



FilmTalk

The Jewish Villain

Lecture series organised by
The Leo Baeck Institute London
and The Wiener Library

Lectures are held at The Wiener Library and begin at 6.30pm.

Places must be reserved by visiting wienerlibrary.co.uk/whats-on, emailing info@wienerlibrary.co.uk or ringing 020 7636 7247

Admission is free.
Latecomers may not be admitted.

The Wiener Library
29 Russell Square
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LEO BAECK
INSTITUTE LONDON

The Wiener Library
for the Study of the Holocaust & Genocide

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The theme for the 2013 season is 'The Jewish Villain'. The figure of the Jewish gangster or gang-leader has fascinated film-makers almost for as long as film has existed. In this year's FilmTalk, we examine a range of them, from David Lean's Fagin, to Coppola's Hyman Roth, to Leone's 'Noodles' Aaronson and Ritchie's Cousin Avi. These figures draw on antisemitic notions such as "the Jewish global conspiracy to rule the world", or are reactions against such stereotypes. The portrayals of Jewish gangsters – often by Gentiles such as Robert de Niro or Alec Guinness – are among the most remarkable yet controversial roles taken by popular actors.

FilmTalk stresses film as much as talk. The lectures are 20-25 minutes long and are followed or intercut with excerpts from the films under review.

Dr Charles Drazin

Queen Mary, University of London
Reviewing Fagin, 1948-2005
4 April 2013, 6.30pm

David Lean's 1948 adaptation of 'Oliver Twist' provoked so many protests against perceived antisemitism in Alec Guinness's portrayal of Fagin that the film was withheld from release in America until cuts had been made. Yet twenty years later, in Carol Reed's musical version of the film, the character had been sufficiently rehabilitated to win Ron Moody an Oscar nomination. This talk will explore the challenges of playing Fagin from the Lean film of 1948 to the Roman Polański adaptation of 2005.

Dr Charles Drazin is a senior lecturer at Queen Mary, University of London. His books on the cinema include 'The Finest Years: British Cinema of the 1940s', 'Korda: Britain's Movie Mogul' and 'In Search of the Third Man'.

Dr Jonathan Munby

Lancaster University
"Kosher Nostra": Screening the Memory of the Jewish American Gangster in 'The Godfather Part II' (1974)
6 June 2013, 6.30pm

In 1974, 'The Godfather Part II' provided an iconic moment in Hollywood history. Italian American actor, Al Pacino, persuaded his mentor, Lee Strasberg (Jewish American guru of Method acting), to play Hyman Roth, a character based on the Jewish American gangster, Meyer Lansky. This talk examines how 'The Godfather Part II' negotiated the representation of Jewish American gangsters, looking back to the era of the "classic" gangster, when Jewish actors became famous playing Italian gangsters, when "tough Jews", imagined and real, portrayed a feistily defiant self-image as violent Shtarkers who fought back against victimization. Dr Jonathan Munby is Senior Lecturer in Film Studies at Lancaster University and Fellow of the Du Bois Institute, Harvard University. He is the author of 'Public Enemies, Public Heroes: Screening the Gangster from Little Caesar to Touch of Evil' and 'Under a Bad Sign: Criminal Self-Representation in African American Popular Culture'.

Front: Alec Guinness as

Fagin, 'Oliver Twist' (1948).

Left: Al Pacino and Lee Strasberg, 'The Godfather Part II' (1974), Right: Elizabeth McGovern and Robert de Niro, 'Once Upon a Time in America' (1984)



Sir Christopher Frayling

Royal College of Art, London,
 Churchill College Cambridge
Once Upon a Time in Italy
26 September 2013, 6.30pm

Sergio Leone's massive gangster epic 'Once Upon a Time in America' (1984) was the result of fifteen years of preparation. It told of the rise and fall of a gang of Jewish hoodlums from the Lower East Side in New York, over a forty year time span. Leone was determined *not* to make a film about the usual Italian or Irish gangsters - but instead to focus on a community which had more rarely been featured in Hollywood thrillers. When the film opened in America it was severely cut and opinions were sharply divided on whether it was convincing or not. Professor Sir Christopher Frayling was until recently Rector of the Royal College of Art and Chair of the Arts Council England. An award-winning broadcaster and regular contributor to BBC radio and television, he has written eighteen books – among them the acclaimed biography of the Italian director Sergio Leone and a detailed study of his films. He is Professor Emeritus of Cultural History at the RCA and a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge. He was knighted in 2000 for "services to art and design education".

Dr Rachel Garfield

University of Reading
Imagining Multicultural London: Containment and Excess in 'Snatch' (2000)
5 December 2013, 6.30pm

'Snatch' is a comic book gangster film that can be seen to represent the backlash against perceived notions of political correctness in what is effectively a public schoolboy fantasy of working class life in East London. However, the film also delineates the limits of this backlash in its depiction of minorities as either contained or as excess. In her talk Dr Garfield will explore the tension between the genre, representation and Jewish identity. Dr Rachel Garfield is an artist and lecturer in Art at the University of Reading. Her writings include 'Playing with History: Negotiation Subjectivity in Contemporary Video', 'Routledge Companion to Modern Jewish Cultures' (2013) ed. Nadia Valman, Laurence Roth; 'A Particular Incoherence; Some Films of Vivienne Dick', 'Between Truth and Fiction, The Films of Vivienne Dick' (2009), ed. Treasa O'Brien.