

Sadoveanu's Prose in European Context

Elena Golovanova¹

Abstract: Mihail Sadoveanu, the greatest Romanian prose writer of all times, consecrated his work to a single hero: the Romanian people evoked at various times, from the beginnings of the nation to the present day. Mihail Sadoveanu writes in the era of the great realist novel and the modern novel. He is the creator of the Romanian historical novel, who sees history as a huge scene in which great voivodes move in an epic, legendary and mythical space. The originality of his work lies in the ability to merge with the evoked world, so that a single narrator, the author himself, tells the life of the past and today. Sadoveanu's heroes are exponents of some categories, types or archetypes, exemplary for humanity through their deeds. Sadoveanu follows the social and historical condition of the individual, describing the present realities and those belonging to history or a past that the documents cannot attest. What gives charm to the story of Mihail Sadoveanu is the mystery that requires to be revealed and that can be reached by discovering his music, the state of balance and the significance of Sadoveanu's silence. Literary critics have appreciated that the originality of Sadoveanu's writing lays precisely in its lyricism in the realistic evocation of a living world. Sadoveanu's writings produce that state of steady happiness from enjoying the beauty of nature.

Keywords: Mihail Sadoveanu; Romanian prose; literary critics

The Romanian people, the existence of the nation, present day, great realist novel, modern novel, epic space, legendary and mythical space, archetypes, mystery, music, state of balance, Sadoveanu's silence, Mother Nature.

Mihail Sadoveanu, the greatest Romanian prose writer of all times, named by Geo Bogza "Ștefan cel Mare of Romanian Literature", consecrated his work, gathered in over 120 volumes, to a single hero: the Romanian people evoked at various times, From the beginnings of the nation to the present day.

Mihail Sadoveanu writes in the era of the great realist novel and the modern novel. He is the creator of the Romanian historical novel, who sees history as a huge scene in which great voivodes move in an epic, legendary and mythical space. The originality of his work lies in the ability to merge with the evoked world, so that a single narrator, the author himself, tells the life of the past and today.

¹ Associate Professor, PhD, Izmail State University of Humanities, Ukraine, Address: Str. Repin 12, Izmail, 68600 Odessa Oblast, Ukraine, Corresponding author: elena.univ@ukr.net.

Sadoveanu's heroes are exponents of some categories, types or archetypes, exemplary for humanity through their deeds. The author created a world through Ștefan cel Mare and Tudor Șoimaru, Vitoria and Nechifor Lipan, yeoman, boyars, men like Robin Hood and soldiers, priests and lawyers, fishermen and hunters, diplomats and merchants. Sadoveanu follows the social and historical condition of the individual, describing the present realities and those belonging to history or a past that the documents cannot attest.

What gives charm to the story of Mihail Sadoveanu is the mystery that requires to be revealed and that can be reached by discovering his music, the state of balance and the significance of Sadoveanu's silence.

Nicolae Manolescu said: "The Sadovian" story stops time, creating around man - a storyteller or a listener - a magical space that protects him. Heroes do not talk for easing their souls or confer life: but to evade life and death. "Hanu-Ancuței" is the metaphor of the Sadovian imaginary, the objectification of the secret place where the writer's immense compelling force is born. This book is perhaps the most secret key of his entire work, which he places and explains in just ninety pages." (Manolescu, 1971)

Zoe Dumitrescu Bușulenga in the volume "Itineraries by Culture" said that from a certain moment any Sadovian narrative from the most trivial present sees the natural floodgates of the tiny time of human life broken. "The phenomenon of regression in a mythical time of the origins from which everything comes bearing signs and in which all meet, is being produced by opening perspective angles of revelation for other knowledge. At the altitudes from which the mythical geographies have been seen, Sadoveanu-writer gains the power to dominate and sharpen the time and to see how from illo tempore, the streams of mythical time whose eventual charge no longer contradicts the ordinances of cosmic time, but are enframed within some enciphered causal and final relationship." (Busulenga, 1982) That is why the author seems to come as a witness from the depths of history on the one hand, and on the other he can turn back on the thread of time to the source, making by means of a deep and mysterious process of acknowledgement, the time to be repeatable and reversible.

George Călinescu, in the preface to the volume "M. Sadoveanu. Novels and historical stories" wrote: "Mihail Sadoveanu is much larger than Ion Creangă, he has the realism of Balzac and the melancholy of a romantic, the harsh meditation of Miron Costin and the sensual voluptuousness of Rabelais." (Calinescu, 1961)

He also mentioned that Sadoveanu is as precise as a Flemish painter, ineffable as a musician, contemplator of the beauties of the world and naturalist, an atmospheric creator, an impenetrable soul analyst, a prose writer, an expert of the individual and of the community, of the archaic groups and modern society, a defined wise man and a critic of the unfair social order. All registers of soul life complicated by a long civilization, are known for M.Sadoveanu; may it be archaic or advanced, his heroes are endowed with unparalleled finesse. "Mihail Sadoveanu is at the same time a writer for the people and an author for the most refined intellectuals, accessible, like Mihai Eminescu, to all imaginations."

- What distinguishes the writing of Mihail Sadoveanu from the writing of the other Romanian prose writers?

The answer to this question is given by the Romanian critic Perpessicius in "Lirism and narrative in the work of Mihail Sadoveanu", stating: "A constant and continuous fusion between lyricism of expression and the predestination of the epic print. A narrative by Mihail Sadoveanu, regardless of its proportions, a sketch, a novel of dimensions or an epic, are carried out according to the same inner canons of grace and logic, as the toss of hemp from which the Fates are tossing predestinated threads is also a source of mystery and poetry." (Sadoveanu, 1978) Body and soul with their support axis make the vine, which embraces the elm on which it rests or ivy with crutches that are woven along the marble column, as if they communicated one another the sap and the ornaments. Mihail Sadoveanu is named by Perpessicius inherent narrator and the most perfect poet of the Romanian prose of all time. And as a confirmation of this great appreciation are the wonderful words written by Mihai Sadoveanu in the Preface to "The Country beyond Haze": "In this book views and people of this earth are speaking. The mountains where hardened daresness of lonely thinking; the fog that cover the tranquility of the valleys; the waters that sing the song of eternal life renewed; the Danube and the Sea; people in scenic costumes smiling at the passing moment: this book is a tribute to piety of the One who unceasingly releases the miracles, from the pearl of the ocean shell to the delicate smile of a virgin from the mountains of Bucovina."

The main themes of the volume "The Country beyond Haze" are the description of nature and the people's experience of a sense of communion with nature. (Ibrăileanu, 1979, pp. 67-70). Literary critics have stated on several occasions that Sadoveanu would be the brightest poet of nature in Romanian literature. The literary critic Tudor Vianu finds out that "Sadoveanu's literary creation is not the

result of a cabinet work and an imagination working with the data of a reduced experience. As his realistic and naturalistic predecessors, his opera works with direct data, extracted from a continuous experience of nature and people. Through all this work circulates the vivid air of a free and mobile life.” (Vianu, 1944, p. 653) The author crossed the Romanian land from the mountain to the plain, following the water courses and hunting the wild cock on the mountain peaks, the rabbit in the plains of the plains and the coot in the ponds and the delta. The writer has a sense of past that goes down to the times of the first men when hunting and fishing were basic activities of human existence. His stories mingle reality with primitive faith in a sincere and melancholic way, presenting events that seem to have come from another age. Hunting and fishing are opportunities for the author to travel in the past and to merge into the existence of the primordial man. *The Country beyond the haze* is, in the opinion of the writer and publisher Demostene Botez, “the most remote fields that have not gnawed, where the foot of man rarely walked, and where the same people pass today as a few thousands of years.” (Demostene, 1929, pp. 315) The priority in the *Country beyond the haze* or in *the Water kingdom* is not the description in itself, says Constantin Ciopraga, but “the poetry, the fascination of the moment, the existential thrill with unique reverberations.” The originality of Sadovenian creation is due to the incomparable combination of lyricism and reflection, each second seeming to be captured on a curve of eternity. The writer combines the lyricism of descriptions with reflections on the life of man, noting his own impressions and ideas.

Live sense of nature is as laid down in Romanian national awareness. It will be specific for many Romanian writers of the end of XIX – first half of XX centuries: I. Creanga, T. Argesi, L. Blaga, B. Voiculescu, especially Mihail Sadovanu: “I have been always interested in any landscape under any circumstances and any life’s moment. It never annoyed me, it interested me not by my own will. Here we are talking about the phenomenon of immersion, dissolution and fusion. He did not care about me. The demise comes from phenomena of turbulence, rhetoric, and fusion. I become one with things and life, I can feel everything is spiritualized in its own way: furrow, rock, fern, raspberry bush, trees and everything that seems to be motionless.”

Mihail Sadoveanu realizes in this volume pictorial descriptions of nature of a special sensibility, transfiguring poetically both the image of nature and the contact between man and nature. Garabet Ibraileanu affirmed that the novelist writes

pages of pure poetry in which he combines the objectivity of the image with the subjectivity of the feeling, receiving the beauties of creation. (Calinescu, 1961) The stories in this volume give a ritualized joy of the discovery of nature.

The evoked nature is not pictorial and cold, but vivid, with a vegetation rustling because of wind and rain or the slipping of frightened animals. The author realizes very different descriptions, insisting on details that escape the look of a superficial observer. The main characters of these stories are the wild animals (wolves, goats, wild ducks, mountain cocks) or those domesticated (dogs), whose gestures seem described by a fine connoisseur of animal psychology. Between nature and man there is a permanent interaction: nature is humanized, but it also enlivens man in its turn.

People who inhabit this mythical space (hunters and fishermen) seem to be themselves constituents of nature, seeming to have come from a past where respect for nature prevailed. Staying close to nature, they came to know its secrets. Their ancestral occupations and hunting instinct make them pass through mysterious mountains, valleys and ponds and turn them to nature. The hunters bind between them the lasting fellowship which ignore the social hierarchy and are united by the common adventures transmitted through the hunting stories narrated slowly by the nighttime fires.

The relationship established between man and nature is an indestructible one, regardless of old age or illness. Thus, forefather Calistru Pușcașu from the story is so enchanted by the forest, that he feels he cannot die without seeing it one more time, and the hunter Chirica Ciuntu does not let himself beaten by the fact that a hand has been cut off after the rifle has exploded and continues to hunt using the other hand.

Mihail Sadoveanu is not only content to describe simple hunting happenings but imagines mysterious stories that take place in immeasurable times such as the defense of a sheep farm by some prehistoric hunters migrating from unknown north distances up to the Siret meadows or the story of a hunter who saw bisons in the inaccessible precipices in the Calimani mountains.

The inevitable pathos of Sadovenian evokes is regladed by humor, the author not hesitating to appeal to irony and self irony to reduce the subjectivity of some stories. For example, when he describes with excitement and pride his first hunting

experience, the author does not forget to ironically report that cold water has entered his boots.

The seasons give the author some serious meditations. The story “When forefather Calistru had fallen over Deleleu,” may be considered an elegy on the theme of death. The end of the old rifleman Calistru takes place when the last autumn day makes room for snow and takes place solemnly and naturally in the middle of nature, in a similar way to the one in “Miorița”. There are several premonition signs like snow that symbolically anticipate the cold of death or the deep silence that goes on nature.

The consciousness of the man living in the mountains takes another dimensions, when passing from ephemeral to eternal, in a state of ruling silence.

Literary critics have appreciated that the originality of this writing lays precisely in its lyricism in the realistic evocation of a living world and living animals living according to other rules different from those of the contemporary world. The lyrical romanticism of the writing comes, according to the critic Pompiliu Constantinescu, from the constant escape from the social constraint, from the exaltation of the primary forces of nature and from the simplification of psychology to visuality. The book is described as “a poetic hunting manual with a series of conquering landscapes, some memories, heroic or fantastic stories.” “The country beyond its darkness is in fact a peculiar region, a fairytale world with lush nature, rich in wonderful plants, in exotic birds, in unseen fish, in shimmering creatures and gnats”, wrote Constantin Șăineanu. (Șăineanu, 1930, p. 169)

The Critic Garabet Ibrăileanu wrote a very eloquent criticism of this volume, saying that “*The Country beyond Haze* is one of Sadoveanu's most enjoyable books,” in which the author “has put all the best in his luggage of deeds: nature, people of nature and past”. And all the perfection of his art, matured. “The scenic descriptions of nature and the evocation of the simple and archaic life of the people living in the deserted and mountainous landscapes, immortalized by expressions of remarkable lyricism, were praised”. The critic considered that *The Country beyond Haze* is a “song from the beginning to the end, a song when triumphant, when melancholic.” (Calinescu, 1961) He compares the Sadovian writing with the works of Eminescu and Hogaș.

The writer spiritualises the matter by gently presenting the connection between man and nature and their mutual conditioning that leads to an intimate fusion.

Nature acquires such heroic and fantastic dimensions, being the place where so many unreal and mysterious events occur, only accessible to those who have not lost their human soul purity. (Lovinescu, 1937, pp. 196-198) The Critic George Călinescu finds that in Sadoveanu's writings "the search for loneliness is no longer an ascesis but a refinement" that produces a "state of steady happiness", and hunting and fishing become opportunities to enjoy the beauty of nature; the writer replaces the Eminescian style melancholy in nature with a Flemish-like vitality, so that Sadoveanu's Moldova can be compared to "Holland painters a few centuries ago, with people in rags, swelling with wine and glaring with greedy eyes large pieces of roasted meat." (Călinescu, 2001, p. 222).

M.Sadoveanu's work presents a great interest for Ukrainian literary criticism. Why? Sergius Lucikanyn, PhD professor at the National University Taras Shevchenko from Kiev, Ukraine in his work "Mihail Sadoveanu (1880-1961) - a classic writer of Romanian and universal literature," dedicated to the 120th anniversary of the birth writes: "Mihail Sadoveanu worked as a titan, his life was full of achievements, he created significant epic novels about the historical past and the modern life of the Romanian people and became a true master of novels and stories, sketches and journalistic essays, from "Small cases" and random characters composing the comprehensive lyrical doina of the life of the great Romanian people." (Lucikanin, 2000)

The appearance of Mihail Sadoveanu in national literature was immediately noticed – in 1898 the editorial of the magazine „Viața nouă” (“New Life”) published several works of seventeen years young man calling him a great new star in the literature, which shines in the constellation of the world fiction masterpieces and for more than half a century the name of the writer embodies the cultural unity of the Romanian people with the Ukrainian. (Lucikanin, 2000) For half a century in this field is tirelessly working the scientist, writer and translator Volodymyr Yakovyci Pianov which brilliantly recreated by means of Ukrainian language moving pictures of life and national character of short stories and novels by Sadoveanu such as “Călărașul” (“Rider”), “O istorie de demult” (“Ancient Story”), “Județ al sărmanilor” (“Court of offended”) with the artistic suite “Hanu-Ancuței”.

(“Ancuța's Inn”), translated into Ukrainian language such an ambiguous and controversial story as “Mitrea Cocor”. The works of Sadoveanu have been conveyed to the Ukrainian reader by Ivan Kushniryk and Mykola Chyshchevyyi,

Mykola Bogaychuk and Anatoliy Lytvynenko, Galina Berezhna and Larysa Staetska.

Of particular note is the powerful figure of Stanislav Volodymyrovych Semchynskyi who in 1980 published a huge monograph on the great writer in the series "Classics of World Literature," wrote a thorough introductory article and detailed notes to the most voluminous publication of M. Sadovianu's opera in Ukrainian language, which saw the light in the edition "Dnieper" on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the birth of the classic. You can not avoid the achievements Russian translators and scholars of Sadoveanu's opera have obtained - scientists Y. Kozhevnikova, V. Sugonyaya and M. Fridman.

It is necessary to mention here the great interest expressed by M. Sadoveanu towards Ukraine and the history of Ukraine: "The writer has well realized that in the historical sign of the Romanian and Ukrainian peoples there are many points of tangency: they had the same experience of the same calvary in Past and together defended their independence. The Romanian people repeatedly received the necessary help from Ukraine, and many representatives of the Ukrainian people found refuge because of the persecutions on the Romanian soil" Mihail Sadoveanu really loved Ukraine, the Ukrainian language, has always been interested in its history and culture, often evoking them in artistic works and journalistic articles.

In his article „Despre Taras Șevcenco” (“About Taras Shevchenko”) written in 1946, which opened the first and several subsequent editions of Kobzar's works in a separate book in Romanian in 1952, Sadovianu noted: "Shevchenko often sang the glory of the Dnieper free cazacs. Thus was manifested his passion for the past and the old song.

In the Romanian liberation war against the Turkish enslavement, Nicoara Pidkova played a prominent role, sung in Romanian and Ukrainian folklore, and also Ivan Pushkov's famous romantic ballad of Taras Shevchenko (1839). Denying the joys of life, giving up his own love, the Zaporozhite Nikoara Pidkova, the brother of the murdered master Ion Lyuty, decides to take revenge for him and seize the throne. Having achieved his goal in 1577, he, however, after two months of rule, voluntarily renounces power and is dying in the fight against the enemies. But his exploit was not useless: "Let's take fire from his inexhaustible spirit," Sadovianu emphasizes, "and after us, others will do like fire takes from fire, light from light" (p. 594). Nicoara Pidkova in the eponymous novel from the very beginning speaks of a person who is deeply convinced that the true meaning of life is to be open to it,

that the thing he has begun will survive himself, and that he personally can perish (as happened, as we know, the ninth or tenth attempt on Henry IV, the king of France failed to be stopped - hence, the image of Nicoara Pidkova is even more "portrayed-humanistic"), but the ideas, perceived by him and planted in the field of European life, will constantly ignite people.

Sadoveanu, however, was a writer of poetic disposition, profound lyrics, genuinely fascinated by the beauty of folk life, folk language, prolific natural beauty of his native land, which also was one of the main themes in the works of writer who since childhood liked to find peace of mind in a happy moment unity with Mother Nature, feeling its primordials. Although sketches and sounds of nature in all works of Sadoveanu are constantly present, we cannot forget to mention the specific collection in which nature appears in its most poetic manifestations - humanized (personified), she experiences, thinks, acts: "*Țara de dincolo de negura*" ("The Country beyond Haze").

Undoubtedly, hunting and fishing are the oldest sports, with the observation that they were born under the pressure of necessity and became entertainment only with time. The primitive fishing was alacrity; hunting - strength and resilience.

The works of Mihail Sadovianu do not get old in the long run. The spiritual affinity between his romantically raised heroes and the writer himself reveals his life-giving spirit to the present. His opera is that national treasury from which mankind has continually to draw experience, teaching and example. Turning the pages of Sadoveanu you can feel that you are in a large bright temple in solemn prayer - in a temple of the sacred language of Romanian people, which rests on the pillars built from numerous works of genius. Sadoveanu created his own unique human world, his artistic space, which united the scientific understanding of history, the knowledge of the real events and sources with the rapid flight of the artistic imagination, the authenticity of chronology with the appeal to present and future.

Bibliography

Manolescu, Nicolae (1971). *Imaginarul sadovenian: Hanu Ancuței. Locul unde nu s-a întâmplat nimic/ Sadovian imaginary: Hanu Ancuței. The place where nothing happened.* In vol. *Teme/Themes*. Bucharest.

Busulenga, Zoe Dumitrescu (1982). *Sadoveanu. Motivul drumului și aventura umană/ Sadoveanu. The motive of the road and the human adventure.* În vol. *Itinerarii prin cultură/ Itineraries through*

culture. Bucharest.

Calinescu, George (1961). *Mihail Sadoveanu. Romane si povestiri istorice (prefață)/ Mihail Sadoveanu. Romans and historical stories (preface)*. Bucharest

Perpessicius (1956). Lirism și narațiune în opera lui Mihail Sadoveanu/ Lyricism and narration in the work of Mihail Sadoveanu. In *Mențiuni de istorie literară și folclor/ Literature and folklore history*. Bucharest.

Sadoveanu, M. (1978). *Poezia populara/ Popular poetry*. Iași.

Ibrăileanu, Garabet (1926). Recenzii: M. Sadoveanu, Țara de dincolo de negură/ Reviews: M. Sadoveanu, The Country beyond Mist. *Viața Românească/ Romanian Life*. Iași, year XVIII, no. 10, October, pp. 125-127. Reprodus în vol. (1930). *Studii literare/Literary Studies*. Bucharest: Editura Cartea Românească, apoi în (1979). *Studii literare/Literary Studies*. Vol. 2. Bucharest: Editura Minerva, pp. 67-70.

Vianu, Tudor (1944). Mihail Sadoveanu. In *Revista Fundațiilor Regale/ The Royal Foundation Magazine*. Bucharest, year XI, no. 12, December, p. 653.

Demostene, Botez (1929). Recenzii: Mihail Sadoveanu, Împărăția apelor/ Reviews: Mihail Sadoveanu, The Water Kingdom. *Viața Românească/ Romanian Life*. Iasi, year XXI, no. 2-3, February-March, pp. 315.

Șăineanu, Const. (1930). *Țara de dincolo de negură*, de Mihail Sadoveanu/ The country beyond darkness, by Mihail Sadoveanu. *Noui recenzii (1926-1929)/New reviews*. Bucharest: Editura Adevarul, p. 169.

Lovinescu, Eugen (1937). *Istoria literaturii române contemporane (1900-1937)/ The History of Contemporary Romanian Literature (1900-1937)*. Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Socec & Co. S.A., pp. 196-198.

Călinescu, George (2001). *Istoria literaturii române de la origini până în prezent/ The history of Romanian literature from the origins to the present*. Bucharest-Chișinău: Editura Litera Internațional, p. 222.

Lucikanin, Serghii (2000). *Mihail Sadoveanu (1880-1961) – scriitor clasic al literaturii române și universale, 120 de ani de la naștere/Mihail Sadoveanu (1880-1961) - classic writer of Romanian and universal literature, 120 years from his birth*. Kiev.