

TARR – 60

Studies in Honour
of a Distinguished Cineast

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Mélange congénial – A Kind of Introduction

The authors of this book honour a filmmaker, a distinguished artist of our time, who represents at the same time and in his person as a prism through various perspectives the actual artistic and social position of the film art itself. Béla Tarr and his nearly constant staff of artists (actors, nota bene the *non-professional actors* as such in many of his films, co- authors, visual art and sound department members, music composition, costume, scenery, film editing and so on) realized during the last 36 years a memorable number of extraordinary films. His name represents a creative program, a high quality of the art of filmmaking, a challenge to the viewers in cinemas and among the film critics as well. Béla Tarr's films reflect our world, our lives in an impressive and *moving* way, in perspective, but free of any – natural or ideological – teleology. They simply show us the beauty and tragedy of our existence.

Tarr's films are the results of an intensive team-work. The Tarr-team could therefore fairly be called the true creator of these films, just like in the case of other great film artists like (only to illustrate a much longer list) Federico Fellini, Ingmar Bergman, Miklós Jancsó, Michelangelo Antonioni or Andrej Tarkovskij. We used to speak about the films of different film directors, in case of Tarr we have to stress, that *all "Tarr-films" are eminently societal productions*. Tarr himself has admitted in an interview that he regards his lifework as "one film" – in fact, according to the themes and artistic means there are no significant breaks or radical changes between the single pieces of his *œuvre*, although the development of his art is unmistakable. The results of

the above described common artistic efforts are films, each of which can be characterized as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (synthesis of the arts), since the limitations of the singular aesthetic categories are crossed over and substantially melted together with the result of a new, independent entity.

Béla Tarr will be sixty years old at the end of this month. Authors and editor of this book intend to express with the following texts their deepest respect for him and for his companions. Their unique œuvre deserves our unique esteem.

Hamburg, July 2015.

József Pólik

The Attraction of the End: Béla Tarr's *The Turin Horse*

"There is no life before death"
– Europa Publishing

FOREWORD

The Turin Horse will come as no surprise to those who know Béla Tarr's earlier films. Tarr was always talking about endings – the end of various things of different value. One of the elements of his creation was always an apocalyptic world-view. This world-view is initially weak, barely noticeable, but grew steadily stronger later (towards the end of the 80s), reaching the peak of its intensity in *The Turin Horse*. Here, the 'eschate hora' is no longer some distant threat, some vague promise; it is rather a 'discovered' or 'uncovered' reality. *The Turin Horse* is a closed situational drama,¹ but it can also be linked to those catastrophe movies that envisage the destruction not of a city or a community, but of humanity as a whole. Precisely for this reason, we can refer to them in brief as 'apocalypse mov-

¹ Cf. András Bálint Kovács. *A modern film irányzatai [Schools of modern film]*. Budapest: Palatinus 2008, pp. 136-139.

Figure 3.

The dark mob effacing the light
in *Werckmeister Harmonies*.



Figure 4.

Karrer effaced by walls and pillars in *Damnation*.

