VITORIA, A WOMAN "WHO RUNS WITH THE WOLVES"

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Vitoria Lipan is the heroine of *The Hatchet* novel, published in 1930 and written by the Romanian writer Mihail Sadoveanu. A representative character of Romanian literature, Vitoria Lipan – who is a simple, uneducated, yet intuitive peasant woman – reveals a way of thinking and acting that leads her to success. She lives in a traditional, rural society, where a simple woman could hardly be given the opportunity to find her deceased husband by herself, by retracing his death itinerary and exposing the culprits like a detective. Nevertheless, in this short mythical realistic novel we can identify several inner strategies that enable this simple mountain woman to succeed. Our study focuses on the internal psychological structure of the heroine and tries to relate her to the archetypal image presented by the author Clarissa Pinkola Estés, in her study on stories and myths of the *wild woman* archetype.

Keywords: *connection*; *signs*; *intuition*; *wild nature*; *success.*

Introduction

In the opening of her *Women Who Run With the Wolves* bestseller, Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Jungian psychoanalyst and writer, who has extensively studied the myths and stories of many peoples, puts forward some amazing ideas on the genuine essence of the woman, intuitive and creative in her internal structure, yet suffocated by culture and society, which have tried to civilize her by imposing upon her rigid roles that are foreign to her entity:

> "No matter by which culture a woman is influenced, she understands the words *wild* and *woman*, intuitively.
>
> When women hear those words, an old, old memory is stirred and brought back to life. The memory is of our absolute, undeniable, and irrevocable kinship with the wild feminine, a relationship which may have become ghostly from neglect, buried by over-domestication, outlawed by the surrounding culture, or no longer understood anymore. We may have forgotten her names, we may not answer when she calls ours, but in our bones we know her, we yearn toward her; we know she belongs to us and we to her.
>
> It is into this fundamental, elemental, and essential relationship that we were born and that in our essence we are also derived from. The Wild Woman archetype sheaths the alpha matrilineal being. There are times when we experience her, even if only fleetingly, and it makes us mad with wanting to continue. For some women, this vitalizing "taste of the wild" comes during pregnancy, during nursing their young, during the miracle of change in oneself as one raises a child, during attending to

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a love relationship as one would attend to a beloved garden.

A sense of her also comes through the vision; through sights of great beauty. I have felt her when I see what we call in the woodlands a Jesus-God sunset. I have felt her move in me from seeing the fishermen come up from the lake at dusk with lanterns lit, and also from seeing my newborn baby's toes all lined up like a row of sweet com. We see her where we see her, which is everywhere.

She comes to us through sound as well; through music which vibrates the sternum, excites the heart; it comes through file drum, the whistle, the call, and the cry. It comes through the written and the spoken word; sometimes a word, a sentence or a poem or a story, is so resonant, so right, it causes us to remember, at least for an instant, what substance we are really made from, and where is our true home.

These transient "tastes of the wild" come during the mystique of inspiration—ah, there it is; oh, now it has gone. The longing for her comes when one happens across someone who has secured this wildish relationship. The longing comes when one realizes one has given scant time to the mystic cookfire or to the dream - time, too little time to one's own creative life, one's life work, or one's true loves.

Yet it is these fleeting tastes which come both through beauty as well as loss, that cause us to become so bereft, so agitated, so longing that we eventually must pursue the wildish nature. Then we leap into the forest or into the desert or into the snow and run hard, our eyes scanning the ground, our hearing sharply tuned, searching under, searching over, searching for a clue, a remnant, a sign that she still lives, that we have not lost our chance. And when we pick up her trail, it is typical of women to ride hard to catch up, to clear off the desk, clear off the relationship, clear out one's mind, turn to a new page, insist on a break, break the rules, stop the world, for we are not going on without her any longer.

Once women have lost her and then found her again, they will contend to keep her for good. Once they have regained her, they will fight and fight hard to keep her, for with her their creative lives blossom; their relationships gain meaning and depth and health; their cycles of sexuality, creativity, work, and play are reestablished; they are no longer marks for the predations of others; they are entitled equally under the laws of nature to grow and to thrive. Now their end-of-the-day fatigue comes from satisfying work and endeavors, not from being shut up in too small a mindset, job, or relationship. They know instinctively when things must die and when things must live; they know how to walk away, they know how to stay.

When women reassert their relationship with the wildish nature, they are gifted with a permanent and internal watcher, a knower, a visionary, an oracle, an inspiratrice, an intuitive, a maker, a creator, an inventor, and a listener who guide, suggest, and urge vibrant life in the inner and outer worlds. When women are close to this nature, the fact of that relationship glows through them. This wild teacher, wild mother, wild mentor supports their inner and outer lives, no matter what.

So, the word wild here is not used in its modem pejorative sense, meaning out of control, but in its original sense, which means to live a natural life, one in which the *criatura*, creature, has innate integrity and healthy boundaries. These words, *wild* and *woman,* cause women to remember who they are and what they are about. They create a metaphor to describe the force which funds all females. They personify a force that women cannot live without." (Pinkola Estés 1992: 3-4)

Starting from the observations of the above-mentioned psychoanalyst, Clarissa Pinkola Estés, who carries out literary and psychological investigations in some of the greatest worldwide myths and stories, we shall try to present the image of an exquisite feminine character of the Romanian literature, as it is built in a realistic and mythical story that is rich in significance and that deserves far more attention than it has been given.

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The Hatchet, a mythical realistic novel

Vitoria Lipan is the heroine of *The Hatchet* novel by Mihail Sadoveanu. It's been said that this story captures the Romanian national distinctiveness, its true nature, way of thinking and of responding in the face of the crucial issues of existence (Dodu Bălan 1983: 8 *apud* Sadoveanu[2] 1983).

> "*The Hatchet* is the most widely translated Romanian novel, except perhaps for Mircea Eliade's works, though the latter's audience was tremendously increased by the author spending most of his life in the Western world and by his outstanding career as a historian of religion. Sadoveanu (1880-1961), however, never left Romania but for short periods of time. *The Hatchet*'s international fame started as early as 1936 in France and Germany, continuing with the Czech version two years later, followed by the Finnish translation in 1944 and by the Italian edition in 1945. The Communist regime, which came to power in Romania after World War II, strongly promoted the writer and his books, especially those works that contributed to the reenactment of an heroic and idealized national past. Thus, *The Hatchet* was published in translation even in such far-reaching places as Shanghai (1957), Tehran (1958), and Damascus (1964), which ensured the author a widespread world audience." (Borbély 2008: 345)

Mihail Sadoveanu is the author of an incredibly long and rich series of written works, with a real storytelling gift, but *The Hatchet* is a rather short novel, written in one breath, within less than two weeks (Herdean, 1998: 98), which was all the time he needed to complete it. He pursued the line of sentimental realism and descriptive naturalism, and, due to a writing activity extended over a very long period of time, he was contemporary with four successive generations: Duiliu Zamfirescu, Liviu Rebreanu, Camil Petrescu and Anton Holban (Manolescu 2008: 572).

The plot of *The Hatchet* novel seems simple: Nechifor Lipan (spoilt as Gheorghiță, by his wife, Vitoria) is a wealthy shepherd who leaves for the mountains to buy some sheep. On his way he becomes friend with two other shepherds that kill him in order to steal his flocks. Vitoria senses danger in the long period of time elapsed since he left, so she sets out, on her own, to look for her husband. Together with their son, Gheorghiță, who is given a hatchet, similar to Nechifor's, she retraces her husband's itinerary and finds out how many sheep Nechifor had bought and to whom he had sold, and how far he was accompanied by the buyers, etc., eventually finding his corpse. Through a close analysis of his things she identifies the two murdering shepherds but makes no accusations. During the funeral, with a stunning delicacy, she reveals to all the participants (Călinescu called her "a feminine Hamlet" (Călinescu 2003: 559)) the way in which Nechifor was murdered. Under the psychological pressure that had built up, the two shepherds confess to their deed.

The Hatchet is a mythical-realistic novel that "is kept within a highly mysterious and poetic sphere", (Perpessicius *apud* Sadoveanu[1] 1983: VI), also found in other stories and novels of the author: *Hanu-Ancuței (Ancuța's Inn)* or *Zodia Cancerului (Under the Sign of the Cancer)*. Their topics "are surrounded by the halo of a solemn severity, in whose gold are to be found both an artfully crafted material and a style of numerous adornments" (Perpessicius *apud* Sadoveanu[1] 1983: VI). As literary critics say, the novel was conceived as a reply to the ideology of those times, which defined the psychological structure of the Romanian people through features that were unrelated to its true nature: resignation in the face of mortality, mysticism, lack of vitality (Dodu Bălan 1983: 10 *apud* Sadoveanu[2] 1983). But, the novel's genesis is interesting. In 1950, at the Institute of Literary History and Folklore, the writer himself revealed the genesis of the novel. Travelling

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across the country, on a very hot day at an inn, Sadoveanu heard about an incident of a murdered shepherd, reported by two police officers, and their assumptions about the culprits. This event was associated in his mind with the stories of the anonymous poets of the Romanian ballads, *Miorița*[1], *Dolca* and *Salga,* and this was the origin for the "epic plasma and poetic thrill of his novel *The Hatchet*" (Dodu Bălan 1983: 10 *apud* Sadoveanu[2] 1983). Sadoveanu is inspired by *Miorița*'s symbols, the shepherd's conflict and the woman's figure and combines them with the image of *Salga*'s brave shepherdess, who punishes the head of a band of thieves, doing justice; the dog's image is also connected to and taken from the *Dolca* ballad (in *Miorița*, the dog is invoked only by the naughty sheep as a possible help for the shepherd; furthermore, *The Hatchet* novel's motto is a line from *Miorița*: *Master, master, dear/Call a large hound near*), that shall assist in *The Hatchet* to the finding of the deceased shepherd and the identification of the murderers (Dodu Bălan 1983: 11 *apud* Sadoveanu[2] 1983). However, the *Miorița* ballad is the major factor in the construction of Sadoveanu's novel. Based on a lyrical and metaphorical foundation, Sadoveanu is building an epic with multiple layers, a poem of the Romanian ethnic soul, that shall solve the essential issue of the popular famous ballad. We are faced with "a vibrant hymn dedicated to the man and his creative powers, a knitting of the ephemeral and the eternal, an alloy of history and nature" (Băileșteanu 2001: 17).

Therefore, the mythical dimension of the novel is explained, first of all, by its genesis related to the *Miorița* ballad. The social life of the Tarcău mountain people unfolds according to certain mythical coordinates; here there is "an astral civilization, where the human deeds are connected with the activity of the stars, sun and moon" and "catching a moment is just like capturing an infinity of time equivalent moments" (Georgescu 1967 *apud* Dodu Bălan, 1983: 130). The writer himself describes in his novel these mountain inhabitants:

> "The people who live in the shadow of the pines are strange people: quick-tempered and fickle like the waters and the weather, enduring with fortitude both hardships and the stress of fearful winter weather, yet radiant in their joy and under the August heat. Eager for love and drink, they preserve traditions that date back to the beginning of the world. (…) Above all, they face the sun with a heart that seems like a piece of the sun itself, delighting in its wild pulsation as song and friendship quicken in." (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 77)

The mountain people create shepherd's huts and live there, "alone with God and the solitudes" (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 15). Their life is difficult, especially for the women, because they often become early widows. Women, as Vitoria's son remarks after hearing this thought from his mother, are more wicked and have a sharp tongue, while men are more stupid, but stronger. Nechifor is a skilled sheep breeding craftsman, and the shepherds not only know stories but also the secret of curdled milk and kneaded cheese. (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 16).

[1] "The ballad Miorita is the central legend of Romanian ontology: Hundreds of writers, philosophers, and artists have tried to capture its inner wisdom concerning the nature of human being and existence. It has been interpreted as the textual description of an archaic rite of passage and as the ultimate luminous stage in an ontological tragedy in which a man is facing the call of death and giving vent to his happiness at leaving his transitional earthly incarnation in order to regain the pure wholeness of the cosmos. Another famous interpretation turns the ballad into the main key to understanding the psychological drama of the Romanian people: Its persistence throughout centuries is attributed to an archaic capacity to avoid the traps of history by pessimistically "leaping out of time" into imagination or myth whenever the people face a challenge or catastrophe." (Stefan Borbély, 2008: *The Hatchet* in Sollars, Michael D. (edit.): *The Facts On File Companion to the World Novel, 1900 to the Present*, New York, Infobase Publishing)

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In the short parable-story in the novel's introduction, which Nechifor used to tell, the following is shown: after God created the world, He assigned certain specific attributes to each people. So, He taught the Gypsies to sing, the German people to use the screw, He gave the Jewish people persecution and then fortune and the Hungarian people a penchant for pride, ostentation and entertainment; He predicted that the Turkish people would rule over others by sword, He put the plough in the Serbian people's hands, he made the Russian people familiar with drinking and singing at parties; when the Romanians from the mountains' turn came, and they were the last ones to come before God, there was nothing left for them. They live in harsh regions, in buildings crammed between rock cliffs, with snaky pathways and hard to descend steeps. They confess that only thunder, lightning and floods come upon them, but they wish for vast lands, wheat fields and smooth waters. But, even though they are dear to God, they can no longer receive anything:

> "'You are the last to come', the Lord said regretfully, 'and dear though you are to me, I cannot help you. You will hold what you have, for I can give you nothing besides, except a light heart to rejoice at what is yours. Everything shall seem good to you; and always your door shall be open to the fiddler and the man with strong drinks; and your women shall be beautiful and full of love'" (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 14).

These are the Wallachians, the mountain inhabitants of Sadoveanu's novel world, people without a rich life style, but who know how to live a beautiful life through simple-mindedness, kindness and light-heartedness.

The novel's action takes place in Moldavia, in the Tarcău Mountains, and Nechifor's family (himself, Vitoria and their two children, Minodora and Gheorghiță) live in the Măgura village. They are a wealthy family. According to the annual tradition, he leaves for Dorna to buy some sheep. Although he should have returned a long time ago, people at home have no news from him. Vitoria thought that he might have stopped by at a party, but, if such was the case, his long absence was not justified. She knew his habits, his stopovers and the fact that every time he returned to their farm; in their twenty years of marriage, she had learned his journeys and his returns. He had never been late for more than twenty days, and, at that time, seventy-three days had passed. Nechifor's disappearance is not only a tragedy for his family, but it also breaks a balance that his wife has the sacred duty to restore in the eternal circuit of the world. Her investigation is also the search of the woman who fights for bringing back her husband, preserving her family and, therefore, regaining the interior, family and social balance of her assumed existence. Even though Nechifor is no longer alive, Vitoria needs to find his deceased body and to bury it. And, indeed, by proceeding like an authentic detective, she will retrace her husband's itinerary.

Who is, after all, Vitoria?

Certainly, Vitoria is a realistic down-to-earth woman (Crețu 2011: 48) with an excessive lucidity (Călinescu 2003: 559). With still young and fierce eyes, Vitoria "was no longer young, but there was an uncommon beauty in her eyes" (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 47). She confesses that she lives in this world only for her husband, being satisfied and happy with him. (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 132)

Due to the uncertainties related to Nechifor Lipan's disappearance, their son is shy and insecure, and Vitoria's mind is full of pain and ardor. Day after day when the man fails to return, the boy notices that his mother becomes more and more upset. They understand that the husband's disappearance ruins the family balance and that their whole world is turned upside down. She wonders, terrified, whether other women with their charming eyes had made Nechifor, a strong

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and well-known man around that place, stay for such a long time far away from home, as had happened on other occasions. This thought was tormenting for Vitoria because she loved her husband. But the thought of other women's eyes, not brown like hers, was still hard to grasp because "she had been above them all; she had possessed a power and a secret which Lipan had not been able to guess at. And he had come to her as one comes to a refreshing spring". (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 69). Regardless of who he stopped at, Nechifor always returned to Vitoria: he went back to her inner power, which was enigmatic even for Nechifor.



The Spanish Actress Margarita Lozano playing the role of Vitoria in the Romanian Movie *The Hatchet* (1969), director: Mircea Mureșan

Vitoria drew their son's attention to the fact that the time for playing around had passed and, from that moment on, he had to take up the role of the man in the house. When Gheorghiță returned with no news from the Jijiei river, where he had been waiting for his father, Vitoria gladly received him, kissing him on both cheeks, but closing the door of another room to cry freely. In the conversations with her son, she reproaches him for the fact that his mind is captive in books and words when it should be in his head. On the other hand, the boy seems fascinated with Vitoria's ideas ("This mother of his must have magic powers; she knows the man's thoughts…") (Sadoveanu[1] 1983: 29) or with her amazing skills, as long as – the boy ponders – "I eat and she gains strength" (Sadoveanu[1] 1983: 41). She is careful and controls herself even during the funeral: "I shall cry afterwards". As for crying, she will cry later on. Now she has no time.

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The Spanish Actress Margarita Lozano playing the role of Vitoria in the Romanian Movie *The Hatchet* (1969), director: Mircea Mureșan

When she decided to send Minodora, their daughter, to the monastery, for the duration of the journey that she and her son would go on in search of her husband, she never thought of giving in to the girl's pleas. Although Minodora "was crying in her fists", Vitoria was relentless like a "firm portrait" (Sadoveanu[1] 1983: 39). Gheorghiță silently noticed how their mother decided their journeys and returns, and even the weather. She did not know how to read but interpreted the people's faces. She managed to adapt her behaviour according to each person she met on her journey: upon departure, she did not hesitate to make several acid remarks to the Vatra Dornei barmaid regarding hospitality at her inn. The old man Vitoria met on her way to Vatra Dornei, to whom she said that she was convinced that God would help her find her husband's sheep, step by step, was mesmerized by such a strange woman. The amused and available traveller who followed her to Vatra Dornei also had an unexpected surprise; after he approached Vitoria and whispered something into her ear, she asked her son to take the hatchet and hit this shameless foreigner. The boy and the traveller were both terrified hearing that command, and the foreigner, after moving away from this atypical woman,

> "He laughed to himself, wondering at the woman. Surely, she was from another world. The women in our parts, he thought, are more friendly; they use cutting words, not a hatchet. The truth was that Lipan's wife, herself, felt that she had entered another world." (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 82)

Certainly, the mountain woman "had slowly detached from the world and entered into herself". She had "what is called an issue – word and concept that were surely unknown to a mountain woman" (our translation) (Sadoveanu[1] 1983: 28). This inward-looking nature and,

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implicitly, the exclusion of everything from the exterior side reveals the return to her authentic identity. She seems to always preserve a part of her ego, which remains unknown, being half present and half absent:

> "Her presence is simulated all the time. With a certain degree of reserve, we could call her lonely to the extent that she is unique: her relationship with the environment where she lives and with her family is distant, and the severity towards her children is an attempt to preserve the role that supports her unique human being. By adapting herself through the masks used, she can easily repress her individuality and proceed towards the archetypal type of woman." (Herdean 1998: 102-103)

We suspect Sadoveanu himself of being so passionate about the rare aesthetic opportunity provided by such a character, which is "beautiful with an inner light, and no artificial (...) elements, based on measure, inner balance and common sensical moral instinct: a character whose nobility and simplicity are inseparable" (Crețu 2011: 48). This simple, intransigent and perseverant woman will not fail. During her difficult journey she makes use of several infallible resources: dreams, faith, signs.

Dreams, faith, signs

Vitoria is a very realistic woman and proves a pragmatic energy, being "exclusively commited to the specific and immediate, terrestrial materiality of the world" (Crețu 2011: 49). But, within this pragmatic and specific approach, she uses support that exceeds the visible reality.

Vitoria goes to investigate because of her instincts; she has no help whatsoever. She does not have any knowledge, or training, or any kind of clue, but she starts looking because this is her inner call. At the beginning she asks for help from the authorities, the prefect and the police officer, demanding for investigation, although she has an inner belief: "My great hope is elsewhere". (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 45). She "asks for pieces of advice but does not hear them, she obeys the church and civil authorities, although she easily and skilfully dominates them" (Herdean 1998: 100). In very few literary works do we have the image of the woman that leaves her home and goes on a search journey. Usually, the man is the hero with this initiative, who travels to search and find. On this occasion, Vitoria is the heroine who starts searching. She had never travelled farther than Piatra, where she went with her husband, a long time ago. But, now, she must leave her comfort area and find her husband, either alive or dead, in order to complete the proper burial.

The intuition and instinct of Sadoveanu's heroine mostly belong to the communion with nature. It is not a primitivism of the uncontrolled, uneducated senses and feelings like the characters of some naturalists such as Rebreanu illustrate in the miserable animal weakness of their true nature; here we refer, instead, to a healthy wildness, to the simple, basic intuition of human beings, who, being aware of the trap that might endanger their soul, know how to keep a proper distance from civilization, so that this does not alter their discrete and vital communion with nature and divinity. The conflict between Vitoria and Minodora, caused by the girl's ideas, reveals the

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The journey of Vitoria

danger of an innovative trend, different from the family and village spirit, as the mother wishes to preserve the best customs, intuitively considered crucial for the existence of the mountain people from Măgura Tarcăului. On the other hand, Vitoria is not afraid of new things and has no anxiety about leaving her comfort area; her challenging journey is itself a proof thereof, as she meets new people and places, deals with unpredictable circumstances, and she even makes an imprint of her strong, amazing and unusual character. Consequently, in Sadoveanu, the fundamental natures "do not become manifest, as is the case with so many writers of naturalistic realism, in the substructure of humanity, but in its apotheosis" (Vianu 2010: 232), because from their basic behaviours they slowly reach reflexivity.

The first clues about her husband come from a dream, when she sees "Nechifor Lipan on horseback, with his back turned to her, crossing a great water towards west" (Sadoveanu[1] 1983: 9). We must remember that we are in a rural civilization, with people connected to the rhythm of nature, and here we refer to the mythical dimension of the novel, since two historical times meet in this novel's world: the archaic world and the modern, realistic world (Herdean 1998: 98). Vitoria seems to cope well with both worlds (Herdean 1998: 98).

Vitoria discovers the death of her husband starting from some signs that she considers valid and that cannot lie as human words usually do. Knowing the world by signs is a fundamental theme in Sadoveanu's works. Rational knowledge is not enough, therefore the woman approaches the magical – symbolic one. The signs and symbols are not obvious, but there is always something they reveal, since "everything in this world tells us something", "everything speaks. That's how God has ordained it. And everything passes from mouth to mouth until it reaches the right quarters."

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(Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 62-63)

They start their journey on a freezing and blizzardy weather; as they step forward, the water is defrosting and the weather is warming up, which is symbolic of the progressive clarification of the situation. When she arrives in Dorna, close to her husband's corpse, "they entered into a sunshine glow". The sun becomes her witness and sheds light. The weather changes depending on the progress or regress of her search. Vitoria is connected to nature and perceives all its clues: "The woman of the mountains felt the fragrance of the fresh water tickling her nostrils, even as the wild beasts of the forest." (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 66). When she turns to her authentic nature, the external nature helps her. "Through her painful descent into death, the mother teaches her son to read the archaic signs of eternity, encrypted in myths, rituals, and symbols, and to distrust the empiric evidence of everyday life." (Borbély 2008: 346). On their journey they are assisted by the signs provided by nature, since the nature's expressions are a certainty for a mountain woman like her. In every unknown place they arrive at, nature reveals to them if it is the right place by providing them with clues about Nechifor, or not. When they entered the Farcașa village, a cold wind was blowing and there were black snowy clouds: Vitoria felt that it was a sign to stop there and look for accommodation. After this stopover, the wind stopped, the sun rose and suddenly "ahead of them, there was a sharp bend in the street, and on a hillock beyond, as if another world had been opened to them, a great press of men." (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 70). Later on, when she is close to Dorna she feels a special scent, a warm wind from the west that was about to melt the snow. Signs and faith come together to lead her way, since in her soul she knows that here, in Dorna, something relevant for her search will occur: "She was numbed to any influence from without; a burning fever within consumed and stifled her. She was convinced that henceforward her life would be fashioned after a different pattern" (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 80).

At a certain point, when she turns around, the weather suddenly breaks. Furthermore, a track is beginning to appear "from sign to sign and tavern to tavern", sometimes fading but at other times reappearing in another place, depending on people's "word of mouth" (Sadoveanu[1] 1983: 75) When Iorgu Vasiliu gives her a relevant piece of information, the wind stops and Vitoria sees a clear sign: God had preserved the tracks left by Nechifor. She must return and find them: "She felt a new strength surging within her, apparent in all her movements and in her face" (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 116).

Despite her brave behaviour, Vitoria preserves her feminine traits until the end, which is defining to her character. The harshness of her words comes from the need to protect herself, yet she never plays any masculine character. She doesn't even touch the hatchet. She takes their son, Gheorghiță, along in order for him to handle the hatchet: "I'll take my son with me, so as to have a man's strength to rely on." (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 51). She keeps her feminine attributes and integrity, in accordance with her ancestral structure and her functional role: a woman does not hit, nor carries a gun, but needs a man's hand for it. She believes that her mind will have to help her unravel the mystery and find her husband, while Gheorghiță's arm will have to do the work. (Sadoveanu[1] 1983: 28). At the end of the novel, she exposes the entire plot of the killing, not giving the names of her husband's two murderers, but simply making them confess to the murder. Therefore, she does not defy her social status and does not fulfil a man's functions; yet, she is successful in her approach, with her weapons that are typical for a woman: intuition, intelligence, patience and faith. Although she unmasks the two murderers of her husband, she does not use her hand to do justice, but leaves it for God to take care of it, whenever He decides. The words of Clarissa Pinkola Estés, are, once more, relevant for understanding the true nature and behaviour of Vitoria:

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> "Intuition senses the directions to go in for most benefit. It is self-preserving, has a grasp of underlying motive and intention, and it chooses what will cause the least amount of fragmenting in the psyche. (…). Being bound to one's intuition promotes a confident reliance on it, no matter what. It changes a woman's guiding attitude from 'what will be, will be' to 'let me see all there is to see'" (Pinkola Estés, 1992: 40).

Other feminine characters in the story emphasize, by contrast, Vitoria's uniqueness. The other women are preoccupied by clothes, cooking, gossiping, therefore by common things. Lady Maria, the wife of Mr. Iorgu Vasiliu, is also wise, but does not reach the level of Victoria's intuitive power. She just knows and understands: when Gheorghiță has the feeling that, at a certain point, his mother does not understand how things are, he suddenly realizes that she actually "does not suspect, but she *knows*" (emphasis added) (Sadoveanu[1] 1983: 84), because a woman like her, being in communion with nature, understanding and respecting its signs, is gifted "with a permanent and internal watcher, a knower, a visionary, an oracle, a guide, an intuitive, a maker, a creator, an inventor, and a listener who guide, suggest, and urge vibrant life in the inner and outer worlds. When women are close to this nature, the fact of that relationship glows through them. This wild teacher, wild mother, wild mentor supports their inner and outer lives, no matter what." (Pinkola Estés 1992: 4). Her connection with divinity and nature leads her to her authentic true nature, that of a human being full of life and vitality; from there emerge her strength and the successful ending of her journey.[1] Tiberiu Herdean wrote about the skilful performance of the heroine of two worlds, the mythical and the modern one:

> "She illustrates the woman with (...) secular feminine virtues, manifested now in the current world due to an urgent need. She is on a general mandate and not on an individual one, or, to be more precise, a feminine strategy with a universal meaning is built up, based on a personal case. These two motivations, the universal and the immediate one, function at the same time, creating the mysterious atmosphere of the novel. During the search – observing an almost lost society within the everyday life habits – Vitoria becomes more determined and, using the opportunity of the investigation, she goes much further than her mandate required. Beyond proving her truth, she reveals the truth of the civilization she holds dear, being educated in the spirit of an ancient morality." (Herdean 1998: 101)

As opposed to Minodora, her daughter, who illustrates youth and innocence, Vitoria symbolizes the woman's maturity, the feminine ideal that any woman seeks to achieve. Therefore, Vitoria is for Minodora who she could become through her feminine evolution.

Conclusions

Sadoveanu's Vitoria seems simple and uneducated. She is stubborn, ambitious and endowed with a magical thinking rather than a rational one. Nevertheless, she is kind and submissive when necessary, and she must be so because she fulfils her role and respects her feminine status, without invading or aspiring to a man's functions. Moreover, "Nobody can jump over their own shadow", as Nechifor says at the beginning of the book (Sadoveanu[2] 1983: 14). Thereby, she is successful due to the fact that her power comes from somewhere beyond society and civilization: it is born

[1] Cf. Crowther & Schmidt, 2015: 55: "States of grace, in Jungian terms, facilitate the transcendent function and generate experiences of the self, expand consciousness, recalibrate the psyche and allow truth to be realized. In these states of mind, thinking is not something that we do but something that happens."

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from nature and creation.

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