

Dealing with Legacies in *Das Leben der Anderen*: Transcript

Rachel: To what extent do you feel that *Das Leben der Anderen* acts as a counterpoint to the other popular *Ostalgie* films such as *Sonnenallee* and *Good Bye, Lenin!*?

Elizabeth: In tone it is certainly very different. It's not a comedy, it's not light-hearted, but it was still successful abroad. I think that was an important marketing tool for it – the fact that it could position itself against these comedies and I think a lot of the reviewers picked up on this.

Jo: It is definitely a counterpoint to those two films which also position themselves at a younger audience. *Good Bye, Lenin!* is a popular film among you adults and teenagers up, whereas *Das Leben der Anderen* is marketed at older people and it is definitely a more serious film in tone. It's also a different genre too.

Rachel: To what extent does this film deal with the lasting impact of fascism in Germany and what can we learn about this in the film?

Jo: I think with the character of Christa you can definitely see that. She is a tragic female figure and she has to deal with the impact of people forcing themselves upon her and in a way which, it has been argued, fascism was forced upon an unwilling public. She obviously dies at the end of the film and this very straightforward, tragic ending for a character who has been forced into a situation unwillingly by authority, and that's one way it deals with the impact of fascism.

Elizabeth: This ongoing idea of following orders and almost paying lip-service to orders sometimes, this idea that some of the characters, especially the leaders, will always rise to the top of the top of any system because they will conform to it in order to progress their own careers, is something that arguably happened under National Socialism and which seems to happen in this film. There is the idea that Wiesler's superior is going to be fine under unification because he will adapt to the new system. In that sense, there is a slight Germanness to it, but also it appeals to audiences outside Germany because careerism and opportunism are themes which cross borders as well.

Rachel: There has been this myth that the totalitarian behaviour which is represented in the film is specifically a German problem. To what extent does the film reinforce this myth?

Elizabeth: In a sense, it is slightly unfortunate that the film was so successful abroad as a German film because people then again link Germany with totalitarian regimes. On the other hand, as we said, the success of the film suggests that maybe there are themes in the film that appeal despite the film's historical background.

Rachel: Following on from that, why do you think the film was so successful abroad?

Jo: I think the way it markets the history of East Germany in such a well packaged way. It fits into the genre conventions of a spy film. Surveillance is something which a lot of people can relate to, especially now. We have what people term a 'surveillance culture' and there is definitely this worry and we hear about how many security cameras are watching you at a

certain point, so I think it's definitely a very universal theme. That's one thing that made it extremely well liked.

Elizabeth: It was also the product of a very good marketing campaign, especially here in the UK. They designed a trailer which had no dialogue, so their aim was almost to trick audiences into the cinema by showing a film which, as we said, fitted genre conventions. It was a spy film, it was a romance. The director has said openly that they designed a trailer to almost sideline the fact it was a German film and hope that people wouldn't be deterred by it.