

Essay on jewish studies film review

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



This paper reviews the film *The Shop on Main Street*. The movie is set during the World War II at a time when aryanization was rife. As part of the process, an apathetic Slovak carpenter is given the prospect to take over a store belonging to a Jewish woman who is nearly deaf. The woman is oblivious of the process and does not quite understand why the carpenter wants to take over the store. A Slovak who is antagonistic to the process attempts to aid the woman by convincing the carpenter that the business is running at a loss.

In order to retain the shop in Jewish hands, the Jewish community offers to pay the carpenter on a weekly basis in turn for his continued passive ownership. The carpenter convinces the woman that he is a relative who has come to help her out. Their relation subsists for a while until authorities begin rounding up all Jews in the town. The carpenter is at loss whether to hide the woman or turn her in to the authorities. Somehow the woman becomes aware of the situation and loses it. The carpenter accidentally kills her in an attempt to silence her. He becomes confounded by the occurrence and hangs himself.

Anti-Semitism is manifested in the film through the authorities' repossession of businesses belonging only to Jews. The process of aryanization itself reeks of anti-Semitism as it entails the expulsion of Jews from economic enterprises (Bajohr, 2002). The transfer of these businesses to non Jews further depicts anti-Semitism in the film. A further manifestation of Anti-Semitism in the film is the round up of the entire Jewish community for transportation to areas reserved for Jews only. These areas are akin to concentration camps and the placement of Jews there depicts anti-Semitism.

Though there are other themes in the film, anti-Semitism takes the center stage. The film itself is set at a time when anti-Semitism was popular in Europe especially the communist Europe. The story also revolves around the hatred of Jews. It focuses on how such hatred affected the relation of ordinary folk. It also highlights the varied responses these ordinary folk had towards it. But for it the story in the film could not have had the impact the film had. Ideally, if anti-Semitism is taken away, the story would make little sense.

The film portrays Jews as hard working and peaceful people. With her condition and age, the fact that the woman still fends for herself depicts the Jews as hardworking. They are portrayed as peaceful in the sense that they did not resort to violent means to oppose the taking over of their businesses. Even in light of the deportations, they do not respond violently to it. The film also portrays them as caring people; the Jewish community offers to pay the carpenter in order to help the woman retain her store.

The Jewish actors in the film are portrayed as victims. The woman is subjected to atrocities even though she was oblivious to the surroundings. For all the wrongs done to them the film does not show any thing that they might have done to justify the treatment they were subjected to. Even after losing their business for no wrong doing, they are still deported. Perhaps the best depiction of Jews as victims is the death of the woman. Though she did not lose her store and was not on the list of the deportees she eventually dies.

The outcomes for the characters in the story would have been different if

they were gentiles. From the onset, they would have not lost their businesses as the process only targeted Jews only. Secondly, if they were gentiles they would have questioned or opposed such repossession. In the most likely scenario, they would have adopted an armed or violent struggle given that it was during the World War. Thirdly, the old woman would have not lost her life as the events leading to her death would probably not have happened.

Work Cited

Bajohr, F. “Aryanisation” in Hamburg: The Economic Exclusion of Jews and the Confiscation of their property in Nazi Germany. Hamburg: Berghahn Books, 2002.