

# 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 Richard Dyer** (King's College)

### **The Shadow of *M*: Serial Killing and Nazism in Film**

Serial killing is an extraordinarily rare form of murder and yet it has been widely taken to be symptomatic of the societies and historical moments in which it occurs. Even though there are strong reasons not to equate them, serial killing has often been seen to be at one end of a spectrum of which the Nazi mass exterminations are the other. This presentation explores these two issues in representation through the example of the film *M*.

*M* has been a constant reference point since its release in 1931, not least through the use of the image of the killer's shadow. *M* has been seen as symptomatic of the cinema and society of the Weimar Republic, including in debates about whether Weimar gave birth to Nazism. It is often an irresistible source of imagery for films dealing with serial killing in both the Weimar and the Nazi eras. It has been used to distinguish Nazism from serial killing (not least, but not only, by Nazi propaganda) and to suggest a continuity between them. In the range of uses, and often their contradictoriness, these films raise the question of what is at stake of wanting to make the connection at all.

Films to be touched on include: *Der ewige Jude*, *Die Mörder sind unter uns*, *Der Verlorene*, *Nachts, wenn der Teufel kam*, *Le Vampire de Düsseldorf*, *Die Zärtlichkeit der Wolfe*, *Dr. Petiot* and *Hitler: ein Film aus Deutschland*.

## Biography:



Richard Dyer teaches Film Studies at King's College London and the University of St. Andrews. His books include *Stars*, *The Culture of Queers*, *White*, *Pastiche*, *In the Space of a Song*. He is currently completing a book on serial killing in European cinema and preparing one on *La dolce vita*.