



"KRACHTIG, OVERTUIGEND EN
GEMAAKT MET VAKMANSCHAP"
- LA TIMES

"VERFRISSEND, INTELLIGENT
EN SUBTIEL GEMAAKT!"
- VARIETY

"MUST SEE"
- SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS

HOMECOMING (1945)

AFTER THE WAR, THE TIME OF TRUTH

EEN FILM VAN FERENC TÖRÖK

KAPITEL TÖRÖK és családja története a HUNGAROFILMOK 1945-ben készült "HOMECOMING (1945)" című filmjéről. A film a második világháború utáni Magyarországon játszódik, ahol a német megszállás után a szovjet csapatok érkeztek. A film a háború utáni Magyarországon játszódik, ahol a német megszállás után a szovjet csapatok érkeztek. A film a háború utáni Magyarországon játszódik, ahol a német megszállás után a szovjet csapatok érkeztek.

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Première datum Nederland: 10/05/18



Synopsis

Het is een bloedhete dag in augustus 1945. Terwijl de inwoners van een Hongaars provinciedorpje zich voorbereiden op een huwelijk, arriveren een orthodoxe joodse vader en zoon in het plaatselijke stationnetje. Ze huren een paardenkar waarin ze zwijgzaam twee houten kratten laten vervoeren. Er ontstaat onrust. Wat bevindt zich in de kisten en wat is hun doel? De dorpsbewoners gaan gebukt onder een collectief schuldbesef en door hun komst komen donkere geheimen en herinneringen bovendrijven. Is het familie van joodse dorpsgenoten die werden gedeporteerd en komen ze hun clandestien verkregen eigendommen opeisen? Het dorp raakt in paniek en begint maatregelen te nemen..

Korte synopsis

Het is een bloedhete dag in augustus 1945 als een orthodoxe joodse vader en zoon in een Hongaars dorpje arriveren, terwijl de inwoners zich voorbereiden op een huwelijk. De dorpsbewoners - achterdochtig, berouwvol en angstig - verwachten het ergste. De dorpsecretaris is bang dat ze familie zijn van gedeporteerde joodse dorpsgenoten en dat ze clandestien verkregen eigendommen komen teruggeisen...

Oneliner

Een joodse vader en zijn zoon keren terug naar een dorp waar de joodse bevolking is afgevoerd. Hun komst maakt veel los. Angsten komen boven, schuldgevoelens, huwelijksdrama's en het aller-slechtste en allerbeste van mensen onder druk komt los..

Achtergrond

De in Boedapest geboren regisseur Ferenc Török geldt als een van de meest prominente figuren van de nieuwe garde Hongaarse filmmakers. Na enkele succesvolle korte films draaide hij in 2001 zijn eerste speelfilm, 'Moscow Square', die al snel een cultstatus verwierf. Met het beklijvende en pakkende 'Homecoming (1945)' - winnaar van verschillende publieksprijzen - werpt hij nu een genuanceerde en filmische blik op een lastig onderwerp: het lot van de Joden in het naoorlogse Hongarije. "'Homecoming (1945)' is van een beheerste schoonheid. Török schept een sfeer van naderend onheil, schuldbesef en paranoia." De authentieke sets van architect László Rajk (die ook aan Oscarwinnaar 'Son of Saul' meewerkte), de elegante zwart-witbeelden van de wereldvermaarde cameraman Elemér Ragályi en de subtiele, melancholische muzikale score stuwden de film langzaam maar zeker naar een onverwachte climax. (A.I.)

De film won op het filmfestival Film by the Sea de prijs voor beste literatuurverfilming: Uit het Juryrapport: *"...en dan "Homecoming (1945)", een subtiel en genuanceerd verhaal over een overgangstijd: het Hongarije van na de Duitse capitulatie en de komst van nieuwe bezetters – de Russische bevrijders. De film is gebaseerd op een kort verhaal van 14 pagina's, maar vertelt de grote geschiedenis van verraad en hebzucht. Het behandelt een pijnlijk onderwerp dat niet alleen in Hongarije, maar ook in andere Europese landen een rol heeft gespeeld: het heulen van de plaatselijke bevolking met de Nazi's. "Homecoming (1945)" gaat ons dan ook allen aan. "Homecoming (1945)" is prachtig verfilmd, een symfonie in zwart en wit met veel gegluur achter gordijnen en hagen. Soms heel licht, vrolijk bijna om de wreedheid en waardigheid schrijnender te belichten."*





Ferenc Török / writer-director

Born in 1971 in Budapest.

Honored with Pro Cultura Urbis awarded by the City of Budapest, 2005.

Member of the European Film Academy since 2007.

Honored with Balázs Béla Award, a state recognition for outstanding achievement in filmmaking, 2008.

Filmography

Homecoming (1945), 91 min, feature, director, script, producer (2017)

No Man's Island / Senki szigete, 99 min, feature, director (2014)

Istanbul / Isztambul, 96 min, feature, director, script (2011)

Apaches / Apacsok, 70 min, TV drama, director (2010)

Pile-Up / Koccanás, 71 min, TV drama, director (2009)

Overnight, 93 min, feature, director, script (2007)

Eastern Sugar / Szezon, 91 min, feature, director, script (2004)

Moscow Square / Moszkvatér, feature, director, script (2001)

Theatre

Apaches / Apacsok, Radnóti Miklós Theatre, director, 2009

Textura 2014, Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts, director, 2014

Main cast

Péter Rudolf - István Szentes

Bence Tasnádi - Árpád Szentes

Tamás Szabó - Kimmel Jancsi

Dóra Sztarenki - Kistrózi

Ági Szirtes - Mrs. Kustár

József Szarvas - Mr. Kustár

Eszter Nagy - Kálózy Anna Szentes

Iván Angelus - Hermann Sámuel

Marcell Nagy - Son of Hermann Sámuel

István Znamenák - Stationmaster

Sándor Terhes - József Iharos

Iván Angelusz / producer (1967 – 2016)

"The story is exiting from two perspectives. On the one hand because it is set in 1945 when the German troops had left and Soviet "liberators" found themselves stationed in a country preparing for democratic elections. The village in which the film is set suffered the evils of the Holocaust in 1944. So it is one year later that two orthodox Jewish men return home and in so doing disrupt the established rhythm of life in the village. Their reappearance forces the local residents to confront and come to terms with the horrific events of the previous year: the forced deportations, what they



did and what they did not do, what happened to the belongings left behind, and who made which decisions. Beyond perhaps, *Valahol Európában* (Somewhere in Europe, 1947, dir. Géza Radványi) and *Budapesti tavasz* (Springtime in Budapest, 1955, dir. Félix Máriássy), this is one of the few works to explore the events of 1944 in Hungary. The former of the two did not deal with the topic from sufficient historical distance while the latter only focused on events in the nation's capital.

This movie attempts to do very much more. It is set in an era when it appears that there is still a chance of setting forth on a sunny path to the future at the same time as exploring a year the dark memory of which still lives on among us. It is not our aim to point the finger. The lesson that we learn, however, is that those living in fear find it very difficult to help their fellow men. In fact, the inhabitants of a village can hardly be expected to defend their fellow citizens at the risk of restricting their own freedom. At the same time, they are unable to deny certain unethical deeds that worked in their favor. One of the aims of this piece is to provoke greater discussion of this topic.

It is not a Holocaust film but rather a drama that "dissects" life in a provincial village. It investigates the effect events had on the Hungarian population, not restricting itself to the Jewish population." (excerpt from a 2014 interview published during the shooting).



Gábor T. Szántó - screenwriter

Novelist and screenwriter, born in Budapest in 1966. He studied law and political science and graduated from Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. He has been a participant of the Iowa International Writing Program Residency in the United States. Szántó is the editor-in-chief of the Hungarian Jewish



monthly Szombat. His additional field of interest is researching and teaching Modern Jewish Literature.

His writings include novels *Keleti pályaudvar, végállomás* (Eastern Station, Last Stop), 2002, *Édeshármas* (Threesome), 2012 and *Kafka macskái* (Kafka's Cats), 2014, as well as volumes of short stories and novellas. Szántó's writings have been published in German, Russian and English, and a Turkish publication of *Kafka's Cats* is in the works.

His short story *Hazatérés* (Homecoming, 2004) serves as the basis of the film *Homecoming* (1945). The short story came out in German (*Heimkehr*) in the periodical *Wespennest* 166/2014 and in Russian in his volume *Obratnij Bilet* (Moscow, 2008). It has also been translated into English and Spanish.



Interview with Ferenc Török

Hungary's past is replete with unprocessed trauma. The director of 'Moscow Square' (Moszkva tér, 2001), the cult film about the historical events in 1989, now guides the audience back to Homecoming (1945). In the presence of Soviet soldiers, the people of a little village are getting prepared for the wedding of the notary's son, all the while trying to ignore the fact that they deported a significant part of the town's Jewish community the previous year. In Zurich airport we spoke about historical taboos and the production process with the film's director, Ferenc Török, just before he took off to Miami to attend the world premiere of 'Homecoming (1945)'.

How do you feel about the world premiere?

I'm a little nervous because my flight has been delayed and it's not even sure I'll make it to the opening (he says, laughing). And I've got a more than 10-hour-long flight ahead of me. Apart from that, it's a great honour to be able to show this film for the first time in the States: there are so many people with European roots living in America whose family will also have gone through the horrors of the world war, like in Hungary. The European premiere will be in Berlin, later followed by the Hungarian release in April.

The film is set in 1945' in a little village in the foothills. How did you choose this topic?

I've been interested in this topic for 10 years now, ever since I read Gábor T. Szántó's novel, which the film underlies. I was really interested in the time just after the war and just before the introduction of nationalization and Communism, when for a moment there was an inkling of the possibility of democratic transition. Things could even have taken a turn for the better. Fascism was over but Communism had not yet begun; we tried to capture the atmosphere of those few years in this film. This is a period in Hungarian history that is not overly represented either in literature or in film. Instead, people focus on the Second World War itself or on the dictatorship of the 1950s, with these few intermediate years earlier. I wanted to present a social tableau that would portray life in Hungary just after the war.

How did the screenplay come about?

Gábor T. Szántó's story is originally a 10-page novel. Together we first developed a dramaturgy similar to the Greek tragedies, which are built on the unities of action, time and place. We created new characters and strengthened the whole with dry dialogue. This is how the text became a screenplay over the years. What I like most about the novel is how the plot, in the relatively short amount of time – three or four hours –, presents situations with no dialogue and in a balladic way, which is something that we definitely wanted to keep.

Creators are also usually personally connected with their topics. What's your story?

This is a tragic time in history with which everyone is connected in some way or another. I wasn't led by a personal, family story though; this is rather fiction, unlike 'Moscow Square'. If I had to say something about my connection it would be what grasped me. Szántó's novel took a completely



different take on the given historical situation than anything I had ever read before. I think about the motive of new beginnings and how society must overcome trauma, start a new journey, confront the past and undertake a new life.

Could you tell us a little bit about the shooting?

We had a fantastic cast and a relatively smooth shooting. It was the first time I worked with Elemér Ragályi, the cameraman, whom I deeply respect. I have known him personally for a while now and consider him to be my maestro. I asked him to work on the film, among other things because he went through of all this when he was five and living in a little village. That's the kind of personal motive that I was talking about before; it is real for him. He doesn't only remember what an old soccer ball used to look like, for example, but he also remembers the atmosphere people lived in in rural Hungary. It's about that summer, when the war ended. We used to be taught that that was the liberation itself, and we even celebrated it on the fourth of April each year.

How can young people these days, 15-20 year olds, connect with this topic through your film? What kind of reception are you expecting from them?

I usually say that we should trust youth. 'Homecoming (1945)' is not necessarily about adolescents, but about the more mature and nuanced-thinking audience. They're likely to feel more empathy for the film itself. Together with that, I think that the period of history in my film will be more easily understandable than, let's say, in dry textbooks. This is a plastic drama that confronts the audience with real-life situations. Based on the invitations to various festivals, I'm hoping that it will attract a lot of people and that they will be touched by it. I trust the Hungarian audience will be mature enough for the critical interpretation of this era. This moment in history hasn't yet been shown from this approach.
(2017 January, Ágnes Gurubi)



REVIEWS

Variety: Homecoming (1945)

by ALISSA SIMON

A fresh, intelligent cinematic approach to a difficult topic that takes on a transitional time in Hungarian history with subtlety and nuance. Featuring striking black-and-white lensing that imbues potent compositions with foreboding, Magyar multihyphenate Ferenc Török's finely performed "Homecoming (1945)" takes on a transitional time in Hungarian history with subtlety and nuance: It's a sweltering day in August, and two Orthodox Jews' arrival in a remote Hungarian village catalyzes an unwelcome reckoning with the recent past for the local inhabitants. Like compatriot director László Nemes' "Son Of Saul," the gripping period drama offers a fresh, intelligent cinematic approach to a difficult topic, and should appeal to niche art house audiences in most territories. Menemsha Films has already snapped up North American rights.

The sober-looking strangers, white-bearded Hermann Sámuel (Iván Angelus), and his son (Marcell Nagy) arrive on a day already filled with tensions. Reedy young pharmacy manager Arpad (Bence Tasnádi), the son of domineering village notary István (Péter Rudolf, impressively alternating between the unctuous and the pugilistic) is due to marry pretty peasant girl Kiszrózsi (Dóra Sztarenki).

Although Kiszrózsi dumped her previous fiancé Jancsi (Tamás Szabó Kimmel) for the chance to join the bourgeoisie, she is still clearly attracted to Jancsi's cocky masculinity and muscular good looks. Kiszrózsi's true feelings are all too clear to Arpad's scornful, drug-addicted mother, Anna (Eszter Nagy-Kálózy), who is not happy that her future daughter-in-law is more attracted by the earnings potential of the drugstore than by love for her milquetoast son. Meanwhile, Soviet soldiers not yet tired of claiming the spoils of war lurk on the sidelines, wondering how they can enrich themselves in the village through the daily business of Occupation.

The Sámuels procession resembles a funeral cortege as the dignified family walks silently behind the horse-drawn cart driven by Suba (Miklós B. Szekely, a familiar face from Béla Tarr's "Satantango") that carries their mysterious, wooden-crated goods from the train station. Their cavalcade draws all eyes, from those of the station master (István Znamenák), under orders from István to follow them, to the workers harvesting in the fields; from the men drinking in the pubs to the women preparing the wedding feast. Eventually, the reasons that the Sámuels' appearance creates so much consternation are compellingly revealed.

For those who know their European history, it's no spoiler to say that many provincial villagers in Hungary and elsewhere profited from the deportation of their Jewish neighbors. Director Török and co-writer Gábor T. Szántó, upon whose acclaimed short story "Homecoming" this screenplay is based, concentrate on the point-of-view of the locals, almost all of whom, including the priest (Béla Gados), share guilty secrets about ill-gotten gains. For some, such as the drunkard Bandi (József Szarvas), remorse becomes overwhelming. While for others, such as Bandi's wife (Ági Szirtes), the determination to keep her comfortable new home and fine furnishings,



including traditional Jewish candelabra and Hebraic art, overrides any compunction. But it's the increasingly embattled István who has the most to lose.

Nothing in helmer Török's previous filmography would predict his virtuosity here. In a film with surprisingly little dialogue, a fine ensemble cast, including real-life married couple Rudolph and Nagy-Kálózy, convincingly enables this dissection of village life and matters of conscience to be more shown than told. Key to the impact is the superb lensing of veteran DP Elemér Ragályi. The mirrored opening shot, a close-up of István shaving with a straight razor, establishes a sustained tone of impending doom, while his beautifully composed images, frequently framed through gauzy linen curtains, windows, doors, and fences, heighten visual interest.

Also deserving of praise are the spare, melancholy score that at times recalls forgotten Jewish melodies from Tibor Szemző ("The Tree of Life"), the spot-on period production design by Dorka Kiss, and the believably lived-in costume work of Sosa Juristovszky.

<http://variety.com/2017/film/reviews/1945-review-1201985200>

Cineuropa: Homecoming (1945): Getting to grips with the ghosts of the past

by Roberto Oggiano

Director Ferenc Török faces the past to talk about the Hungarian nation's present

Ferenc Török's latest film, *Homecoming* (1945), which was presented in the Panorama section of the 67th edition of the Berlin Film Festival, is the black and white portrayal of a special day in the life of a small Hungarian village at the end of the Second World War, as it gets to grips with a past best forgotten and a threatening future.

The film revolves around the presence of two Jews, who return to the village with two large trunks, stirring fear in those who profited from their persecution; it is the very sense of anxiety created by that which is foreign that Török tries to describe to us, using quick-fire editing and a camera that's always on the move, in contrast with the wide shots framing those who have come from far away by train: the comparison with the growing sense of nationalism in contemporary Hungary is clear to see, victims who are portrayed as dangerous invaders by those in power is somewhat of a leitmotiv that is repeated over and over again. Whilst for some nations, 1945 was the year of liberation from Nazi-fascism, other states in Eastern Europe simply went from being dominated by one foreign power to being dominated by another, turning a prosperous future into terrible misfortune: the final shot showing the black smoke from the train in the middle of the countryside is in this respect symbolic; what should have been a cause for celebration (a wedding) turns into tragedy, in which no one is free from blame, from the parish priest to the mayor, from masters to servants; indeed it's no accident that the only positive characters end up leaving the village.

Whilst this small village is the spitting image of Hungarian society, certain shots sum up the film, real explanatory depictions that require no dialogue, whilst the camera observes the victims discretely, always from the sidelines



or from the other side of windows or bars (how can we not think of the barbed wire lining the border between Hungary and Serbia?). It's almost as if the narration were purposefully deferential, one that is painful but necessary not only to understand what happened in the past, and therefore what's happening now, but with the feeling that foreseeing a threatening future is a duty, and that certain tragedies aren't accidental but the result of the dissemination of demented ideas of the likes of nationalism and racism. Török's film perhaps put too many irons in the fire for its 1h30 running time with so many narrative lines, some of which remain largely unexplored (for example the relationship between the locals and the Russian soldiers), but in substance it is an honest film that commits itself to portraying Hungary in the immediate post-war period, showing that fearing that which is foreign (back then Jews, today migrants) never pays off.

<http://cineuropa.org/nw.aspx?t=newsdetail&l=en&did=323567>

The Hollywood Reporter: Homecoming (1945)

by Boyd van Hoey

Hungarian director Ferenc Török's latest, an adaptation of a short story by Gabor T. Szanto, is a black-and-white drama set in the immediate postwar period in rural Hungary.

The arrival of two Orthodox Jews upsets the wedding day of a rural town clerk's son in Hungary in 1945, a mournful choral drama in elegant black and white from Magyar director Ferenc Török. More a portrait of a community's collective guilt and shame than a character drama about a handful of individuals, this adaptation of the short story *The Homecoming* from co-screenwriter Gabor T. Szanto examines how a town really feels about having moved into the homes and started eating off the plates of the Jews that vanished during the war, raising the twin specters of culpability and dishonor when two men of that faith return.

Handsomely shot by veteran cinematographer Elemér Ragalyi (*Anne Frank: The Whole Story*), this is a respectable if somewhat predictable addition to the canon of movies dealing with the immediate postwar period that should see decent returns in local specialist venues. It might attract more attention abroad if chosen as Hungary's submission in next year's foreign-language Oscar category, though it now has fierce competition in *On Body and Soul*, which just won the Golden Bear in Berlin, where both films premiered.

Menemsha Films has picked up stateside rights.

Török is best known for his loose-limbed debut, *Moscow Square*, a portrait in smudgy colors of a group of high-school kids in 1989, the year the Iron Curtain came down. The historical period he examines here is similarly in flux, with the Nazis having barely left and the liberating Soviet forces still around, though Communism is still several years away and everyone in the small, unnamed rural community is trying their hardest to get back to normal.

The arrival of an elderly Orthodox Jew (Ivan Angelus) and his adult son (Marcell Nagy), transporting two mysterious wooden boxes from the train station to the town, upsets everyone. Might they be relatives or friends, or acting on behalf of the Jews who used to live there? Have they come to claim the property and possessions of local Jewish families that the remaining villagers have divided up amongst themselves? As they silently march behind the horse-drawn carriage carrying their goods, the villagers,



having been hastily informed by the stationmaster (Istvan Znamenak) that the two black-clad strangers are coming, start to worry or even panic. The imperious, mustachioed town clerk, Istvan (Peter Rudolf), is outwardly defiant, continuing the preparations for the nuptials of his milquetoast son, Arpad (Bence Tasnadi), as if nothing were the matter. But even that is no easy task: The future bride, Rozsi (Dora Sztarenki), seems to love Arpi's drugstore but it quickly becomes clear that her heart belongs to the sexually forward Jancsi (Tamas Szabo Kimmel), who speaks Russian and has no qualms about loving up either the Soviets or the bride-to-be.

Very different reactions in the parish are sometimes apparent under one roof: Bandi (Jozsef Szarvas), the village drunk, is wracked with guilt and wants to give everything back straight away. But his steely, overly pragmatic wife (Agi Szirtes) prefers to hide her newly "acquired" carpets and silverware in the basement. "If anyone asks, the stuff isn't here, the Germans took it — or the Russians," she says, exposing both her own selfishness and the chaos of the immediate postwar period that the characters were using to excuse their behavior.

The lean screenplay by Török and Szanto isn't much interested in individual psychology. The film opens on Istvan, who feels closest to a traditional protagonist though he barely grows or changes over the course of the narrative. Similarly, the subplot involving Arpi, his wife-to-be, Rozsi, and her lover, Jancsi, feels rather perfunctory and clichéd in terms of its scant character development. But the film is interested in human behavior and group dynamics on a wider scale. For example, the love triangle, as contrasted with the actions and feelings of the villagers faced with the two strangers, highlights how people might be intellectually willing to do the right thing or to reasonably compromise. But in the end, reason might still have to make way for the devastating force of selfish desires.

As a portrait of group behavior leading down a gloomy path, the story is ugly but also quite familiar. It echoes Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold* in the way the villagers' actions are almost preordained by a combination of their own positions and the expectations of others. But it never reaches the unsettling insight of either that novel or something like Haneke's proto-Fascist parable *The White Ribbon*, also shot in black and white.

Instead, the drama's restrained and solemn tone is occasionally interrupted by somewhat ungainly moments that border on the melodramatic — like Török focusing his camera on a pair of tiny shoes that belonged to a child who perished in the war; or Istvan accusing his bed-ridden wife (Eszter Nagy-Kalozy, Rudolf's real-life spouse) of having slept with the Jewish friend he betrayed to the authorities. Thankfully, these off notes are few.

In terms of its look, *Homecoming* (1945) is heavily indebted to films from the 1930s and '40s, especially in the way Török and cinematographer Ragalyi do their blocking and assemble elements visually within the frame. The convincingly lived-in sets and numerous exteriors are by ace architect and production designer Laszlo Rajk, who also worked on the recent Hungarian Oscar winner *Son of Saul*. Tibor Szemző's music evolves from a spare and sinister percussion theme to a more full-bodied score that incorporates traditional, Jewish-sounding strings as the strangers approach their tragic destination.

