Clothes Kaleidoscopes in the novel *Adela* by Garabet Ibrăileanu

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Abstract: *This paper studies the body and clothing in Garabet Ibrăileanu's* Adela*, a Romanian novel where the body is in a continuous articulation, discursive and material, in a continuous becoming. The body is visible and legible, forcing the individual to resort to refined communication-spacing techniques. Following this line of analysis, I show how clothing kaleidoscopes express the world without saying a word, how modesty – of the body, but also of the woman's soul – becomes the sound of silence, used as an allusion to the promises of woman's nudity, all this unfolding in the absence of articulated language. The garment, as a flying buttress of the body, becomes a language accessible to all, a set of clues and traps, that is to say a means of communication. Adela's silence is in contradiction with the sounds that her body and her clothes generate, producing a confusing semantic explosion, but one consonant with our speech.*

Keywords: Adela *(Garabet Ibrăileanu), clothes, body*

This paper studies the body and clothing in the novel *Adela* written by Garabet Ibrăileanu, one that, despite the fictional fin-de-siècle universe that it proposes, becomes actual through the trade of meanings it offers to the body. Ibrăileanu's novel proves to be a profitable subject of reflection, especially in the contemporary context, in which the tyranny of communication forces us to explore various forms of expression. The narratives that propose amorous fictions represent textual shelters as they offer hedonistic immersions, the fulfilment of expectations related to their own emotional and existential fulfilment, being interested in the coherence of the images in a project of a possible world, necessarily enchanting. They are complementary, because they add the ghosts of literature to the ghosts of genetics, physiology, sociology or other humanistic disciplines.

The year 1933 proposes in the Romanian literature the nuances of the amorous fiction from which it is worth mentioning *The Golden Bough* by Mihail Sadoveanu, *Maitreyi* by Mircea Eliade, *Procrust's Bed* by Camil Petrescu, *The Russian Girl* by Gib. I Mihăescu, but also *Adela* by Garabet Ibrăileanu. *Adela* was received in the age as "the novel of a casuist thirsty for certainties and frightened by the contradictions that arose at all times, of an intellectual with the erotic action paralyzed by too much dissociation" (Călinescu 667); Nicolae Manolescu reduces the story of the novel to an "amitié amoureuse" (*Istoria critică...* 463) suitable for the quadragenarian. But, although the novel, as it appears, is part of the interwar period, Garabet Ibrăileanu places the action at the end of the nineteenth century, making Adela the contemporary of Duiliu Zamfirescu's heroines and less of Camil Petrescu's Mrs. T. and Ela Gheorghidiu or of Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu's Nory Baldovin. Moreover, the nature of the sentimental relationship depicted in the novel

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is fuelled by the nature of the social behaviour of the characters who, in their turn, are the product of the mentality and the *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere. A world in which the relations unfold as a matter of good-will, in which the woman and the man know what is permissible and what not, which they adapt and adjust until the flagrant violation, yet pretending that they respect them to the letter.

A type of femininity emerges in the context of Romanian literature as a narrative reflection on the feminine mystery, a prototype that combines the attributes of femininity, empathy, beauty, intellectuality, a woman-mirage limited to a category that attracts and rejects, contradicts and fascinates. In the context of the discussion about Garabet Ibrăileanu's novel, Ioana Pârvulescu notes that concealment is the main technique of a novel that covers sensuality, which gently envelops eroticism, and can cause an uninitiated reader to miss the erotic imagery that the image organizes (*Alfabetul doamnelor* 45). In fact, Ibrăileanu nonchalantly, even proudly, acknowledges his way of writing *Adela*, in an interview given to the newspaper *Adevărul* in 1932:

> "Although I put a lot of pornography in it [the novel] ... I have a great scene: when Adela climbs into the carriage, one can notice her socks for two-fingers."
> Our laughter arouses Mr. Ibrăileanu's confusion:
> "What? Isn't that enough?" (Ibrăileanu, *Opere: Note şi impresii* 234)

The same witty Garabet Ibrăileanu, eight years before the publication of his novel, draws a distinction between *then* and *now* on the subject of fashion and woman: "current fashion reveals day by day from the field of the immoral regions that keep extending from the feminine geography" (qtd. in Manolescu, *Arca lui Noe* 405). The puritan and sentimental interwar writer proposes an antithesis between the fashion of yesteryear, favourable to love, and the fashion of the present, favourable to instincts. He goes on to say that this disclosure of the woman destroys the feeling and transforms fiction into an aphrodisiac – "the detailing of the female body in novels can shatter the reader, but does not contribute to that beginning of his [*sic*] being in love, necessary to understand the so-called 'Infinite' from the lover's soul" (qtd. in Manolescu, *Arca lui Noe* 406). This article, published in *The Romanian Life* in 1925, shows a writer conservative in his real or fictional world-view, in which we are very interested in the exercise of understanding his novel. Ibrăileanu's exaggerated bashfulness, in an age of complete disinhibition in which Henry Miller or D. H. Lawrence published their novels (and had them banned), may seem outdated, but it is explicable in literary sociology terms. Although he is a critic open to modernity, Garabet Ibrăileanu is a post-Eminescu writer from the category of "proletarian-cult" critics, to paraphrase Gherea; in the ideology of the proletariat, the woman's body plays a role as long as it ensures healthy procreation.

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Throughout the novel, the deep interiority of the soul will be revealed: "the sadness of the night grew suddenly. But Adela was near me, with her young life, concentrated in her slow voice, even hot in the cold loneliness of the night" (Ibrăileanu, *Adela* 73). The text conceptualizes the body as a material support, as an operator of all social practices and of all exchanges between actors. Thus, the socialization of bodily manifestations is undergone under the auspices of repression, symbolically translated as keeping one's distance. The rites of avoidance (touching the other only in special circumstances; familiarity between the interlocutors; partial nudity) suppose that the subject symbolizes through her body the tonality of the relation with the world. A real erotic theory and practice can be drawn from this novel in which the vagueness of relationships enhances the charm and the uniqueness of the moments of meeting, where the delay and suspension create a tension full of delights, and the mixture of gravity and play gives the final tenor of these relationships. There is a twofold modesty that breathes in Ibrăileanu's text: of the body, but also of the woman's soul – some modesty also in the socio-cultural context of the action, but also in the mentality of the author who stated in the aforementioned article that "by her biological role that dictates her reserve and guard, as well as by her situation of secondary, submissive sex, the woman had to hide her soul's movements in front of the man" (qtd. in Manolescu, *Arca lui Noe* 406). The encounter with the woman weakens the man, causes him to step down from his position of centrality, because his presence and action create the deprivation and cause a kind of internal rupture, engendering concupiscence. And Adela is a woman who inhabits her body and who becomes sublime precisely because her nudity exceeds any representation and imagination:

> She would pull her dress down, without any need, for one could barely see the tip of her shoes. This movement, very common to her, has become irresistible, like a nervous tick, because it is obvious that she does it without wanting and maybe without knowing. (This gesture, noticeable to other women, is the sign of an excessive modesty, due to an excessive femininity, which always brings to consciousness its strong echo, but at the same time – against the defence instinct that dictates it.) (Ibrăileanu *Adela* 81)

In the *Metaphysics of Sex* (162), Julius Evola problematizes two types of modesty: male and female. If the first is defined as an ethical fact, an obscure sensation of the harm that the desire itself represents for the intimate being, for the supernatural principle itself; the second –feminine modesty – is presented in its sexual dimension (for it ceases when women are with each other). Although he acknowledges that there are forms of modesty without sexual reference (for example, modesty for physiological functions), that the phenomenon of modesty stems from a more or less conscious impulse of man to put a certain distance between himself and nature, Evola concludes that modesty is, after all, an ingredient of female

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attractiveness. Adela demonstrates her modesty when male attention is focused on a portion of her nudity. Moreover, her modesty is not inferred from the presence of clothing, as the covering of the body is not the guarantee of genuine modesty. In this novel, as we will see later, clothing is used as an allusion to the promises of woman's nudity. The question is: what is Adela trying to defend? If modesty is a defensive one, against whom does she defend? Adela's logic is intuitive, evasive and sensitive, and in this game modesty has a psychological-symbolic meaning. The part of Adela's body, the tip of her foot, has the value of a symbol (a fetish), and showing instead of concealing it means an openness of self, some un-avoidance, a way of no longer being exclusively for herself. Or, modesty becomes in this novel an exercise in the defence of intimacy, a denial of transparency, which vulgarizes, and an affirmation of emotional and discontinuous femininity. It functions as a condition without which seduction would be impossible: modesty maintains a distance that approaches and invites discovery and imagination. So, it is not Emil Codrescu that Adela protects herself from, but the fantasy that her body could trigger in the man's mind. The girl's reserve becomes a confession of vulnerability; the indecision of her signs attracts the subtlety of the game of attitudes.

Accepting the approach proposed by Ioana Pârvulescu (*Alfabetul doamnelor* 48) – that "*Adela* is the novel of several different female characters with the same name, Adela" – we notice the discontinuous manifestation of the woman throughout the novel: from the girl, to the girl with the flies, to the woman who has passed through an unsuccessful marriage. Predictably, Ibrăileanu makes Adela experience a very brief but mysterious marriage, knowledge about which is suppressed in the narrative through recourse to the character's discretion: "a woman has the right to be silent about her intimate life" (*Adela* 40). However, Ibrăileanu's gesture is equivalent to an additional security measure, which should prevent the literary scandal caused by a possible relationship between a mature man and an adolescent girl, but which also brings a specific *fin de siècle* note of sexual maturation and erotic assumption of womanhood through marriage. Although Adela is very young, a child, she imitates adults and prepares herself for maturity by using games, or at least in this direction we are guided by the narrator. She builds, as do all the little girls, a parallel world in which she takes care of her dolls – herself "a living toy full of surprises" (Ibrăileanu, *Adela* 34), with "her little doll's hand" (*Adela* 35) – securing them in shoe or cigarette boxes, watching over their health and talking to them. She trains for the woman's job by arranging her friend's tie and hair, a gesture that indicates incipient flirting. Sometimes she plays small games of seduction such as hide-and-seek (symbolic of the game that the mature woman will play before the man) and she never forgets to offer her full beauty to be admired, and even gets upset when she is forgotten or ignored. The whole aesthetic of the novel is a negative one (the term is used in Byung-Chul Han's sense), one of concealment and not of disclosure, of the female body. The scenes in Adela's boudoir are completely eluded, the character is "dressed" with a Victorian prudishness, not without perversity, which cultivates the

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civilized eroticism of the covered body, the erotic explosion occurring only at the moment of revealing only a few centimetres of white skin, above the boot. Nicolae Manolescu (*Arca lui Noe* 405-431) underlines in the maximum sensuality of the moment when the character "takes down" her glove, comparing Emil Codrescu with the libertines of the Marquis de Sade, a comparison that is not surprising:

> I had the feeling that I undressed her a little. I kissed her hand for a long time, on one side and on the other, then, with an even more poisonous sensation, between her fingers and, lifting her the narrow sleeve of her coat, I kissed her arm from her wrist to the bandy cloth. Her arm smelled of amber. She was silent, her face turned now. (Ibrăileanu, *Adela* 141)

My approach activates an interpretation grid that dominates the current public discourse – transparency or, more appropriately, "the coercion of transparency" (Han 61). A South Korean scholar and professor who teaches philosophy and culture philosophy in Berlin, Byung-Chul Han describes the transformation that today's society has undergone. Humanity, under the dictatorship of positivity, of hyper-information, has begun to dismantle the veil around things, now building a society of transparency, a society with a panoptic structure. Everything is in sight, we think we know everything, we want to know everything, we are not interested in the cause, nor the effect. Mystery has become a dysfunctional notion, and pornography and consumer nudity have spread massively, from the most important to the smallest aspects of life. Without mystery, without metaphor, otherness does not exist. What does the South Korean essayist's positivity-negativity binominal refer to? For Byung-Chul Han, positivity becomes synonymous with transparency, meaning "a hell of an equal" (60), where things lose their uniqueness and become uniform. Specific to today's society, positivity is devoid of ambivalence; it does not allow for negative feelings (such as pain and suffering), beaconing us to shape them. Furthermore, love, in a positivity society, is domesticated and framed in a consumption and comfort formula that avoids injury. In opposition to this term, negativity, associated with otherness and strangeness, is configured to that "something else" that disturbs and delays a smooth communication that the equal implies. The essayist admits that the human soul needs spheres in which to be "*itself*, without the other's look" (61), recognizes impermeable folds, which keep alive the relationship with the other, in which the right to question is limited by the right to secret. He associates the idea of happiness to the gap of negativity, to omission and forgetfulness – respecting the principle according to which *the less* knowledge and information becomes productive and determines *a more*. A champion of negativity, Byung-Chul Han proposes as a solution to the pathos of transparency and positivity (pornographic precisely through the absence of gaps in view), a "pathos of distance" (63) – integrating modesty and discrete spaces of withdrawal as fundamental elements of the life of the spirit.

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In Ibrăileanu, the girl challenges Emil to a permanent decoding exercise, her clothes becoming the clothes that dress/undress Adela's multifaceted femininity. Transparency equals individuals through a directionless lighting (paradoxically, it removes everything to an absence of distance that is neither near nor far), it positivizes and domesticates love in a comfort and consumption formula. However, the exercise proposed by Ibrăileanu's novel is precisely the negation of positivity – of exposure and over-lighting – which becomes synonymous with obscenity ("more visible than the visible," in Jean Baudrillard's terms). Like Byung-Chul Han, Baudrillard charges as obscene any form revealed in its mere appearance, rejecting the ambiguity of absence and exhausting itself in an exacerbated visibility. Everything that does not make the illusion possible becomes obscene and pornographic, all that is left to the sole operation of the real, refusing the mask, so the game of appearances and the end of the secret and the scene. Challenging everything that involves hypervisibility, the two encourage a minimum of illusion, an imaginary movement that defies the real and which, therefore, seduces and revolts.

In Ibrăileanu's novel, Adela's garments enhance eroticism through the game of distance which the man is aware of and participates in: "I felt her life radiating through her light clothing" (*Adela* 73); or, later in the text, "Adela's arms when she straightened her hair! so white, that in the room with the small, dark windows, they shone real light in their slow movements, with graceful precision" (74). The play of lights and shadows amplifies the playful spaces of pleasure; seduction rests on multi-meanings, not being related to the rules of seriousness and symmetry, so of transparency. In this sense, fantasy is essential to the economy of pleasure: an object offered unwrapped removes pleasure from the game. Therefore, only the withdrawal and evasion of the object stimulates pleasure; otherwise, its straightforward presence, which does not admit the imaginative and narrative detour, is pornographic: "with her childlike face and her waist now hidden in the cloak the illusion was total" (77). The woman glides among the shades, aware that transparency is not a state of peace, that a coercion of exposure would cause everything, especially the body, to become a mystery-free commodity. And Emil Codrescu observes how

> The body of a young woman – her elasticity, warm roundness, fineness and luminosity of the epidermis – is the most complete formal and structural realization of living matter, it is the supreme miracle of nature after billions of years trying to find it and unsuccessful attempts, it is the last term of cosmic evolution. (*Adela* 87)

The body has always been the support of social relations, itself a social construct, hence the belief that a constraint of the physical expression of the body and good manners represents an effective rhetoric by which a certain social status is asserted, defended and legitimized. Thus, body management is a specific cultural

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product: on the surface it encompasses the conventional aspect of woman – silhouette, dress, hairstyle, gestures, language, make-up, jewellery – all of which become indications of historical time (*la belle époque*, in the case of *Adela*), also individually (the age of the female character is a little over twenty). As Georges Vigarello states, "the body has expressive and subversive potential" (Corbin, Courtine, Vigarello 533). It is the place of the subject, its cover, but also a limit adjacent to its content: on the one hand, it is the restriction imposed on the soul's impulses to infinity; on the other hand, it is the screen within the framework of social relations, preserving the inner freedom of the individual. Adela's body is hinted at by structures of the type "with the high bust in the long dress"; "the music of her body (...) made for me the most disturbing symphony"; "in the white coat, tied with a blue ribbon, she was all a lovely woman"; "her eyes shone a violet light, and the lace cup of the short sleeves laid shadow flowers on the round white of her arms"; "Adela's arms when she straightened her hair! so white, that in the room with small, dark windows, they lighted up real in their slow movements, with graceful precision." Accordingly, her body cannot be dissociated by the negativity of withdrawal. She invites the viewer to contemplative loitering, she has interiority, covertness, mystery; her sociability keeps the distance. Adela proposes a scenario of gestures and shapes that, somehow, play around an action and evade the economy of purpose, the apple bite sequence anticipating the idea of a physical intimacy of the kiss accepted only because of love:

> Often, to share with me the cause of her happiness, when crunching an apple on my knees, usually raw, she kept a rest, carved by her small teeth like a jewel from which precious stones would have been taken, and, with her little dolly hand, she was pushing it into my mouth. And then she pulled my moustache, attentive to the result. You can't imagine a tastier fruit and a more charming idyll... (Ibrăileanu, *Adela* 35)

I have previously focused on veiling as a technique not only in the representation of fictional eroticism, but also in the representation of the novel's eponymous character. And, once again, Garabet Ibrăileanu offers the starting point – "the clothes have changed into mystery what until now has been natural" (qtd. in Manolescu, *Arca lui Noe* 409) – forcing us to seek the answer to the question: how does erotic veiling change in the context of camouflaging the body? Chevalier and Gheerbrant's *The Dictionary of Symbols* (431-432) offers some clues for reading and understanding the term "veil": *Hijab* means in Arabic what separates two things; designates hidden or revealed knowledge; in the monastic Christian tradition "to take the veil" means to separate yourself from the world, but also to separate the world from the intimacy in which you enter to live in the Lord; The Koran speaks of the veil that separates the damned from the elect; Christ's revelation is a revealing "nothing is covered that will not come to light and nothing hidden that will not

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become known" (Matthew 10.26); for the mystics, the veil designates everything that conceals the purpose, the impression produced on our heart by the illusory appearances that constitute the seen world and which prevent it from admitting the revelation of truths; in Buddhism, the veil becomes not what hides, but what by allowing the sight, shines a light through itself shining, the light of Truth; the secular power uses the veil to sanctify itself (for example, the Emperor of China is separated by a veil from his interlocutors – he could see without being seen, and the Caliph's chamberlain wore a veil because he was both the hiding person and the one revealing the truth). Finally, the veil is an intermediary, not an obstacle: it only hides partially, it invites to knowledge as an attribute of flirtation; for esotericism, it shows what is revealed by hiding or what it is hidden by revealing it. *The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language* explains that the Latin *velum* – etymologically the origin of the word *văl* ("veil") in Romanian – refers to a "fine, usually transparent fabric, which women put on their head or with which they wrap their body or part of it" (1149). Interestingly, the language outsmarts by forging a transfer between women and the veil and suggesting the hiding, appearance and pretext that both terms imply – under patriarchy.

An inventory of Adela's outfits includes terms such as long dress; grey, blue, lilac clothes; white coat, closed with a blue ribbon; blue polka, with a small scarf on the head; short sleeve lace; silk skirt; small cloak; thick grey gown; the black veil of the stocking. Certainly, in Ibrăileanu's world, clothing is not just an element of camouflage in the monastic sense: the habit inscribes the religious in the logic of spiritual events, being an outward affirmation of the monastic vows of simplicity, poverty, modesty and humility; the monastic habit covers the body and protects it from the shame of emptiness, discouraging the seeds of deceit and pride. Ibrăileanu extends the approach to clothing, making it synonymous with a type of behaviour, a mechanism that not necessarily keeps the distance, as much as it encourages an imaginative scenario, which transfigures sexuality and transforms it into eroticism. It is Octavio Paz's passionate geometry (100): it starts from a primordial fire, sexuality, which raises the red flame of eroticism, which, in turn, supports the third, blue and trembling flame of love. Emil's eye looks, admires, seeks, brings meaning; it is the one that offers pulse and sensuality to Adela's clothes. Moreover, a scale of the sentimental temperature of the male character can be realized starting from the girl's clothes loaded with meaning: "I felt her life radiate through the light clothing" (Ibrăileanu, *Adela* 73), "with the waist hidden in the cloak, the illusion was total" (77), "the cambric white dress, which draped her into statuary; (...) admiration drowned everything" (105), "in the pink dress (...) she was a block of living and warm beauties" (109), "the shawl that had absorbed the heat so many times" (111); it continues with the fetishization of the objects of the girl: "her coat on the hanger, when I enter the entrance room, gives me the chills" (119); and it ends with the sadness of a silk skirt that "sounded harsh under the thick dress" (139). Adela's clothes bring the promise of a revealing concealment, of a subtlety that invites an

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imaginative turn, of that modesty that enhances her femininity. The garment is transformed here into the barometer in which we can gauge the nuances of the character, her "placement" in intimacy with herself and with the other, a form of revealing dialogue. Anyway, complementary in this game there is Emil, the man who is extracted from the category of those dominated by subconscious rash through this engagement in the imaginary act – left alone, finally, he has the temptation to sit on Adela's bed, yet immediately waxes conscious of a gross abuse. Adela's clothes become a shelter and a showcase, a proclamation and a re-garment, functioning as a set of clues and traps.

The mysterious vagueness of the woman maintains the erotic tension of the novel. This tension comes from the setting of a lighting and darkness, the semantic inaccuracy being erotic, attractive, allusive. The imagination of the man rests on the game, because it involves spaces of manifestation in which nothing is firmly defined and clearly outlined. Intimacy generates a state of confession, desolation, the lack of pornographic distance, thus destroying objective play spaces in favour of subjective emotional impulses. If in a positive society things must be exposed in order to gain value and they are valuable if they are seen, in Garabet Ibrăileanu's fictional world veiling – the invisible – possesses the hermeneutic structure of depth, accentuates the sublime creatively and generates a cultic value: "the realities of love trivialize love" (Ibrăileanu, *Adela* 124), confesses Emil Codrescu. It is the very principle according to which worship is based precisely on the intangibility of the desired object, when every touch is equivalent to a desecration, a maculation of the object. The Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben questions the opposition system to consecrate / to desecrate, in which, *consecrate* ("sacrament") designates the exit of things from the sphere of human law, whereas *desecrate* means, in reverse, to render them available for the free use by people. However, this contradiction coagulates around a third term, *separation*, by which things and people are removed from common use and transferred to a separate area, which contains and preserves a religious core. Essential in this process of consecration is the caesura that separates the two worlds, the threshold that must not be trespassed. Or, in Agamben's view, touching is the first form of manifestation of desecration; it contains the contagious dimension of an act that descends and gives back to common usage that which the sacred had separated. We can explain in these terms the attitude of the male character of Ibrăileanu's novel – an adherent to the "aristocracy of the heart" (Paz 100) – who denies negligent behaviour (by neglecting to understand the separation and the particular use of the object) in relation to Adela, adopting a form of love devoid of the inertia of the flesh.

We must accept that Emil Codrescu's reporting contains notes of *amour courtois*, in which distance is essential and therefore renders the game incompatible – in theory – with any kind of sensual achievement. Ibrăileanu's novel thus promises the noble cult of the woman in which the ascendant sense of Platonism is conjoined with feudal service and faithful worship of the Christian type. The flesh appears as

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sexuality and as the initial point of love, but it is maintained throughout the text as unconsummated sex. Desire may begin sexually, but it turns to an ideal that undermines its premises. In a way, this desire is fulfilled even by its dissatisfaction and the idealization of the object. Worthy and statuary, a woman is sometimes allowed to get rid of the veil, but she has to comply with a status for which she has not asked. Maybe that is why Adela's observation does not seem surprising: "but women do not like to be treated as sanctuaries, with genuflections and censers, even when the incense is of the highest quality. We are not sanctuaries!" (Ibrăileanu, *Adela* 57). The observation recalls, in retrospect, that of another of Emil Codrescu's loves, Otilia, who criticized the excessive admiration of the man, the exercise of idealization to which he subjected her and that falsified the woman's identity, generating in her shame and shame towards him. However, for Emil Codrescu the idealization of the woman is necessary, and the chastity of the relationship of the two is a signal of sex in a negative way: by refusing to consummate it, the woman maintains her position intact, becoming unique and extraordinary. The man's reactions are a matter of goodwill, of the delicious misunderstandings born from the awareness that reality is opposed not only to ideality, but also to imagination. For Emil Codrescu, the paradise is a country of subtle and clandestine signs, where "nothing is consumed, nothing is craved for: all desires are abolished because they seem definitely fulfilled" (Barthes 114). In the novel, the same character, in an exercise of intellectualizing the love experience, notices:

> But without these ghosts, without this smoke in her brain, would she be so precious to you? Her intangibility, the mirage you see her in, her uniqueness, all these "ghosts" make her dear and distinguish her from all the women in the world! To deny the legitimacy of "ghosts" is a rude sophism. (...) without all this "smoke", without all these superstructures ... Adela would not be for you a woman of a single species ... would not be *Adela.*" (Ibrăileanu, *Adela* 130)

Arguably, love is what Gabriel Liiceanu names "a waiting presence" (255). Again, the negative becomes a way of propelling the positive. The inaccessible presence of the woman (the "smoke"; the "ghosts"), so the ambiguity of Adela's appearance contains the germs of the amplification of the desire, the continuous retention of the image and the ghost, the hiding that illuminates and which makes it unique. The element of the form is present in the absence of materiality, and precisely this "smoke" that dresses the woman becomes the fertilizing ground of the imagination, that is, the *crystallization* (in José Ortega y Gasset's sense) of the adored woman. The woman of Garabet Ibrăileanu's novel is under the sign of fluidity, of a permanent transformation in someone else. Let us not forget that Adela enters the text as a child that generates paternal feelings and engages in games and passionate dialogues. In a few years, Emil encounters an Adela who manifests her gestures of intimacy behind

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a fraternal "mon cher maître." And the last coat that Adela's identity puts on is one of the woman on the offensive, more masterful, more mature and obviously seductive. All the same, bashful reserve is the ingredient present at all times of this relationship. Her fine sensuality, hypersensitivity and vibrant mystery transform the only real dialogue of the bodies present in this novel into an experience of terrifying proportions, in which all the previous refusals were understood and compensated for. Thus, the text creates the myth of the feminine mystique by suggesting that love never says anything explicitly, but exploits the implicit. Seduction, as the key term of the novel, is concerned with the fragility of appearances in which veiling becomes the main exercise.

Thus, the body appears in continuous articulation, discursive and material, in continuous becoming. It is visible and legible, forcing the individual to resort to refined communication-spacing techniques. Following this line of analysis, I have shown how clothing kaleidoscopes express the world without saying a word, how modesty – of the body, but also of the woman's soul – becomes the sound of silence, an allusion to the promises of woman's nudity, all this unfolding in the absence of articulated language. The garment, as a flying buttress of the body, becomes a language accessible to all, a set of clues and traps, that is to say a means of communication. Adela's silence is in contradiction with the sounds that her body and her clothes generate, producing a confusing semantic explosion, but one consonant with our speech.

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