identity' evident in some rubble films function as a reflective criticism of German nationalism before, during, and after the National Socialist regime?

The Debate of Style: Formalism versus Realism

Most studies¹⁸ define the period of rubble films as occurring between 1945 and 1949. The primary reason for this relatively short time span is the currency reform of 1948 and the return of materialist wealth, which only served to lessen the already fading interest of German audiences in rubble films. However, this study extends the widely accepted timeframe of rubble films to 1951, as clear evidence exists that, in particular West German productions contributed significantly to a Romantic tradition. Examples of such films include *Second Hand Destiny* (*Schicksal aus zweiter Hand*, 1949) by Wolfgang Staudte, *The Last Illusion* (*Der Ruf*, 1949) by Josef von Báky and Fritz Kortner, and *The Lost* (*Der Verlorene*, 1951) by Peter Lorre.

To make a complete list of all rubble films made in the early post-war period would be extremely difficult, given that most German post-war films deal with problems of the recent past and then-present times. Even those productions that do not explicitly display rubble or ruins often represent them by metaphor or otherwise indirectly.¹⁹ Recent studies on rubble cinema, such as those by Robert Shandley (2001) or Jamey Fisher (2007), avoid the problem of how precisely to differentiate early post-war films from rubble films by focusing only on specific patterns.²⁰

Since it is difficult to make a clear distinction between ordinary post-war films and rubble films between 1946 and 1951, this study approaches the problem by approximation and suggests that there exist around fifty rubble films. As already mentioned, most of these films employ a pseudo-neorealism or a formalist style in order to address the problem of German national identity in the post-war period. The formalist style refers to post-war reality in two ways: the first way goes about it directly, by showing the setting of destroyed cities; the second way addresses post-war reality indirectly and metaphorically, without

18 For example: Shandley (2001); Brandlmeier (1989). According to Pleyer (1965) this period ends in 1948.

19 For example in: *Martina* (*Martina*, 1948/49) by Arthur Maria Rabenalt or *The Lost Face* (*Das verlorene Gesicht*, 1948) by Kurt Hoffmann. See also Bergfelder in Spicer (2007), p. 141.

20 Shandley states that he only investigates films that show rubble and ruins, but then, interestingly, also extends his discussion to films like *The Blum Affair* (*Affaire Blum*, 1949) by Erich Engel, a film devoid of any portrayal of rubble. Meanwhile, Fisher focuses on the problem of the image of the child and youth in rubble films, and therefore limits his selection in response to these subjects.

exposing rubble and ruins or other major aspects of the period. The distinction between pseudo-neorealist and formalist style in rubble films is important, as it explains the negative perception that audience and critics predominantly accorded post-war rubble films, especially those made in a formalist style.

The terms of realism and formalism are closely linked to an important discussion on style in literature: the debate surrounding Expressionism had initially sparked a controversy regarding realist and formalist style. The Marxist philosopher and literary critic George Lukács had considered the formalist style in literature to be indirectly responsible for the rise of the National Socialist regime.²¹ I suppose that the lasting impact of this debate provoked leading film critics in the post-war period, such as Eisner, Siegfried Kracauer, Chris Marker, Ulrich Gregor, and Enno Patalas to discredit the formalist tradition in cinema and decry rubble films as insignificant.

This study argues that these assumptions brought about the misinterpretation of formalism in some rubble films. In contrast to the controversy surrounding realist and formalist styles, I argue that Staudte's first rubble film *The Murderers Are Among Us* (*Die Mörder sind unter uns*, 1946) introduces visual techniques and a subject matter that invokes a Romantic discourse. This film not only questions important aspects of post-war reality, but also introduces a Romantic aesthetic that marks the later films of the subcategory of formalist rubble films.

As already mentioned, formalist rubble films essentially differ from the other grouping of rubble films, which consist of a pseudo-neorealist tradition. The latter films are closely related to the classical cinema style and usually lack a serious discussion of contextual reality. Interestingly enough, these rubble films are related to a realist tradition that was also employed during Nazism, just as in the propaganda film *True Love* (*Die große Liebe*, 1942) by Rolf Hansen. In this respect, the discussion of realism and formalism in rubble films will address viewpoints on formalist style such as including those expressed by writers such as Bertolt Brecht and Peter Weiss (*The Aesthetics of Resistance*, 1975/1981), as well as and by the film philosopher Irving Singer (*Reality Transformed: Film as Meaning and Technique*, 1998).

I focus on how the formalist style engenders a Romantic discourse that provides a critical reflection on past events and post-war reality. I am aware that the

21 Lukács first introduced this debate in 1934 by publishing in the Moscow exile journal *Internationale Literatur* the article 'Größe' und 'Verfall' des Expressionismus. In this article, he defended a bourgeois realism against formalist styles such as Expressionism (see also *Theory of the Novel*, 1920; *Realism in the Balance*, 1938 etc.). Beutin / Ehlert / Emmerich et al. (2001), p. 460.

distinction between a realist and formalist style is problematic by nature: Singer states that 'reality as portrayed in films is always a product of formalist techniques and creative innovations that enable some filmmakers to express what he or she considers real in the apparent world.'²² This citation refers to the difficulties of distinguishing between a realist and formalist style. However, clarifying the differences between realism and formalism would require a work of its own.²³ In this study, I will nevertheless employ the terms realism and formalism in order to define a style in fiction films (films that seeks to reproduce reality) based on a filmic realism. Formalist style depends here on a stylised realism that creates signification by transcending the way how we perceive external reality. This transcendence works to represent the inner subjective world and feelings of the protagonists in these films. Furthermore, a particular use of film techniques creates a highly stylised realism in order to visualise these impressions and feelings. The distinction between realist and formalist features thereby evolves from how intensely formalist techniques shape the given realist style. Finally, an important aspect of this transcendence is that a controversial point of view emerges towards contextual reality.

The selection of rubble films that I will examine is distinguished by their significant composition of formalist film techniques. These techniques create a stylised realism and are combined with Romantic patterns. The analysis in the subsequent chapters will demonstrate that this unique combination functions to question post-war reality to a much greater extent than the rubble films of the pseudo neorealist style. Thus the analysis of my chosen film samples focuses minutely on inherent patterns of filmic forms as represented in each film. This procedure is an important aspect of the theoretical approach of neoformalism that this study employs. For neoformalist²⁴ film analysis, 'great theories'²⁵ are those that only explore cinema through patterns of other art mediums such as lit-

22 Singer (1998), p. xiii.

23 Many researchers even agree that realism in cinema is mainly a matter of viewing habits and conventions. See Kiefer / Ruckriegel in Koebner (2002), p. 493.

24 Neoformalism is an approach of film analysis that builds upon literary theories by the Russian Formalists in the early 20th century. This term should not be confused with that of formalist style in cinema. Formalist style results in a special use of film techniques, while the Russian formalists investigate literature through a focus on the principles of its formal construction.

25 Great theories are, according to Bordwell, methods of analysis that focus on interpretative issues and lack interest in the patterns of the filmic material itself (for more information, see the beginning of chapter one on neoformalism).

erature, theatre, and fine arts. However, these earlier theories fail to consider sufficiently the texture of the film material concerning its own inherent poetics and aesthetic devices.

The tradition of filmic realism in rubble films has already been investigated by scholars such as Brandlmeier, who makes a particular examination of the neo-realist film *Germany Year Zero* (*Germania Anno Zero*, 1947) by Roberto Rossellini. The film serves as an important reference point to illustrate the visual style and narrative patterns present in German post-war and rubble films.²⁶ Brandlmeier outlines parallels between rubble films and neorealism, such as the use of expressive²⁷ camera techniques and fatalistic worldviews embedded in dark and pessimist melodramas.²⁸ As I will demonstrate in upcoming chapters, these elements are all central aspects of the Romantic discourse in the rubble films that I will discuss.²⁹ Italian neorealism also indicates parallels to films linked to the new objectivity movement of the late Weimar Republic, like *People on Sunday* (*Menschen am Sonntag*, 1929/30) by Robert Siodmak, Rochus Gliese, and Edgar G. Ulme (film script: Billy Wilder). Most importantly, some directors of the new objectivity movement later went on to make rubble films.³⁰

Many researchers assert that neorealism, in addition to Expressionism, is an important stylistic intertextual reference in rubble films.³¹ Yet more importantly,

26 Compare Fisher in Ruberto / Wilson et al. (2007) and Brandlmeier, who outlines the parallel between rubble films and neorealism—an expressive camera technique, a fatalistic worldview, and dark and pessimist melodramas. Brandlmeier (1989), p. 55.

27 We use the term ‘expressive film techniques’ as defined by to Bary Salt. It refers to techniques such as extreme camera angles that produce dramatic effects. Salt (1983), p. 199.

28 Brandlmeier (1989), p. 55.

29 Additionally, these influences might also be traced to earlier realist traditions such as French magic realism of the 1930s (for example films by Marcel Carné) or American and French film noir. Notably, most of these traditions are reciprocally informed by Weimar cinema: film noir references formalist films (such as in *Caligari*, *Shadows* or *Nerves*), which show a strong affinity with the aesthetics of Romanticism.

30 For example: *To Whom Does the World Belong?* (*Kuhle Wampe oder Wem gehört die Welt*, 1931) by Slatan Dudow (film script: Bertolt Brecht) and *Emil and the Detectives* (*Emil und die Detektive*, 1931) by Gerhard Lamprecht (script once again by Billy Wilder).

31 Robert Rossellini’s *Germany Year Zero* (1947) is often praised, beyond its stylistic achievements, for providing a critical discussion of German national mentality in the early post-war period. Yet, the critical impact of this film did hardly reach Germany’s

this study will show that the formalist tradition of Weimar cinema plays a significant role in contributing to the construction of a discursive representation of national identity in German rubble films; because the formalist tradition more critically interrogates post-war reality than in films assumed to be closely related to the pseudo-neorealist tradition in German post-war cinema (such as *In Those Days*, *Between Yesterday and Tomorrow*, *Rotation* etc.).³²

Methodological Reflections

In order to analyse style and narration in the selected examples of rubble films, this study employs the neoformalist procedure of ‘sample analysis’³³ as proposed by Bordwell and Thompson. The neoformalist approach does not recognise a separation between form and content; as such, the conceptual and theoretical framework of this study is informed by the neoformalist concept of an ‘overall form’ that exists in each film. The overall form is composed of these two interactive systems, narration and visual style.³⁴

cinema-going public due to the nearly complete censorship of Rossellini’s film. It was extremely seldomly distributed in cinema and never in television until as recent, as 2003, when it was finally entered into the official German film list (*Filmkanon*). Schrey in Böhm / Mielke (2007), p. 304-305.

32 The rubble filmmaker Peter Pewas is the most prominent example for showing the limited influence of Italian neorealism on German rubble films. As the most promising talent of German cinema under the protected auspices of the Minister of Propaganda, Joseph Goebbels, as well as that of the film academy director Wolfgang Liebeneiner, Pewas made his first film during Nazism, *The Enchanted Day* (*Der verzauberte Tag*, 1943-44), in a style close to neorealism. Although Pewas witnessed and admired Rossellini’s work in his neorealist rubble film *Germany Year Zero*, he later turned away from the neorealist tradition in order to revive earlier formalist patterns of Weimar cinema when he produced his rubble film *Street Acquaintance* (*Strassenbekanntschaft*) in 1948. Compare: Shandley (2001), p. 135.

33 The neoformalist approach combines a comprehensive analysis of formal patterns in principles of film construction and socio-cultural norms, which is extremely useful for this study. In contrast to psychoanalytical, feminist and deconstructionist ‘screen theory’ of the 1970s, the neoformalist approach demands a deeper analysis of aesthetic film material in relation to historical context, spectator reception, and film theory. Bordwell (1985); Bordwell / Thompson (2003). See also chapter two for more information.

34 Ibid. 50; *ibid.*, p 389-394.

Using these theoretical tools, I explore the formal construction of the Romantic discourse through a selection of rubble films by identifying stylistic devices, referential links, and exploring their function within each film's overall form. The construction of narration, style, meaning, and even ideology is always analysed as it relates to formal elements and structures in each film's overall aesthetic composition. Therefore, the analysis of visual style refers to the principles of construction and interaction within 'the overall system of relations that we can perceive among the elements in the whole film.'³⁵

This concept demonstrates how cinematographic principles interfere with intertextual, intericonic, and intermedial references that influence style and shape meaning. Finally, the analysis of visual style, its 'constitution, function, consequences and historical manifestations,'³⁶ and its relation to the narrative impact enables us to define the 'Romantic discourse.' By analyzing a selection of rubble films, this project aims to show that the Romantic discourse provokes partly a challenge of prior classical tradition in cinema under the National Socialist rule. To further this analysis, I will also study the following: the neoformalist key concept of 'defamiliarisation'³⁷ and the distinction of *syuzhet* and *fabula*. These concepts will be synthesized in an analysis of the socio-cultural context and the responses of post-war audiences. Reviews written by film critics represent these contemporary sources. They allow us to explore why certain visual devices in some rubble films defamiliarised and thus challenged a post-war audience's perception of rubble films. These perceptions were built firmly upon visual and narrative patterns of National Socialist ideology that had been transmitted through so-called non-political entertainment films. The presence of such films in German cinema and television did not end with the breakdown of Nazism. On the contrary, Harro Segeberg considers the early distribution of these non-political entertainment films as the 'final completion [of entertainment cinema produced under National Socialism] in German post-war cinema.'³⁸ German television still broadcasts many of these films, while still others, such as *True Love* (*Die große Liebe*, 1942) by Rolf Hansen or *The Golden City* (*Die goldene Stadt*, 1941/42) by Veit Harlan, have recently been released on DVD.

The methodology of neoformalism that I employ enables us to focus on the particular properties of the film medium in relation to audience responses within a socio-historical context. Since Bordwell's own theories on style in cinema (as

35 Bordwell / Thompson (2003), p. 49.

36 Bordwell (1985), p. 371.

37 Thompson (1988), p. 11; Bordwell / Thompson (2003), p. 430.

38 Segeberg, (2004), p. 223.

in *Narration in Fiction Film*, 1985) strongly references works by the art historians Erwin Panofsky and E.H. Gombrich, this study also draws on the reflection on visual style and iconography by Panofsky and Gombrich. With reference to Gombrich's definition of style in art as the 'expression of the age,'³⁹ the second chapter analyses to what extent the controversy over style in Romanticism gave birth to forms of fragment and fragmentation, which introduced a subversive potential to the fine arts and was revived in German cinema from the Weimar period to the post-war era.

In order to gain a deeper insight into how Romantic patterns in the selected rubble films launched an artistic discourse that influenced perceptions of German audiences, I will combine the neoformalist approach with the technique of discourse analysis created by the philosopher Michel Foucault. Discourse analysis examines writing, texts, and discourses as constructive phenomena, shaping the identities and practices of human subjects.⁴⁰ While Foucault shows how institutions employ the practice of discourse in order to force people into patterns that change identities, I will adopt Foucault's theory of discourse in order to show how artwork, in this case cinema, creates a symbolic order which reflects contextual reality.

According to Foucault, this symbolic order of stylistic and narratives elements can be defined as an 'archive.'⁴¹ The archive of artistic means furthermore reflects the 'monument,'⁴² which is a specific historical moment. The combination of artistic means that reflects the monument can reappear (though possibly modified) in different historical contexts. In addition, various aspects such as cinema and art traditions, the voices of German critics and cinema audiences, as well as post-war cultural policies and conditions, informed the discourse in and on rubble films. Thus, the term 'discourse' is used to identify how Romantic aesthetics and formalist film techniques create a symbolic discourse that discusses the conditions of contextual reality and thereby affects how people perceive post-war German society and national identity.

39 Gombrich (2006), p. 480.

40 Foucault explains how these discourses act both as institutional technologies of power, implemented and enforced by official authorisation, as well as technologies of the self, internalised means for the self-discipline of action, practice, and identity. According to Foucault, these technologies have both productive and negative materialistic, bodily, and spatial consequences for human subjects and communities.

41 'l'archive.' Foucault (1969), p. 173.

42 'le monument.' Ibid., p. 14-15.

A Focus on Aesthetics

Bordwell's work on visual style offers a productive approach to the study of the Romantic discourse in a selection of rubble films previously not considered. What makes this study significant is its investigation of the subject of Romantic discourse in relation to the concept of visual style with a special emphasis on intericonic, intertextual and intermedial references, together with how they create the visual representation. Since most previous studies have concentrated on how rubble films mirror the past in terms of 'dealing with the National Socialist past' (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*)⁴³ and often ignore a deeper consideration of stylistic devices and their Romantic origins,⁴⁴ this will be the first study to explore in detail the intericonic and intermedial impact of German Romanticism on rubble films.

Another relatively untouched aspect that this study addresses is the visual aesthetic of landscape in rubble films, in particular the relation of rubble films to Romantic paintings by Caspar David Friedrich. In regard to the findings of Angela Dalle Vacche (1996), I will investigate the function of landscape as an expression of psychological condition within a socio-political context of crisis. With the results of this study, I aim to fill a gap in work done on rubble films. They will also help lay the groundwork for considering the reproduction of a Romantic discourse in other areas of German cinema, European cinema,⁴⁵ as well as filmmaking in Hollywood.⁴⁶

Structure

Based on the results of Bordwell's, Staiger's and Thompson's study on classical style in Hollywood cinema, the first chapter defines the ways in which 'non-conforming'⁴⁷ visual and narrative forms oppose the reassuring and affirmative

43 Such as Hoffmann / Schobert (1989); Brandlmeier (1989); Becker / Schöll (1995); Shandley (2001).

44 Kaes (1987), p. 16; Heinzelmeier (1988), p. 11; Shandley (2001), p. 1-8.

45 For example the films of the Hungarian film-maker Béla Tarr, the Berlin School, in particular, Angela Schanelec and Christian Petzold, or the Russian film-maker Andrei Swjaginzew.

46 For example film noir, neo noir or as in the recent study on Romantic irony in Hitchcock's film oeuvre by Allen Richards in 2007.

47 Bordwell / Staiger / Thompson (1985), p. 75.

effects of classical style in cinema.⁴⁸ Non-conforming devices include visual conventions, e.g. film techniques that were placed at the forefront in order to overtake narrative functions, as well as other patterns in visual style or narration that challenge the idealising effect of classical cinema style. Beyond various Romantic narrative aspects, this also refers to visual forms that evoke the impression of fragmentation, such as extreme camera angles, canted shots, *chiaroscuro* lighting, shadow effects, and expressive camera movements. In our selection of rubble films, frequently employed visual patterns evoking the visual impression of fragmentation serve to challenge the harmonising wholeness of classical forms, thereby acting as a mirror of post-war German identity and society. I will demonstrate that non-conforming patterns allow films to portray a historical moment of crisis in an ambiguous manner, such that traditional values and convictions are called into question. Our selection of rubble film is based upon these non-conforming aesthetic devices, which distinguish them from those conventional rubble films that make use of classical conventions.

Staudte's *The Murderers Are Among Us* was the first so-called rubble film to introduce these non-conforming patterns, which were then repeated in later rubble films. Therefore, *The Murderers Are Among Us* served as a trendsetter for the rubble films that followed it, which is why this film will serve as a particular reference for discussing non-conforming features and what sets them apart from conventions in classical style. In the end, what emerges from the application of these non-conforming visuals and the way these devices are arranged is the Romantic discourse.

Chapter two focuses on the birth of a Romantic discourse and its function in the literature and paintings of German Romanticism. This chapter explores patterns and functions of typical Romantic motifs and subject matter such as doubles, doomed wanderers, demonic citizens, double and errant perception, iconic representation of landscapes, as well as ruins, given that these aspects later return in some rubble films.⁴⁹ In the first part of chapter two, I discuss the Roman-

48 Thanks to viewing conventions of predictable visual patterns, style passes in classical cinema relatively unnoticed and works to reassure and reaffirm pre-existing views on society and its values. Compare: Ibid. Linda Schulte-Sasse speaks even of an absolutely control of 'film viewer's rate of comprehension' in classical cinema that creates a 'pleasurable wholeness'. Schulte-Sasse (1996: 11) (165)

49 They are combined with film techniques that invoke other typical Romantic devices such as uncanny and fatalistic worldviews/atmospheres (often indicated by environment and landscape), ironic discourses (between a fictional narrator and the film text), fragmented space, and open-ended narration. Special attention is paid to the

tic novella *The Sandman* (*Der Sandmann*, 1816) by E.T.A. Hoffmann, as this text develops facets of typical Romantic motifs and themes such as alienation, doubles, and mistaken perception that return in many rubble films. By drawing on Romantic paintings by Caspar David Friedrich, Carl Gustav Carus, Carl Blechen, Johan Christian Dahl, and others, I will be able to explore the socio-political function of certain visual devices within contexts of crisis. After all, key examples of their work can be regarded as acts of opposition against the invader Napoléon Bonaparte (circa 1806/1810), while others object to the conservative restoration in Germany following the Vienna congress in 1815 (especially in the case of Friedrich). The assumption is that here, as well as later on in Weimar Expressionism and rubble film, subjective notions of Romantic style attempt to break with the norms and conventions of dominant classical academic style in art (e.g. under Bonaparte, restoration, the Kaiserreich and National Socialism).

Consequently, a core goal of this study is to investigate how far and to what aesthetic end literary and visual concepts of Romanticism break with classical traditions in literature and art. In order to achieve this, I draw upon the literary and visual reflection of the historical context of crisis, which is related to the concept of national identity in art. As opposed to previous investigations of the continuity of literary motifs, this project identifies important iconic and stylistic aspects in Caspar David Friedrich's work in particular, which importantly mark some of the selected rubble films. In comparison to other German Romantic painters such as Carus or Dahl, Friedrich employs more characteristically Romantic devices in order to represent the impact on the socio-political changes taking place in German society and national identity. This is why Friedrich's Romantic discourse creates distinctive patterns of an aesthetic of opposition that also importantly marks our selection of rubble films. Therefore, Friedrich's style is at the forefront of this study rather than other Romantic painters who express their socio-political opinions more moderately. Finally, the return to Friedrich's aesthetic devices renders the visual representation of national identity through Romantic devices⁵⁰ a cornerstone of this study.⁵¹

double motif and the literary and visual constructions of fragmentary identities and their meaning within the social-historical context of high and late Romanticism (from approximately 1800 to 1830).

50 These aspects are provoked due to constraints of the socio-political condition of crisis.

51 The similarity of Friedrich's visual devices to those in some rubble films, in particular to the groundbreaking *The Murderers Are Among Us*, questions whether an intermedial and intericonic tradition ranging from these paintings to German cinema exists. Eisner (1952), as well as two art historians, Angela Dalle Vacche (1996) and William

I distinguish classical style⁵² in National Socialist entertainment films from the stylistic and narrative Romantic elements in films of the aesthetic of opposition by arguing that the use of an artistic camera style, which is put into the fore, appears as a central oppositional pattern in *Romance in Minor Key* (*Romanze in Moll*, 1942).⁵³ This aesthetic strategy is an important visual device, designed to establish a critical perception instead of uncritical empathy. Comparable to Bertolt Brecht's 'effect of distanciation' in literature and theatre, this accentuated expressive style favours a critical perspective of the film story, because it weakens the processes of identification and empathy. This effect conflicts with the narrative and visual strategies in the so-called non-political entertainment films of the National Socialist period. Some films contain propagandist elements created by a canonical narrative and stylistic composition that reinforce identification and empathy. The result of this reinforcement is that the spectator recognises the model characters in the film and decides to adapt their behaviour to his or her own life. Narrative and visual patterns in *Romance in Minor Key* break with such practices and enable the audience to judge each character individually, without outside influence.⁵⁴

This methodical process also aims to support the key hypothesis of this study: that classical visual style and narrative devices in entertainment cinema

Vaughan (2004), have demonstrated how Friedrich's aesthetic reappears in the German cinema of the Weimar republic, in films such as those by Fritz Lang and Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau.

52 According to Linda Schulte-Sasse, the classical style in the so-called 'non-political entertainment' of National Socialist cinema creates an illusory sense of 'wholeness,' which serves to transmit National Socialist ideology. This classical style is comparable to Hollywood cinema. In contrast to these idealising forms, the discussion explores films of the 'aesthetic of opposition' (Witte 1995) to demonstrate how fragmentary visual forms and Romantic motifs challenge the creation of homogeneity and coherence in cinema under Nazism. Schulte-Sasse (1996), p. 11.

53 Lowry notes certain examples: 'sometimes the camera perceives figures and objects which do not fulfil a narrative function; sudden inserts foreground certain objects; often the camera jumps at a new scene.' (manchmal nimmt die Kamera Figuren oder Objekte wahr, die keine narrative Funktion haben; plötzliche Detailaufnahmen stellen Objekte in den Vordergrund; oft "springt" die Kamera auf einen neuen Schauplatz.) Lowry, p. 218. The camera movements and editing techniques are employed in such a conspicuous way that the narration is usually rendered artificial.

54 Compare: Lowry (1991); Witte (1995); Rentschler (1996); Schulte-Sasse (1996); Ascheid (2003); O'Brien (2006).

under National Socialist ruled still a German post-war audience's perception of films to such an extent that the non-conforming style, iconography, narratives, and motifs of some rubble films did not appeal to the German public—a problem that is manifest on the level of a visual style rather than in a narrative construction. This effect also arises due to the frequent use of genre devices and conventions that had not been permitted during the Third Reich, such as the criminal film, because of their potential to conflict with patterns of classical conventions. In divergence from the previously mentioned studies, this project focuses on a selection of formalist rubble films. In these films, emphasis is placed on how style and narration contribute to the creation of a controversy on German post-war society and national identity.

The main objective of the last chapter is to demonstrate how visual and narrative patterns of a Romantic discourse present in each rubble film constructed, each in a different manner, conflict with the aesthetic devices employed by filmmakers in the National Socialist entertainment industry. Another aspect is that oppositional patterns in these rubble films serve to criticise German post-war society while evolving by placing a problematic male identity in the foreground through visual and narrative patterns of fragmentation. Anke Pinkert⁵⁵ has previously referred to these male identity constructions as the ill male or German patient, but without detailing their Romantic implications. Therefore, this analysis focuses on how the specific Romantic patterns constructed the fragmented male identity and how a general aesthetic of fragmentation worked to oppose the harmonising features of a classical style, which, as a key element of transmitting National Socialist ideology in film, was still widely expected by larger parts of German cinema audience.

The six selected films all employ an artistic visual style that narratively accentuates problems of male identity as a symbol for the crisis in the post-war East and West German society and as a central aspect of the Romantic discourse. The rubble films that I will discuss share a central narrative device: visual form. The visual form present in these films evokes the impression of fragmentation that sets the stage for the subversive potential of leading Romantic motifs, such as the double, the demonic citizen, and the doomed wanderer, all of which appear as central elements in said films. Beyond these key aspects, each of the selected rubble films displays a unique selection of Romantic elements that fulfil the same narrative and visual functions: non-conforming visual devices, Romantic motifs, and icons engender ambiguous viewpoints on the period of the late Weimar Republic, the up-and-coming National Socialist regime and the post-war

55 Pinkert (2008), p. 118-136.

period. These elements produce, in each film, a discussion about German national identity, notably, one that is gendered male. This effect of the Romantic discourse is not necessarily based on a complete break with the visual conventions of classical style. A combination of classical and non-classical elements can also irritate the audience and thereby challenge the harmonising cinematographic structures of classical style. Based on these criteria, the selected films are: *The Murderers Are Among Us* (*Die Mörder sind unter uns*, East Germany, 1946) by Wolfgang Staudte; *Film Without a Name* (*Film ohne Titel*, West Germany, 1947) by Rudolph Jugert, the former assistant of rubble film director Helmut Käutner, who wrote the film script; *The Blum Affair* (*Affaire Blum*, East Germany, 1948) by Erich Engel; *Second Hand Destiny* (*Schicksal aus zweiter Hand*, West Germany, 1949) by Wolfgang Staudte; *The Last Illusion* (*Der Ruf*, West Germany, 1949) by Josef von Báky—Fritz Kortner wrote the script and appears as the main actor; and *The Lost* (*Der Verlorene*, West Germany, 1951) by Peter Lorre.