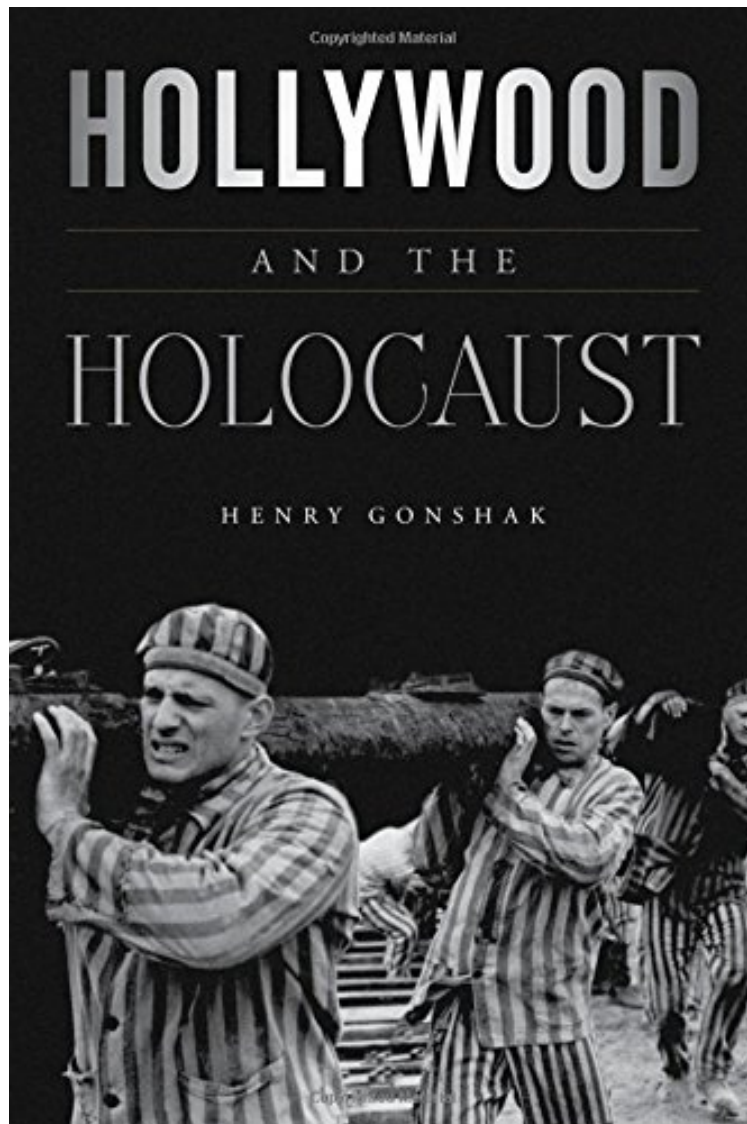


[E-BOOK] Hollywood and the Holocaust (Film and History)

Hollywood and the Holocaust (Film and History)

Henry Gonshak

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Henry Gonshak : Hollywood and the Holocaust (Film and History) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hollywood and the Holocaust (Film and History):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Hollywood Promotes Monopolized Holocaust Supremacy--Almost-Completely Ignoring All Other Genocides By Jan Peczkis This work focuses on questions such as whether or not Holocaust films are historically accurate, whether or not they are primarily entertainment, whether or not they are kitsch, whether or not they adequately teach important lessons, whether or not they trivialize the Holocaust, and whether or not they are explicitly Jewish or universal. However, none of these issues/questions is relevant to the

inescapable fact that it is the Jews genocide that constantly basks in the limelight, and that it does so at the expense of the countless genocides of other peoples. That is the focus of my review.

MEDIA INDOCTRINATION IN ACTIONThe author identifies himself as Jewish (p. 18). Henry Gonshak aptly summarizes his book, Its premise is quite simple: for better or worse, the average American (as well as millions internationally) generally learns about the Holocaust not through history books, documentary films, or serious works of literature and cinema but rather through Hollywood portrayals (along with other examples of mass media, such as commercial television, popular fiction, and Broadway plays). (p. 1). He states in no uncertain terms, that Holocaust consciousness has saturated American culture. (p. 115). [No kidding].

THE CULT OF THE HOLOCAUSTGonshak mystifies the Holocaust, repeating the assertion that the Holocaust is an event whose horror so defies the limit of the human imagination that it simply cannot be fully artistically represented (p. 212), and that the Holocaust is perhaps modern history's most tragic event. (p. 313). Wow! No one speaks of anyone else's genocide in this grandiose fashion. The author also repeats the well-worn claim that Jews were targeted for total annihilation (pp. 316-317). [It does not follow that a comprehensive genocide is worthy of more attention than only a partial genocide. Besides, in the case of Jews, it is untrue. See comments.] Finally, the author lapses into the standard anti-Christian trope that would have us believe that putative Jewish responsibility for the Crucifixion of Christ laid the foundation for the Holocaust. (p. 265). [Haman tried to exterminate the Jews. Oopsthat was before Christianity.] As for modern Jews, the Holocaust has become a substitute religion. The author quips, With a decline in religious practice among many American Jews and with American Jewry fractured over so many issues, such as Israel, it is no surprise that Jewish Americans have decided en masse that the Holocaust should be elevated to this SACRED STATUS, as the one event all Jews can agree is central to Jewish identity. This unfortunate sacralizing of the Shoah has spread from the Jewish American community to the American public at large, as can be seen in so many Hollywood Holocaust films. (p. 4; Emphasis added).

POLES ARE CORRECT ABOUT THE DE-GERMANIZATION OF THE NAZISWith reference to *THE READER* (2009), Gonshak comments, Rather than being unthinkable a decade ago, such a trend of whitewashing German guilt for Nazism has a long history in Hollywood Holocaust films, dating all the way back to such anti-Nazi propaganda as *HITLERS CHILDREN* and *TOMORROW THE WORLD!* Thus, the exculpation of German guilt is no new message in Hollywood but rather the resurrection of a very old message (p. 285).

HOLLYWOOD SYSTEMATICALLY AVOIDS NON-JEWISH GENOCIDESHenry Gonshak astonishes the reader by pointing out that there are only SINGULAR INSTANCES of American-viewed films about genocides of non-Jews, and moreover these have not been made solely by American companies. Thus, there is the Cambodian genocide (*THE KILLING FIELDS*: 1984); Armenian genocide (*ARARAT*: 2002); Rwandan genocide (*HOTEL RWANDA*: 2005); and Bosnian genocide (*WELCOME TO SARAJEVO*: 1997). The conclusion is inescapable, and Gonshak unflinchingly says it, Especially given the plethora of Holocaust films, Hollywood has shown a marked lack of interest in dealing with other atrocities. Clearly, there is a gross imbalance between the plenitude of Hollywood Holocaust films and the EXTREME DEARTH of portrayals of other genocides. (pp. 314-315; Emphasis added). Thats putting it mildly. Hollywood also turns a blind eye to Communist crimes. Gonshak writes, Amazing as it may seem, Hollywood seems to have ignored Stalins genocide against his own people. The same is true of Mao Zedongs murder of millions of Chinese (p. 315).

VARIOUS EXCULPATIONS FOR HOLLYWOODS MONOPOLIZATION OF THE HOLOCAUSTThe author speculates that movies about genocides would be of a feel-bad nature, and this would be box-office poison. Gonshak also reminds us of Americas culture of victimization, and the way that 20th-century European Jewry had been deemed the consummate victim. (p. 315). But these beg the question why such considerations should lead to a double standard between non-Jewish and Jewish genocides. Then there is the Holocaust-uniqueness argument (p. 316), which begs the question about who said that it was, and then kept promoting this "truth" through endless repetition. [It is also false. See comments.] Surveys, when unambiguously worded, show that only at most 2% of the American population denies the Holocaust. (p. 332). So much for the excuse (p. 196) that constant Holocaust education is needed to serve as a bulwark against Holocaust denial.

THE REAL ISSUE: HOLLYWOOD JEWISH INFLUENCE AND THE SYSTEMATIC IGNORING OF OTHER GENOCIDESGonshak acknowledges that, in his words, Hollywood has always been largely a Jewish industry (p. 315), but then tries to run away from its Holocaust-monopolizing implications by stating that Hollywood Jews, at one time, had largely avoided the Jewish victims of Nazi Germany. This is rather lame. Earlier in his book, Gonshak identified the reason for this, and it was quite simple: It was not then in the Jews interests to do so! Let us examine why. During at least the first several years of the Nazi era, leading Jews in Hollywood opposed calling attention to the plight of Jews, as this could cut into their profits. Money talked. Gonshak quips, Prior to *THE GREAT DICTATOR* [1940], Hollywood had almost totally ignored the threat posed by Hitler, despite the large number of Jews working in the American film industry. Germany, after all, was an enthusiastic consumer of American movies, and Hollywood had no desire to alienate these customers by making films attacking the nations leader. In fact, Jewish MGM head Louis B. Mayer had agreed to remove parts of his studios films that the Nazi authorities had found offensive when the movies were screened in Germany. (p. 20). Later during WWII, Hollywood Jews portrayed the European Jews as just one of many peoples that were suffering under the Nazis. It was the standard common-sense way of thinking at the time, and so they HAD to. (p. 45). As for American Jews, this was the heyday of assimilation,

and so Hollywood tended to de-emphasize the Jewishness of even American Jews. (p. 75). Instead, Jews were as all-American as any other American. **HOLLYWOOD AND RACISM** At one time, Hollywood practically featured only white people, and treated non-whites almost as if they did not exist. Nowadays, Hollywood treats non-Jewish genocides as if they had never existed. Perhaps one day, Americans will recognize Holocaust Supremacism for what it is a form of racism. **Genocide-Recognition Equality Now!** 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A superb study By alan weltzien Gonshak's study, the fruit of many years' labor, magisterially surveys, over four generations, the relationship between the two antagonistic entities captured in his title. How, since the advent of World War II, have commercially released films changed in their treatment of the Holocaust? and more broadly, what moral obligations exist between film as an art form and the prevalent horror of genocide? This book scrutinizes the many ways in which the Holocaust, before the 20th-century's end, became an established and accepted subject foregrounded in American movies. Consistently well-written and well-argued, Gonshak traces a complex growth from Charlie Chaplin to the early 21st century. Along the way, the reader gains fresh insights into movies likely seen years ago and develops a new list of Holocaust-themed movies to check out. An erudite and graceful book for anyone interested in the Holocaust's presence in American film. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Henry Gonshak has written a wonderful book on a very important topic By mikehessdorf Henry Gonshak has written a wonderful book on a very important topic. His book is an exhaustive study of the Hollywood films of the Shoah. The book is extremely well researched and it is also a very interesting and accessible read. The book begins with *The Great Dictator* and ends with *Inglorious Basterds* and he examines a wide range of films in between. I especially liked the chapters on Chaplin, *Cabaret*, *The Grey Zone*, *X-Men* and of course, *Schindler's List*. I heartily recommend this book to all who are interested in the Holocaust and in American culture. I am eagerly looking forward to Henry Gonshak's next book.

The Holocaust has been the focus of countless films in the United States, Great Britain, and Europe, and its treatment over the years has been the subject of considerable controversy. When finally permitted to portray the atrocities, filmmakers struggled with issues of fidelity to historical fact, depictions of graphic violence, and how to approach the complexities of the human condition on all sides of this horrific event. In *Hollywood and the Holocaust*, Henry Gonshak explores portrayals of the Holocaust from the World War II era to the present. In chapters devoted to films ranging from *The Great Dictator* to *InglouriousBasterds*, this volume looks at how these films have shaped perceptions of the Shoah. The author also questions if Hollywood, given its commercialism, is capable of conveying the Holocaust in ways that do justice to its historical trauma. Through a careful consideration of over twenty-five films across genres including *Life Is Beautiful*, *Cabaret*, *The Reader*, *The Boys from Brazil*, and *Schindlers List* this book provides an important look at the social, political, and cultural contexts in which these movies were produced. By also engaging with the critical responses to these films and their role in the public's ongoing fascination with the Holocaust, this book suggests that viewers take a closer look at how such films depict this dark period in world history. *Hollywood and the Holocaust* will be of interest to cultural critics, historians, and anyone interested in the cinema's ability to render these tragic events on screen.

Gonshak is responsible in debating his predecessor critics and eloquent in meditating on the ethical responsibilities of those who produce Hollywood films. Even though Gonshak is flexible in his aesthetics comedy can work, historical accuracy is not necessarily required most Hollywood films (which here include *X-Men*, 2000) do not have anything substantial to say about the Holocaust. Hollywood veers too often toward kitsch, and in his conclusion the author expresses the wish that Hollywood could learn from the more substantial Holocaust documentaries and fiction films produced in Europe. Insdorf discussed both Hollywood and European films, which ultimately makes for a more satisfying project. Yet Gonshak's selection allows each film more depth, and he takes full advantage of this opportunity by staging one scrupulously crafted discussion after another. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates through faculty. (CHOICE) *Hollywood and the Holocaust* offers an important look at Hollywood's ongoing representations of the Holocaust aimed at a general readership not usually addressed by volumes on this subject. (Dillon Tribune) By what standards should we judge films about the Holocaust? That's the provocative question that hangs over *Hollywood and the Holocaust* by Henry Gonshak, an English professor at Montana Tech. In examining older films, Gonshak rightly puts them in the context of their times. . . . In joining the growing shelf of books on the subject of the Holocaust and movies, Gonshak offers some insights as to how far we've come. (The Jewish Advocate) **About the Author** Henry Gonshak is professor of English at Montana Tech, where he teaches Holocaust Studies. His writings on the Holocaust, Israel, and Jewish-American culture have appeared in two book collections, *New Perspectives on the Holocaust: A Guide for Teachers and Scholars* and *The Burdens of History: Post Holocaust Generations in Dialogue*, as well as in a variety of publications, including *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, *The American Jewish Congress Monthly*, *Response: A Contemporary Jewish*, *The Journal of American Culture* and *Peace : A Journal of Social Justice*.