

Stan Douglas and the “New-Old” Film

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ABSTRACT

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After the fall of the Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany, the former UFA film studios in Potsdam-Babelsberg were sold by the government to a French conglomerate, and a number of its oldest studios were either demolished or repurposed. In 1994, Canadian artist Stan Douglas produced the two-channel black and white film installation *Der Sandmann* in one of these old studios. Douglas’s film utilizes an early cinematic special-effect called the “doppelgänger trick”: a simple double-exposure which allows one actor to play opposite himself or herself on the film screen. This technique was first used in the German Expressionist silent film *The Student of Prague* (1913), and again in the second film version (1926), which was, not coincidentally, shot on the same UFA film lot as *Der Sandmann*. By imitating not only the aesthetic, but some of the technical limitations of *The Student of Prague*, Douglas engages in what film critic Marc Le Sueur might have recognized as “deliberate archaism”: a specific way of making nostalgia films that productively exploits both formal and technical features of films from the past. At the same time, *Der Sandmann* resists what Marxist cultural theorist Fredric Jameson reproaches as the ahistorical aesthetic of “pastness” that is produced and perpetuated by the nostalgia film. While Douglas directs us to the past, he does so for contemporary ends; he recodes the history of Expressionist cinema in order to explore the aftereffects of reunification on the former East Germany.

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Stan Douglas and the “New-Old” Film

What might it mean for a twenty-first century spectator to see (for the first time) Canadian artist Stan Douglas’s two-channel film installation *Der Sandmann* (1995), a 15-year-old film made about the (then) recent German reunification, which takes the form of an adaptation of E.T.A. Hoffmann’s 1816 novella and is shot using iconic aesthetic and technical standards of 1910s and 20s Expressionist cinema? How can we confront an artwork that is simultaneously new, old, and older: one that does not advance a simple relationship between present and past; one that is entangled in multiple histories; one that while set in one period, adapts its narrative from another, and pastiches the visual treatment of yet another? These questions flooded my mind after seeing Douglas’s installation of *Der Sandmann* shown in the exhibition *Haunted: Contemporary Photography/Video/Performance* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in June 2010.¹

The installation was contained in a dark room which housed two long benches, a large suspended projection screen and an enclosed projection booth. A grainy black-and-white image flickered on the screen in front of me, recalling at once the slow pacing of an avant-garde film from the 1960s (perhaps an Andy Warhol *Screen Test*) and the chiaroscuro lighting of a 1920s German Expressionist film. The film presented a slow 360-degree pan of a 1920s era German film studio—film equipment strewn on the floor,

¹ Prior to viewing *Der Sandmann* in the context of *Haunted*, I had already viewed a digital preview copy of the work, read Douglas’s artist statement, and reviewed the history of the techniques Douglas employed. This preparatory work enriched my experience at the exhibition by allowing me to be more sensitive to details (such as the grain of the film and sound, the actual design of the apparatus, etc.) that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

the head and shoulders of an actor reciting his lines, and a set replicating a German *Schrebergärten* (a public garden allotment designated for low-income residents). All these elements were fascinating, but my attention quickly became fixed on a wavering vertical seam at the center of the frame. In the first 360-degree pan, the left half of the frame (depicting a *Schrebergärten* in 1970) seemed to wipe away the right (the same garden modified to look like it had been taken over by a construction site in the 1990s). In the second rotation, it was the construction site that wiped away the garden. Probably due to the large scale of the screen (which filled my field of vision), I was engulfed and hypnotized by this visual effect. Every effort I made to inspect the subtle distinctions between the left and right side of the divide was thwarted; I could not help but watch the film with a sort of tunnel vision. I found myself distracted by the seam and the strange temporal wipe. A peek at the projection apparatus confirmed that this effect was being produced before my eyes. The trick was quite simple—two films made in the same studio at separate points in time were projected side by side by two synchronized 16mm projectors—but the internal tension it created between right and left, “new” and “old” left me perplexed. What could be the conceptual, historical, and political meaning of this mechanically-produced seam? Might these two projections represent two Germanies—one East and one West—at a transitional moment in late twentieth-century German history, and might the magnetism of this divide, this “hyperbolic distraction,” be a cinematic analogue to another distraction: the recently demolished Berlin wall?²

After the fall of the Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany, the former UFA film studios in Potsdam-Babelsberg were sold by the Treuhand (an agency responsible

² Thanks to Martha Langford for making this observation.

for privatizing the GDR's nationalized property) to a French conglomerate, and a number of its oldest, most outdated studios were either demolished or repurposed.³ While on a residency in Berlin in 1994, Douglas shot *Der Sandmann* in one of these vintage studios [fig. 1]. Douglas's film installation adapts and modifies the opening section of E.T.A. Hoffmann's Gothic tale of repressed memory and uncanny recognition, restaging it within the political climate of the newly consolidated Germany, where not only were the former East Germany's sites of cultural production being sold off by the government, but many of the *Schrebergärten*—integral elements of German culture since 1864—were



[fig. 1] Stan Douglas, *Der Sandmann* (1995). Two-channel 16mm film installation, black and white, stereo sound, 9:50 min. (loop). Two synchronized 16mm projectors run out of phase with each other, focused on either half of a single screen.

³ The film lot at Potsdam-Babelsberg was home to the *Universum Film Aktien Gesellschaft* (better known as the UFA), one of the largest film production and distribution companies in the world during the 1920s and 30s. Scott Watson, "Against the Habitual," in Carol J. Clover, Diana Thater, Scott Watson, eds., *Stan Douglas* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 32.

being repossessed by the state to be sold as prime real-estate for high-rise hotels and condominiums.⁴

Conceived as a split-screen projection, one half of *Der Sandmann*'s frame presents a set built to resemble a *Schrebergärten* circa 1970, while the other half presents the same garden modified to look as if it were being redeveloped, presumably after reunification. This split-screen effect was derived from a technique called the "doppelgänger trick," designed for the 1913 German silent film *The Student of Prague*, and again used in Henrik Galeen's 1926 remake of the same film [fig. 2]. Douglas's film closely resembles the latter of these early horror films, which was, not coincidentally,



[fig. 2] Film still from Henrik Galeen (dir.), *The Student of Prague* (1926). 35mm film, black and white, silent, 91 min.

⁴ Stan Douglas, "Der Sandmann," in Hans D. Christ, and Iris Dressler, eds., *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect: Works 1986-2007* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 196.

shot on the same UFA film lot as *Der Sandmann*. In imitating not only the aesthetic, but some of the technical limitations of *The Student of Prague* (black and white film, a vintage UFA film studio, and the doppelgänger trick), I believe that Douglas engages in what film critic Marc Le Sueur calls “deliberate archaism”: a specific way of making nostalgia films that “entails the artist’s desire to recreate not only the look and feel of the period in question but to give his artifact the appearance of art from that distant time.”⁵ It is precisely Douglas’s use of deliberate archaism to create hybrid “new-old” films that I will address in this thesis. I am interested in how, as a new film which uses a historically outmoded aesthetic, *Der Sandmann* falls within the scope of the nostalgia film (a new film which imitates the look and feel of films from the past), but has not yet been discussed within this critical framework. In this thesis, I will position *Der Sandmann* in opposition to what Marxist cultural theorist Fredric Jameson reproaches as the stereotypical aesthetic of “pastness” that is produced and perpetuated by the nostalgia film.⁶ I will suggest that Douglas’s pastiche of *The Student of Prague* does not obfuscate our sense of “real” materialist history; rather, it refamiliarizes us with a particular historical mode of film production. By underscoring how German film production has been affected by its political and economic circumstances at multiple points in history, Douglas allows us to better understand that German cinema is inextricable from Marxism’s “real” history.

⁵ Marc Le Sueur, “Theory Number Five: Anatomy of Nostalgia Films: Heritage and Methods,” *Journal of Popular Film* 6:2 (1977): 194.

⁶ Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 296.

Much has been written about *Der Sandmann*, with the bulk of critical literature focusing on the relationship between Sigmund Freud's 1919 analysis of Hoffmann's *Der Sandmann* in "The Uncanny" and the various doubles that occur within Douglas's film adaptation: two gardens, two projectors, two 360-degree rotations of the studio, and so on.⁷ The film's most striking formal feature, the temporal wipe at the center of the film frame, features prominently in many analyses because, in animating the erasure of the "old" by the "new" and the "new" by the "old," it makes visible the structure of repression and repetition that is at the heart of the Freudian "uncanny" experience and articulates a concept of memory (remembering, forgetting, repressing, replaying, and so on) that is particular to cinema. For film scholar Christa Blümlinger, the constant presence of the wipe exposes the extent to which "the cinematic dispositive is affected by the way the visible constantly, incessantly slips away, therefore constituting a challenge to the memory."⁸ The concept of memory—its fluidity, its repressions and returns—is crucial for critics who deal with the complexity of erasure and repetition at play in *Der Sandmann*. In this thesis, I approach Douglas's work through a related though different field of inquiry, specifically that of nostalgia studies. While memory studies are generally rooted in personal or collective subjectivity and are founded on an understanding of experience as the continuous interchanging of past, present, and future, postmodern nostalgia studies tend to focus on the concrete ways in which cultures choose to imagine

⁷ Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny" (1919), in Alix Strachey, trans., and James Strachey ed., *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 217-256.

⁸ Christa Blümlinger, "Remake, Readymade, Reconfiguration: Film as Metahistory," in Hans D. Christ, and Iris Dressler, eds., *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect: Works 1986-2007* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 39.

and represent the past.⁹ While critics such as Blümlinger have established crucial links between *Der Sandmann* and a specifically cinematic uncanny, they have often ignored or glossed over a rather obvious question: how does the film installation's visual treatment relate to its subject matter?

In this thesis, I will target Douglas's use of *pastiche* in *Der Sandmann*, and ask what seems to me to be the fundamental question: what do the doppelgänger trick and Henrik Galeen's *The Student of Prague* have to do with the historical and economic conditions of the former East Germany? I should briefly mention my reasons for describing Douglas's practice as "pastiche," a strategy often used in contemporary appropriation art. In artistic contexts, "appropriation" generally refers to a "citational style" that originated in the early 1980s with artists such as Sherrie Levine and Richard Prince.¹⁰ As art historian Robert S. Nelson has noted, appropriation most generally "pertains to the artwork's adoption of preexisting elements."¹¹ While appropriation itself does not denote a particular technique, strategy, or aesthetic quality, pastiche specifically implies an *imitation* of past styles or aesthetics. It can therefore be understood as a very particular tool that can be used in appropriation art. In *Pastiche* (2007), film theorist Richard Dyer defines pastiche as "a kind of imitation that you are meant to know is an imitation."¹² Pastiche is meant to provoke a dialogue between contemporary stylistic codes and an imitated form, but it is only recognizable as such if the spectator is familiar

⁹ For more on the relationship between cinema and memory studies, see Susannah Radstone, "Cinema/Memory/History: Masculinity Remembers Itself," *Screen* 36:1 (Spring 1995): 34-47; and Radstone, ed., *Memory and Methodology* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2000).

¹⁰ Ingeborg Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), 10.

¹¹ Robert S. Nelson, "Appropriation," in Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, eds., *Critical Terms for Art History*, 2nd ed. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 162.

¹² Richard Dyer, *Pastiche* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 1.

with the imitated stylistic devices. As a term, pastiche has—since it was famously assailed by Fredric Jameson in 1983—been generally coded with the rhetoric of passivity.¹³ Due to the term’s generally pejorative connotations, it might seem controversial to assert that *Der Sandmann* is best characterized as “pastiche.” However, following recent scholarship on this term, I intend to rehabilitate pastiche as a critical postmodern tool and challenge its use as a negative term.¹⁴ Also, by choosing to investigate Douglas’s work under the rubric of pastiche, I would like to highlight the particular strategy of imitation at work in his film installation while still acknowledging its place within the context of contemporary appropriation art.

I will begin this thesis by situating *Der Sandmann* within the theoretical framework of pastiche and the nostalgia film, and within a broader field of contemporary “cinematic” film and video installations. After briefly surveying Douglas’s *oeuvre*, I will delve into *Der Sandmann* and its deliberately archaic pastiche: its use of black and white, the doppelgänger trick, and a 1920s era UFA film studio. While I will explore the ways in which *Der Sandmann* replicates the aesthetic and technical conditions of *The Student of Prague*, I will also consider how these conditions are updated, modified, and made new. Finally, I will suggest some of the ways in which Douglas imitates the historical doppelgänger shot in order to articulate questions about the social, political, and cultural conditions of recently reunified Germany, and I will question the role Douglas himself may play in the transformation of German culture.

¹³ Nelson, “Appropriation,” 162.

¹⁴ Hoesterey, *Pastiche: Cultural Memory in Art, Film, Literature*, x.

The Nostalgia Film

Nostalgia films are generally understood to be commercial films that recreate the look and feel of films from the past. They tend to stereotype the aesthetic representations of the past, creating the look of a generation—‘the fifties’, for instance—while retaining only the surface effect of that historical period. Popular forms of the early 1970s—exemplified by George Lucas’s *American Graffiti* (1973), Peter Bogdanovich’s *The Last Picture Show* (1971), and Roman Polanski’s *Chinatown* (1974)—nostalgia films have been Hollywood staples ever since. Take, for example, Polanski’s *Chinatown*. In this film, we follow private investigator Jake Gittes (Jack Nicholson) as he untangles a web of mysterious occurrences surrounding the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power in 1937. Polanski merges a series of documented historical incidents with the narrative and pictorial strategies of early film noir. Including such film noir archetypes as the *femme fatale* and the tough private detective, and filmed with a sepia-tinged glow, *Chinatown* recreates an already stylized image of the 1930s by mining the period’s most famous cinematic contributions.

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, Fredric Jameson emerged as a leading critic of this developing film genre. He repeatedly expressed his distaste for nostalgia films, calling them empty recreations which prompt no affective connection to the past.¹⁵ Instead, they presented “a new connotation of ‘pastness’ and pseudohistorical depth, in which the history of aesthetic styles was displacing ‘real’ history.”¹⁶ “Real” history, for Jameson, has less to do with cataloguing historical facts and events than situating these events

¹⁵ Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Port Townsend: Washington Bay Press, 1983), 116.

¹⁶ Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 20.

within their economic, ideological, and social context. To create a sense of “real” history in cultural production—as he claims Sir Walter Scott did in his novels¹⁷—is to represent the past with historical complexity, to situate a fictional or historical narrative within a broad network of social relations.¹⁸ For Jameson, beginning in the 1960s, our understanding of the past was replaced with *pastness*. The historical depth imbued in older cultural forms, such as the historical novel, was replaced with fashionable, glossy images of the past—mere simulation and surface-effect. He connected this shift in values and cultural production with a shift to a new stage of late, multinational capitalism, where everything—aesthetics, ideas, even nostalgia—was reified and made commodifiable.¹⁹ For Jameson, postmodern cultural production did not merely support the logic of late capital. It defined this new economic order.²⁰

In Jameson’s critical project, the nostalgia film exemplifies an overarching shift towards simulation in postmodern culture, constituting a key expression of postmodern pastiche. Jameson defines pastiche as follows:

[T]he imitation of a peculiar or unique style, the wearing of a stylistic mask, speech in a dead language: but it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without parody’s ulterior motive, without the satirical impulse, without laughter, without that still latent feeling that there exists something normal compared to which what is being imitated is rather comic.²¹

In short, pastiche is “blank parody,” the uncritical simulation of past aesthetic modes which fully emerged at a moment when creativity and originality became

¹⁷ Ibid., 23.

¹⁸ Jameson, “Introduction,” in Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, Reprint ed. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 2.

¹⁹ Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real: The Avant-Garde at the End of the Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 72.

²⁰ Paul Grainge, *Monochrome Memories: Nostalgia and Style in Retro America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), 30.

²¹ Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” 114.

incomprehensible.²² The proliferation of pastiche was symptomatic of a postmodern crisis of historicity: the inability to tell or represent the stories of our age and to distance ourselves from the here and now by viewing our present historically.²³ Pastiche, and its cultural manifestation in the nostalgia film, recreates the cultural artifacts of the past, reducing “real” history into its most recognizable cultural products. In this process, nostalgia is reified—transformed into a consumable object. While Jameson’s criticism still stings, some theorists have begun to reevaluate the nostalgia film and to recover nostalgia as a critical postmodern tool.²⁴

Paul Grainge, for one, critiques Jameson’s assumption that postmodern articulations of nostalgia are inherently connected to the so-called crisis of historicity.²⁵ As Grainge argues in *Monochrome Memories: Nostalgia and Style in Retro America* (2002), Jameson’s particular understanding of nostalgia departs from the term’s conventional meaning. Although historically, nostalgia was understood as a *mood* (an affective longing for the past), Jameson designates it as a *mode*: a consumable style.²⁶ These two poles in nostalgia discourse—the mood and the mode—relate to the past in distinct ways. On one hand, the nostalgia mood is associated with the concepts of longing and loss. This concept of nostalgia typically implies some utopian stability in the past, in the good old days when life was simpler.²⁷ On the other hand, the postmodern construct of the nostalgia mode reframes nostalgia as “a consumable style that has been commonly

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 117.

²⁴ Christine Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe Props and Technicolour Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 86.

²⁵ Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 21.

²⁶ Grainge, *Monochrome Memories*, 6.

²⁷ Ibid., 27.

characterized as amnesiac.”²⁸ Grainge suggests that “the nostalgia mode satisfies a desperate craving for history while reinforcing the past as ‘a vast collection of images, a multitudinous photographic simulacrum’.”²⁹ While the nostalgia mood embodies an affective relationship to the past, the nostalgia mode implies the opposite: an inability to comprehend, and therefore represent the past in any meaningful way. Grainge acknowledges that Jameson has done much for identifying and theorizing the nostalgia mode and its particular relationship to the past. However, he rejects Jameson’s assumption that the nostalgia mode necessarily produces a crisis of historicity. Grainge studies the nostalgia mode, but he does not presuppose its connections to amnesia and the displacement of “real” history. Rather, he suggests that “meaningful narratives of history or cultural memory can be produced through the recycling and/or hybridization of past styles.”³⁰

Much like Grainge, Vera Dika suggests that nostalgia films teach us how we consume or use the past for the sake of the present. In *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film* (2003), Dika isolates specific points of resistance contained within the narrative and *mise-en-scène* of various nostalgia films. She points out that tensions between the nostalgia film and the spectator’s memory of film history—older films, styles, conventions, signifying systems—trouble the glossy historicism implicit in Jameson’s nostalgia film. In the nostalgia film, “the old is not erased but ever present, and if the friction is critical enough ... a rupture will result in its representational

²⁸ Ibid., 11.

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

³⁰ Ibid.

surface.”³¹ She suggests that while the nostalgia film refers to the past, it “destabilizes it in service of the present, and consequently tells stories that are very much our own.”³²

Confronting Jameson’s criticism head-on, Dika asks: “[C]an these stories, these images, and the generic universe they invoke be used to do more than obfuscate present history? Can acts of ‘resistance’ be staged even within such a system, and can these commercial strategies be seen as similar to those utilized in contemporaneous art practice?”³³

Douglas’s *Der Sandmann* suggests that the answer to both questions can be “yes,” but only if one considers not only the product—what is on screen—but the production, in terms of process and the film’s material dimension.

To redirect Dika’s questions to the material apparatus of Stan Douglas’s *Der Sandmann* is to respond to Christine Sprengler’s call to shift analysis away from the nostalgia film’s narrative and thematic content and towards its visual dimensions.³⁴ In *Screening Nostalgia: Populuxe Props and Technicolor Aesthetics in Contemporary American Film* (2009), Sprengler recovers Marc Le Sueur’s underconsidered 1977 essay “Theory Number Five: Anatomy of Nostalgia Films: Heritage and Methods,” suggesting that his notion of “deliberate archaism”—a strategy of pastiche which replicates the visual dimensions of past films—can be used to critically communicate with the past from a distinctly contemporary position.³⁵ Sprengler recalls that in “Theory Number Five,” Le Sueur detects two aesthetic strategies at work in early nostalgia films: surface

³¹ Vera Dika, *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film: The Uses of Nostalgia* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 206.

³² *Ibid.*, 21.

³³ *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁴ Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia*, 90.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

realism and deliberate archaism.³⁶ While some nostalgia films practice surface realism, borrowing “surface details only, elements such as dress, cars, settings, etc.,” others engage in deliberate archaism by recreating the visual dimensions of past media artifacts—using black and white film stock, for instance.³⁷ Sprengler reintroduces Le Sueur’s notions of surface realism and deliberate archaism into nostalgia film discourse in order to explore the critical potential of *visual* nostalgia. She underscores the ways in which “the visual dimensions of the cinema might be the source of both its nostalgic label *and* its critical consciousness when bolstered or even impeded by narrative and thematic content.”³⁸ Pushing off from Sprengler’s position, this essay seeks to understand how deliberate archaism has been used in Douglas’s *Der Sandmann* to motivate critical analysis of history and its material artifacts.

In an interview with artist Diana Thater, Douglas says that forms of communication that have become obsolete “become an index of an understanding of the world lost to us.”³⁹ For Douglas, outdated technologies are material artifacts of the past that can be recovered and utilized in the present to rethink the relationship between various historical modes of production and contemporary multinational capitalism. From this perspective, film techniques and aesthetics are inextricable from their ideological and economic circumstances; they are indexical of—and thus point us toward—these specific historical conditions. In his awareness of the inseparable relationship between technology, economics, and ideology, Douglas extends Jean-Louis Comolli’s materialist theory of cinema. In a series of essays written in 1971-72 and translated into English in

³⁶ Ibid., 85.

³⁷ Le Sueur, “Theory Number Five,” 193-194.

³⁸ Sprengler, *Screening Nostalgia*, 90.

³⁹ Douglas with Diana Thater, “Interview,” in Carol J. Clover, Diana Thater, Scott Watson, eds., *Stan Douglas* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 9.

the 1980s, Comolli proposes a methodological approach to film history that considers filmmaking as a form of material labour that is imbedded in its historical context.⁴⁰

According to Comolli, the history of particular film techniques

cannot be constructed without bringing into play a system of determinations which *are not exclusively technical*. They are rather economic and ideological, and as such they break down the boundaries of the specifically cinematic field, extending and therefore transforming it with a series of additional areas; they bring the field of cinema to bear on other scenes and integrate these other scenes into that of the cinema.⁴¹

Materialist theory releases cinema from its closed world, realigning it as one element in a broader historical context. Cinema's technological developments and stylistic codes must be understood within this social whole. Thus, media artifacts (films, film techniques, aesthetics, etc.) can direct us to the complex network of economic, ideological, political, and social values which once gave them shape. Cinematic effects are never strictly cinematic; they are imbedded in what Jameson would call "real" history.

What happens when outdated cinematic techniques are used in the present? Can deliberate archaism—as a specific type of pastiche used in nostalgia films—have the potential to reengage "real" materialist history and therefore resist the reactionary postmodernism posited by Jameson? From the perspective outlined by Comolli, we can begin to understand how deliberate archaism necessarily involves more than the past aesthetics and outdated technology it recreates; it exists within, and therefore can unearth, a whole socio-economic system. How, then, can we situate Stan Douglas's deliberately archaic film installation historically? How does the "real" history indexed by the media

⁴⁰ Comolli was the editor in chief of *Cahiers du cinéma* from 1966 to 1978. Amongst other essays, Comolli published translated versions of: "Machines of the Visible," in Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath, eds., *The Cinematic Apparatus* (London: The MacMillan Press, 1980), 121-142; and "Technique and Ideology: Camera, Perspective, Depth of Field [Parts 3 and 4]," in Philip Rosen, ed., *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 421-443.

⁴¹ Comolli, "Technique and Ideology," 430-431.

artifacts Douglas employs in *Der Sandmann* function within the film's signifying system? Rather than implicate Douglas's use of outdated techniques—his deliberate archaisms—in a reactionary return to cinema's past, I will highlight the economic, ideological, and historical implications that this pastiche has for the meaning of his film.

Stan Douglas, Deliberate Archaism, and the Art Museum

Although *Der Sandmann*—a film installation that is exclusively exhibited in art museums and galleries—is presented in a very different forum than any of the commercial nostalgia films that the scholars above discuss, it is linked to the discourse of commercial cinema by its use of deliberate archaism. While *Der Sandmann* has not yet been discussed within the context of the nostalgia film, much can be learned by cautiously bridging this institutional divide. This link between visual art practice and commercial cinema is not without precedent. After all, since the early 1990s, film and video installations exploring aspects of commercial cinema have become increasingly prevalent in North American and European art museums and galleries. Curator Tanya Leighton has recently noted that “one may go so far as to say that large-scale cinematic modes of projection have quantitatively surpassed traditional mediums such as painting and sculpture—a situation that would have been unimaginable forty years ago.”⁴² In 1996, curator Kerry Brougher mounted the important exhibition *Film and Art after 1946: Hall of Mirrors* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, for the first time making links between the histories of art and film from an international perspective. These links were further elaborated in such survey exhibitions as *Spellbound: Art and*

⁴² Tanya Leighton, “Introduction,” in Tanya Leighton, ed., *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader* (London: Tate Publishing and Afterall, 2008), 7.

Film at London's Hayward Gallery in 1996; *Into the Light: The Projected Image in American Art, 1964-1977* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York in 2001; and *Beyond Cinema: The Art of Projection* at Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin in 2006. The first major survey exhibition of Canadian projection-based art since 1964, titled *Projections*, was mounted in 2007 by Barbara Fischer at four art galleries administered by the University of Toronto.⁴³ This brief list provides only a snapshot of the many thematic exhibitions that have treated the connections between film history and contemporary "cinematic" art practices. Solo exhibitions of projection work at major institutions would constitute another long list.

Chrissie Iles, curator of the Whitney Museum's *Into the Light*, argues that "the relationship between film and art is a one-way love affair. Artists love film, but the film world is largely indifferent to the fact."⁴⁴ The art world's fascination with the cinema has made it increasingly difficult to discuss contemporary art history without touching cinema studies—and here lies the problem.⁴⁵ Although contemporary film/video installations and commercial cinema are undoubtedly distinct enterprises (in terms of their economic modes of production, advertising methods, exhibition formats, and the spectatorial experiences they typically motivate), we cannot ignore that aspects of commercial cinema—its history, technology, narrative codes, genres, and aesthetic styles—have become integral to the experience of much contemporary art.

⁴³ Stan Douglas's work was included in *Hall of Mirrors*, *Beyond Cinema*, and *Projections*, and the artist co-curated *Beyond Cinema* with Christopher Eamon, Joachim Jäger and Gabriele Knapstein.

⁴⁴ George Baker, Matthew Buckingham, Hal Foster, Chrissie Iles, Anthony McCall, and Malcolm Turvey, "Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art," *October* 104 (Spring 2003): 74.

⁴⁵ Art historian George Baker says: "[W]e are now witnessing an intense relativization of the field of the art institution, the art critic, and the art historian by film history, cinema history, film theory." Baker, et. al., "Round Table: The Projected Image in Contemporary Art," 94.

In “Of an Other Cinema,” cinema theorist Raymond Bellour discusses the relationship between commercial cinema and contemporary museum-based film/video installations. According to him, the specificities of the new museum context permit artists to release cinema from its conventional narrative and formal constraints, to expand the cinematic apparatus beyond its standardized single screen format.⁴⁶ Bellour produces a working definition of film/video installations as *other cinema*: a cinema which reconfigures the model of commercial cinema, its devices, and its architecture in order to create unique, new, and expanded spectatorial experiences.⁴⁷ While many artists, such as Doug Aitken and Eija-Liisa Ahtila, have been drawn to cutting-edge technology and multiple screens to create new spaces for expanded narrative cinema, others, such as Matthew Buckingham, Tacita Dean, Joachim Koester, Steve McQueen, and Ulla von Brandenburg have done just the opposite by reusing outdated techniques, technology, and aesthetics in their installations. Even though these artist-filmmakers endlessly mine the history of commercial cinema, their installations are often read against the institution, ideology, and economic apparatus of commercial cinema. For instance, art historian Ursula Frohne contrasts the experience of a seated spectator in the commercial cinema with that of a mobile spectator who navigates the film or video installation in the museum. For Frohne, the cinema spectator submits to spectacle, identifies with screen images, and absorbs entertainment, while the mobile museum visitor is encouraged to critically deconstruct this passive cinematic experience. Participation and embodiment

⁴⁶ Ibid., 418.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

become essential components of this reconfigured apparatus.⁴⁸ Frohne suggests that the museum's "artistic remake" distances the spectator from illusory seduction, revealing the ideological mechanics of the commercial apparatus.⁴⁹ While film/video installations and commercial cinema have marked differences, I want to avoid this rigid opposition by considering how particular memories of commercial cinema are put to use in Stan Douglas's work.

Douglas expresses these memories of commercial cinema by merging technological processes and aesthetic conventions derived from film history with the conventions (and limitations) of the contemporary museum-based film/video installation: repetition, the physically mobile spectator, sculptural space, conceptual (rather than plot) driven narratives, and so forth. According to Christa Blümlinger, appropriation functions on two levels in Douglas's work: "on one level, it is about taking the cinematographic out of the cinema and into the exhibition space; on another, individual films or film fragments are shifted into a new territory of meaning through the form of material appropriation, of the citation, pastiche, or remake."⁵⁰ While the spectator in the commercial cinema is expected to watch each film in one sitting, Douglas's film installations are frequently designed to have no clear beginning or end. In his first film installation, *Overture* (1986), Douglas couples a 16mm film projection of an 1899-1901 Edison Company film shot from a train as it weaves through the Rocky Mountains with three spoken excerpts from Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* (1913-1927) [fig. 3].

⁴⁸ Ursula Frohne, "Dissolution of the Frame: Immersion and Participation in Video Installations," in Tanya Leighton, ed., *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader* (London: Tate Publishing and Afterall, 2008), 359.

⁴⁹ Frohne, "Dissolution of the Frame: Immersion and Participation in Video Installations," 360.

⁵⁰ Blümlinger, "Remake, Readymade, Reconfiguration: Film as Metahistory," 31.



[fig. 3] Stan Douglas, *Overture* (1986). Single-channel 16mm film installation, black and white, sound, 6 min. (loop). Installation at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, 1996.

As a narrator speaks poetic lines about the hazy moments between sleeping and waking, we see a flickering, grainy image of the landscape ahead. Just as the train enters a tunnel, the projection on screen fades to black and the sequence of spoken words concludes. Douglas synchronizes silence with darkness and speech with light. Because the film reel begins as the train exits a tunnel and ends as it enters a different tunnel, the beginning and end of the film is indecipherable. The 7-minute film seems more like a perpetual journey through the Rocky Mountains than a repeated “loop.”

While contemporary film/video installation artists routinely use the repeated film or video loop when dealing with the art museum context, Douglas has consistently challenged this convention, either by creating seamless loops which have no definitive

beginning or end (as in *Overture*), or by using computer software to randomly reedit or “remix” each work over the course of the exhibition.⁵¹ Douglas created his first “recombinant narrative,” *Win, Place or Show* in 1998: a two-channel video installation that depicts two dockworkers who bicker and then fight in their apartment [fig. 4]. The set for this video was based on architectural plans for a public housing development that was proposed but never built in downtown Vancouver in the 1950s. Shot in the style of the short-lived CBC television drama *The Clients* (1968)—characterized by long takes, deep focus, and the absence of establishing shots—*Win, Place or Show* inhabits a moment in an imagined late 1960s in order to reflect on the legacy of the failed utopia of social housing.⁵² The video was shot with 12 cameras from multiple angles, and is edited together in real time by a computer in its museum installation. The six-minute sequence is randomly montaged so that for over 20,000 hours, no two visitors see the exact same series of shots.⁵³ By creating an evolving tale of an argument that escalates, fizzles out,



[fig. 4] Video still from Stan Douglas, *Win, Place or Show* (1998). Two-channel video installation, colour, sound, 204,023 variations with an average duration of 6 min. each.

⁵¹ According to Mieke Bal, “In general, the loop is the most distinctive marker of video installation, or more generally, video exhibition, as different from one-time showings.” Mieke Bal, “Re-: Killing Time,” in Hans D. Christ, and Iris Dressler, eds., *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect: Works 1986-2007* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 88.

⁵² Douglas, “Win, Place or Show,” in Hans D. Christ, and Iris Dressler, eds., *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect: Works 1986-2007* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 201.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 202.

and then escalates again, Douglas's recombinant narrative responds to the real-time of museum viewing, avoiding the logic of the loop altogether. Viewers are permitted, even encouraged, to enter and exit these installations at their own free will because works like *Win, Place or Show* are physically impossible to see in their entirety.

The presentation of Douglas's films and videos in the museum context is essential to the experiences they motivate. But, equally important are the narrative, aesthetic, and technological conventions he appropriates from commercial cinema. The aesthetic and narrative conventions Douglas uses in his films and videos shift abruptly from work to work: from *Hors-champs* (1992)—two videos of a “Free Jazz” performance of Albert Ayler's 1965 song *Spirits Rejoice*, shot in the official style of 1960s French public television broadcasts and projected synchronously on the *recto* and *verso* sides of a thin suspended screen; to *Pursuit, Fear, Catastrophe: Ruskin B.C.* (1993)—a 16mm film about the mysterious disappearance of a Ruskin, B.C. man in 1929, presented in the style of 1920s American silent film and accompanied by an automated piano which plays Arnold Schönberg's *Accompaniment to a Cinematographic Scene* (1929-30); to *Evening* (1994)—a three-channel video installation which, using the aesthetic of 1969-70 American television news broadcasts, reconstructs two days in the Chicago-area evening news (January 1, 1969 and January 1, 1970) at a time when the more rigorous editorial-style news reportage was being replaced by “Happy Talk News” across the USA; to *Der Sandmann* (1995)—and its imitation of the doppelgänger shot from Henrik Galeen's 1926 film *The Student of Prague*; to *Win, Place or Show* (1998)—and its adoption of the conventions of the 1968 CBC television drama *The Clients*; to *Inconsolable Memories* (2005)—a two-channel film which takes *Memories of Underdevelopment*, Tomás

Gutiérrez Alea's 1968 film about the Cuban missile crisis and, using a similar film style, restages it during the 1980 Mariel boatlift. As art historian William Wood notes, "The concern with imitating—or better, inhabiting—certain conventions and devices of television and film while altering them is perhaps the only constant in his projects."⁵⁴ In other words, when looking at Douglas's *oeuvre*, it seems as though his most consistent strategy has been deliberate archaism: rendering his films with the aesthetic conventions of past media artifacts.

His work thrives on intertextuality, on intertwining and reworking varied cultural sources. Curator Iris Dressler has noted that Douglas's intertextual collage is far from arbitrary: "Rather, Douglas takes up interwoven relationships and launches their recombinations along the fragility of modern constructs of progress: where that unceasingly recurring tandem between omnipotence fantasies and aggrieved self-experience, guilt and repression, upsurge and decline engenders revenant upon revenant."⁵⁵ Douglas hopes that his work can "provoke certain associations in people familiar with the quoted cultural forms."⁵⁶ His film and video installations act as platforms from which the spectator who is familiar with the referenced material can create multi-layered associations between multiple historical moments. He offers clues to the interested spectator in the form of detailed project descriptions which outline each work's process, historical background and key reference points. These descriptions are supported by supplementary texts and catalogue essays, all of which Douglas considers

⁵⁴ William Wood, "Secret Work," in *Stan Douglas*, exhibition catalogue (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 1999), 115.

⁵⁵ Iris Dressler, "Specters of Douglas," in Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler eds., *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect: Works 1986-2007* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 10.

⁵⁶ Douglas with Thater, "Interview," 24.

part and parcel of his work.⁵⁷ This discursive framework allows the artist to create film and video installations that do not just employ the most recognizable cultural references.

It is from within this demanding intellectual and intertextual context that I will pursue some of the less explicit or immediate historical references at play in *Der Sandmann*. At this point, I will turn directly to *Der Sandmann* and propose that by using a black and white film aesthetic, recreating the historical doppelgänger trick, and reusing an outdated UFA film studio, Douglas recreates not only the look and feel of “pastness,” but also reengages a historical mode of production in the present (specifically, that of 1920s Expressionist cinema), allowing this past to haunt the exploited properties of the former East Germany.

Der Sandmann

Der Sandmann was produced while Douglas was on a DAAD residency in Berlin in 1994.⁵⁸ Located in Berlin-Mitte, the “Artists-in-Berlin” residency programme was the first institution to move to the former East Berlin after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.⁵⁹ In the years following the 1990 reunification of Germany, the former East Germany witnessed a massive transformation of its cultural, social, and physical structures at the hands of the Treuhänder.⁶⁰ German reunification was far from a mutual consolidation of two political entities; as German historian Hanna Behrend writes, the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁸ Run by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Artists-in-Berlin residency programme has hosted nearly 1000 international artists for one-year residencies in Berlin since 1963. Berliner Künstlerprogramm, “Index,” Berliner Künstlerprogramm, http://www.berliner-kuenstlerprogramm.de/en/index_en.php (accessed 22 June 2010).

⁵⁹ Berliner Künstlerprogramm, “History,” Berliner Künstlerprogramm, http://www.berliner-kuenstlerprogramm.de/en/profil_ge.html (accessed 22 June 2010).

⁶⁰ Hanna Behrend, “Forward,” in Hanna Behrend, ed., *German Unification: The Destruction of an Economy* (London and East Haven, CT: Pluto Press, 1995), xi.

reunification process can be best characterized as an ‘*Anschluß*’: “an act of incorporating an economically weaker state with little reference to the interests of the people concerned.”⁶¹ When Douglas was invited to Berlin, he was afforded a central view of this highly contested transitional period. Although he went to Berlin with no intention of making a film (in fact, he went with the intention of writing), his interest in the heated political climate surrounding reunification led to his two-channel film installation *Der Sandmann*.⁶² His research centered on two casualties of the Treuhänd: former East Germany’s film industry and its *Schrebergärten*. While Douglas’s projects are almost always inspired by particular sites or locations, they are often also heavily informed by archival research. In his words:

Often I will begin by just getting familiar with the site—the lay of the land, its geography, by doing photographs there . . . But then, the additional research I do is often in the form of archival research—if I am using historical idioms of television or film, it’s looking at old films, old television programmes, sometimes interviewing people living in the place where I am working.⁶³

His observation of the effects of reunification on the former East Germany’s film studios and garden allotments led him to uncover the broader histories of these vanishing cultural landmarks.

The history of the former UFA film studios at Potsdam-Babelsberg is long and complicated. Prior to 1917, the German film industry was struggling, overshadowed by large French and American film industries that dominated both domestic and

⁶¹ Behrend, “Inglorious German Unification,” in Hanna Behrend, ed., *German Unification: The Destruction of an Economy* (London and East Haven, CT: Pluto Press, 1995), 5.

⁶² Douglas, (Public Lecture, The Elaine Turner Cooper Education Fund Conversations with Contemporary Artists, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY, June 9, 2010).

⁶³ Douglas, quoted in William Wood, “Secret Work,” 116.

international markets.⁶⁴ The German market was fractured, dispersed and decentralized, consisting of a number of medium-sized companies that, located across Germany, competed with each other in what film historian Thomas Elsaesser has called an “as yet unstructured market.”⁶⁵ The German film industry could not develop an international role because of this lack of internal cooperation. In 1917, nearing the end of the First World War, a number of Germany’s mid-sized film production and distribution companies (Messter GmbH, PAGU, Nordisk, and others) merged to form the *Universum Film Aktien Gesellschaft*, better known as the UFA.⁶⁶ In his book *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany’s Historical Imaginary* (2000), Elsaesser recalls that this merger—a deliberate attempt to restructure the German cinema industry and compete in the international market—quickly made the UFA the largest film production and distribution conglomerate outside of Hollywood.⁶⁷ In 1921, the UFA acquired “debt-ridden but asset rich” Decla-Bioscop which had recently produced the internationally successful *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920).⁶⁸ With the addition of Decla-Bioscop, the UFA acquired the film lot at Potsdam-Babelsberg, which quickly expanded as the appetite for German cinema grew in the 1920s.⁶⁹ Decla-Bioscop’s former director Erich Pommer became the head of production at the UFA, giving the company “a far-sighted, European-minded

⁶⁴ Thomas Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After: Germany’s Historical Imaginary* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 110.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 112-113.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

⁶⁹ The film lot at Potsdam-Babelsberg was founded in 1911 by the Deutsche Bioscop GmbH and was owned by Decla-Bioscop until 1921. Studio Babelsberg, “History: 1912-1930,” Studio Babelsberg, <http://www.studiobabelsberg.com/1912-to-1930.131.0.html?&L=1> (accessed 22 June 2010).

producer who championed an internationally recognized art cinema and brought about the confluence of industrial and creative trends which built UFA's enduring reputation."⁷⁰

Under the direction of Pommer from 1921-1926, the still young UFA had high ambitions: it aimed to "dominate the domestic as well as the European film market."⁷¹ Pommer's impressive understanding of the international film market led him to shift the UFA's film production into a niche market underrepresented by the Hollywood heavyweights at the time. The UFA became known for making prestige art cinema, which Pommer branded "Expressionist film."⁷² Elsaesser recalls that German Expressionism quickly became famous for its "stylisation of the sets and the acting, the 'Gothic'-story material and fairytale motifs, angular exteriors, claustrophobic interiors, and above all, that excess of soul ascribed to things 'typically German'."⁷³ Pommer attributed this innovation to economic necessity:

The German film industry made 'stylised films' to make money. [...] Germany was defeated: how could she make films that would compete with the others? It would have been impossible to try and so we tried something new; the Expressionist or stylised films.⁷⁴

Expressionist cinema was produced with strategic commercial aims, and so, as Elsaesser insists, the art/commerce or high art/popular culture binaries often considered in relation to this cinema did not exist, at least not on the pragmatic level of film production and distribution in the 1920s.⁷⁵

Expressionist cinema first reached international fame and admiration in 1920 when Robert Wiene's *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (produced by Pommer at Decla-

⁷⁰ Ibid., 115.

⁷¹ Ibid., 113.

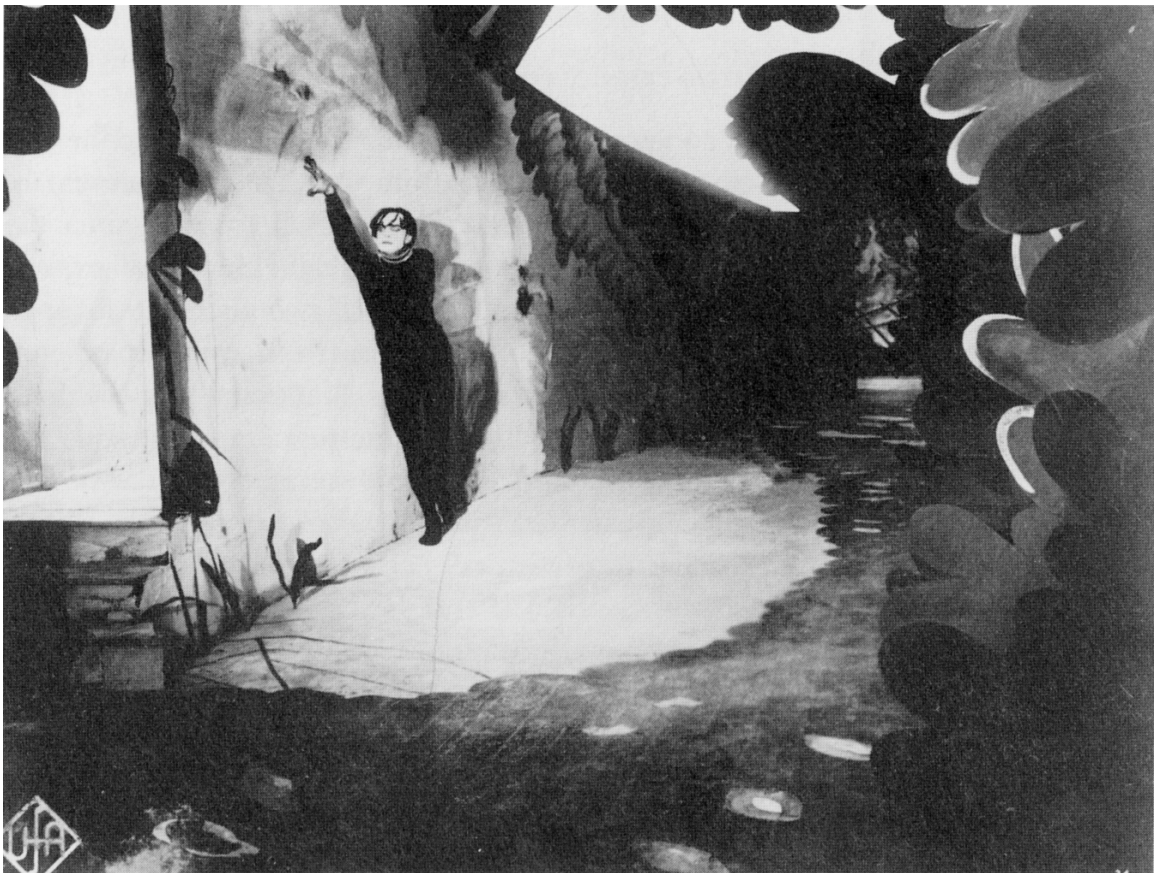
⁷² Ibid., 18.

⁷³ Ibid., 20.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 26.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 7.

Bioscop) made waves in France and later in America [fig. 5]. The popularity of *Caligari* was never matched by the UFA.⁷⁶ For several years following *Caligari*, a whole array of films using the same dramatic lighting, narrative doubles, Faustian pacts, etc., were produced by the UFA—obvious attempts to exploit the stylistic devices and repeat the commercial success of *Caligari*—with mixed critical and commercial results.⁷⁷ While many criticized Expressionist-style cinema after *Caligari* as opportunistic regurgitation, the influence of this film for the years to come has left us with a legible “Expressionist”



[fig. 5] Film still from Robert Wiene (dir.), *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920). 35mm film, black and white, silent, 71 min.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 4.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 63-64.

style to comprehend within its social and economic context.⁷⁸

Pommer left his post at the UFA in late 1926 (and moved to America), and on his departure, the UFA entered a new phase in its development. Under the new directorship of Ludwig Klitzsch in 1927, the UFA ostensibly gave up its “art cinema” identity, opting to produce entertainment cinema (akin to contemporaneous Hollywood production).⁷⁹

The company became strictly controlled by the Nazi government in 1933, and its studios at Potsdam-Babelsberg were later used as the hub of Joseph Goebbels’s Nazi propaganda operation. Following the Second World War, the UFA was shut down by the Allied Control Commission.⁸⁰ Located in Soviet-controlled territory, it was renamed *Deutsche Film-Aktiengesellschaft* (DEFA), essentially becoming a minor outlet for Communist cinema until the collapse of Soviet power.

Elsaesser recalls that “By chance and coincidence, in 1992 the old UFA studio in Babelsberg celebrated its 75th anniversary just in time to see its site sold by the ‘Treuhand’ to a French conglomerate, the ‘Compagnie General des Eaux’ (CGE).”⁸¹ The UFA studio—undergoing constant transformation since its creation (due to commercial, artistic, military, and nationalist pressures)—acts as a container of twentieth-century (East) German history. Its eventual expropriation and absorption into the scheme of late multinational capitalism (through the globalized film industry) signifies the end of an era of German cinema. Elsaesser wonders if “this is the sign for the German cinema to

⁷⁸ Elsaesser explores two influential studies by Siegfried Kracauer and Lotte Eisner that first established connections between Weimar cinema and social history in “Expressionist Film or Weimar Cinema? With Siegfried Kracauer and Lotte Eisner (Once More) to the Movies,” in *Ibid.*, 18-59.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 132.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 107.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 134.

become its own museum.”⁸² Visiting the former UFA film studios during his residency in 1994, Douglas surely picked up on this tension, and these studios—particularly, a 1920s-era building on the demolition list—became the site for his exploration of the socio-economic effects of reunification.⁸³

Curator Scott Watson recalls that “Visiting the studios and the region around them, Douglas discovered another transformation underway in the local use of property. The arrival of real estate speculation and development in Potsdam also impinged on the small, private gardens allotted to Potsdam apartment dwellers.”⁸⁴ The eventual expropriation of the Potsdam-Babelsberg film lot was mirrored by the disappearance of its government-sponsored garden allotments. In a statement about *Der Sandmann*, Douglas explains that in the early nineteenth century, public garden allotments designated for low-income or economically underprivileged citizens became an important facet of German culture.⁸⁵ These small garden plots were owned by the government and were leased out to those who fit its criteria. Parallel to this socialized garden movement was a short-lived plan by educator Ernst Hausschildt to establish *Schrebergärten*, garden plots designed not for the poor, but for the physical education of youth. Inspired by the education theory of Moritz Schreber, who believed that green-space dedicated for physical exercise could “alleviate the adverse psychological effects of industrialization upon children and adolescents,” Hausschildt established Germany’s first *Schrebergärtenkolonie* in Leipzig in 1864.⁸⁶ These *Schrebergärten* never caught on, but

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Scott Watson, “Against the Habitual,” 32.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 32.

⁸⁵ This paragraph paraphrases the brief history of the *Schrebergärten* located in Douglas’s official statement for *Der Sandmann*. Douglas, “Der Sandmann,” 195-197.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 195.

the name “*Schrebergärten*” became synonymous with “garden allotment” in twentieth-century Germany. Douglas notes that public garden allotments were crucial to feeding German citizens during severe food shortages after both the first and second World War. They remained important features of the East and West German infrastructure throughout the twentieth century, but with the 1990 reunification of Germany, laws regarding the gardens became more strict: “In Potsdam, at least, small quantities of produce can no longer be sold to market vendors, gardeners can no longer sleep in their *Lauben* (cottage shacks), and plumbing and electricity are no longer permitted.”⁸⁷ Moreover, over half of the thousands of garden allotments in Potsdam were privatized and sold by the Treuhand to developers [fig. 6]. Much like the film studios at Potsdam-Babelsberg, many of former East Germany’s *Schrebergärten* were being erased by developers.

In *Der Sandmann*, Douglas intertwines multiple histories—of the *Schrebergärten*, UFA film production, German Expressionist cinema, as well as nineteenth-century German Gothic fiction—within the context of reunification. He does this, most basically, by recreating a *Schrebergärten* inside a 1920s era UFA film studio, and then staging an Expressionist-style film adaptation of the introduction to E.T.A. Hoffmann’s 1816 novella *Der Sandmann* on this set. Hoffmann’s story begins with a series of letters between Nathanael, his childhood friend Lothar, and his fiancé (and Lothar’s sister) Klara.⁸⁸ These letters recount Nathanael’s childhood fear of “the Sandman”: a man who, as legend has it, steals the eyes of children who will not go to sleep. In his letter to Lothar (which he mistakenly sends to Klara), Nathanael explains that when he was young he

⁸⁷ Ibid., 196.

⁸⁸ Summarized from E. T. A. Hoffmann, “The Sandman,” in Leonard J. Kent and Elizabeth C. Knight, eds. and trans., *Selected Writings of E. T. A. Hoffmann: The Tales Volume 1* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 137-162.



[fig. 6] Stan Douglas, *Path through "Bergauf", Am Pfingstberg, Pfingstberg*, from the photographic series, *Potsdamer Schrebergärten* (1994). Digital C-Print mounted on dibond. 46 x 56.1 cm.

associated this Sandman character with Coppelius, an obnoxious lawyer who frequently visited his father at night to run various alchemical experiments. Nathanael was convinced that Coppelius was responsible for his father's eventual death because, after his father was killed in an experiment gone wrong, Coppelius vanished without a trace. Nathanael did not see Coppelius again until one day, several years later, he recognized Coppelius in Giuseppe Coppola, a barometer salesman who came to his door.

Hoffmann's story was structured around Nathanael's multiple (mis)recognitions: his recognition of the Sandman in Coppelius and Coppelius in Coppola. Hoffmann's characters, as well as this basic narrative of repression and (mis)recognition were

borrowed by Douglas in his film adaptation of *Der Sandmann*. However, in Douglas's revision, Coppélius the lawyer is refashioned as Coppélius the mysterious old gardener who fascinated Nathanael and Lothar when they were children, and Klara, who was Nathanael's fiancé in Hoffmann's tale, is his sister in Douglas's story. As in Hoffmann's story, Douglas's Nathanael believed that Coppélius was the Sandman—and the man who killed his father—when he was a child. Several years later, while visiting his hometown, Nathanael is unable to make the connection between the “overwhelming sense of dread” that overcomes him at the site of an old man working in his *Schrebergärten* and his childhood fear of the gardener Coppélius.⁸⁹ In the film, updated versions of the three letters which open Hoffmann's story are read aloud. We see Nathanael, a black man,⁹⁰ standing off-set, reciting his letter as the camera pans across the studio, but Lothar and Klara are voices-off, that is heard but not seen.⁹¹ They all speak English, but with distinct German accents. In his letter to Lothar, Nathanael describes the strangely frightening experience of seeing an old man working in his garden just a few streets from his childhood home in Potsdam. In his response, Lothar suggests that the gardener is actually Coppélius, a neighborhood man whom he and Nathanael took for the Sandman when they were children. Lothar recalls that one night, when they were children, he and Nathanael decided to sneak into Coppélius's garden and free the eyes they thought were hidden there. As they entered the garden, they were immediately chased away by an enraged

⁸⁹ Douglas, “Artist's Writings: Der Sandmann, Script, 1994/97,” in Carol J. Clover, Diana Thater, Scott Watson, eds., *Stan Douglas* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 128.

⁹⁰ In many of his films and videos, Douglas substitutes a historically designated white male character for a visible minority. For instance, in *Vidéo* (2007)—Douglas's revision of Orson Welles's 1962 film adaptation of Kafka's *The Trial* (1925)—Josef K. is reimagined as K, a black woman whose face is never revealed to the spectator. The aspect of racial and gender identity in Douglas's film adaptations is ripe for discussion, but cannot be explored within the scope of this paper.

⁹¹ Carol J. Clover, “Focus: Der Sandmann,” in Carol J. Clover, Diana Thater, Scott Watson, eds., *Stan Douglas* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 71.

Coppelius. Following Lothar's account, Klara recites a letter to Nathanael, informing him that he had misaddressed his letter to Lothar and sent it to her by mistake. She mentions that after reading the letter herself, she personally delivered it to Lothar. In her letter, Klara notes that the night the boys entered Coppelius's garden was the same night that her and Nathanael's father was killed.⁹² These three letters rationalize Nathanael's sense of dread, relating it to a repressed moment in his childhood when his fantasies (the Sandman) met reality (his father's death).

Douglas's decision to connect a story derived from nineteenth-century German Gothic literature with 1920s UFA film production is not at all surprising, since, as media historian Friedrich Kittler explains in "Romanticism – Psychoanalysis – Film: A History of the Double" (1997), Expressionist cinema was born out of this tradition.

Doppelgänger, phantoms, and ghosts, motifs typically used in Gothic novels, were first visualized on film in the 1910s and 20s: "What poetry promised but could only grant in the imaginary realm of the reading experience appears on the screen in reality."⁹³ When convincing film tricks and special effects were developed in Germany in the 1910s and 20s, doppelgänger were dispelled from the printed page—signaling the end of an era in Romantic literature and the beginning of one in cinema.⁹⁴ Expressionist film was informed and inspired by the worlds of Gothic novels in the *Sandmann* tradition. Retreating to the fantastic enabled early filmmakers to experiment with various special effects, thereby carving out a distinct role for cinema within the landscape of contemporaneous theatre, photography, fine art, and literary practices.

⁹² Douglas, "Artist's Writings: *Der Sandmann*, Script, 1994/97," 128-130.

⁹³ Friedrich Kittler, "Romanticism – Psychoanalysis – Film: A History of the Double," in John Johnston, ed., *Literature, Media, Information Systems: Essays* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1997), 96.

⁹⁴ Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* (1989), Geoffrey Winthrop-Young and Michael Wutz, trans. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 153.

The German cinema's appropriation of nineteenth-century Gothic motifs was certainly bound up in the *Kino Debatte*, an attempt in the 1910s to legitimate cinema as an "art" suitable for the bourgeois public. In a 1914 essay called "Why We Go to the Movies," psychologist Hugo Münsterberg recalls his initial resistance to the new medium:

I may confess frankly that I was one of those snobbish late-comers. Until a year ago I had never seen a real photoplay. Although I was always a passionate lover of the theatre, I should have felt it as undignified for a Harvard professor to attend a moving picture show, just as I should not have gone to a vaudeville performance or to a museum of waxed figures or to a phonograph concert. Last year, while I was travelling a thousand miles from Boston, I and a friend risked seeing *Neptune's Daughter*, and my conversion was rapid. I recognized at once that here marvelous possibilities were open, and I began to explore with eagerness the world which was new to me.⁹⁵

Well into the 1910s, narrative films (or "photoplays" as he calls them) were, in America at least, commonly thought to be mere recordings of theatre, theatre for the lower classes. In *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study* (1916), the first book-length study of cinema, Münsterberg makes a case for the photoplay as an art form entirely distinct from the theatre.⁹⁶ This text exemplifies the American upper-middle class's struggle with going to the cinema in the 1910s. This debate was no less relevant in the German context, as Elsaesser suggests:

By reviving Gothic motifs, Biedermeier settings, and imitating the romantic *Kunstmärchen*, the fantastic film achieved a double aim: it militated for the cinema's legitimacy . . . by borrowing from middlebrow Wilhelmine 'culture'. Yet it also countered the 'international' tendency in early cinema, offering instead nationally identifiable German films.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Hugo Münsterberg, "Why We Go to the Movies," in *The Cosmopolitan*, 1914, quoted in Allan Langdale, "S(t)imulation of the Mind: The Film Theory of Hugo Münsterberg," in Allan Langdale ed., *Hugo Munsterberg on Film: The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 7-8.

⁹⁶ Langdale ed., *Hugo Munsterberg on Film: The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings*.

⁹⁷ Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After*, 65.

Not only did early German films prove to new audiences that cinema could produce special effects—doppelgängers, phantoms, and ghosts—that theatre could not, it did so by using specifically German narrative and thematic devices, creating a national cinema that would fully form with films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Douglas took one such film, Henrik Galeen’s 1926 version of *The Student of Prague*, and imitated some of its key aesthetic and technical specifications in his film adaptation of Hoffmann’s novella.

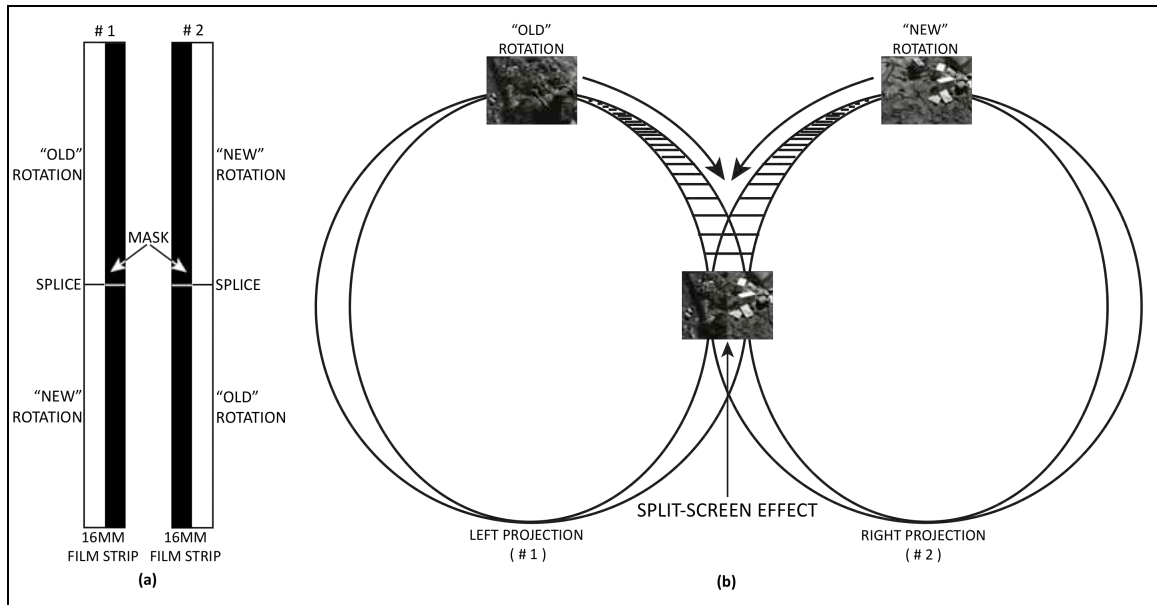
If we return to the question of deliberate archaism, we can begin to piece together some of the ways in which Douglas fashions *Der Sandmann* with the tools of 1920s era German cinema, and how this pastiche may function critically within the film installation’s conceptual structure. The most obvious marker of deliberate archaism in *Der Sandmann* is its black and white aesthetic. In *Monochrome Memories*, Paul Grainge suggests that a film’s use of black and white can direct us to the past, even when it is clearly set in the present.⁹⁸ Black and white immediately points us to the past because, most plainly, its qualities are no longer the industry standard. However, according to Grainge, regardless of how arbitrary the aesthetic choice may seem, “it cannot be reduced to schemes that would see it either in terms of generalized longing for the past (relating to an experience of loss) or as a desperate hyperrealizing of it (responding to a condition of amnesia).”⁹⁹ In *Der Sandmann*, black and white creates a hybrid temporality, where the ostensible subject of the film—the former East Germany—is represented with an archaic aesthetic mode. Where does black and white function within the work’s signifying

⁹⁸ Grainge writes this when describing the opening sequence of Woody Allen’s *Manhattan* (1979). Grainge, *Monochrome Memories*, 1.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

system? On an immediate level, it is definitely the first, most readily apparent marker of the film's pastiche. Taken alone, it might generate a certain ahistorical "pastness," a gesture towards a generalized filmic past. However, black and white *cannot* be understood alone in *Der Sandmann*. The film installation's black and white aesthetic points us to the more subtle, but far more specific historical references at play in its visual and material treatment. It directs us to the past, opening up the possibility for us to contemplate other types of pastiche that exist at the level of the film's production. If we frame black and white as the *surface-effect* of *Der Sandmann*, historical *depth* can be found in its use of the doppelgänger trick.

Douglas built two sets in a large vintage UFA film studio: one resembling a *Schrebergärten* as it might have appeared in the fall of 1970, complete with a *Lauben* shack, a cabbage patch, and leafless trees; and another, presenting the same *Schrebergärten* modified to look like it was being taken over by a construction site, presumably after having been sold to developers by the Treuhand. Using a 16mm film camera, Douglas recorded two synchronized 360 degree pans of the entire studio: one revealing the first set, and the other revealing the second. The two films were spliced together, duplicated, and are projected by two projectors one half rotation out of phase with each other. Half of each film is masked off, so that, when projected in a gallery setting, these two pans create a single film frame. Two moments in time (1970 and post-1989) are ever present on the screen, creating a visible seam and temporal split down the center of the film frame [fig. 7]. The synchronized panning movement of the two rotations animates this fractured temporality with a stunning wipe effect where one half of the screen seems to eat away at the other.

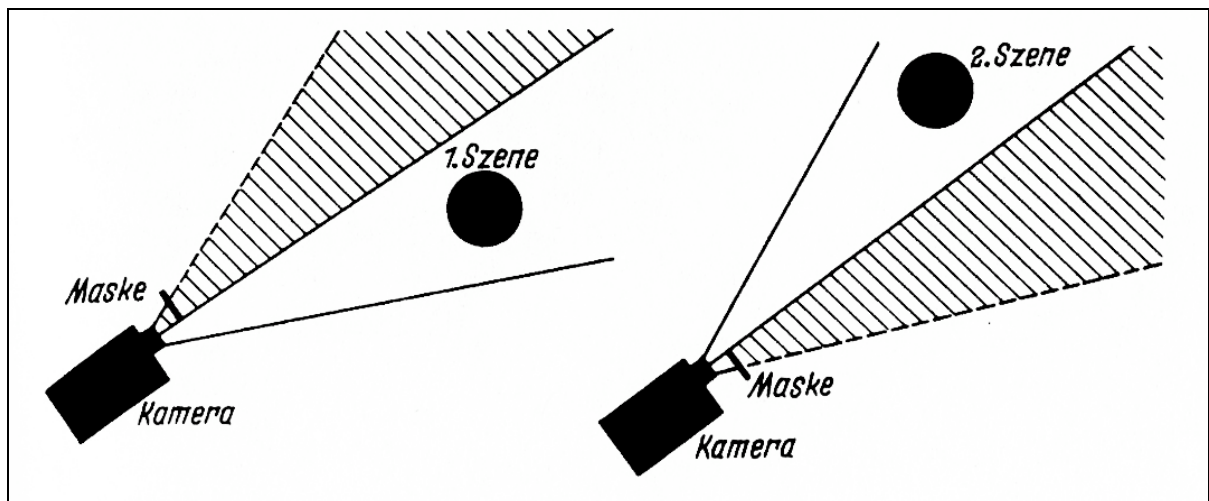


[fig. 7] Two diagrams illustrating the split-screen effect in *Der Sandmann*. Diagram (a) illustrates how both “old” and “new” rotations were spliced together, duplicated, and one half of each frame was masked off. Diagram (b) illustrates the film’s looping/projection scheme.

The visible seam at the centre of the image is the first indicator that the film is composed not of one single shot, but of two shots projected side-by-side on the large screen. Again, this split-screen effect was derived from the doppelgänger trick as used in Henrik Galeen’s 1926 film *The Student of Prague*. Briefly, *The Student of Prague* presents a Gothic tale of Baldwin, a poor university student who sells his reflection to a mysterious sorcerer named Scapinelli for a large sum of money. Although the student becomes wealthy, he is constantly haunted by his doppelgänger until he is ultimately led to kill his double, and therefore kill himself. The doppelgänger trick—a double-exposure which allows one actor to play opposite himself on screen—was used throughout this film at any time that Baldwin was confronted by his double. Friedrich Kittler explains the trick: “half of the lens is covered with a black diaphragm while the actor acts on the other half of the picture frame. Then, without changing the camera’s position, the exposed film is rewound, the other half of the lens is covered up, and the same actor, now in his role as

the doppelgänger, acts on the opposite side of the frame”¹⁰⁰ [fig. 8]. Alternatively, this effect can be produced by filming two separate reels, and creating the double-exposure in the more controlled environment of the editing room, as Douglas did in his revision.¹⁰¹ Regardless of the method of production, when executed correctly, there is *no visible seam*, and the illusion that a character and his or her doppelgänger are simultaneously present in the same physical space is achieved.

Typical of Expressionist film, *The Student of Prague* was shot with dramatic key lighting—a quality that is recalled in *Der Sandmann*. However, while this film is clearly the source for Douglas’s aesthetic, it was not the first occurrence of the doppelgänger trick. Galeen’s *The Student of Prague* was actually a remake of Stellan Rye’s 1913 film of the same name [fig. 9]. This first film was conceived by actor Paul Wegener and cameraman Guido Seeber, who invented the trick and commissioned Hanns Heinz Ewers to write a story that would allow Wegener to play his own double.¹⁰² As the story goes,



[fig. 8] Diagram of the historical doppelgänger trick.

¹⁰⁰ Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 153-54.

¹⁰¹ Speaking with artist Diana Thater, Douglas states: “My first plan was to be a hard-ass materialist about it and use one piece of film – and I could have done that – only it’s safer in long runs to use two identical films in separate loopers.” Douglas with Thater, “Interview,” 19.

¹⁰² Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After*, 64.



[fig. 9] Film still from Stellan Rye (dir.), *The Student of Prague* (1913). 35mm film, black and white, silent, 41 min.

Ewers mined every literary-doppelgänger in his library to come up with a screenplay that could best showcase the new trick.¹⁰³ The doppelgänger trick preceded narrative content, which itself was a sort of literary pastiche. Elsaesser calls this 1913 film “the first Expressionist film,” not because it used Gothic literary motifs later used in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), but precisely because “story and style are driven by the exigencies of developing and testing state-of-the-art film technology.”¹⁰⁴ Far from just a neutral effect, the doppelgänger trick is imbedded in a historical mode of film production where, as Paul Wegener states, “technique, [and] form, gives the content its real meaning.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 154.

¹⁰⁴ Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After*, 66.

¹⁰⁵ Leon Hunt, “The Student of Prague,” in Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker, eds., *Early Cinema: Space, Frame, Narrative* (London: BFI Publishing, 1990), 389.

While the historical significance of the doppelgänger trick may not be accessible to visitors who first encounter *Der Sandmann*, its constant presence via the visible seam summons our attention, providing an index to the material history of the technique. However, while the doppelgänger trick functions in *Der Sandmann* as a historical marker, there is a marked difference between the Expressionist doppelgänger trick and Douglas's update. As Kittler explains, the doppelgänger trick depends on keeping the camera stationary for each exposure.¹⁰⁶ Douglas's film exceeds this limitation by creating a full 360-degree pan of the studio. To ensure synchronicity, the artist used a computerized motion-control system called MAX to automate the camera's movement.¹⁰⁷ Because this system removes all human error from the actual filming process, Douglas was able to record two identical 360-degree pans of the studio that would make up the left and right sides of the frame. By updating the doppelgänger trick to be mobile rather than fixed, and by modifying the 1970s era *Schrebergärten* of the first rotation to look like it was being taken over by a 1990s construction site in the second, he was able to achieve the spectacular wipe effect, where, as the maker explains, "the old garden is wiped away by the new one and, later, the new is wiped away by the old, without resolution, endlessly."¹⁰⁸ This movement, of course, counters the historical motive of the shot: to create a seamless, unified image. Instead, it accentuates the seam, repurposing this divide as a relay between historical moments.

As the camera scans the set, the old gardener appears on the right side of the screen, working away in his *Schrebergärten*. Soon, his double emerges from the seam on

¹⁰⁶ Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 153-54.

¹⁰⁷ George E. Lewis, "Stan Douglas's *Suspiria*: Genealogies of Recombinant Narrativity," in Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler eds., *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect: Works 1986-2007* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 45.

¹⁰⁸ Douglas, "Der Sandmann," 197.

the left side of the screen [fig. 10]. The two men, the gardener and his doppelgänger, exist on screen simultaneously for a few moments before the man on the left disappears into the seam again. Seconds later, the two gardeners overlap at the centre of the screen, merging into one, and the seam vanishes for an instant. In this moment, the spatial and temporal divide is miraculously bridged. The gardener—doubling, dividing, appearing, disappearing, and merging into one—performs with the seam. He is manipulated by the trick, breaking the illusion of unity that made the original doppelgänger trick a *trick* by repeatedly crossing the uncrossable divide.¹⁰⁹ Art critic Philip Monk astutely observes



[fig. 10] Film still of the old gardener and his doppelgänger in *Der Sandmann*.

¹⁰⁹ When reviewing Galeen's doppelgänger trick, it becomes obvious that the actors perform within the limitations of the trick; Baldwin and his doppelgänger never cross the invisible seam, except in instances when a body-double is used.

that Douglas's doppelgänger is not at all psychic; it is temporal.¹¹⁰ The fantastic literary doppelgänger, understood as a figment of the human psyche, is transformed into a doppelgänger represented spatially at two isolated points in time. The letters spoken by Nathanael, Lothar, and Klara ascribe a personal narrative onto this temporal wipe, but nevertheless, the personal or psychological doppelgänger only stands in for a temporal (and thus historical) double.

As the camera pans beyond the set, it passes by the "off-screen" studio space, and the seam becomes less apparent.¹¹¹ The illusion of spatial and temporal unity is restored until the camera passes by Nathanael, who, standing opposite the set, holds a piece of paper while reciting his lines [fig. 11]. As our gaze passes over Nathanael, his voice runs out-of-sync with his mouth; but, when his mouth crosses the central seam, it suddenly synchronizes with the soundtrack. As the camera returns again to the set, we realize that it was the "new" post-1989 image that ran out-of-sync with the soundtrack. Nathanael speaks in the present tense from the temporal past (the 1970 side of the screen), and this tension plays out in our inability to clearly identify the narrative present.¹¹²

Perhaps this non-synchronous sound is just another natural limitation of the historical doppelgänger trick. With its entangled narrative of past and present, *Der Sandmann* embraces the trick's limitations, making visible the "seam" and exposing its temporal incongruities. Douglas allows the moments when the visual trick falters to

¹¹⁰ Philip Monk, "Discordant Absences," in Philip Monk, ed., *Stan Douglas* (Cologne, Germany: DuMont, 2006), 22.

¹¹¹ While the set was modified for each rotation, the studio (which makes up the other half of the 360 degree pan) was left virtually untouched, thus making the seam less visible.

¹¹² Nathanael recites his letter in the present tense ("Something's wrong here. Whenever I stray too far from the tourist sites – I'm lost. I can't exactly say what it is but, places that once simply looked old now seem sinister"), and the conflict between Nathanael's words and the two on-screen temporalities makes it impossible to detect a single narrative present.

Douglas, "Artist's Writings: *Der Sandmann*, Script, 1994/97," 128.



[fig. 11] Film still of Nathanael in *Der Sandmann*.

inform our interpretation. He highlights the fact that “mechanics becomes a coproducer” when one employs the doppelgänger trick, as Walter Bloem wrote in *The Soul of Cinema* (1922).¹¹³ By emphasizing the seam that was camouflaged in the historical doppelgänger trick, Douglas adopts and exaggerates an Expressionist mode of production, where, again, “technique, [and] form, gives the content its real meaning.”¹¹⁴ Meaning in *Der Sandmann* is not only created by Douglas’s thematic play with the “uncanny,” but by his manipulation of the doppelgänger trick.¹¹⁵ The trick does not just support, but creates the

¹¹³ Bloem, Walter. *Seele des Lichtspiels: Ein Bekenntnis zum Film* (Leipzig, 1922), 56, quoted in Kittler, *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter*, 156.

¹¹⁴ Hunt, “The Student of Prague,” 389.

¹¹⁵ Many essays have discussed Douglas’s layered construction of the divided subject—through the relationship between Hoffmann’s “Sandman,” Freud’s reading of Hoffman’s tale in his 1919 essay on the uncanny, the doppelgänger, *Schrebergärten*, and the influence of Paul Schreber (Moritz Schreber’s son) on Freud’s study on hysteria—but few focus on the relationship between this system of meaning and

fractures, doublings, and unsettling returns at work in the film installation. The Expressionist mode of production—in which formal and technical experimentation takes priority over narrative and thematic content—is at the structural core of *Der Sandmann*.

However, we must acknowledge that *Der Sandmann* does not fully adhere to the technical specifications of Expressionist cinema. Most obviously, it includes diegetic sound, which did not emerge in German cinema until 1929.¹¹⁶ *The Student of Prague* was, of course, a silent film released at the height of silent cinema, and a perfect 1920s recreation would follow this important technical standard. However, *Der Sandmann* is not an authentic remake; it is a *new-old* film that straddles multiple historical moments: 1970 and post-1989 East Germany, and 1926 and today.¹¹⁷ In doing so, it disrupts the classic “nostalgia film” binary of imperfect present/idealized past and the stereotyping of past eras that nostalgia films are typically associated with.

Douglas’s doppelgänger trick is inscribed within a very political space: an old UFA film studio that is slated for demolition.¹¹⁸ The studio itself is featured in *Der Sandmann* for nearly two-and-a-half minutes at a time. After the camera passes the set, we see the other “unstaged” half of the studio. Old lighting equipment, ladders, props,

Douglas’s pastiche of Expressionist film. For example, see: Ivone Margulies, “Stan Douglas’s Clear and Present Strangeness,” in Hans D. Christ and Iris Dressler, eds., *Stan Douglas: Past Imperfect: Works 1986-2007* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2008), 155-170.; or the chapter on “Syncope” in Daniel Birnbaum, *Chronology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Sternberg Press, 2007), 47-65.

¹¹⁶ The first German language sound film was called *Melodie des Herzens* (*Melody of the Heart*) (1929). Studio Babelsberg, “History: 1912-1930.”

¹¹⁷ Philip Monk notices several points where the “new” troubles the “old” in *Der Sandmann*: “Nathanael’s synch-sound reading is anomalous to *Der Sandmann*’s authentic twenties remake, as are the other two epistolary voice-overs by Klara and Lothar. So too – unless the casting was color-blind – is the black actor playing Nathanael. As much as an anomaly is a deviation, it is also an uncanny, that is to say uncomfortable, reminder of what we might prefer to remain forgotten, obscured, or repressed – a telling residue perhaps of past life.” In “Discordant Absences,” 22.

¹¹⁸ Watson, “Against the Habitual,” 32. By 1999, 60 buildings on the Potsdam-Babelsberg film lot had been demolished. Filmmuseum Potsdam, “Permanent Exhibition: On the History of the Babelsberg Studios.” Filmmuseum Potsdam, <http://www.filmmuseum-potsdam.de/en/381-859.htm#babel> (accessed 22 June 2010).

and other archaic film devices are strewn throughout the large concrete bunker. The camera movement, which I have already described at length, provides a panoramic view of the outdated production facility. The old film studio, and not only the 1970/post-1989 *Schrebergärten*, is imbedded in Douglas's narrative of repression and return. Film scholar Ivone Margulies writes about Douglas's location choices: "He makes his thorough historical research of places available to the viewer who can then ponder how sites are haunted by various past interests and fantasies."¹¹⁹ The old UFA film studio—and its association with both Expressionist cinema *and* Nazi propaganda, its expropriation by the Treuhand, and its impending demolition or repurposing—disturbs the 1920s film-world of *Der Sandmann*. The Potsdam-Babelsberg film lot at once signifies a rich history of German cinema, its degradation, and its eventual liquidation. Douglas memorializes the studio, giving it a last life as a film production facility while using some of the aesthetic and technical restrictions of Expressionist film—the UFA's proudest achievement.¹²⁰ The studio itself may be the most simple deliberately archaic element at play in *Der Sandmann*. Douglas not only recreates the technique that made Galeen's *The Student of Prague* noteworthy, but his film grew from the same studio floor. He recreates a historically specific film trick within the physical conditions in which the trick was once produced.

However, Douglas allows the contemporary conditions of production to infiltrate his pastiche. As the exhibition literature indicates, the artist *recreated* the historic film technique in an *old* studio in 1994. The old UFA film studio, prominently displayed in

¹¹⁹ Margulies, "Stan Douglas's Clear and Present Strangeness," 157.

¹²⁰ In a recent lecture at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York, Douglas notes that the studio he used was never actually demolished, but was converted into a hotel instead. He mentions that he was one of the last filmmakers to use this particular studio before it was repurposed. Douglas, Public Lecture.

Der Sandmann, does not look state-of-the-art as it would have in 1926; it shows the imperfections (old equipment, dingy walls, etc.) that come with age. This deliberately archaic pastiche, where aesthetic, technical and material elements from *The Student of Prague* are reused, is riddled with traces of the “new”: the marks of wear in the building, the updating of the doppelgänger trick, and the imperfect integration of synchronized sound. Douglas reengages the specifically Expressionist mode of production within a new, though still volatile context of German reunification, but he does so without nostalgic (mood) intent. He entangles real material relations—the ongoing conflict between a changing economic system in former East Germany and the preservation of its distinct cultural identity—with his fictional narrative.

In “Discordant Absences,” Philip Monk notes that the film studio is “rooted physically as a garden is to its soil: before, during, and after the divide of the Berlin wall.”¹²¹ Monk detects the connection between the eventual fate of the *Schrebergärten* with that of the studios, two elements of East German society that became vulnerable during reunification. Here, he returns us to our first question: what does *The Student of Prague* have to do with a *Schrebergärten* in the former East Germany? I believe, in a roundabout way, it comes back to the doppelgänger shot and the particular economic structure of the German cinema industry in the 1920s. In opposition to the Hollywood demand-driven studio system, which followed an established model of supply and demand, the UFA’s system, called the “director-unit system,” organized production around major directors who were given the freedom to improvise, and to experiment with

¹²¹ Monk, “Discordant Absences,” 21.

new technologies and techniques regardless of time and money.¹²² It was from this economic context that the Expressionist ethos of pushing the boundaries of cinematic experimentation first emerged. The company's significant financial losses in 1926 led to the removal of Erich Pommer as its director and to the hiring of Ludwig Klitzsch, who proceeded to remodel the company after the Hollywood studio system.¹²³ With its shift to the Hollywood-style studio system, the unique German director-unit system and the Expressionist art cinema it had facilitated began to disappear. If Expressionist cinema—as a mode of production which encouraged technical and aesthetic experimentation—was born with Stellan Rye's 1913 *The Student of Prague*, it died shortly after Galeen's 1926 film.

Douglas's film installation, with its intertextual layering of references, grafts this tombstone of the director-unit system onto another tombstone, that of former East Germany's cultural artifacts: its sold and soon to be demolished or repurposed 1920s era film studios, and its repossessed and privatized garden allotments. In creating this dynamic exchange between historical moments, *Der Sandmann* follows a Freudian process of deferred action (*Nachträglichkeit*), whereby a seemingly inconsequential event is reinterpreted as traumatic by a second incident occurring later in life.¹²⁴ Or, as art critic Hal Foster explains in *The Return of the Real* (1996), "One event is only registered

¹²² Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After*, 120.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹²⁴ Jean Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, trans. David Macey (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 88. Daniel Birnbaum also recognizes a model of deferred action in *Der Sandmann*, though in a very different way. In *Chronology*, Birnbaum suggests that if the vertical seam at the center of the frame constitutes the present, the film may suggest that "[t]he presentness of perception is not the firm foundation it has been held to be, but an effect of a play of differences." He suggests that *Der Sandmann* might "propose a form of temporal awareness that comes close to what Freud understood as *Nachträglichkeit*, or deferred action." Birnbaum convincingly proposes that *Der Sandmann* presents a *temporal* scheme of deferred action. In contrast, I propose that a *historical* scheme of deferred action is at play in Douglas's use of pastiche. Birnbaum, *Chronology*, 57.

through another that recodes it.”¹²⁵ By linking the final period of Expressionist cinema with the eventual sale of the publicly owned DEFA (formerly UFA) to a French multinational conglomerate, Douglas positions the latter as an event which is “looking for its cause, of which it could claim to be the consequence.”¹²⁶ Perhaps this implies that a seed was planted when advanced capitalist impulses first infiltrated the German cinema—in 1927, shortly after the release of the second *The Student of Prague*. Perhaps this deferred action, this “complex relay of anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts” sets into motion a dynamic between two moments when German cinema was redirected by advanced capitalist interests—where the second trauma (in 1992) registers and recodes the first (in 1927).¹²⁷

In *The Return of the Real*, Foster proposes a new theory of the neo-avant-garde, asking: “what allows for a critical recovery of a past practice?”¹²⁸ Specifically, he describes the ways in which historical and neo-avant-gardes are constituted through a process of deferred action. Assessing practices from the 1950s and 60s which borrow strategies from the historical avant-garde of the 1910s and 20s (collage, the readymade, monochrome painting, etc), Foster suggests that the neo-avant-gardes do not negate the historical avant-garde as Peter Bürger posits in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1984). Instead, they take up older avant-garde forms to solve problems the historical avant-garde could not solve, to ask questions it did not ask, etc.¹²⁹ Foster takes a particular example of appropriation operating in neo-avant-garde practices and shows how it was used to rethink history. In this respect, *The Return of the Real* presents a possible model for a

¹²⁵ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 29.

¹²⁶ Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After*, 4.

¹²⁷ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 29. Italics removed.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

critical pastiche which recodes the past in service of the present through a process of deferred action. Douglas articulates his own dynamic of deferred action through a strategic and pointed pastiche of Henrik Galeen's *The Student of Prague*, and this imbedded connection can only be unraveled through a close reading of his film's material dimension. By attending to the material, we can begin to rethink how pastiche can provoke critical engagement with history. We can begin to recognize a form of critical pastiche in Douglas's work where the tension between new and old—deliberately archaic faithfulness and strategic renovation—motivates a critical dialogue between media artifacts and “real” historical processes.

16mm Film and the Avant-Garde

Shot, processed, and projected in 16mm film, *Der Sandmann* is bound to another history—that of nontheatrical film exhibition.¹³⁰ 35mm film has invariably been the standard film stock for the commercial cinema industry since the invention of celluloid.¹³¹ Not unexpectedly, then, Henrik Galeen's *The Student of Prague* was shot in standard 35mm black and white film. First released in 1923 as a way for Kodak and other companies to expand their market to amateur filmmakers and nontheatrical exhibitors, 16mm has a related though notably different history. Jean-Louis Comolli's materialist theory is relevant here, reminding us that nothing in cinema is purely technical; meaning can only be made by situating film technology within its historical, economic,

¹³⁰ Every time Douglas has used film—from his most modest films in the mid 1980s (such as *Overture*) to his longer, more ambitious ones in the 90s and 2000s (such as *Inconsolable Memories*)—he has used 16mm black and white film stock.

¹³¹ Some filmmakers—from Jean Luc Godard in the 1950s and 1960s to Kevin Smith in the 1990s—have opted to use 16mm film on occasion. However, these are exceptions to the general rule.

ideological, and social conditions. While the film stock used in *Der Sandmann* is often banished to the trivial land of image captions, I believe that it is worth discussing at least briefly, because it aligns this film installation within a particular history of production and exhibition that exists outside of the commercial apparatus.

In *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (2005), film historian Haidee Wasson describes the effects that the invention of 16mm film had on the popularization of nontheatrical film exhibition in America. Throughout the 1920s and 30s, 16mm film was marketed as a less cumbersome alternative to the cinematic standard 35mm film. Wasson notes some of the advantages 16mm had over 35mm as a nontheatrical film medium:

No exceptional space needed to be dedicated to housing exhibition equipment—sizable nitrate reels, large projectors, fireproof booths—such as were common for 35mm projection in auditoriums and lecture halls. With 16mm, one projector could be moved simply from classroom to classroom or from living room to closet. With a self-operated machine, images could be shown readily to a range of audiences in limitless locations, in turn relieving audiences of traveling long distances to a movie theatre showing an industry-scheduled film.¹³²

The standardization of a single film format that was safe, portable, inexpensive, easy to use, and easy to store created the possibilities for individuals unrelated to the cinema industry to exhibit, collect, and make films for a fraction of the cost of 35mm. While “16mm” literally refers to the width of the film gauge, it connotes “more accurately an expansive network of ideas and practices, supported by an amalgam of cameras, projectors, and film stock.”¹³³ Wasson recognizes the constitutive role this film format had in the dissemination of old films that would no longer be profitable in mainstream

¹³² Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 46.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

movie houses, in the creation of a rental market, and in the development of the Museum of Modern Art's comprehensive film library, all of which helped generate a new perspective on film as a historically and culturally significant art form. In short, 16mm helped define film as something worth preserving and studying, and it created an infrastructure for the widespread proliferation of cinema outside the sanctioned space of the commercial apparatus.¹³⁴

Not only did the development of 16mm film allow Kodak and other companies to expand and diversify their market, but it made it possible for film to enter schools, libraries, and museums. It provided the technical support for individuals "to carve out distinct exhibition spaces that functioned at one remove from commercial cinema going and also fed alternative models for film and culture."¹³⁵ Marketed to both nontheatrical exhibitors and amateur filmmakers, 16mm became seminal to the democratization of film and to the formation of experimental, underground, and avant-garde cinemas.

Laura Mulvey recalls that 16mm film equipment that was used for newsreels during World War II hit the second-hand market in the 1940s, and the newfound abundance and inexpensiveness of this equipment laid the groundwork for American underground film.¹³⁶ 16mm has been used in seminal avant-garde films ranging from Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1941) to Andy Warhol's *Sleep* (1963), Michael Snow's *Wavelength* (1967), Dan Graham's *Body Press* (1970-72), and Anthony McCall's *Line Describing a Cone* (1973), and so on. As an inexpensive, mobile medium, 16mm enabled artists working on a relatively low budget to make and project films in alternative

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 66.

¹³⁶ Laura Mulvey, "Film, Feminism, and the Avant-Garde," in Michael O'Prey, ed., *The British Avant-Garde Film 1926-1995* (Luton, UK: University of Luton Press, 1996), 206.

venues for specialized audiences. One such venue was the art museum, which began to see 16mm projectors whirring in its white rooms in the early 1970s.¹³⁷ Douglas's material engagement with 16mm helps position *Der Sandmann* within a historical genealogy of avant-garde cinema and nontheatrical exhibition.

In an essay describing his 16mm film *Line Describing a Cone*, Anthony McCall notes a longstanding distinction made between avant-garde film and film installations produced for a museum or gallery context: “[T]he two worlds sometimes seem like Crick and Watson’s double helix, spiraling closely around one another without ever quite meeting.”¹³⁸ Film scholar Jonathan Walley elaborates this division between avant-garde films and artists’ films in an essay titled “Modes of Film Practice in the Avant-Garde” (2008), situating each within its own context of “production, distribution, exhibition and reception.”¹³⁹ On one hand, avant-garde films have historically been “radically acollaborative,” where every facet of production is controlled by the (singular) filmmaker.¹⁴⁰ On the other, artists’ films have become increasingly collaborative since the 1960s, often making use of full production teams.¹⁴¹ While avant-garde films rely on such factors as ticket-sales and film rentals to generate revenue, and do not have a feasible system of economic stability, artists’ films are part of a very different economic structure. Derived from the art-world model, artists’ films are produced in limited

¹³⁷ Michael Snow’s *Two Sides to Every Story* (1974), an installation in which two colour 16mm films are synchronously projected on the recto and verso sides of a suspended screen in a gallery, may serve as an early example. 16mm is still a widely used film gauge in museum-based film installations, notably used by artists such as Matthew Buckingham, Tacita Dean, Joachim Koester, Steve McQueen, and Ulla von Brandenburg.

¹³⁸ Anthony McCall, “Line Describing a Cone and Related Films,” *October* 103 (Winter 2003): 48.

¹³⁹ Jonathan Walley, “Modes of Film Practice in the Avant-Garde,” in Tanya Leighton, ed., *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader* (London: Tate Publishing and Afterall, 2008), 185.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

editions, and they are marketed to museums and private collectors as rare and collectable material objects. Stan Douglas's film installations undoubtedly fall into Walley's "artist's film" category, since they characteristically involve full production crews, large budgets, and are designed for museum-going audiences. Douglas has noted the importance of 16mm film—and its distinct materiality—for his film installations: "I've taken to identifying my film works as 'sculptures' to certain museums, just to avoid them deciding to transfer my films to DVD and projecting them on some crappy LCD projector."¹⁴² As I mentioned earlier, Douglas's film installations respond to the particular context of museum viewing (creating seamless loops, for instance), but, like in McCall's "double-helix" metaphor, the history of 16mm avant-garde film still seems to spiral around his work.

For example, looking again at *Der Sandmann*, the moment when the camera passes Nathanael, cropping his head and shoulders in grainy black and white, is reminiscent of Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* (1964-1966)—both their framing and aesthetic quality [fig. 12].¹⁴³ In the mid-1960s, Warhol created over 500 *Screen Tests*: short films shot from a stationary 16mm camera, each of which observes the head (and sometimes shoulders) of a single man or woman for the duration of a 100-foot film reel. According to P. Adams Sitney, Warhol's various typological experiments with the stationary film camera paved the way for structuralist film—and it goes almost without saying that his influence was paramount for postmodern art.¹⁴⁴ The grainy black and

¹⁴² Stan Douglas in conversation with Christopher Eamon, "Regarding Shadows," in Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon, eds., *Art of Projection: Elsewhere* (Ostfildern, Germany: Hatje Cantz, 2009), 11.

¹⁴³ Thanks to Martha Langford for making this observation.

¹⁴⁴ P. Adams Sitney, "Structural Film," *Film Culture* 47 (1969): 1-2.



[fig. 12] Film still from Andy Warhol, *Screen Test 309, Edie Sedgwick* (1965). 16mm film, black and white, silent, 4:36 min @ 16 fps, 4:06 @ 18 fps.

white of *Der Sandmann* acts as a visual cue not only to 1920s German Expressionist cinema, but to many of the iconic 16mm avant-garde films from the 1960s which used similar production and projection equipment. While *Der Sandmann*'s look—its aesthetic and technical devices—conjures up a history of German Expressionist cinema, its feel—non-narrative production, slow pacing, camera movement, etc.—is perhaps more reminiscent of various 1960s and 70s experiments with 16mm. The tradition of 16mm avant-garde film connects the film installation not to the history it pastiches most explicitly (German Expressionist cinema), but to a long history of 16mm film technology that was instrumental to bringing cinema into the museum. The history of 16mm film and the distinct possibilities it afforded independent filmmakers and exhibitors spirals around *Der Sandmann* without compromising the more overt historical references at play. While

Douglas's use of 16mm breaks with its deliberately archaic pastiche of *The Student of Prague*, it opens up the question of the apparatus, and of the ways in which the distinct histories of commercial cinema and nontheatrical exhibition coexist within *Der Sandmann*'s signifying system. Perhaps *Der Sandmann* mobilizes a triple-helix structure, where the histories of avant-garde cinema, museum-based film installation, and German Expressionist cinema orbit around the work without directly intersecting.

Or, perhaps the double-16mm projection apparatus featured in *Der Sandmann* is more entangled in the "Expressionist" signifying system than one might immediately expect. After all, this 16mm apparatus is itself responsible for producing the doppelgänger trick in real time, and the looping scheme so important to any semiotic analysis of the never-ending wipe-effect was conceived within the parameters of 16mm projection technology. The whole filmic-effect is contingent on this antiquated mechanical apparatus. Might our awareness of this—the presentation of the "trick" in real time—subject us to a distancing of sorts, ejecting us from the film's 1920s Expressionist world into the contemporary museum exhibition space, where a very different mode of film production is in operation? What does the embeddedness of *Der Sandmann* within the tradition of non-theatrical exhibition, and specifically within Jonathan Walley's category of "artist's film" bring to bear on the Expressionist mode of film production that I have claimed also runs throughout the work?

Central to Walley's discussion is the artist's film's relation to capital and the demands of the contemporary globalized art industry. He explains that in artistic production, "prints are purposefully scarce, as scarcity is what makes them valuable in

the art market.”¹⁴⁵ The distinct form that artists’ films have come to take—specifically, as sculptures in museums—has been partially determined by economic interests. Thus, as Walley might argue, artist-filmmakers who sell and exhibit their work internationally (such as Douglas) are inextricably bound to the same advanced capitalist system that was responsible for the ‘*Anschluß*’ transformation of East Germany in the 1990s, and for the sale of the Potsdam-Babelsberg studios to a multi-national conglomerate. Within this problematic, it seems that Douglas’s film adopts the same advanced capitalist system it so eloquently critiques. Do the material components and institutional spaces that Douglas inhabits nullify any critical commentary he makes about the East German situation? Or, does his construction of a film installation that is entirely contingent on a carefully calibrated double-16mm projection apparatus serve to distance us from any 1920s nostalgia (mood), consequently making us realize that there is no escape from advanced capitalism, a system in which not only Douglas, but we as spectators/consumers are fully implicated? These uncomfortable questions can only heighten our interest in the work.

A Postmodernism of Resistance?

I have now described, in some detail, the ways in which pastiche operates in *Der Sandmann*: how present political and social circumstances are navigated through a past aesthetic mode, and how by communicating between various pasts and presents, Douglas may speak to a process of deferred action—a “complex relay of anticipated futures and reconstructed pasts.”¹⁴⁶ I have also proposed that *Der Sandmann* shares some affinities

¹⁴⁵ Walley, “Modes of Film Practice in the Avant-Garde,” 187.

¹⁴⁶ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 29. Italics removed.

with the commercial nostalgia film, specifically in its use of deliberate archaism. However, it is clear that Douglas's film installation takes a very different form than the commercial nostalgia film. After all, his film was shot in 16mm, was produced for a museum audience, does not have a predetermined (or enforced) duration, and its political content can only be recognized through an elaborate series of allusions to both film and social history. In this final section, I would like to further contemplate the possibility that *Der Sandmann* presents a form of pastiche that, while working within the late capitalist paradigm, resists the regressive and reactionary fate that Fredric Jameson prescribes for the nostalgia film.

In *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Jameson discusses the all-pervasive influence of late multinational capitalism on cultural production. For him, the new space of postmodernism makes it structurally impossible to position “the cultural act outside the massive Being of capital.”¹⁴⁷ He suggests that late capitalism renders older Modernist forms of criticality—opposition, negativity, subversion, or transgression—futile.¹⁴⁸ While it is important to understand that there are no clean breaks or ruptures from the modern to the postmodern for Jameson (the postmodern retains the residue of the modern and the modern contains the seeds of the postmodern), his theory of postmodern cultural production in general and the nostalgia film in particular is founded on a belief that older forms of opposition and transgression are no longer productive. In his 1983 essay, he asserts that the nostalgia film “replicates and reproduces—reinforces—the logic of consumer capitalism,” but he wonders

¹⁴⁷ Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, 48.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

“whether there is also a way in which it resists that logic.”¹⁴⁹ Jameson’s uncertain concluding sentence—“But that is a question that we must leave open”—presents both his openness to the possibility of a critical postmodernism and his inability to recognize one at the time the essay was written.

In “For a Concept of the Political in Contemporary Art” (1985), Hal Foster echoes Jameson’s assessments about the all-pervasiveness of capital, where “[m]ore than any avant garde, capital is the agent of transgression and shock – which is one reason why such strategies in art now seem as redundant as resistance seems futile.”¹⁵⁰ However, while Jameson cannot (or will not) generate a postmodern strategy of criticality, Foster believes that a critical postmodernism is possible. “What is needed,” he writes, “is a practice that somehow exceeds the claims of capital – its omnivorous ability to recoup and recode.”¹⁵¹ Foster conceives of a *resistant* postmodernism which does not reject the established ideological frame, but instead resists the status quo through a process of critical deconstruction.

In an earlier essay—the preface to the anthology in which Jameson’s “Postmodernism and Consumer Society” first appeared—Foster draws a distinction between a *reactionary* and a *resistant* postmodernism: “a [resistant] postmodernism which seeks to deconstruct modernism and resist the status quo and a [reactionary] postmodernism which repudiates the former to celebrate the latter.”¹⁵² Briefly, a postmodernism of reaction is characterized by a concentrated rejection of modernism and

¹⁴⁹ Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” 125.

¹⁵⁰ Foster, “For a Concept of the Political in Contemporary Art,” in *Recodings: Art, Spectacle, Cultural Politics* (Port Townsend, WA: Bay Press, 1985), 147.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Foster, “Postmodernism: A Preface,” in Hal Foster, ed., *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), xi-xii.

a return to tradition, most intensely forwarded by neoconservatives in America.¹⁵³ On the contrary, a postmodernism of resistance would combat both the reactionary postmodernists and institutionalized culture of modernism (its claims for artistic autonomy, etc.), all the while working within the “total system” of late capitalism:

[A] resistant postmodernism is concerned with a critical deconstruction of tradition, not an instrumental pastiche of pop- or pseudo- historical forms, with a critique of origins, not a return to them. In short, it seeks to question rather than exploit cultural codes, to explore rather than conceal social and political affiliations.¹⁵⁴

Foster demands that postmodern artists offer more than pop appropriations for their own sake. He forms a concept of resistance which—avoiding the pitfall of modernist transgression: the necessity to escape the system—carefully questions established systems of thought and exposes ideology without escaping it.

Within Foster’s terms of reaction and resistance, it is clear that for Jameson, the classic nostalgia film is reactionary: a regressive return to tradition which simultaneously obliterates our understanding of “real” history and our sense of historicity. At its worst, for Jameson, the nostalgia film simply reproduces the logic of late capitalism by abstracting and stereotyping the past.¹⁵⁵ Pastiche, as a symptom of the postmodern age and the primary aesthetic strategy at work in the nostalgia film, is dismissed as reactionary. Not only is it devoid of critical potential but it is detrimental to society and culture. I believe this type of diagnosis—which risks implying that pastiche is inherently reactionary—must be questioned. Following Dika in *Recycled Culture in Contemporary*

¹⁵³ Ibid., xii.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Jameson, “Postmodernism and Consumer Society,” 125.

Art and Film, I would like to recuperate the nostalgia film and its particular manifestation in *Der Sandmann* as a postmodern strategy of resistance.

Addressing appropriation art in the 1970s and 80s, Foster asks, “When does appropriation double the mythical sign critically, and when does it replicate it, even reinforce it cynically?”¹⁵⁶ He grapples with the problem of ascribing any one function—criticality or cynicism—to the practice of appropriation in postmodern art. For Foster, postmodern strategies can be used to various ends, and sometimes these ends are neither reactionary nor resistant: “Is it ever purely the one or the other?”¹⁵⁷ From this perspective, where value cannot be diagnosed to a given strategy *in general*, we must address the particular postmodern object with sensitivity. Or, as Foster writes, “To rethink the political, then, is not to rule out any representational mode but rather to question specific uses and material effects.”¹⁵⁸ Within this framework, the representational mode of pastiche and its cultural manifestation in the nostalgia film—which we can confidently say Jameson has ostensibly “ruled out”—is not inherently reactionary, nor is it inherently resistant. I believe that, in the project of postmodernism—where resistance can only be found in a more subtle project of critical deconstruction—perhaps Jameson’s theory is too *macroscopic* and not *microscopic* enough to recognize the possibility of a critical postmodern practice. It needs be said that Jameson’s aim is not to locate points of resistance or criticality in the postmodern cultural object, but to observe the broader correlations between late capitalism and postmodern cultural production—and within this context his project is quite admirable. Nevertheless, while he

¹⁵⁶ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 93.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ Foster, “For a Concept of the Political in Contemporary Art,” 143.

offers a broad view of the reactionary nature of classic nostalgia films like *American Graffiti*, he is largely insensitive to the particularities of any given manifestation. By applying a counter-strategy of close reading, this essay has sought to uncover the ways in which pastiche functions critically within Stan Douglas's film installation.

By questioning the "specific uses and material effects" of pastiche in *Der Sandmann*, I have tried to show that Douglas does not reduce Expressionist cinema to a generalized style or fashion, but instead presents a very pointed pastiche of the doppelgänger trick from Henrik Galeen's *The Student of Prague*. If we consider Comolli's notion that cinema technologies are always already bound to "real" materialist history, it is possible to recognize a complex system of ideological, economic, and social factors that surround the references at play in Douglas's pastiche. On close inspection, it is also possible to identify the ways in which *Der Sandmann* is informed by these historical conditions: Expressionist cinema's investment in technology and innovation; and the influence of a capitalist-driven model on the decline of Expressionist filmmaking. By incorporating this system of shifting values into the internal logic of his installation, Douglas resists the ahistorical flattening that has been attributed to mainstream nostalgia films.

What, ultimately, is the critical value of Douglas's pastiche? Does *Der Sandmann* follow Dika's model of the resistant nostalgia film, which, "although referring to the past, destabilizes it in service of the present, and consequently tells stories that are very much our own"?¹⁵⁹ I believe that, while Douglas's film installation directs us to the past, it does so for contemporary ends; it recodes the history of Expressionist cinema in order to

¹⁵⁹ Dika, *Recycled Culture in Contemporary Art and Film*, 21.

explore the aftereffects of reunification on the former East Germany. Douglas reengages the doppelgänger trick in the social and economic climate of recently reunified Germany, recoding a modern cinematic practice (Expressionist film) as a postmodern one (pastiche and appropriation in late twentieth-century art).¹⁶⁰ *Der Sandmann* grapples with the transformation of a cinema industry, retroactively tracing the ways in which capitalist impulses have troubled—and still trouble—German culture.

His use of pastiche is bound to a process of deferred action, where, again, “[o]ne event is only registered through another that recodes it.”¹⁶¹ Deferred action, expressed through pastiche in *Der Sandmann*, presents a continual process of anticipation and reconstruction, repression and return, where a past aesthetic mode can speak from and about the present. It “throws over any simple scheme of before and after, cause and effect, origin and repetition,” resisting the very concept of a return to unity or stability that the fall of the Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany has come to symbolize.¹⁶² Instead, Douglas imagines German consolidation as a traumatic return: a reunification that is more like an invasion, an ‘*Anschluß*’, highlighting how East Germany’s cultural landmarks, its film studios and its *Schrebergärten*, were swiftly restricted or sold.

To recall a question posed earlier, what role might Douglas himself play in the transformation of German culture? After all, he is firmly imbedded in the global art industry, part of the very economic system that was responsible for the “erasure” of East

¹⁶⁰ Elsaesser writes: “There can be no doubt that UFA was conceived as an industrial conglomerate that wanted to be ‘state of the art’ in the international film business. Less certain is whether it was a conglomerate to which the description ‘advanced capitalist’ applies.” Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After*, 116.

¹⁶¹ Foster, *The Return of the Real*, 29.

¹⁶² Ibid. Italics removed. This “return to harmony” narrative is heavily promoted in Berlin tourist culture, specifically in the many museums and monuments that center on the history of the Berlin wall.

Germany's *Schrebergärten* and film industry. In "Imperialist Nostalgia" (1989), anthropologist Renato Rosaldo urges social critics to acknowledge the roles they play in transforming the systems they critique: "[I]t is a mistake to urge social analysts to strive for a position of innocence designated by such adjectives as detached, neutral, or impartial."¹⁶³ To construct this illusion of objectivity is to engage in a kind of "imperialist nostalgia," "where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed."¹⁶⁴ Although Douglas reuses a soon to be repurposed UFA studio from the privileged position of (foreign) observer—a seemingly nostalgic and imperialist action—I do not think he engages in "imperialist nostalgia" as outlined by Rosaldo. If we look again at the narrative of Douglas's story, it is quite clear that Nathanael, Lothar, and Klara's reflections on the past are not at all nostalgic, but analytical (perhaps even psychoanalytical). The characters look to the past in order to resolve a question about the present—Nathanael's unsettling experience at the sight of an old man working in his *Schrebergärten*—and *not* to retreat to or restore a prior condition of innocence. The way in which these characters reflect on the past in order to solve a contemporary problem mirrors Douglas's own analytical process. Douglas does not attempt to position his work outside of the contemporary realities of capitalism; he acknowledges his presence within the "new" German cinema industry. He imitates the Expressionist doppelgänger trick in order to speak to the conditions of a Germany in transition. Instead of "impartially" mourning a death of East German culture, Douglas exemplifies and makes visible the new economic and material conditions of unified Germany—including the newly

¹⁶³ Renato Rosaldo, "Imperialist Nostalgia," *Representations* 26 (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, Spring 1989): 107.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 108.

available access to the former UFA studios for an international filmmaker—while questioning what has been sacrificed to create these possibilities.

In exposing the split at the centre of the frame in *Der Sandmann*, Douglas exposes what was always there in the historical doppelgänger trick—a scar. This scar, retroactively revealed as always already present, is doubled by the many traces of the Berlin wall, which to this day physically divide the city, tripled by a now invisible split between East and West German cultures, and finally quadrupled by the old UFA film lot which, despite being sold to an international conglomerate, is still, as Thomas Elsaesser reflects, “perhaps the most poignant site of the German cinema’s historical imaginary.”¹⁶⁵ Ultimately, *Der Sandmann* does not offer a eulogy by signaling the end of an era; through retrospective rewriting, it invests and participates in the global afterlife of German cinema as a sculpture in a museum.

¹⁶⁵ Elsaesser, *Weimar Cinema and After*, 134.

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