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Adaptation Strategies in József Pacskovszky's *The Wonderful Journey of Kornél Esti*

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Abstract. The present paper aims at a parallel analysis of the narrative specificities of Dezső Kosztolányi's *Kornél Esti* and its film adaptation directed by József Pacskovszky, *The Wonderful Journey of Kornél Esti* [*Esti Kornél csodálatos utazása*, 1994]. The short story cycle *Kornél Esti* drifts apart from the classical narrative tradition, and through its metapoetical figures and the complexity of its genre combining narration with treatise and essay it can be related to late modern literary discourses. Its adaptation under discussion can be regarded as a representative example of (self-)reflexivity in film, which initiates a medial-intermedial dialogue both with literary and film tradition.

Keywords: metanarrative, reflexive adaptation, silent cinema, mise-en-abyme, heterotopia

Kosztolányi's oeuvre is a recurrent challenge of Hungarian film history, and within, that of Hungarian adaptation. The present paper aims at an analytical rather than historical approach, focusing mainly on the narrative aspects of a particular adaptation, however, we cannot ignore the fact that the character of adaptations is considerably determined by the context of (film) history as well. In his survey of the history of Hungarian adaptation, Gábor Gelencsér (2006) considers that prior to the postmodern literary achievements of the 1980s, adaptation is the dominant figure of Hungarian film history.

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The first adaptation of Kosztolányi, *Anna* (*Édes Anna*, 1958) was directed by Zoltán Fábry in the period after the revolution of 1956. From a film historical point of view, this film is the product of the period paving the way for modernism (1954–1962)[1]. In these years the relationship between film and literature becomes closer, the classical adaptation is in its prime. As an expression of the spirit of the age, Fábry's expressionist, visionary approach reinforces the events constituting the historical background of the novel, turning the film into a means of expressing overtones only mildly suggested by Kosztolányi's novel.

In the 1960s, in the period of the Hungarian new wave cinema (1963-1969), the history of adaptating Kosztolányi's works to the screen continues with two films directed by László Ranódy: *Skylark* [*Pacsirta*, 1963] and *Golden Dragon* [*Aranysárkány*, 1966]. Ranódy's adaptations do not belong to the films that bear the traces of the changes in attitude and in form of expression of the period. Gábor Gelencsér considers it surprising that in the age of the auteur cinema, in which the relationship between literature and film is redefined in several respects, there are only two adaptations which join the new wave endeavours, namely, *Twenty Hours* [*Húsz óra*, 1965] directed by Zoltán Fábri and *Cold Days* [*Hideg napok*, 1966] directed by András Kovács. The monochrome and color adaptations of Kosztolányi's two novels, the *Skylark* [*Pacsirta*] and the *Golden Dragon* [*Aranysárkány*], which continue the nineteenth century narrative traditions further towards the depths of psychological prose, represent versions of the classical adaptation pattern, due to the elaboration of plot in accordance with the text and due to the acting aiming at psychological genuineness. The value of the film *Skylark* lies in the eminent acting, as well as in the coded messages addressed to the viewer of the time, eager to notice hidden meanings and contents. The main character is acted by Anna Nagy, her parents are acted by Klári Tolnay and Antal Páger, emblematic actors of Hungarian film art; Ranódy's film mainly focuses on the psychological drama of the parents. The merit of the *Golden Dragon* is indisputably the performance of László Mensáros, acting professor Novák.

In the 1980s—from a film historical point of view, the eighties represent a transitional period (1979-1986)—Ranódy returns to Kosztolányi's oeuvre; his episodic film entitled *I Dream of Colorful Inks* [*Színes tintákról álmodom, 1980*] combines three short stories—*The Key* [*Kulcs*]*, Bathing* [*Fürdés*] *and The Chinese Pitcher* [*Kínai kancsó*]—with an amateur film shot with the members of the Kosztolányi family; the images taken from their everyday life are paralleled with the stories of Kosztolányi's literary heroes. Ranódy's death also meant the death of the type of adaptation represented by him.

In the period of film history defined as the political and poetical reflection of the change of regime (1987-1995), which does not abound in adaptations, the

[1] I rely on Gábor Gelencsér's periodization of film history (2006).

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young director József Pacskovszky, at the beginning of his career, turns again towards the Kosztolányi theme, more precisely, towards a segment of unique aesthetic value of Kosztolányi's life work. The short story cycle of *Kornél Esti* drifts apart from the classical narrative tradition, and through its metapoetical figures and the complexity of its genre combining narration with treatise and essay, it can be related to late modern literary discourses. As a result of the character of the literary source, of the modes of film narrative becoming highly sophisticated by the 1990s, and also of the director's creative vision, *The Wonderful Journey of Kornél Esti* [*Esti Kornél csodálatos utazása*, 1994] can be regarded as a representative example of (self-) reflexivity in film, which initiates a medial-intermedial dialogue both with literary and film tradition.

Most often, adaptations are based on one author's single work. Those based on several texts, connected in accordance with the scriptwriter's conceptions, usually assume an additional task: that of rendering the writer's world view (Cf. Gelencsér 2006). The genre of short story proves to be the most frequent and the most proper starting point in such cases. As far as the concept of the totality of the work of art, the borders of the literary work are concerned, the *Kornél Esti* text(s) maintain a degree of uncertainty. It is hard to decide—and in the spirit of *Kornél Esti* we can even say that the difficulty in making a decision in this respect is coded within the text—,whether the short stories are juxtaposed at random, or they are linked together, constituting an organic unity.

Béla Németh G. draws attention to the fact that Kosztolányi did not start writing the pieces of the Esti Kornél as the parts of a previously planned whole. The gesture of revision and connection is subsequent; and, what is relevant from the point of view of the film, besides the separate *Esti* volume, not only in short stories written after, but also in those written prior to it, there appear the questions, motifs and rhetorical specificities characteristic of *Kornél Esti*, what is more, the world of *Kornél Esti* is reflected in some poems as well (117). If we define the "Esti syndrome" of Kosztolányi's works as an attitude to life, as a world view or as a meditative, contemplative, stoic philosophical standpoint, then the above mentioned borders of the text seem to dissolve, which can justify the apparent incompatibility that the title of the film contains the name of Kornél Esti, though the selection of the texts that will constitute the source of Pacskovszky's adaptation is not limited to the *Esti Kornél* corpus.

These texts can be read in an optional order, no logic of causality or temporality can be set up within their relation. Later chapters allude to earlier phases of Kornél Esti's life, there is no chronological order in the construction of the biography, what is more, we cannot even speak of a biography, Kornél Esti is not the hero of a Bildungsroman, not a round character in the sense of the novel tradition, but rather a rhetorical "figure", a *linguistic* Doppelgänger, the double of the speaker projected into the text.

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The double, the Doppelgänger appears not only at a thematic, but also at a formal level, as a text structuring principle: based on certain structural correspondences, Mihály Szegedy-Maszák (1987) considers the book entitled *Kornél Esti*, published in 1933 in form of an independent volume, and the short stories forming a cycle from the volume entitled *Tarn* [*Tengerszem*], published in 1936, as each other's *doubles*.

Kornél Esti is undoubtedly the alter ego of the writer, in the sense that the abstract author delegates the task of text production—whether written or spoken—to this figure, whose distinct feature is in this way to serve as a pretext for an imaginary dialogue set up between different narrative positions. The pretext of the double is essential in order to create and to maintain a dialogical situation between Kornél Esti and the unidentified first person narrator (in this case the abstract author), dialogue which bears Platonic and Socratic reminiscences of the genre, and at the same time provides the mirror structure of narration, the permanent switches of roles between the homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators, the alternation of the narratorial point of view. The narratorial situation is not always unambiguous, it may also happen that due to a subsequent intercalation (e.g. "*Kornél Esti said*"—in the last piece of the *Kornél Esti* cycle, in the *Eighteenth Chapter*) the whole narratorial discourse is put in quotation marks, and is thus assigned to Kornél Esti.

The often quoted architextual comment of the opening chapter withdraws the *Esti Kornél*-texts from among the traditionally distinguishable genres, undermines the concept of the story existing prior to narration, the ideal of the novel pattern based on causality, the ideal of biography, instead, it formulates the poetics of possible worlds, it takes over the romantic ideal of fragmentariness, of course, not devoid of self-irony either: "*It is a travel account, in which I relate where I would have liked to travel, a novelized biography in which I also account for how many times the hero died in his dream. I stick to one thing. Do not glue it with some awkward story. Everything should remain what is proper for a poet: a fragment*" (1965. 586, translated by me, J. P.). This self-referential instruction of the text remains valid also for its transposition into motion picture. Pacskovszky's film endeavors to face this challenge.

Most interpreters (Szegedy-Maszák 1987, Bengi 2000, Dobos 2002) unanimously consider the text of *Kornél Esti* as a complex of self-referential, metapoetical figures. Mihály Szegedy-Maszák mentions several aspects of the self-mirroring character of the text(s): the world of *Kornél Esti* is a literary world, in which the undefined narrator and the title figure are both writers, there are many allusions to texts within texts, to the act of reading and writing; *Kornél Esti* abounds in linguistic games. Esti is present in the texts both as a character, a partaker in the events, and as a narrator, reflecting on events he is not part of, assuming a continuously interpreting, evaluating and contemplating attitude.

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Kornél Esti, as a narrator, is not always reliable: "Esti's reliability is disputable, because in *Kornél Esti* the speaker is not the same as the viewer, the subjective speaking situation does not necessarily mean an outer point of view, the objective speaking situation does not necessarily presuppose an inner point of view. The point of view is not a part, but the limit of the narrated world; an eye, through which we see without seeing the eye itself" (135).

The present paper does not aim at fully exploring the narrative specificities of the literary text; our purpose is to examine to what extent the film preserves the metapoetic character of Kosztolányi's text and renders a similarly, analogously reflexive film narrative.

According to Friedrich Kittler, since the birth of the film on 28 December 1895, the unmistakable criterion of high standard literature has been the impossibility of turning it into a film (314). If we regard adaptation as an act of translation, then Kittler's statement is consonant with Kosztolányi's translation theory rooting in his organic view of language: the possibility of translation from one language into another has different stages, and the more developed a language, the less it can be translated (Cf. Szegedy-Maszák 167). What is more, in an essay Kosztolányi even writes, polemically of course: "*It is impossible to translate*" (120, translated by me, J. P.). Analogously, in the sense of this approach, it would be impossible to adapt *Kornél Esti* to the screen.

The two theoretical impossibilities—that of translation from one language into another and transposition from one medium to another—essentially refer to the same act of faithfully *re*producing an original. The linguistic games of *Kornél Esti*, the diversity and often ambivalence of narrative tone, modality (Cf. Bengi 10-11), the alternation of the point of view, the lack of a storyline (the reader might suspect, the "story" is the act of narration itself) is indeed incompatible with any intention of transposition aiming at fidelity to the letter of the text.

In another essay Kosztolányi expounds the above quoted "impossibility":

> If we acknowledge literary translation as being justified, then we cannot expect the translator to offer a word by word translation, as faithfulness to the letter is in fact unfaithfulness. The material of every language is different. The sculptor solves his task differently if he has to carve the figure in marble or wood. The materiality imposes a change, and the statue is always made by two: by the sculptor and by the material itself. The work of the literary translator is similar. He has to carve a statue in a totally distinct material. Freedom is necessary for this. One must not translate a poem with the preciseness of an official translator just as one must not translate a play upon words literally. He has to create something new instead, another one, which is identical with the original in spirit, music and form. A fake, which, still, is true. To translate is to dance in chains. (575, translated by me, J. P.)

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As it can be seen, Kosztolányi's concept is embedded in the romantic tradition of creative freedom. Fidelity to the letter of the original is in fact infidelity, striving for an identical reproduction fails to transmit the spirit of the source text. Accordingly, there is no point in calling to account the compositional, poetical and rhetorical unity of the literary text, its irrepeatable uniqueness inseparable from its materiality.

In the film under discussion an inherent, not transparent, *literary* universe is formed, with closed frames, out of which there is no "passage" to "reality" in the sense that the film rejects the illusion of reality; instead, by making use of several devices, techniques and procedures, by making reference to film history as well as paradigms of film theory, it creates a reflexive *textual* space.

One way of achieving this is by breaking the continuity of narration. The ruptures of the narrative flow suspend the possibility of relating a story based on causality, on the interaction of characters etc. Apparently, there are two parallel journeys, that of the young Kornél and the adult Esti, two temporal hypostases of the same personality, Kornél travelling towards life (symbolized by the motif of the sea) and Esti travelling towards death (expressed in the metaphorical layer of "the last lecture"). In fact, the film does not put in parallel two separate storylines, two independent journeys, but there are several knots tangling up the narrative threads, there are several intercalations, several moments of passing from one narrative level to the other, which result in a highly stylized, metaphorical, mental chronotope.

The film respects the metafictional character of the literary text and seems to follow the inherent instructions of the short stories, responding to the challenge of genuinely rendering Kornél Esti's mental journey. For example, the following statement, taken from the famous ars poetica chapter of the short story cycle, namely, the *Nineth chapter*, can be considered such an instruction, (mis)guiding the reader in the textual universe: "After expounding all this, I remembered that the opposite is also valid, at least to the same extent, as in the case of everything in this world" (670, translated by me, J. P.). This sentence reminds the reader of the fact that in the textual universe under discussion the meanings do not have a referential validity, the freedom of language undermines the authority of meaning, besides, it is difficult to formulate any statement about the text, about the work of art itself, without validating its opposite at the same time.

As follows, I will examine the selection of the literary material to be transposed into film. I have already mentioned that Pacskovszky does not only rely on texts taken from the *Kornél Esti* cycle, he also makes use of other short stories, poems, what is more, the script is completed with elements written in the spirit of Kosztolányi's texts. In fact, three chapters are taken from the *Esti Kornél* cycle, namely, the *Third chapter*, which relates the story of the journey to the sea (summary: "in which, in 1903, immediately after school leaving, in the train at

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night, he is kissed on his lips by a girl"), the *Seventh chapter*, ("in which there occurs Kücsük, the Turkish girl, who is like a honey cake "), as well as the *Fifteenth chapter* ("in which Pataki is worried about his son, while he is worried about his new poem"). I have to mention here that the short summaries of the chapters ironically play upon this convention of adventure novels. The film more or less adjusts to the former two chapters, though there can also be found significant changes: for instance, in the *Third chapter*, at the end of the journey to the sea, the dialogue between Kornél and the mother of the handicapped girl is in fact a virtual conversation, an interior dialogue, the young writer candidate expressing his compassion towards the suffering mother (this compassion towards a fellow human being initiates him into the world of literature), while the film "amplifies" this conversation, the dialogue actually takes place between the characters. Thus the film version becomes a kind of "exteriorization," "concretization" of the literary text. As concerns the *Fifteenth chapter*, it is transcribed to a greater extent: in the text Pataki is worried about his son's appendectomy, whereas in the film he is concerned about his wife's incurable disease, and while the writer is engaged in the problems around writing a poem, Pataki jumps out of the window (the suicide is an additional element as compared to the text). In this way the film alters the interpretation of the message: in the short story art is opposed to life, life and art discredit each other, Kosztolányi ridicules the concept of *impassibilité* of art towards the problems of life, considered of lower rank as compared to the decision of including or leaving out a few lines from the poem. The film reinforces the interpretation that art is *incapable* of solving real life problems. Pacskovszky interprets the "film version" literally: if it is a *version*, then the script really has to bring significant and meaningful changes to the source text.

The script extends beyond the limits of the *Kornél Esti* cycle. From among the short stories written prior to *Kornél Esti*, the script includes *The Woman from Vienna* [*A bécsi asszony*] and *Hrusz Krisztina's Wonderful Visit* [*Hrusz Krisztina csodálatos látogatása*], and from among those written after it, out of the short stories of the volume entitled *Tarn* [*Tengerszem*], *The Last Lecture* [*Az utolsó fölolvasás*] is included. The film dramatizes two versions of the story *The Woman from Vienna*: a version with Kornél and a version with Esti, the latter being the adaptation of Kosztolányi's text, the former being a "double" created by the script. In the former version Kornél asks Sárkány to allow him to use his flat in order to meet the woman from Vienna; in the latter version Ábel, a friend asks the same thing from Esti. There is a chiastic symmetry between the two stories. Similarly, the events taking place at the railway station from Marienhof have two versions reflecting each other. The parallel of the stories of the young Kornél and of the old Esti is highlighted by the juxtaposition of the elements of the story, what is more, the camera movement provides the passage from one level to the other: the camera moves horizontally from one level to the other, there is no cut, the passage is

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carried out within one single motion picture. Additionally, one sequence is shot from various camera angles, from various points of view. This technique might remind us of a former literary experiment, which left its imprint on film as well: the French roman nouveau was interested in the variation of the point of view within narration, and Alain Resnais–Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Last Year in Marienbad* is the best example of this endeavor in film.

There appear several episodes which merely allude to Kosztolányi's texts, without carrying out a full dramatization, e.g. *The Bulgarian Conductor* [*A bolgár kalauz*] and *Happiness* [*Boldogság*]. The literary texts are present in the film in several ways: quoted by the *voice over* narrator—whether with Esti's or with Kornél's voice—included in the characters' discourse, e.g. quotations from poems: *Kornél Esti's Song* [*Esti Kornél éneke*], playful crambos, also "performed" both by Esti and by Kornél, or in form of mise-en-scène (either restricted to an episode or based on the whole text). The frame story as well as the opening and closing scenes are provided by the text entitled *The Last Lecture* [*Az utolsó fölolvasás*].

In Kosztolányi's work entitled *The Technique of Writing* traveling becomes the allegory of the writer's career: "Our journey is dark. There are no traffic lights to warn us. Our railway stations do not have names. We go ahead, blindly and insecurely, and we do not know when, where and why we arrive" (371, translated by me, J. P.). Accordingly, in the film the train journey has an obvious metaphorical meaning, it is a journey leading through memories, visions towards the inner layers of the self.

The relativity of time and space is emphasized in the *Third chapter*: "Did they travel backwards or forwards? Half an hour had passed? Or only half a minute?" (609, translated by me, J. P.). The film narrative suggests a mental journey, in which time is flexible, reversible: the piece of paper, on which Esti writes for Kücsük, the Turkish girl the most beautiful Hungarian words of Turkish origin, becomes visible for Kornél through the train window, as if coming from the future. The relativity of time, the difference between the subjective and the objective time is also suggested by the fact that in the railway station from Marienhof, Esti's watch shows a time different from the clock of the railway station.

The *voice over* narratorial comment, whether with Esti's voice, or with Kornél's one, does not respect the rules of retrospection; the two voices are randomly combined, even within one sequence. In other cases, the voice frame does not correspond to the image frame, the narratorial comment or the background music extend over the cuts between the sequences, and as a result of these incongruencies the borders between the narrative levels are dissolved. The film applies the technique of shot–reverse shot in a way that it seems as if Esti and Kornél were travelling together, face-to-face on the train, though they belong to ontologically different dimensions. Thus, the simultaneity of the different narrative levels is achieved.

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The sequences follow one another in a way that everyday space experience is broken. This is achieved by various unrealistic effects. For example, the mise-en-scène of the short story entitled *The Woman from Vienna*—Esti meets the mysterious woman in his flat—ends by the conductor's entering the compartment and asking for the tickets: the room interior abruptly turns into the interior of a compartment. Film space is an artefact, as it is illustrated by the antropomorphic moon face witnessing Esti and Kücsük's kiss in the train window, the background reminding of a theatrical scenery (see picture No. 1). Esti, having a conversation with the conductor, points upwards: at the top of the train a woman can be seen, performing an opera aria. This surrealistic vision can be interpreted as a self-reflexive gesture of the film: the aspiration towards totality is expressed in relation to the medium itself: totality, in terms of film, would be a kind of Gesamtkunstwerk best expressed by the art of the opera (see picture No. 2).

On his journey to his last lecture, Esti looks into the camera, and addresses not only the hypothetical future audience, but also the actual viewer of the film. The look into the camera, the direct contact with the viewer is a taboo in principle, the viewer experiences the shell of a fictional world from the outside, and if the character looks out, the shell of fiction is broken (see picture No. 3).

The schemes of classical narration are broken also by allusions to film history. Pacskovszky's film initiates a vivid, playful dialogue with the early film. The exposition of the film is a stylistic paraphrase of the silent cinema: the sequences of the exposition are monochrome, accelerated in the manner of the early film, the actors act similarly to silent film actors, the scenes are accompanied by piano music, and there are intertitles. Esti and Kornél appear in black and white suits respectively, as each other's contrastive reflections. The contrastive feature of the motif of the double functions well visually, they appear as antagonistic figures characteristic of the burlesque. They perform the movements and gestures necessary for setting out for a journey, they repeat each other's gestures, reminding the viewer of the farcical situations of the burlesque. However, there is a little delay in their movements, and the exchange of hats definitely breaks the mirror-effect, they reach across the hypothetical mirror between them, the illusion of which is thus dissolved. The exchange of hats mocks at the viewer's expectation of adventure, at the "black hat white hat" character types well known from commercial films (see picture No. 4).

The sequence following the exposition is similarly a silent film paraphrase, in which the main motifs, namely traveling, woman and death are linked: at the railway station a woman disguised in a death mask, the actress of the early cinema chases the writer (see picture No. 5). The travel by train is illustrated by images of the engine and the wheels, which seem to be archive shots of earlier movies, from the early period of film history. These images have not only a diegetic, but also a metadiegetic function, showing that the journey takes place in a mental space and

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time, at the same time back into film history. The evocation of film history, the nostalgia towards the beginning of the film medium can be partially explained by the fact that these images create the atmosphere of the time when Kosztolányi's writings were actually born.

Pacskovszky's film assigns diegetic function to visual quotations, quasi-quotations alluding to the early period of film history, which originally enchanted the viewers by the power of showing rather than by the elaborated techniques of narration. Tom Gunning (1992) highlights the non-narrative character of Lumière's and Méliès' early cinema, as compared to later development of cinema. He considers the first films as films of attraction, through which the viewer witnessed a sort of magic. Because of this, the viewer's attitude was that of unconditioned admiration, being influenced by the irresistible splendour of the image. As the film gained ground, and newer techniques and procedures came to light, the cinema of attraction was gradually repressed by the narrative film; however, it had an indisputable influence on later chapters of film history as well.

The reflexive character of Pacskovszky's adaptation is reinforced by various techniques of embedding films within the film. The train window functions—with Foucault's term—as a heterotopia. Esti prepares for the last lecture in the compartment, in front of the window/stage courtains. The reaction of the public—applause, cheering, then howling him down—can be heard too, as noises coming from outside the image frame. Then, the train window serves as a screen on which mental images are projected. Looking out of the window, Kornél watches the film of his daydreams. The opening pictures of the short story entitled *The Woman from Vienna* are also projected onto the window, Ábel and Esti greet each other from ontologically different dimensions; in another sequence the *voice over* narrator describes the cities, and in the meantime the images projected onto the window illustrate the description; further on, Grete tries to arouse in Esti the memory of their former meeting, after the unsuccessful trial she gets off the train and sits onto her husband's motorcycle, which is projected onto the train window in form of a close up (see picture No. 6).

This procedure, that of projecting a film onto the train window results in a sort of *mise-en-abyme*, respectively, it evokes the metaphor of the film as window in film theory. André Bazin interprets film by making use of the metaphor of the window: according to him, film is a window to reality, it represents reality (contrary to this theory, Rudolf Arnheim and Sergei Eisenstein expound the metaphor of the film as a frame, representing an abstraction differing from reality).

The other embedded film, film-within-film is the one projected in the Fortuna cinema, where Esti goes on Wednesday evenings, while Ábel has a date with the woman in his flat. While the short story only mentions that the homodiegetical narrator, who is also a partaker in the story, is away during the rendezvous, the film fills the empty spaces (*Leerstellen*, Iser) of the literary text, and sends the writer to

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the cinema. There, on different occasions, Esti watches the same film: sequences from a sort of silent film parody, a love assault which seems to dramatize his repressed subconscious. Psychoanalytic traces can be found in Kosztolányi's prose writings as well. In a psychoanalytic approach, the film is conceived on the analogy of the dream as well as on the analogy of the mirror. The latter metaphor is inspired by the Lacanian subject: the motion picture is a kind of mirror-image of the viewer, creating the possibility of identification with the film universe. Thus, the film can be interpreted in psychological terms, as the projection of inner dreams and desires.

From among the psychoanalytical terms applied to film, the most popular one, namely, voyeurism is also a motif of Pacskovszky's adaptation. The short story entitled *The Woman from Vienna* itself contains the motif of voyeurism. In the film Esti finds the woman in his flat. Their meeting is emblematic, I cannot help interpreting this image allegorically, as a metafictional allusion (see picture No. 7).

The man and the woman are situated on different parts of the mirror: in the background we can see Esti the writer's mirror reflection, while in the foreground there is the figure of the woman, the attraction of the spectacle. They can be interpreted as standing for the spheres of the verbal and the visual respectively, they belong to "other spaces" (Foucault). This image can be interpreted as a covert allusion to the relationship between film and literature: a game of otherness and mutual attraction.

Adaptations can be regarded as a special case of reception: their perception is determined, in an ideal case, by the experience, the interpretation of another, distant text. However, it works the other way round as well: the viewer's experience will not leave the reading of the text untouched either. The relationship between film and literature is a dynamic relationship, fusion as well as dispersion, if it is thought of in terms like palimpsest (Genette) or heterotopia (Foucault). On these grounds it is worth reconsidering the matter of "faithful adaptation" as well, as Ágnes Pethő does:

> Instead of the question of *faithful* adaptation (which is, on the one hand, an unattainable ideal, as it is never the text but rather the interpretation that is 'adapted'; and on the other hand, as an ideal it is meaningless: why should the literary experience be doubled), it is more interesting to describe the mutually controlling motions of the bifold consciousness, and to point out the way the literary elements (those that can be traced back to literary sources) become part of the intertextual network. From a non-normative point of view, the idea is not that we should weigh and appreciate the extent to which the original text 'penetrates' through the filter of the film texture and the extent to which literature as 'source' can 'nourish' and serve the film. (105)

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As a conclusion, we can say that although Pacskovszky's art film does not belong to the epoch-making films of film history, nevertheless, its treatment of time, its metaphorical structure, the motif of the mental journey as well as the fact that it relies on several texts instead of one, relate it to Zoltán Huszárik's *Sindbad* [*Szindbád*, 1971], which is a landmark indeed, a reference in Hungarian adaptation history.

Pacskovszky creates a film universe which gains independence from the literary source, transposing literary reflexivity into film language. Still, it manages to remain faithful to the spirit of Kosztolányi's texts, considered by Teréz Vincze as being suitable for being turned into film:

> On the one hand . . . it is great if the basic material is a work which, by its content, by its structure, makes several interpretations possible, in the course of which newer and newer junctions turn up. . . . On the other hand, I consider such a literary work as being suitable for being turned into film, which is in some way related, either by its theme or by its structure, to problems and issues which are essential for film as an artistic form of expression." (172)

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Annex

Pictures from József Pacskovszky's *The Wonderful Journey of Kornél Esti* (1994)



1.



2.



3.



4.

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5.



6.



7.

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