

OPINION

the Jewish news

Wilfully hijacking history

EVER SINCE Shelly Winters starred in *The Diary of Anne Frank* in 1959, cinema buffs have vigorously debated whether feature films should attempt to depict the horrors of the Holocaust. Does the sheer scale of the tragedy defy description, or can historical films serve as reference for those who did not witness the events?

Attempting any fictional adaptation of history is to step on fragile ground. And when it comes to Hitler, moviemakers are confronted with a seemingly impossible dichotomy between entertaining their popcorn-munching audience and staying true to the subject.

Some directors, most notably Stephen Spielberg with *Schindler's List*, have generally succeeded in heightening public awareness without undermining the Shoah's reality. Others, like notorious German filmmaker Uwe Boll, stand accused of hijacking the subject for their own selfish motives. Boll's critically and publicly ridiculed movies, many of which feature on the Internet Movie Database's 100 worst films of all time, have typically been based on horror stories and video games. But with his latest, *Auschwitz*, he's crossed the line. No longer simply a peddler of harmless schlock, Boll has committed perhaps cinema's ultimate sin – wilfully trivialising the Holocaust simply to shock and scare.

Any film director tackling this topic has an obligation to craft a memorial to the victims and recognise their unique plight. It's obvious from Boll's car crash of a back catalogue that he has neither the talent nor temperament to handle such subject matter. He couldn't direct traffic, let alone a monument to mankind's darkest hour.

And the Oscar goes to...

IT'S SAFE to assume Mr Boll won't need to dry clean his tuxedo this weekend for Tinseltown's annual glittering gong show.

Jewish stars and themes often dominate the Academy Awards, but this year it seems as if almost every film body tipped for an Oscar holds interest for Jewish movie buffs. Natalie Portman is the hot favourite for Best Actress for *Black Swan*, Jesse Eisenberg is up for Best Actor in *The Social Network* and 14-year-old Hailee Steinfeld is in line for Best Supporting Actress in *True Grit*, up against Helena Bonham Carter for *The King's Speech*. Other notable hopefuls include director David O Russell for *The Fighter*, Lee Unkrich for Best Animated Feature for *Toy Story 3* and Lisa Cholodenko and Stuart Blumberg for Best Original Screenplay in *The Kids Are All Right*.

So settle in on Sunday night for what promises to be an even more triumphant night than usual for Hollywood's kosher contingent.

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ANGLO-JEWRY AND BRITISH IDENTITY

Dear Sir

I must take issue with your columnist Carmel Gould (*Jewish News*, 17 February) when she writes: "Jews and Muslims regard non-adherents to their faith as goyim and kufr, respectively" as if these are comparable derogatory terms.

While it is true that non-Jews find the word "goyim" offensive, and therefore it might be better to avoid it in reference to them, its real meaning is merely "nations", in particular non-Jewish ones, and is not meant to be abusive. In the Shabbat minchah shemoneh esrei, we even describe the Jewish people as "goy echad" ("one nation").

On the other hand, the word 'kafir' means "unbeliever" with the basic implication of not believing in one God. It is the cognate of the Hebrew word kofer, someone who denies the basics of religion, specifically a polytheist.

The word "kufr" meaning "unbelief", the equivalent of the Hebrew "kefirah", cannot be used referring to people.

Islam offers those kafirs who have come under Muslim rule the choice of either conversion to Islam, exile or death, as is recorded in the Koran.

I am not aware that Judaism has anything remotely like this attitude to the generality of non-Jews so treating the two terms as in some way similar is an example of a perverted political correctness that wilfully ignores the truth.

Martin D. Stern
Salford

Dear Sir

Carmel Gould's article last week was simply nonsense. She wants to know how Jews can lose their identity and merge into liberal British values.

Why are we expected to lower ourselves to the lowest common denominator?

The problem that people have with different cultures is not which nights they spend with their wives or switch on the lights, but when they preach hatred as your report on Channel 4 *Dispatches* noted. Does she want everyone in the country to do the same things at the same time, so that we can be fully integrated?

Ann Cohen
NW11

HERE IS THE BIASED NEWS FROM EGYPT

Dear Sir

While watching the news from Egypt, I heard a British journalist complain that, all over Egypt, Western journalists were being threatened and violently intimidated after the Egyptian state media had broadcast lies about the "real" motives of these journalists. They were accused of being "Israeli spies and agent provocateurs".

Of course, these are lies, just as most stories about Israel which appear in

narrative flow with no concern for right or wrong. The first law of the journalist's code is: never let the truth get in the way of a good story.

Because of this tsunami of lies, anglo-Jewry is forced, on an ongoing basis, to guard our kindergartens, schools and communal institutions from attack by the swelling ranks of anti-Semiticacists.

It would be nice to think that British journalists would learn from their mistakes on this topic. But then pigs might fly, so the only realistic comment I can offer is: "Suffered because of someone else's lies? Join the club".

We Jews have been members for years.

David Marks
Palmers Green

CLARIFICATION ON SACKS DISINGENUITY

Dear Sir

Your letter writer Dr Ben Bradley wrote that I said Chief Rabbi Sacks was disingenuous because he didn't accept brain death as death. I did not write that, and I did not imply that in my letter (*Jewish News*, 27 January), entitled "The Chief Rabbi is being disingenuous."

I clearly wrote that the Chief Rabbi was being disingenuous because he implied he would be willing to endorse organ donation once the National UK Organ Donor Registry would "facilitate an option for Jews" to donate their organs within halacha.

I pointed out that, since Rabbi Sacks and his Beth Din rejected brain death as death and refused to allow doctors to turn off ventilators, Jews who followed his ruling would not be able to donate any life-saving organs, regardless of any fanciful vague "changes" the Chief Rabbi was suggesting. To imply otherwise is insincere.

This distinction is not even subtle and I am surprised that I have to explain it to a physician.

Robby Berman
Founder & Director
Halachic Organ Donor Society

IT'S NOT A PROMISE, MORE OF A THREAT

Dear Sir

Viewers who have watched the Channel 4 drama *The Promise* cannot have failed to be dismayed by the one-sided version of events it so graphically portrays.

In the first programme, British soldiers were shown being shot by Jews. And while the Palestinians were depicted as being poor, the Jews were seen as affluent.

The second episode showed British soldiers being killed while Jews were sitting in cafés. The Palestinians, meanwhile, were seen being thrown out of their homes, which are occupied by Jews. I dread to think what the final episode will show.

Sidney Sands
By email

ISRAEL NEEDS MORE JEWISH VISITORS

Dear Sir

In your interview with the outgoing Israeli ambassador, Ron Prosor (*Jewish News*, 17 February), he mentions that tourism to Israel from Britain's Jewish community is strong.

I was recently in the country, travelling in the country by bike, train and bus for three weeks. During this time, I saw more British non-Jews than Jews.

In a price comparison, Israel is at least three times more expensive than Spain – while food prices are only slightly lower than in Britain. The border police are aggressive and the security situation creates an air of tension.

All this is off putting, but does not prevent religious Jews visiting the Kotel and going for simchas. But they tend to restrict visits to Jerusalem and Bnei Brak.

Norman Bright
Stamford Hill

HAGUE, WE ARE NOT UNDER THE MANDATE

Dear Sir

British Foreign Secretary William Hague recently warned that, in the wake of the revolution to topple Mubarak in Egypt, now is not the time for "belligerent" language from Israel.

Has no one told Mr Hague that Israel is no longer ruled by the British Mandate? Israel is a sovereign state and it is *his* belligerent mode of language that is unacceptable.

No one living outside the region is in any position to tell us how and when

Sketches & kvetches

By Paul Solomons www.daftoons.com

