CORRESPONDENCE  Who's dullest, Tom Daschle or Hillary Clinton? &c.

ANDREW SULLIVAN  TRB: Union Due  Why America should fear the European Union.

THE EDITORS  ERROR OF COMMISSION  Why it’s OK for the U.S. to be alone at the U.N.

NOTEBOOK  The pope’s road to Damascus, &c.

RYAN LIZZA  White House Watch: Write Hand W’s hidden intellectuals.

MARCIA YABLON  VICTIM POLITICS  Pro-choicers snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

JOSHUA KURLANTZICK  BRUNEI DISPATCH: Paradise Spent  Shangri-la goes bust.

PETER BEINART  GOING STRONGER  Why conservatives are winning the tax war.

PAUL KRUGMAN  GOING FOR BROKE  Almost every cost estimate the Bushies have given for their tax cut is wrong. Not because the math is impossible or because they made an honest mistake—but because the administration has decided simply to lie.

JONATHAN CHAIT  GOING FOR GOLD  Conservatives say the tax cut will help waitresses. They say it will spur the economy. But those aren’t the real reasons they support it. The real reason is that they genuinely believe it’s wrong to take money from the rich and give it to the poor. If only they’d say so in public.

STANLEY KAUFFMANN  ON FILMS: LOVE, DEATHLESS AND LIFELESS  Under the Sand studies a strong bond between two; Town and Country probes the limitless narcissism of one.

LEON R. KASS  PREVENTING A BRAVE NEW WORLD  Human cloning is close to becoming a reality. If we don’t ban it soon, the human world will become inhuman.

ZOË HELLER  THE GHOST RUTTER  The Dying Animal by Philip Roth

DAVID RIEFF  PROBLEMATIZING EVIL  When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nazism, and the Genocide in Rwanda by Mahmood Mamdani

RACHEL HADAS  POEM  Sky and River, Net and Open Book

STANLEY KAUFFMANN  LIGHTS, CAMERA, HATRED  Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History up to World War II by Steven Alan Carr

MARTIN PERETZ  CAMBRIDGE DIARIIST: HONORS

On the Cover: Photo by Michael Conroy/AP
On the Web: www.thenewrepublic.com
included in the new government. After all, the claim that Mamdani makes about Rwanda could have been made about Germany; that Naziism enjoyed the support of the majority of the German population. Mamdani may have chosen to believe that this solution was as viable in Rwanda as it had been in Uganda when, after Yoweri Museveni’s victory, loyalists from both Idi Amin’s and Milton Obote’s dictatorships were brought in, or in South Africa, where, as he put it, all political tendencies from Black Power to White Power were permitted. But there was an essential difference: in Rwanda, a genocide had been planned and carried out in the name of Hutu Power. In Mamdani’s account the fact that the Hutus had been the oppressed in pre-colonial and colonial Rwanda gave them some kind of special dispensation, if only for the historian.

In the introduction to *When Victims Become Killers*, he writes that “most obviously, [Rwanda] was a metaphor for post-colonial political violence. Less obviously, it was a postcolonial challenge, a vantage point to think through the postcolonial crisis.” But why is the Rwandan genocide a metaphor for “the postcolonial crisis”? To make such a claim is to leech the event of its tragic specificity, to put it to uses that distort it or profane it. Moreover, Rwanda is not as typical as Mamdani seems to think. One of the striking things about Rwanda, as the area specialists whom Mamdani surrounds have pointed out, is the extent to which so many elements in its history, including the ideological underpinnings of its independence crisis, diverge from African norms.

When all is said and done, Mamdani’s book is the work of an old-fashioned Rwame Nkurumah or Amilcar Cabral-style pan-Africanist, a throwback to assumptions that have had little political validity since the 1960s. His historical premises and his political opinions have little to do with today’s African realities. For the primary intellectual disservice to Africa is to treat it in pan-African terms. By thinking continentally, Mamdani is thinking unconcretely; and by hewing to his single model—the survival of the Native Authority and the native-settler dichotomy—Mamdani demeanes the actual history of the actual place called Rwanda. The story of the Rwandan genocide deserves better. And so do the other stories of Africa.

---

**Lights, Camera, Hatred**

*By Stanley Kauffmann*

**Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History up to World War II**

By Steven Alan Carr

(Cambridge University Press, 336 pp., $24.95)

**The Term “Anti-Semitism”**

was coined by a German journalist named Wilhelm Marr in a pamphlet attacking Jewish participation in politics. That was in 1873, which is odd. What had the phenomenon been called through all the preceding centuries? Almost two thousand years earlier, Josephus cited it as recognizable during the Egyptian exile even earlier. Strange that an animus of such longevity had to wait so long for a convenient tag.

Whatever it was previously called, it has survived. History demonstrates that, whatever its degree of visibility, anti-Semitism has persisted—in Western societies, anyway—at least since the dispersion of the Jews. It waxed and waned, for reasons that generally have little to do with Jewish behavior; but even in the most equanimous societies, sometimes in those with few or no Jews in them, only the insatiably wide-eyed could maintain that no amount of delving would uncover a streak of the virus. The reasons for this persistent animosity have often been explored, but no exploration has led to its disappearance. Since it has been in some measure omnipresent, it arrived in America with the first Europeans. Amid the Dutch settlers, as Michael Kammen reports in *People of Paradox*, a clergyman was concerned about what would happen “if the obstinate and inmovable Jews came to settle here.” When the United States was founded, its Constitution enshrined ster- ling egalitarian principles, but who would maintain that they have been invariably followed? Not the “obstinate and im-

movable Jews.” (The American tolerance of slavery is another contradiction, and another story.)

American enterprise flourished through the nineteenth century, and since Jewish Americans were busy in many of its industries, anti-Semitism became a component of the American ethos. Anyone who doubts this can look at issues of *Life* (I mean the original humorous magazine of that name) around the beginning of the twentieth century. For the modern reader, the shock is not only the viciousness of the anti-Semitic jokes, but also the fact that they were accepted—more, expected. (Recall the attitudes tacitly surrounding Simon Rosedale in Edith Wharton’s *The House of Mirth*, which is set at about that time.)

Through the nineteenth century, Jews became prominent in the American theater business, and Steven Alan Carr’s book reproduces cartoons about Jewish producers that would have made Goebbels envious. When film was invented, Jews were among the earliest entrepreneurs in every branch of what quickly grew into the film industry. Anti-Semitism exploded. The theater now became, in popular effect, a lesser part of the American cultural scene, and the fact that Jews so quickly were prominent in this overwhelmingly new power provoked something near to frenzy in the press and even the pulpit. The virus was ready, so to speak, and waiting—this new stimulant propelled it. Carr’s book, though he doesn’t emphasize this aspect, is in essence the history of a twentieth-century epidemic derived from an ancient venom. The ancient bile, newly simmered, spewed into channels of the whole American social landsape.

**Hollywood and Anti-Semitism**

is intensely researched and sensibly weighed. Carr begins his account with what he calls “the Gabler paradox.” This is the contradiction that underlies Neal Gabler’s valuable study *An Empire of Their Own*, which appeared in 1988. In his introduction, Gabler observed:

The paradox is that the American film industry... was founded and for more than thirty years operated by Eastern European Jews who themselves seemed to be anything but the quintessence of America... While the Hollywood Jews were being assailed by know-nothings for conspiring against traditional American values and the power structure that maintained them, they were desperately embracing those values and working to enter the power structure.

Gabler principally investigated Holly-

---

THE NEW REPUBLIC : MAY 21, 2001 : 47
wood figures and their society. Carr broad-ens his inquiry to examine larger social and political evidences, around the coun-try, of the peculiar animus resulting from the Gabler paradox: how these very Jews who were trying to be ultra-American pro-voked American hatred.

A s a n instrument for his inquiry Carr devised a concept that he calls "the Hollywood Question" — a phrase with which he wishes to update that venerable and troublesome phrase "the Jewish Question." The latter, he says, is a term that "in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century ... articulated a problem: given their cultural and religious differences, should Jews enjoy the same basic rights as everyone else?" He says that the Hollywood Question is "not a garden variety of anti-Semitism," that such a diagnosis fails to understand "the full impact of the Question." I am unable to see that Carr's book benefits to any great degree by his change of name; but whatever the term, the results of his inquiry are vivid, disgusting, and enlightening.

His work is in three parts, dividing the 1860-1941 span of the book into chronological segments. Here I cite examples from all three parts of the areas into which Carr has traced the rush of the anti-Sem-itisim caused by Hollywood. Part One cov-ers the period from 1880 to 1929. The years before the arrival of film, in 1895, set the timid scene. After film's arrival, the first explosion was in the subject of sex—not so much sex on the screen as behind it and around it. Sex is so dominant an element in films, however chaste, and the presence of attractive women is so essential, that Hol-lywood's adoré di feminina quickly infuri-ated the ready-to-roll haters. This sexual obsession had fostered vicious enough about Jews as theater producers; but be-cause films were exponentially so much more invasive of privacy and fantasy, the presence of Jews at the source of these invasions was especially intolerable. Lovely gentle maidens in the paws of ape-like Jewish studio chiefs: this was too much.

Oligarchy came soon after sex. Jewish business control of films excluded others (it was claimed) and allegedly fostered Jewish warplings of the truth, and this "fact" galvanized virulent elements in the pulpits as well as the press. (With an ancient spurious logic, this Jewish promi-nence was also attacked because it was dis-proportionate to the Jewish percentage of the immigrant population—less than two percent in 1910.) The real fact that the majority of American films were wrapped in cookie-cutter, red-white-and-blue virtues mattered little to those clergymen and editors who were hungry to hate.

One especially bitter instance was the behavior of the Catholic Church. In the nineteenth century, American Catholics, especially the Irish, had been constantly affected by the Protestant majority. (As late as the 1920s, when I was a boy working summers on upstate New York farms, if I made a mistake I was called "you Irishman.") Still, when the chance came to Catholics to use comparable tac-tics on others, they seized it. Admittedly they were in some degree heated by Irish stereotypic forms in films, but these only opened the floodgates of long-stored Catholic hatred of Jews. (This subject has only recently come in for wide discussion.) Early-twentieth-century Catholic organizations and churchmen attacked pictures that they said were produced by "foreign-born Jews of the lowest sort." In 1927, for example, Jewish-owned studios presented The Callahans and the Murphys, about feud-ing tenement families, and Irish Hearts, about immigrant romance—two sen-timental films that Catholic groups assailed as chauvinistic caricature.

Congress itself found time to debate the Jewishness of the film world. In 1926, after a Ku Klux Klan newspaper fumed (without specification) about the way that "certain Jew pictures" ridiculed "the Protestant ministry of the land," Representa-tive W. B. Shaw of Georgia testified to the same effect before a federal hearing. The heat was heated further by The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, the malicious forgery about Jews that arrived here shortly after World War I. A grading odality: the Protocols assailed Jews for their rationalism, not for their capitalist greed, and one result of this new angle of attack was to link Jews with the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. The arrest and eventual execution of these two men in 1927, says Carr, "attested to a fear of radicalism and anarchy that ex-tended to almost any foreigner, but espe-cially Jewish immigrants."

I n part two, dealing with the years from 1929 to 1941, Carr examines the ways in which the Question was linked with the Depression, communism, and the approach of World War II. An outstanding figure in this mode of Jew-whipping was the "Radio Priest," Father Charles Coughlin of Detroit, who in the 1930s was estimated to have an audience of more than thirty million weekly listeners. To increase his audience, Coughlin indicted Jews for their influence on America's foreign policy, especially for their softness, as he saw it, on communism. American films, he held, were insufficiently anti-communist (all the while that those pathetic Hollywood producers were sweating to be Yankee Doodled in extre-mis). Sanctionously Coughlin would speak of his "followers" but asked, de-spite the Gabler paradox, why movies poured "pitiless propaganda upon the sil-ver screen of our nation to deceive us." I can still hear Coughlin's amary voice distin-guishing between good Jews and "bad" Jews.

My memory was jogged again by the name of William Dudley Pelley, whose face and prattle were once familiar to newspaper readers and newsreel viewers. Pelley began as a journalist, then went to Hollywood in the 1920s and wrote screen-plays, some of them based on his own novels and stories. Several of his screen-plays were produced, including The Skull, which starred Lon Chaney. But after some reverses in Hollywood and a nervous breakdown, Pelley organized a fascist group called the Silver Shirts and founded a magazine called Liberation, which was furiously anti-Semitic. He scoured the "controlled" press, replete with what he called "Jewspapers," and of course attacked Jewish control of the film studios where he had once worked. What chills even in retrospect is the fact that Pel-ley and Coughlin and similar others were at the time regarded by many simply as part of the American scene. Comparable minds and months elsewhere. Of course, and they have their listeners and readers, but such figures are not now usually treated merely as nutty curiosities.

The American air today is much clearer of these fumings. And what helped to clear it, to a very considerable degree? Irony past the ironic. There arrived in Europe the worst ill wind of the century, which nonetheless blew some good. It is a dreadful but ineluctable fact, as Carr shows, that the rise of Hitler in Europe gradually ameliorated anti-Semitism in this country, at least in its public manifes-tations. True, as late as 1941 a congress-man such as John Rankin could contend that Jewish bankers had "created Hitler"; but as early as 1935 Fortune, in an article by Archibald MacLeish, contended that "anti-Semitism in America, judged by its exponents, is a very sick donkey." Certainly the donkey still lived, but it was increasingly seen as a donkey.
The donkey stumbles on into Carr’s Part Three, “1941 and Beyond.” In 1941, Charles Lindbergh, a fervent isolationist, said:

Instead of agitating for war, the Jewish groups of this country should be opposing it in every possible way. The greatest danger to this country lies in their large ownership and influence in our motion pictures, our press, our radio and our government.

This seemed a warning that if this country entered the war, Jews would be blamed and persecuted. Yet at the same time, owing to the rise of fascism in Europe, Carr says that in America “outright anti-Semitism could prove a political liability, rather than galvanizing rhetoric.” Carr cites Leo Rosten’s book Hollywood: The Movie Colony, the Movie Makers (1944) as one of the turning points. Among its many clarifications, Rosten addresses the decision of the founders as refugees from the garment business: “In no other industry is humble origin interpreted as a skeleton in the closet rather than proof of admirable success.” (In the 1990s J.B. Priestley had described Hollywood producers as “tailors become caliphs.”)

Another large index of an atmospheric change, inversely pleasant, came in novels by Nathanael West, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Budd Schulberg, who rehabilitated the Shylock Jew as part of a larger critique of the American Dream, locating this stereotype not in some Other but within the very fabric of American life. In other words, it was now possible for authors to treat Jewish characters candidly, without seeming or intending to seem anti-Semitic. (By the time Herman Wouk’s novel Marjorie Morningstar became a best-seller in 1945—the heroine’s name had originally been Morgenstern—the topical joke was that Wouk’s book made it chic to be Jewish.)

In 1941, the year of the Lindbergh speech quoted above, the Senate began its Hearings on Motion Picture Propaganda, headed by the isolationist Gerald P. Nye. Carr writes: “The hearings were, in fact a showdown between a traditional, isolationist America and a modern New Deal, interventionist America. The Propaganda Hearings also marked a decisive shift in the popular perception of Hollywood.” The end result was in some measure an acknowledgment of the Gabler paradox, because of the terrible world situation: “the Jewish movie moguls represented a new kind of ethnic agency, ardently defending the principles of America’s founding fathers.”

Everything thereafter was not—never will be—tosses the way. Carr even makes a case that the epochal consent decrees of 1947, with which the federal government forced the film studios to divest themselves of the theaters that they owned, had some basis in anti-Jewish feeling. Another worry sector bulged out of postwar anti-communism, which became an acceptable, even laudable means of being anti-Semitic leaflet from the 1930s.

An anti-Semitic because so many on the left were Jewish. Still, the experience of World War II certainly improved matters. American films began to treat Jewish characters not only as sympathetic figures but as principals. Says Carr: “Battleground (RKO, 1944) and Gentleman’s Agreement (Twentieth Century-Fox, 1947) condemned anti-Semitism, not because of its prevalence, but because of its abhorrence. As both films suggest, anti-Semitism operated distinctively at odds with democratic ideals.” With The Diary of Anne Frank (1956) Hollywood—for the first time—even “treated the Holocaust by focusing on anti-Semitism.” Today the situation is so completely revised that it may be difficult for some to believe that the conditions in Carr’s book prevailed so widely for so long. Today it would be impossible to make a film for general release in which a Jew was lampooned as a Jew, and today few public figures utter in anti-Semitic rhetoric.

Extremities on the political-religious right and some racial panjandrums remind us that this country is not purged of anti-Semitism, but we have only to consider the success of Woody Allen to recognize that today a Jew can even satirize himself with reliance on the audience’s view of him as a fellow citizen, not a member of a lower order. Then consider the name, simply the name, Dustin Hoffman. It would have been impossible for a star to use that name in the earliest film years. When an actor was born Douglas Ulman began his career early in the last century, he became Douglas Fairbanks. How blameless were the Jews through all those decades of vituperation? Completely. To cite vulgarity or greed or misbehavior on the part of some Hollywood producers, to find one iota of justification for the abuse, is to destroy opposition to the abuse. To venture an immense, infernal comparison, it would be like conceding that some of the Jews sent to Auschwitz were despicable people. That must be true. What difference does it make?

Although Carr doesn’t stress the matter, his book makes one point stubbornly clear: Jewish “domination” of an industry, if and when it happens, is neither to be masked nor apologized for. Jews founded and dominated the American film industry, yes: why didn’t others? Why didn’t others at least give them sizable competition? (Spyros Skouras was one, but how many others?)

Since that did not happen, it was inevitable, in the historical view, that anti-Semitism would well up. The best response to the “charge” of Jewish prominence is a simple fact: it was true.

Carr’s research opens new corners and highlights old ones. (One slip: Edward G. Robinson played an Italian gangster in Little Caesar, not in The Public Enemy.) His writing is serviceable, except when he tries to make it fancy. (“The cultural margins were quickly migrating toward the center of popularity.”) But his book establishes a grimly fascinating and uncomfortably close chapter in the long history of a curse.