

Der Krieger und die Kaiserin: Additional Material

In the video presentation we looked at how Tom Tykwer borrows shots from other well known international films. An important reason for this is to broaden the film's appeal to international audiences and to different age groups. But, it is also interesting to consider why Tykwer might have chosen those films and those scenes.

After reading the points below, see if you can think of any more thematic or cinematic points of comparison or contrast with any German or non-German films you have seen.

Titanic

The now famous and often parodied line 'I'm the king of the world!' is shouted by the character Jack when he is onboard the Titanic and heading to America to start a new life and escape his life of poverty.

Whereas Jack is full of hope, it becomes clear that Bodo is full of despair. When he pretends to fly, it seems like he is trying to forget the past, present and future. Therefore, Tykwer's decision to include a reference to the 1997 film appears to be meant ironically as a way of highlighting the two young men's different states of mind.

Raging Bull

Raging Bull is a long and quite complex film about a boxer called Jake and his battle to come to terms with his own anger and sexual insecurities. You can read a more detailed synopsis of the film here: <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-raging-bull-1980>.

In *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin*, Tykwer uses a shot from the film which suggests Bodo is a boxer and his brother, Walter, is his manager. This is significant because in *Raging Bull*, Jake's manager is his brother and, like Walter, tries to help Jake come to terms with his inner problems.

It is also possible to understand the idea that both men are boxers as a metaphor by the two directors for their male character's wounded sense of masculinity. By this, we mean the two men feel that they have been either poor husbands or have been unable to control their feelings to their wives as they would have wanted. Boxing is a violent sport all about knocking your opponent – your rival – to the ground and proving your dominant strength and power over them. We can, therefore, understand the two characters' pursuit of boxing as an attempt to prove their physical strength when they feel emotionally weak.

One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest

As with *Titanic*, Tykwer's citation of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* may well be designed to serve as a point of contrast. As Robert Ebert's review of the film highlights – <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-one-flew-over-the-cuckoos-nest-1975> –, the patients in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* are shown to have deviant or not 'normal' behaviours. The medical staff treat the patients as they would someone with a physical illness and try to 'cure' them. Now of course, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* was made at a very different time to *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin* and attitudes even over the past ten years have shifted greatly in relation to mental illness. However, it is nevertheless worth reflecting on the differences between how the patients are shown. In *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin*, Sissi tries to help the patients experience different sensations, be they physiological such as at the beginning of the film when Sissi helps Otto experience goose bumps, or sexual as is the case with Steini. One of the major themes of *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* is the abuse of power and forcing individuals to conform to a certain type of person. *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin* seems to take the opposite approach by arguing that individual experience and our own sensual encounters with the world are essential to life.

North by Northwest

North by Northwest is a thriller about mistaken identity (for a full plot description see: <http://classicfilm.about.com/od/mysteryandsuspense/fr/NorthByNorthwes.htm>). An innocent man is pursued by a mysterious organisation which believes him to be attempting to smuggle important state secrets out of America. The so-called cornfield scene in *North by Northwest* is a very famous scene not only in the film, but in cinema history. In the scene, the lead character is chased across a barren field by a plane which tries to shoot at him. The scene's impact is based on the contrast between the vastness of the landscape and the smallness of the individual man and this is designed to convey the character's vulnerability.

Der Krieger und die Kaiserin uses this same idea of being exposed and vulnerable. Traditionally, the countryside in culture is used to convey ideas of freedom, happiness and relaxation away from the crowded hustle-and-bustle of the city. But in both *North by Northwest* and *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin*, there is a strong sense that the two male characters are exposed in a barren landscape. We as the audience are unsure about what will happen. Both men are running from something and, as the *Doppelgänger* – a type of psychological body double – in *Der Krieger und die Kaiserin* shows, in Bodo's case this is himself.