



FilmTalk

The Producers

Au revoir les enfants

Body and Soul

Meet the Fockers

A lecture series organised by
The Leo Baeck Institute London
and The Wiener Library

FilmTalk

FilmTalk, the new lecture series organised by the Leo Baeck Institute, London and the Wiener Library, looks at mainstream feature films, television productions and art house films from the perspective of contemporary Jewish history. What do topics such as 'Jewish identity' or 'Jewish masculinity' in *Body and Soul* or *Meet the Fockers* say about the position of Jews in the USA? How did Louis Malle come to terms with France's past during the German occupation in *Au revoir les enfants*? FilmTalk places as much emphasis on 'film' as on 'talk'. Lectures are restricted to 25 minutes and are followed by a 20-25 minute excerpt from the film under review with a question and answer session concluding the proceedings.

Dr Nathan Abrams

**Considerable cultural confidence –
loud and proud: Mel Brooks' 'The
Producers'**

3 October 2007, 7.00pm

In this lecture, Nathan Abrams will introduce and discuss Mel Brooks' humorous and controversial 1968 film *The Producers*. He will discuss how the film fits into the wider history of the representation of Jews in film, as well as how it reflects the history of Jews in America. At the same time, he will also consider how it deals with issues like the Holocaust and Nazism.

Dr Nathan Abrams is currently a Lecturer in Film Studies and Director of Graduate Studies at the National Institute for Excellence in the Creative Industries at the University of Wales, Bangor. He is author of three books, Containing America: Cultural Production and Consumption in Fifties America (2000), Studying Film (2001) and Commentary Magazine 1945-1959: A journal of significant thought and opinion (2006). He is currently editing a book called Jews and Sex. He also writes frequently for a variety of newspapers and journals.

Prof. Ginnette Vincendeau

**'Au revoir les enfants': Personal
memory and national history**

16 January 2008, 7.00pm

Louis Malle's *Au revoir les enfants* (1987) portrays life in a French Catholic boarding school during the Second World War, in which the priests hide a Jewish boy. The film raises important questions about how films generally address the question of private memory and national history, and how, more specifically, French cinema has dealt with the traumatic years of the German occupation, as well as France's participation in the Final Solution. This presentation will contextualise *Au revoir les enfants* within Louis Malle's work, and within French films about the German occupation, and examine the film's skillful integration of personal memory and national history.

Ginnette Vincendeau is Director of the Film Studies Programme at King's College London. She has written extensively on European and French cinema. Among her books are Stars and Stardom in French Cinema (2000), Jean-Pierre Melville, An American in Paris (2003) and La Haine (2005). She is currently writing a book on the representation of the South of France in French and international film.

Prof. Jose Arroyo

Jewish Identity in 'Body and Soul'

5 March 2008, 7.00pm

Body and Soul (Robert Rossen, USA, 1947) is best remembered as one of the great boxing films of all time. Charlie Davis (John Garfield) fights his way out of the ghetto and offers up his body for the American Dream. *Body and Soul* is also remembered as one of the emblematic Marxist films of the post-war era. Rossen, Garfield, Abraham Polonsky and Anne Revere (the mother), all became victims of the House of Un-American Activities, and were either blacklisted or had their careers curtailed. What is less well-known is that *Body and Soul* is one of the few films to represent and celebrate Jewish-American culture. It is never named but ever present. Thus, in the shadow of Auschwitz and at a time when American films like *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) finally begin to talk about antisemitism, a film where Jewish-American identity is made central, is also seen as a vipers' nest of anti-Americanism, an internal subversion and an infection of American values. How this comes about will be the subject of the talk.

Jose Arroyo is Associate Professor of Film Studies at the University of Warwick. He is the editor of Action/Spectacle: A Sight and Sound Reader and has written and broadcast extensively on film.

Dr Michele Aaron

**From Yidl to Yentl to Ben Still (h)er:
'Meet the Fockers' and the long
history of the effeminate Jew**

4 June 2008, 7.00pm

The antisemitic concept of the 'Jew as woman' is an old and ugly story, but one that cinema seems committed to retell, albeit with different emphases. In this lecture, Michele Aaron traces a fascinating history of films and the 'queering' of the Jew, from Yiddish cinema all the way to the Hollywood blockbuster.

Dr Michele Aaron lectures on film at the University of Birmingham. She is the author of Spectatorship: The Power of Looking On and has published widely on contemporary culture, Jewishness and gender, and queer theory, cinema and TV. She is currently completing a book on Death and the Moving Image.



Dr Nathan Abrams	The Producers	3 October 2007
Prof. Ginette Vincendeau	Au revoir les enfants	16 January 2008
Prof. Jose Arroyo	Body and Soul	5 March 2008
Dr Michele Aaron	Meet the Fockers	4 June 2008

Lectures are held at the Wiener Library and begin at 7.00pm. Admission is free. Places must be reserved in advance by emailing or telephoning the Leo Baeck Institute email: info@leobaeck.co.uk tel: 020 7580 3493
Latecomers may not be admitted.

The Wiener Library, 4 Devonshire Street, London W1W 5BH
Underground: Great Portland Street, Regent's Park. Bus: C2, 18, 27, 30, 88, 135

www.leobaeck.co.uk
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