Abstract

The present thesis explores the relationship between literature and philosophy in the works of a Hungarian prose writer Sándor Márai (1900–1989). The first chapter presents the methodology applied in the thesis. I discuss the main questions of hermeneutics as methodology of literary studies. As an example, I depict and critically reflect on three attempts to develop hermeneutics on a strictly literary academic ground – the approaches of Hans Robert Jauss (Aesthetic of Reception and his Literary Hermeneutics), Peter Szondi (Material Literary Hermeneutics), and Richard Palmer (A Hermeneutical Manifesto). In Hans Georg Gadamer’s hermeneutics, however, I seek his propounded literary theory, i.e. Gadamer’s approach to the interpretation of a literary work. On this basis I present the principles of the hermeneutic model of the analysis of literary texts that I will use to analyse Márai’s work. Next part addresses the issue of the relationship between philosophy and literature. In a triple, thematically narrowing perspective, I deal with the relationship between literature and knowledge in general, then with the issue of the relationship between literature and philosophy that will let me demonstrate what reading literature in a “philosophical” way actually means.

This theoretical base is than applied to analyse and interpret Márai’s work in the following chapters. The second chapter discusses all of Márai’s novelistic work in terms of its relationship with philosophy. The philosophical foundations of the specific type of novel that Márai created are presented; one may even say Márai had his own quasi theory of the novel. Because of the extent of the primary sources it was necessary to group the novels so that the analysis could be carried out in a clear, logical and consistent way, and to show common themes in the novels. The novels are grouped as follows: (1) so-called “crisis novels” (kriziséregények) that are characteristic of Márai’s work from 1930s and 1940s; (2) the novel series A Garrenek műve (The Work of the Garrens); (3) the novels from the period of author’s emigration, which can be described as “historical camouflages”; (4) the essayistic novels that might be also interpreted as the author’s intellectual autobiography. The analyses show to what extent and in what ways different concepts and theories of European philosophy
(ranging from the ancient philosophy to the 20th century philosophical concepts) appear in the individual novels.

In the third chapter I deal with the issue of autobiographism of Márai’s work. I also confront the results of analyses with the content of his non-novelistic work, i.e. with journalistic texts and his diary. I address the question to what extent the philosophical elements were conscious, intended references and I describe the evolution of Márai’s interests and attitudes towards given philosophical concepts.

In the last, fourth chapter I define the basic concepts of both Márai’s work and his outlook. This chapter defines the specific “Márai’s Dictionary” as an expression of his practical philosophy (phronesis). It also demonstrates that in the case of the Hungarian writer we are dealing not only with inspirations or exemplifications of various philosophical concepts in literary texts, but also with his own reflection, which in its essence is of a philosophical (but also hermeneutic) character.

**Key words**
Sándor Márai, hermeneutics, relation between philosophy and literature, Hungarian literature, human being, personality, culture, civilization.