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<http://www.lrb.co.uk>
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In the next issue: Perry Anderson writes about Italy's Journey to Normality; Ian Gilmore about Blair Worden's *Roundhead Reputations*; Alison Light about *Three Guineas*.

Andrew Berry, who works at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, is the editor of *Infinite Tropics*, an anthology of the writings of Alfred Russell Wallace, to be published by Verso.

Stephen Burt's collection of verse, *Popular Music*, is published by the University Press of Colorado. He is completing a study of Randall Jarrell.

Peter Campbell is the LRB's art guru and a typographer.

Siddhartha Deb's first novel, *The Point of Return*, is due from Picador this year.

Jerry Fodor teaches philosophy and psychology at Rutgers. He is finishing a book that is (sort of, he says) about Hume's theory of mind.

Ben Gilbert works as a trader in the City of London.

J. Hoberman, a staff writer at the *Village Voice*, is the author of *The Red Atlantis: Com-*

munist Culture in the Absence of Communism and Bridge of Light: Yiddish Film between Two Worlds.

Ross McKibbin's *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-51* is out in paperback. He is a fellow of St John's College, Oxford.

Stephen Sedley is a judge of the Court of Appeal and has sat as the UK judge in the European Court of Human Rights. The full text of his article in this issue was given as last year's MacDermott Lecture in Belfast.

Charles Simic's most recent book of poems is *Jackstraws*.

Tom Vanderbilt's *Survival City: Adventures among the Ruins of Atomic America* is published in the US this month. He lives in Brooklyn.

Michael Wood, who teaches at Princeton, is the author of books about Stendhal, Nabokov and Proust.

Tony Wood works at the *New Left Review*.

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TO BE ANTI-HOLLYWOOD was, in a sense, to be anti-semitic.' So said Budd Schulberg, the son of a pioneer film producer, a successful screenwriter and author of the quintessential Hollywood novel, *What Makes Sammy Run?* (a book that was itself accused of a self-directed anti-semitism). To be anti-Hollywood has also, at various times, been a way to enlist the rhetoric of anti-semitism to express sentiments that are anti-modern, anti-urban, anti-New Deal, anti-internationalist, anti-capitalist, anti-Communist or anti-American. That, at any rate, is the argument of Steven Alan Carr's *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism*, an impressively researched and closely reasoned cultural history, which takes up its theme in 1880, 25 years before the appearance of the first nickelodeons, and pursues it through to the US entry into World War Two.

Hollywood and Anti-Semitism is less a study of Jewish influence on American movies than an account of what Carr calls the Hollywood Question – which is to say, the ways that this presumed influence has been represented, and what those representations can tell us about the landscape of American culture. The Hollywood Question, Carr writes, has structured 'an entire way of looking at ethnic agency in the motion picture industry'. The most celebrated recent examples are Neal Gabler's *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* – to which Carr's book is in part a response – and its documentary analogue, *Hollywoodism*. (Other instances range from Hollywood fictions like the former screenwriter Dori Carter's potboiler *Beautiful Wasps Having Sex*, to studies such as Michael Rogin's *Blackface, White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot*.) Hollywood is captive to its own mythological origins. Gabler's *An Empire of Their Own* sees it as the Jewish invention of a 'shadow America', an idealised vision of assimilationist immigrants who sought to reinvent themselves in 'the image of prosperous Americans'. As his title implies, Gabler's grand claim is that 'ultimately, American values came to be defined largely by the movies the Jews made.'

A response to the remarkable success of certain foreign-born or first-generation Jewish entrepreneurs, the Hollywood Question was initially an expression of 'native' American xenophobia and with time became a way of commenting on the myth of the American Dream. Because the influx of East European Jews into urban America coincided with the rise of storefront peepshows as the most popular form of entertainment in the slums, the association of immigrant Jews with American movies dates to the nickelodeon era. Like the movies themselves, the nature of the relationship changed significantly once the business became an industry, relocated from the polyglot cities of the East Coast to the balmy climate of Southern California, and organised around half a dozen large studios, most of which were founded and run by Jewish businessmen of East European origin.

While the notion of Jewish Hollywood has at different times emphasised producers, exhibitors, writers, agents and performers, its focus has most often been on 'movie moguls' – a term which, in its ironic association with foreign conquest and Oriental despotism, requires unpacking. The

Moguls J. Hoberman

HOLLYWOOD AND ANTI-SEMITISM: A CULTURAL HISTORY UP TO WORLD WAR TWO
by Steven Alan Carr.

Cambridge, 342 pp., £42.50 and £15.95, 5 July 2001, 0 521 79854 X

stars aside, the first generation of Hollywood executives – William Fox, Samuel Goldwyn, Carl Laemmle, Jesse Lasky, Marcus Loew, Louis B. Mayer and Adolph Zukor – were, by the 1920s, the most colourful symbols of America's dynamic, expanding motion-picture industry; and from the 1920s till the present day, observers have taken the Jewishness of the studio heads to explain the means by which Hollywood fashioned a seemingly universal form of public entertainment for an audience of unprecedented scope. At the same time, Jewish 'control' of the movies has been perceived as a considerable cultural threat. That a newborn industry was seemingly in the hands of recent immigrants of alien background was cause for concern, if not outright alarm. The moral sanctity of Protestant America was threatened by what the 1924 tract *Hollywood as a World Center* described as a 'loathsome and degraded Orientalism'.

The creation of this Hollywood Babylon, along with enhanced Jewish visibility, coincided with a general rise in American anti-semitism. (Carr notes that 'after World War One, the word "Jew" literally supplanted "Catholic" in allegations of ethnic conspiracy.') Suspicion of Jews as non-Christian, unassimilable 'Asiatic' foreigners fed the flames of the postwar Red Scare. Jewish immigrants – many of whom called themselves socialists and openly celebrated the fall of the Tsar – were identified with the Bolshevik contagion, as well as with a horror of racial pollution and satanic mind control. In December 1920, the Reverend Wilbur Fiske Crafts – a longtime vice crusader, prohibitionist and proponent of Federal censorship – appealed to the US Congress and the Catholic Church to 'rescue the motion pictures from the hands of the Devil and five hundred un-Christian Jews'. The perceived crisis was aggravated by the near-simultaneous publication of Henry Ford's two articles 'The Jewish Aspect of the "Movie" Problem' and 'Jewish Supremacy in the Motion Picture World' in his own newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, in February 1921.

'As soon as the Jew gained control of the "movies", we had a movie problem,' Ford wrote. The prime architect of America's modern times, Ford was a tireless drummer against the new, mass-produced culture. Although not the first to rail against what he deemed malevolent Jewish influence on American popular entertainment – as well as banking, politics and the press – Ford was the most powerful figure to raise these issues. The *Dearborn Independent* was available at all Ford dealerships; and a number of his pieces were collected and published as *The International Jew* – a book estimated to have had a print run of often million copies, entire passages from which were incorporated into the American edition of *Mein Kampf*.

Fear of Jewish influence on the movies merged with anxieties over the medium's potential to foster indecency and glamorise violence. Motion pictures were under widespread attack for the presentation of crime, the treatment of sex and the corruption of American youth. Massive press coverage of the Fatty Arbuckle case (the popular screen comedian was tried three times for raping and causing the death of a starlet at a booze-drenched orgy) fanned public outrage and pushed the fearful movie industry towards self-regulation. By March 1922, the studio heads established the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, recruiting the Postmaster General, Will Hays – a prominent Indiana Republican and Presbyterian Church elder – as its president.

Although the creation of the Hays Office did little to placate Reverend Crafts and his successors, Hays ultimately outflanked his Protestant critics by forming an alliance with the Catholic Church. In allowing Catholic clerics as well as prominent laymen to draw up and, under the auspices of Joseph Breen, administer the 1930 Motion Picture Production Code, Hays helped create what the historian Francis Couvares described as 'an industry largely financed by Protestant bankers, operated by Jewish studio executives and policed by Catholic bureaucrats, all the while claiming to represent grass-roots America'.

For Carr, this sense of the movies as an all-American enterprise has largely been ignored. No matter how Hollywood was thought of, it was imagined to be an essentially Jewish enterprise – sometimes of international dimensions. Thus, as with the Nazi notion of 'Judeo-Bolshevism', the moguls might simultaneously be associated with cynical capitalist pandering and with Soviet subversion. Although some critics, such as the Communist Harry Alan Potamkin, pointed out that, even if Jewish control over Hollywood existed, it did not benefit Jews – at least in terms of favourable screen representation – the moguls were nonetheless perceived to be Jews acting as Jews.

'These Jews seem to think of nothing but money-making and sexual indulgence. They are, probably, the scum of the earth,' Breen wrote to a friend in the early 1930s. For Breen and his ecclesiastical supporters Hitler's rise was a useful tool in the campaign to reform the movies. The moguls were newly vulnerable. 'Jewish control of the industry is alienating many of our people' at the very time when 'Jews are afraid of things that may possibly happen in this country to them,' the Los Angeles Archbishop John Cantwell observed in a letter to the Archbishop of Cincinnati in July 1933.

The Hollywood Question was now a political matter. Anti-semitic stereotypes were employed by both supporters and opponents of Upton Sinclair's campaign for Governor of California, and by the mid-1930s,

Breen felt that Hollywood Communists – whom he identified as mainly Jewish – were involved in a campaign to smuggle Red content into the movies. He was also deeply suspicious of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League which, launched during the summer of 1936, had by the autumn enrolled some four thousand members – including such celebrities as Eddie Cantor, Ernst Lubitsch, Boris Karloff and Dorothy Parker. In newsletters and radio broadcasts, at meetings, demonstrations and banquets, it called for a boycott of German products and vociferously supported the Spanish Republic and thus, for Breen, who sympathised with the Falangist rebellion, was a conspiracy 'conducted and financed almost entirely by Jews'.

Although the League was thrown into confusion by the 1939 Hitler-Stalin Pact and the subsequent outbreak of war, the movie industry released several anti-Fascist pictures – among them, *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*. In a closed meeting held late that year, the US Ambassador to Britain (and former RKO executive) Joseph Kennedy bluntly warned Hollywood executives to stop

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making such movies, citing the possibility that any subsequent American entry into the war might be blamed on Jews. This, he suggested, was even now happening in Britain. The line soon went public. Addressing an America First rally in Des Moines, Iowa, Charles Lindbergh maintained that the 'greatest danger to this country' lay in Jewish 'ownership of and influence on our motion pictures, our press, our radio and our government'.

The Republican Senator from North Dakota, Gerald Nye, echoed Lindbergh's charges, informing a national radio audience in the summer of 1941 that Hollywood, a haven for all manner of foreigners, was agitating for war. Consequently, he said, the movies 'have ceased to be an instrument of entertainment', seeking instead 'to drug the reason of the American people' and 'rouse the war fever'. A month later, a Senate Subcommittee on Interstate Commerce opened hearings on 'Moving Picture Screen and Radio Propaganda' with Nye as the first witness. He repeated his charge that the movies had been captured by foreigners. Harry Warner (the most actively anti-Nazi studio boss) and Twentieth Century Fox's Darryl Zanuck testified on their own behalf, the latter stressing his Christian background and Nebraska roots. The studios also enlisted as their spokesman Wendell Willkie, Republican Presidential nominee in 1940. Willkie accused Nye and other isolationist senators of attempting to suppress 'factual pictures on Nazism', while deliberately dividing 'the American people in discordant racial and religious groups in order to disunite them over foreign policy'. The hear-

ings petered out in October; on 7 December, the Japanese Air Force bombed Pearl Harbor.

Carr rightly considers the largely forgotten Propaganda Hearings a turning point in the history of the Hollywood Question, 'a showdown between a traditional, isolationist America and a modern, New Deal, interventionist America'. Although a Gallup Poll in 1939 discovered that more than two out of five Americans considered 'war propaganda' a greater threat to the Republic than Fascism or Communism, and other polls showed a rising sense of Jewish influence, isolationism failed. Still, the Propaganda Hearings foreshadowed those vastly more infamous hearings held two years after the war by the House Un-American Activities Committee. The idea of international Jewry was displaced by that of an international Communist conspiracy and, this time, Hollywood would not escape unscathed.

ALTHOUGH the moguls are often excoriated for their apparent unwillingness to engage the Nazi threat directly, Carr's research shows how closely movie industry leaders monitored events in Europe. Citing a meeting of studio heads held in March 1934 to discuss anti-semitism at home, he notes their decision not to act as moviemakers, but as part of the larger Jewish community. The movie industry had to avoid even the appearance of special pleading. To complicate matters, the moguls were criticised from the Left as well as the Right. Carr cites a late 1938 editorial in the *Hollywood Spectator* addressed 'To the Jews Who Control the Films' which called

on studio heads to put aside profits and directly attack Nazism.

Even as the moguls looked for a way to oppose Nazi Germany within the terms of American patriotism, their own business successes had presented writers with a new narrative metaphor. Carr points to three Hollywood novels, *Day of the Locust*, *The Last Tycoon* and *What Makes Sammy Run?*, published on the eve of US entry into the Second World War, in which 'the moguls did not represent American Jews so much as a universal American experience.' Schulberg, a Communist at the time he conceived his novel (although he broke with the Party as a result of its disapproval), was particularly concerned to universalise his protagonist. The ruthlessly ambitious Sammy Glick is explained in terms of his miserable childhood in the slums of the Lower East Side; his capacity for amoral manipulation is more than once equated with that of Fascist demagogues.

Carr usefully places Leo Rosten's sociological study *Hollywood: The Movie Colony* (1941) alongside the novels. Working on a Carnegie grant, Rosten sought to debunk Hollywood as a home of excess and exotica, seeing it instead as emblematic of the national culture. The movie industry did not fabricate stereotypes or impose values, but was 'compelled to feed' the public's pre-existing tastes – its commercial viability was a factor of how well it succeeded in doing so. Hollywood's Jewish problem was a misapprehension. It was not the movie moguls who were un-American, but the xenophobic bigots who baited them. Indeed, the moguls were judged by a double standard: their humble origins, unlike those of other successful American entrepreneurs, were a subject for ridicule, rather than proof of industry and achievement of the American Dream. Carr notes that 'this powerful response' was further articulated in a new cycle of films, 'anti anti-semitic' movies, such as *Crossfire* and *Gentleman's Agreement* (both released in 1947), which emphasised that prejudice and intolerance – rather than Jewishness – were 'outside the core American experience'.

The aftermath of World War Two and the revelation of the Holocaust may have mitigated direct attacks on the Jewishness of Hollywood moguls, or placed such attacks beyond the pale, just as it muted overt anti-semitic rhetoric in general. The issue was to be invoked once more, however, when the film industry emerged as a domestic battleground in the early years of the Cold War. Gerald Horne's *Class Struggle in Hollywood* provides a detailed account of the labour strife that consumed the movie industry during the mid-1940s.* He also writes about Hollywood's Jewish Question: 'A spasm of anti-semitism erupted in Los Angeles as the postwar era began, reinforcing the conservative assault on labour.' The gangland assassination of the Jewish mobster Bugsy Siegel who, among his other interests, controlled the movie extras' union, was, Horne asserts, a warning to the moguls who 'had been accused repeatedly of failing to corral the Jewish radicals who presumably controlled the Communist Party' and, it was

thought, the liberal, but not Communist, Conference of Studio Unions. When the moguls 'did the right thing' and smashed CSU, they showed that they could set aside presumed ethno-religious interests and so were qualified to advance further within the ruling elite.

PREDICTABLY, Carr himself has come under fire in *Commentary* for pointing out that postwar Red-baiting took up many of the themes expressed by prewar moral crusaders, even as anti-Communism attracted those who, having argued for the existence of a Jewish conspiracy, could now maintain that they opposed both Nazism and Communism. The anti-Hollywood tirades of the Mississippi Congressman John Rankin equated Jews with Communists (like the anti-semitic anti-Bolsheviks of the 1920s, Rankin considered the unmasking of Jewish performers who had Americanised their names as tantamount to uncovering a political conspiracy.) Shortly after VE Day, Rankin warned Congress that 'alien-minded communistic enemies of Christianity' were 'trying to take over the motion-picture industry'. This ideology, which he associated specifically with Trotsky, was 'based upon hatred for Christianity' and, in fact, predated Christianity: 'It hounded and persecuted our Saviour during his earthly ministry, inspired his crucifixion, derided him in his dying agony, and then gambled for his garments at the foot of the cross.'

The long Cold War saw anti-semitism recede to the margins of American political discourse, though the Hollywood Question intermittently surfaced in its original form. During the 1988 controversy surrounding Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ*, Christian fundamentalists picked the home and synagogue of Lew Wasserman, then chairman of MCA (and chief executive of Universal Studios). Usually, however, the language is more oblique. Social conservatives such as Pat Buchanan accuse Hollywood of undermining traditional family values; the movie industry is simultaneously associated with amoral profiteering and ideological subversion in propagandising the credo of 'secular humanism'.

To what degree are these terms coded? Throughout his Presidency, Bill Clinton was regularly identified with a 'cultural elite' conveniently visualised in the form of his Hollywood supporters Steven Spielberg and Barbra Streisand. Similarly, when conservative Republicans campaign against Hollywood's moral degeneracy, they have invariably levelled their charges against Warner Bros and Disney, both studios with prominent Jewish executives, rather than Rupert Murdoch's Twentieth Century Fox or Sony's Columbia.

In its dynamic expansionism and near-universal appeal, American popular culture is often theorised, and experienced by the rest of the world, as a destructive, hegemonic force, even as an unstoppable viral infection which bids to wipe out indigenous cultures. Carr's *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism* demonstrates the degree to which the experience was equally true at home. Do the Jews 'control' Hollywood? How convenient to project this quintessentially American force as the province of alien interlopers. □

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