

Mirror or Distorting Mirror? Returning Dead, Ghosts, Pedagogy

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Lessing as an author has allowed the staging of ghosts to the 18 century religious teachers. He wrote in his series of articles (Hamburgischer dramaturgie, 1767-1768): „*The mob ... thinks this way once and that way another time, it listens with joy if ghosts are mocked during the day and with thrill if it is done during the dark night. [...] The fact that people do not believe in ghosts cannot withhold a dramatic poet to make them appear in their works. We all have the seed of belief in ghosts, and mostly those the poet is writing for (i.e. in the audience)...In our everyday life we can think whatever we want to, in the theatre we have to think what the poet wants.*” (Lessing, 2003)¹ But he even further goes. If an author included a belief-creature in his play, he needed to adapt to the tradition, otherwise he may have caused disinterest or scandal. Lessing criticizes Voltaire because in his tragedy the ghost allowed himself to do things which are „*contrary to all tradition*” (Lessing, 2003).² „*And everything that does not convey the illusion disturbs the illusion*” (Lessing, 2003; Jung, 1985).³ Several well-known ghost stories have survived from the 17-18th century. From these elements the teachers could chose easily.

A printed matter was published in Pozsony in 1643. Its title was *Narratio rei admirabilis* (Narration of Admirables). The archbishop of Esztergom, György Lippay authenticated it. The document was about the return of a dead citizen, János Clemens. He was a good deed soul, and came back from Purgatory, because he committed a murder in his life. The ghost appeared as an old man in a white cloak to a girl, who earlier travelled from Hallstadt to her relatives to Pozsony. (The girl's name was Regina Fischer.)

Later, the soul left behind tangible evidences. He left the fiery imprint of his hand, among other things, on a casket, a tablecloth and a piece of wood. Into this latter thing he burned a cross because he wanted to prove that he was not an evil haunting spirit. These items of evidence still remained in the treasure of Pozsony Cathedral until 1910. Occasionally 18-20 church persons observed the ghost's presence (Ráth-Végh, 1978).

Also known the history of a citizen of Lubló, Mihály Gasperek, who came back to haunt in 1718. About this story Miklós Jósika wrote a novel and Kálmán Mikszáth a

¹ „Der größte Haufe ... denkt bald so, bald anders, hört beim hellen Tage mit Vergnügen über die Gespenster spotten und bei dunkler Nacht mit Grausen davon erzählen. [...]Aber in diesem Verstande keine Gespenster glauben, kann und darf den dramatischen Dichter im geringsten nicht abhalten, Gebrauch davon zu machen. Der Same, sie zu glauben, liegt in uns allen, und in denen am häufigsten, für die er vornehmlich dichtet. Es kömmt nur auf seine Kunst an, diesen Samen zum Keimen zu bringen; nur auf gewisse Handgriffe, den Gründen für ihre Wirklichkeit in der Geschwindigkeit den Schwung zu geben. Hat er diese in seiner Gewalt, so mögen wir in gemeinem Leben glauben, was wir wollen; im Theater müssen wir glauben, was Er will.”

² „...sind wider alles Herkommen“.

³ „...Und alles, was die Illusion ... nicht befördert, störet die Illusion.”

novelette. Gasperek after his death repeatedly returned in a red dress galloping on horseback on the streets. He attacked some peaceful passers and beat them. Also he attended some weddings and there ate and drank (usually he demanded fried fish). Moreover, he got his wife pregnant as well as several nearby pious maidens who worked on the fields. If somewhere someone did not open the door for him, he pounded and clamoured terribly. As soon as possible, official proceedings have been instituted against him.

The bishop of Cracow permitted the excavation of his grave and then Gasperek's body was burnt. His heart remained intact; the dead returned again and started arson everywhere in the town. When the authorities realized that the dead man's heart is still unhurt, they demanded that from the relatives who hid it at home. Thereafter, they burned the organ to dust, and then the danger ceased.

Gasperek claimed that he had to return because there was home for him „neither in heaven nor in hell”. He alluded to a perpetrated crime in his earthly life with this, but what exactly this sin had been was never found out (Róth-Végh, 1978).

The third of contemporary material is from 1818, its writer is Sámuel Kazinczy, a chief medical officer in a Hayduc District. The title is *Debreczeni Professor Hatvani István életéből töredékek* (Fragments of the life of Professor István Hatvani from Debrecen) (Tóth, 1899). In the 7th part the author reports about the outing of an evil haunting spirit. According to the story a certain person, Mrs. M. J. came back after her death. Her husband asked Professor Hatvani to drive away the ghost. Hatvani undertook the task. At midnight he went to the tomb of Mrs. M. J. Suddenly, a „*full-sputum animal apparition*” (Tóth, 1899),⁴ appeared which first turned into a dragon then became a flaming wild boar. The wild boar dug up the grave with his nose and pulled out the corpse from the pit. He shook out the bones from the body, put up the skin and then went to haunt. Hatvani sat on the bones and prevented the monster to put the corpse back into the grave. At dawn the infernal beast painfully screamed and sank into the ground and the professor buried the corpse. From then, this haunting ceased (Tóth, 1899:44-47).

The plays, which we examine, arose almost in this time. The Márton Bolla's *Ariszton* was probably written in Nyitra from 1778 to 1779. Bolla before ordained a priest when he was a novice compiled and took his comedy to the stage. This is his single known drama. Bolla's play remained a manuscript, because he did not consider his work so important (Demeter et al., 2002). We have evidence that he wanted to perform it in a theatre. Maybe that is why he did not urge the print of the text (Demeter et al., 2002). The location of the drama (*Klázoména* – Κλαζομένα), the characters and the names of the actors remind us of Plautus' and Terence's plays. The names of some of Bolla's characters appear in the ancient authors' dramas. Plautus' *Mostellaria* may have been his direct source. *Ariszton* also became source of further authors: the Piarist Hagymási Imre's *Garabonczás László* and an unknown Jesuit author's *Prelukai László*, spring from Plautus Molière's *Les Fourberies de Scapin*, and these are starting points for other Hungarian catholic school-dramas too. Between these there are 5 Piarists, 2 Jesuits and 1 Minorit comedy in the 1770s (Demeter et al., 2002).

Two cities and two times are attached to Kristóf Simai's comedy, the *Váratlan vendég* (Unexpected Guest). The first manuscript arose in Kecskemét, from 1772 to 1777. The hand written variant could be an impurum (unclearing draft) (Czibula et al., 2007). The printed variant was published in Kassa in *Magyar Museum* (1788-89)

⁴ „egy csupa köpedelem állat-tünemény”

(Czibula et al., 2007:469). Before the print Simai had rewritten some scenes, left out some unnecessary characters, in a word he transformed his work into more suitable form to literary appearance. Simai's sources are:

1. Plautus' *Mostellaria* („Ghostiada”),
2. Ludvig Holberg's *Huus – spøgellse eller Abracadabra* („Homemade” Spooks or Abracadabra; after German translation from 1775)

Simai significantly transformed the bases of Plautus. In the Simai's play there are fourteen more scenes than in Plautus'. The Piarist author adapted the structure of the drama from five-act-form into three-act-form. It is more comfortable for the audience. It is important to note that there exist a more direct spring head of Simai's play: there is a comedy with the title of *Filargus* (Tokaj, 1777). Only a description is known about it, the full text disappeared or it is incubated somewhere. The Piarist Bernát Benyák may have written it (Czibula et al., 2007:471). The action is similar to *Váratlan vendég*.⁵

The appearance of the ghost indicates an important change in both texts. In *Mostellaria* the spook is included just in the narrative of the slave Tranio, who in this way wants to keep away the father Theopropides, in order to avoid him seeing the prodigal lifestyle of his son, Philolaces and his relation with the hooker Philematium. In *Váratlan vendég* Ravaszi (Cunninger) the servant of Pasarlai (Wastefuller) himself costumed into a ghost in order to drive away Lambert Pasarlai's father. In *Ariszton* Szanga the insidious slave states about Ariszton that he is a ghost so that he wants to prevent the meeting of Ariszton and Demifo. It is an interesting turn in the story when Ariszton starts to play the role of the spectre. He does that because he sees the scare of Demifo and he notices that he cannot be convinced about his aliveness. The ghost is played by Ravaszi an alleged trader who was murdered and mugged in the house of Lambert. He appears with covered face in a dirty cloak and he howls threateningly. He blames Lambert of disturbing his tranquillity (Lambert had knocked on the door of the house and harassed the spook) and threatened with dragging the poor father away to Hell. Lambert tries to cast him off by an incantation („*Abra-kad-á-bra-abra-kad-á-bra, kad-á-bra, kad-á-bra!*”) then in his deepest despair he hands over two thousand gold to the evil spirit in order to escape. Demifo and Antifo (he is the slave of Demifo) run into the house from Ariszton after they attempt to keep away the ghost by the blood of a black cock. When Ariszton arrives Demifo tries to get away, but Antifo fights Ariszton with a club. Then Ariszton has to take the role of the returning dead again and expel the two frightened people.

Ariszton seems to be a translation by its names and locations accordingly, but the plot includes more thought than *Váratlan vendég*. In *Mostellaria* and *Váratlan vendég* the haunting bounds to the abandoned house, in *Ariszton* the ghost comes from the direction of the sea to his old home, therefore outside from the border of human residence.

But then, both spirits can be classified into same category of returning dead, “revenant souls”, they are that sort of ghosts who returned back to the livings' world because of unfinished business or violent death (Pócs, 2002). This attribute can give some special reading to the plays. Both spirits are included into the plot because an intriguing character wants to prevent the homecoming of the father and occurrence outcome which is discomfort to them nevertheless the staging of the spooks helps the happy endings. Lambert of *Váratlan vendég* left his son uncontrolled as a prey to

⁵ The characters of the plays you can see in the Appendix.

the vicious buddies and greedy, loafer servants. So he is the reason of the slide of the house. The manifestation of the ghost by Ravaszi could warn him of his mistake, but his neighbour Mátyus also exhorts in the handwritten version and ultimately he let his son and Ravaszi unpunished. In *Ariszton* the ghost with pending case is the main character whose scatter-brained way left his own property, entrust his son to unfaithful slaves and his wealth to the neighbours who are well-intentioned, but impotent and selfish. When he arrives to his mugged property and finds his son in servileness, his returning exposes the two disloyal servants and gives his son back. Szanga, the slave, who realised that the ghost does not pay for his deeds, but he gets freedom because his ruse helps the father and son find each other.

If we comprehend these Jesuit comedies influenced-by-Plautus and the Piarist play generated-these-impacts as identity dramas, these ghost figures pop up as marks of the father's and the son's perplexed identity (Frazer, 1925). Later, the restorations of identities simply disappeared, therefore these filled their roles as a mirror or distorting mirror of the confusion of the role of the father and the son. Both spirits vanish when the general world-order is restored and so did the father's reputation and son's respect.

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III.

Education

