

"son of saul" analysis

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The movie "Son of Saul" revolves around a man named Ausländer Saul who came from the city Ungvár in Hungary and lives his life in the camp of Auschwitz which reveals some of the most devastating moments that took place during an atrocity of WWII. Saul is a member of the Sonderkommando special command unit, a group composed of mostly Jewish prisoners which the Nazis forced them to assist with herding people to the gas chambers, burning the bodies and collecting gold and valuables from left over clothes of the dead prisoners. The use of camera entirely close up to the face but out of focus in the peripheral view, uncertainty of rather Saul really has a son, the identity around being Hungarian, the meaning of the last scene, vast use of real-life atrocity and showing the most realistic part of WWII makes this movie a masterpiece and makes the audience feel like they are inside the movie.

The use of camera entirely close to the face remaining fixed on the face of one inmate, but out of focus shot in peripheral makes the atmosphere of the movie more dramatic and makes the audience feel like they are actually at the scene. What I first noticed about the movie was the use of camera which was only focusing on the protagonist's face and other people that are around him, but the focus makes the peripheral views more blurred out and hard to see. I thought this was a genius way of using camera vision especially for this movie because it illustrates Saul's state of mind where he wishes to not see the horror around him therefore other than what he must see, other visions are blurred out. This disorientation is meant to convey immediacy and signal an uncompromising vision. Furthermore, this movie in comparison to Hollywood holocaust movie is much more realistic and close to what really

happened during WWII. There is no surprise, no heroes, almost everyone including Saul himself gets killed near the end of movie. Furthermore, unlike other Hollywood movies, this movie does not use any form of background music, audiences can only hear the horror sounds of people dying, trying to survive, the slamming of doors, burning and shooting sounds which makes the movie very intense. In addition, Saul's unchanging facial expression represents how the horror inside these concentration camp is normal for Saul. His way of accepting the command of the Nazi soldiers and work when soldiers forced him to work shows how deeply he is assimilated living in the death camp. In order to achieve his goal of delivering the boy that claims to be his son, he goes into the doctor's examination room which could have gotten himself killed but his use of words claiming that he was there to clean the room made him survive.

The uncertainty of whether what Saul claims to be his son is actually his real son adds ambiguity and makes the audience imagine in different ways. Saul witnesses a young boy that survived gas chamber but was immediately smothered to death when the Nazi doctor suffocated the young boy to death. The Nazi doctor also seems interested in the boy's symptom after gassing, which the doctor was planning to perform an autopsy on the body and document the symptoms. Saul witnessing all this becomes consumed by the idea of giving the boy a proper Jewish burial and he searches for a Rabbi, a Jewish religious man who can perform the sacred ritual upon burying the boy. What is important with this is the fact that Saul was in despair of no hope in the beginning but after finding this boy he has a reason to protect and therefore allowed him to "feel" again. However, his search for Rabbi

puts Saul and his friends in trouble, where he was at many times almost killed trying to find a Rabbi by going into the pit and also loses a sack of gunpowder which was supposed to be used during a rebellion against the Nazi soldiers. In addition, many of Saul's friends question him especially after he lost the gunpowder trying to find a Rabbi saying, " what is this boy to you?" Saul would immediately reply back saying, " this is my son." However, even though Saul's background and his early life was never mentioned, his friends seemed to know Saul for long time and each one of them replied saying " but you don't have a son." This in sense adds a lot of ambiguity and our own explanation whether or not this boy is really Saul's son. Despite his efforts to save the boy's body, he loses the boy at the lake when he runs away from German soldiers. Where I am convinced to believe that this boy was not Saul's real son, his trail as a madman was a way to reconnect with the world he once knew, with its old age system of values and remaining faith.

The identity around being a Hungarian was also an interesting point that I picked up after watching this movie. First, Saul was questioned by the person who was trying to deliver the dead boy to doctor saying, " what is it to you?" possibly this was the moment he wanted to establish himself as the boy's father. In addition, when he was confronted by the doctor, he begged doctor saying, " doctor please don't cut his body." The doctor replied back saying, " are you Hungarian? Is he one of yours?" I think he asked this question because the boy was Hungarian and a lot of the people that were in this camp were Hungarian, and often times those that are the most courageous and take actions were Hungarians as their history shows. Saul

himself was Jewish-Hungarian and he goes around people asking where their previous transport was and asked if they are from Hungary. Probably because he wanted to find a Rabbi which at a lot of times were from Hungary. Furthermore, when Saul was on his way to find a Rabbi, he throws the Rabbi's shovel into the lake. The officer in command question Saul asking what happened. Saul replied in Hungarian and the officer calls the Hungarian language " an elegant language." An interesting perspective that I received since Hungarian was in a way praised by many European countries even within the concentration camp. Because he was Hungarian, he was spared whereas the Rabbi was killed.

The last scene of the movie was very ambiguous and could be interpreted in many ways. After the blond boy appears in front of the shack in the middle of the forest, Saul who never changed his facial emotion changes and he smiles towards the boy. What I interpreted before seeing the end of movie was " hope" that the blond boy would bring some form of rescue team for the prisoners as they mentioned about Soviet forces approaching. However, it turns out everyone except the blond boy was killed in the last scene. After this, I perceived the blond boy as a symbol of " death" but also a symbol of " innocence." Saul smiled in the end because he is happy that he did reclaim " life" again from trying to properly bury the dead boy. The dead boy initially gave Saul, a reason to live once more and it was almost as if he was reflecting on everything that he went through to properly bury the boy. After seeing the blond boy, Saul saw the manifestation of the " purity" he was trying to protect and felt that he has accomplished something after all, he saved the dead boy's body from going into the oven. Furthermore, after the

blond boy shows up, the camera that was always following Saul shifts to the blond boy. I think the camera is trying to tell the audience, now that you have seen this atrocity, what do we do? It leaves the question of whether the boy run into the forest is perceived as a shattered innocence or his way to the village and let everyone know that there was shooting and try to confront the issue by bringing some people back? I do not know for sure, but it seems like the boy was supposed to represent innocence and purity.

The vast use of real-life atrocity and showing the most realistic part of WWII also makes this movie much different than other Hollywood WWII movies. Although many scenes are blurred and hard to see, it showed the most cruel and devastating images of the holocaust. The use of German language most of the time, the command orders, the separation of women and men working, people shoveling dead people's ashes and throwing it at the lake, people taking off clothes before going into the gas chamber all show the truth that many movies often have trouble showing it to the full extent. In addition, the human experience within the camp was based on limitation and lack of information. No one could know or see that much. However, even during such atrocities, people like Saul can still keep the good or hope that many others have already lost during the hideous chapter of human history.

Some of the implication after the film was made were positive because Son of Saul won Oscar nomination in the best foreign language film in 2015. It received praise in the international community because of its great use of cinematics, an interesting approach using close up shot with blurred background. This movie's central theme revolves around Saul's inner world,

and the loss and recovery of his soul. Every little detail like Saul's emotion, his persistence to find Rabbi, and his quest to save his dead son during the time of autocracy all accounts for why the movie was successful and more importantly delivered a message towards the public what holocaust was really like.