

# Liverpool Film Seminar

2014 - 2015

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Every year, Liverpool Film Seminar invites six experts to deliver a series of talks. Topics vary greatly and the series does not focus on a specific aspect of film. Instead, a range of genres and approaches are celebrated, from historical reach to the internet's impact on cinematic material.

## **Professor James Donald** (University of New South Wales)

### **Return of the Living Dead: Modernity, Monsters, and Technology**

In 1989, I published an edited volume on *Fantasy and the Cinema*. One theme to emerge from several of the essays included was a disquieting but historically specific uncertainty about the boundaries of human finitude – the anxiety about the border between 'human' and 'technology' emblematised in *Frankenstein*, the uncanny border between 'human' and 'earth' in *Dracula*, and the resurgence of both in a vogue for cyborgs.

It was at around this time that Mladen Dollar characterised the uncanny as 'a fundamental dimension of modernity.' Quarter of a century and many technologies later, how does the argument that uniquely modern anxieties about technology and finitude have been inscribed in cinematic monsters and cinematic technologies hold up? Zombies and surveillance may be part of the answer.

### **Biography:**



James Donald is Professor of Film Studies and Dean of Arts and Social Sciences at UNSW Australia, and a Visiting Professor in Media and Communications at the University of Liverpool. He is the author of *Sentimental Education: Schooling, Popular Culture and the Regulation of Liberty* (1992), *Imagining the Modern City* (1999) and *Some of These Days: Black Stars, Jazz Aesthetics and Modernist Culture*, which will be published by Oxford University Press in March 2015. He was editor of *Screen Education* and founding editor of *New Formations*. He has published over a dozen edited volumes, including *Formations of Fantasy* (with Cora Kaplan and Victor Burgin) and *Close Up, 1927-1933: Cinema and Modernism* (with Laura Marcus and Anne Friedberg). He is an Associate of the Centre for Modernism Studies in Australia and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities.