

German Films on Disability and Secondary Literature

- 1) There is one more title (in German) I would like to suggest, a documentary about a congenitally deaf architect, who recently underwent surgery to have hearing aids implanted. It is called: "Natalie: Mein Leben aus der Stille" (2009?). It is really worth watching (or listening to) this.
- 2) Book: Disability in Twentieth-Century German Culture Carol Poore U Michigan
- 3) Michael Ballhaus's documentary In Berlin has scenes about a Down's syndrome daughter of a famous German actress practicing and performing onstage.
- 4) Misselwitz's *Winter ade* addresses this in her interview of Christine (?) I'm no longer sure of her name) who works in a briquette factory in Zwickau, I think. She talks about her difficulties with her child Ramona and social attitudes.
- 5) One thing I've always found interesting is the disability in the end of the NOVEL *Legend of Paul and Paula* is NOT part of the film story. The book is very critical of GDR society and how it makes no space for the disabled. Using the book and the film together would be a fun way to show the film, but then have a serious discussion with students about the question of the "invisibility" of the disabled in state socialist society.
- 6) Has anyone mentioned "Das Land des Schweigens und der Dunkelheit" - a really touching film about being blind and deaf? Werner Herzog made this film about 20+ years ago, but I believe it has been re-released.
- 7) In addition to *Finnischer Tango*, which takes place in a halfway house for handicapped, there is *Zurueck auf los* directed by Sanoussi-Bliss--in the course of that film one of the characters is blinded in an automobile accident.
- 8) These are not films that really deal with disability in an engaged way, but its presence is mobilized for other narrative purposes: Monika Bleibtreu as the blind woman in the phone booth in *Run Lola Run*. There is the not-really-blind man in "M". And I think (and don't have the DVD here to check again), but doesn't Maria's dad have a wooden leg in *Joyless Street*?
- 9) It is not a cinematic release, but there was a very popular miniseries way back about a child with Down Syndrome on German TV called *Unser Walter*.
- 10) There is the DEFA film "Rückwärtslaufen kann ich auch" (dir. Karl-Heinz Lotz, 1990). Not sure if it has English subtitles - but offers an interesting - and rare - GDR perspective on disability.

11) Might "Die Blechtrommel" be a candidate even though disability does not seem to be the prime theme of the movie? I can think of the following movies, featuring blind protagonists or characters:

"Mesmer" (1994) -- with Maria Theresa Paradis, the blind pianist and composer "Erbsen auf halb sechs"

"Ganz nah bei dir" (2009)

12) Fürst, Marion. Maria Theresia Paradis: Mozarts berühmte Zeitgenossin. Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2005.

From: Bibliography (p.368):

Film: *Mesmer (1994)

Drehbuch: Dennis Potter

Regie: Roger Spottiswoode

Filmmusik: Michael Nyman

*Not strictly a "German movie". The script is in German, but the actors and actresses were/are international.

13) You might be interested in a new release "Renn wenn du kannst" (dir. Dietrich Brüggemann) <http://www.wuestefilm-ost.de/in-produktion/renn-wenn-du-kannst>, which deals centrally with the topic: the main character is a young man in a wheelchair. It's a mixed bag of a film, partly slapstick, partly a comedy of manners and love triangles, with sudden lurches into melodrama and tragedy. But it has moments which are genuinely shocking and moving on the subject of disability, and, in the best sense, educational. It is primarily aimed at a teenage and early-twenties audience, so in theory might go down well with undergraduates. It is being hyped a bit among the German films at the Berlinale, but I am not sure of theatre or DVD release dates.

14) Recent ones are the comedy Finnischer Tango-- and Barfuss if you want to include mental disorders.

15) "Requiem" is a film that would address "disability" for the university environment (70ies in Tübingen, Catholicism, exorcism, epilepsy).

16) Book: Susan Burch (sburch@middlebury.edu) has authored _Encyclopedia of American Disability History.

17) Kroko by Sylke Enders: <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0404183/> and Crazy by Hans-Christian Schmid/ Benjamin Lebert <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0215681/>

18) Gregor Schnitzler's 2002 movie *Was tun, wenn's brennt?* has a character in a wheelchair.

19) "Wo ist Fred?" (2006, Anno Saul, dir.) and "Freakstars 3000" (2004, Christoph Schlingensiefel, dir.) -- both are "comedies" and the Schlingensiefel more of a satire/experiment piece.

20) Bernd Sahling's feature film: *Blindgaenger* (*Blindfliers*, 2004) about two blind teen-age girls and their band. Helga Reidemeister's documentary: *Mein Herz sieht die Welt schwarz -- eine Liebe in Kabul* (*War and Love in Kabul*, 2009) about Shaima, depicts teen-age lovers separated by war in Afghanistan. Hossein's legs are paralyzed after fighting with the Taliban, and Shaima, has maintained her love for him since childhood. Family rivalries and marriage arrangements keep them apart. (An amazing film, I just saw this in Berlin. US distrib: Icarus Films/ Germany: Basis-Film.)

20) *Ich klage an* (Wolfgang Liebeneiner, 1941), about euthanasia under National Socialism; and *Das weiße Rauschen* (Hans Weingartner, 2001) starring Daniel Brühl as a young man suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. I think it came out around the same time as *A Beautiful Mind*, and I consider it a much better film.