THESIS STATEMENTS

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ALLEGORIES OF THE TRAGIC IN THE LATE ROMANTIC AND EARLY MODERN HUNGARIAN LITERATURE

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In my paper I have tried to re-interpret some romantic implications of the Aristotle-based problem of the “tragic”. I view the tragic “hybris” as a radical manifestation of the romantic “I”, and the “catharsis” as a similarly radical disposition of the above-mentioned “I”. In this very process, the tragic hero (again, in the romantic sense) temporarily gets “blind” (a metaphor of the tragic death), which opens up new horizons – especially from the reader’s point of view. “The time is “out of joint” (in the act of tragic blindness), which leads to the recognition of the power of time, radically re-semanticising any “stable” meaning.

After a predominantly theoretic chapter (in which I take a deeper look into the Hungarian theories of the “tragic” at the end of the 19th century) I examine the problem of the “closet drama”, that is poems written in a dramatic form, but not set on stage in their own time for any different reasons. Notably, some of the most representative Hungarian dramas (e. g. Csongor és Tünde by Mihály Vörösmarty or Tragedy of May by Imre Madách) are such “closet dramas”, which found their place on the stage many years after the death of their authors.

In the next chapter a take a closer look into the 1850s, when the technological development (better quality and cheaper press) together with the new political situation (censorship and restriction of the freedom of assembly, after the fall of the Hungarian revolution of 1848/49), and last but not least the change of reading habits opened the way for the Hungarian novel.

Consequently, Zsigmond Kemény, one of the most notable novel writers of the time turned an eye on the “decadent” romantic theatre and the tragic, trying to implement its well-tried elements in his novels – as his exemplar English and German colleagues, e. g. Walter Scott or E.T.A. Hoffmann did. This very poetic strategy proves McLuhan’s and Friedrich Kittler’s thesis about “nesting”, that is: former media never disappears completely, but appears (being conserved) in the new ones.

Finally, in the last chapter I would like to deal with the problem of “tragic epos”, specifically with the famous Hungarian epos Toldi szerelme by János Arany, which represents a very modern concept of the tragic of self-variance. At the same time, János Arany is one of the best expounder of Aristotle and translator of some of Shakespeare’s plays (Hamlet, King John and A Midsummer’s night dream) who combined the “tragic” with the modern novel and the so called popular tradition of Hungarian literature.