

## Irena Dimova

# The narrative and the body and the narrative of the body (On the novels 'The Virgin Mary's Earthly Gardens' by Emiliya Dvoryanova and 'Second Body' by Milorad Pavić)

### Abstract

This article seeks to identify the sort of bridging between the concepts of the body, the second body and the other body. The comparative analysis of Emiliya Dvoryanova's novel and Milorad Pavić's novel is centred around a few main thematic axes, like these about the body as a part of the body – space – time triad, about the eye, resp. the process of seeing, and about the hand, as continuing the seeing, and about the extreme conditions of fear and ecstasy. An emphasis is put on the process of composing the texts, on Dvoryanova's pantextualism and of the process of incorporation of sub-texts mirroring each other (mise en abyme) in Pavić's novel.

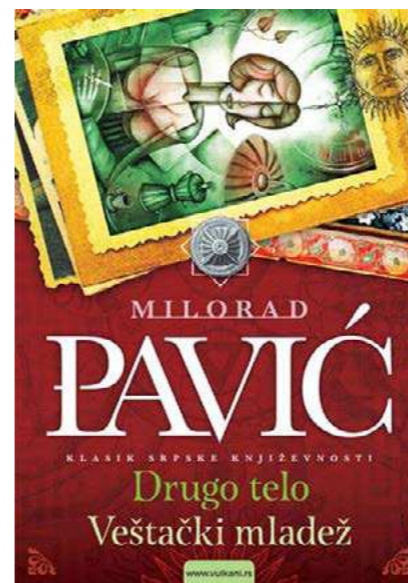
### Key words

Body. Ecstasy. Fear. Hand. Text.



Emilia Dvoryanova, 'The virgin Mary's earthly gardens'. [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <[http://www.delfi.rs/knjige/67404\\_drugo\\_telo\\_i\\_vestacki\\_mladez\\_knjiga\\_delfi\\_knjizare.html](http://www.delfi.rs/knjige/67404_drugo_telo_i_vestacki_mladez_knjiga_delfi_knjizare.html)>.

Dvoryanova and Pavić's novels emphasize the different aspects of looking into the essential philosophical questions, which have a long historical, cultural and literary multiple variability, when it comes to the answers that can be given to them. On the one hand, in 'The Virgin Mary's Earthly Gardens' the space represents itself like a certain space of the existential asking, while on the other hand, in 'Second Body'



Milorad Pavić, 'Second Body'. [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <[http://www.delfi.rs/knjige/67404\\_drugo\\_telo\\_i\\_vestacki\\_mladez\\_knjiga\\_delfi\\_knjizare.html](http://www.delfi.rs/knjige/67404_drugo_telo_i_vestacki_mladez_knjiga_delfi_knjizare.html)>.

we have defamiliarization, estrangement, and a distant observation'. In the second case they are the reason and the cause, that has led to the story, while in the first novel the narrative comes from them, so the text tells us that to live (and to express through the text) is possible only through, in and for the thematic points around the asking about the diad spirit – body. The reason for their parallel analysis that we've chosen is not the coincidence of the time of their publishing, that they were both released in almost the same year 2006/2007, but because of some of the common characteristics that mark the postmodern text, which plays with the concept of the memory and with the memory itself, with the historical and cultural heritage, as well with the idea about the ideas. Here we may also search for the reason why Dvoryanova indicates the impossibility of writing about Virgin Mary, while 'everybody's practicing on Mary Magdalene'. In Pavić's novel both sacred archetypes are being written by the literature, are being illustrated by the painting and are 'being told' in their own temples.

This comparative analysis of Emiliya Dvoryanova's novel and Milorad Pavić's novel is based on a few main thematic axes, like these about the body as a part of the body – space – time triad, about the eye, resp.

the process of seeing, and about the hand, as continuing the seeing, and about the extreme conditions of fear and ecstasy. An emphasis is put on the process of composing the texts, on Dvoryanova's pantextualism and on of the process of incorporation of sub-texts mirroring each other (mise en abyme<sup>2</sup>) in Pavić's novel.<sup>3</sup>

Both novels are situated, framed in a peculiar profanation. However, the difference between them can be inferred from the so-called post-modern ludus. In 'The Virgin Mary's Earthly Gardens' the forbidden is happening, the woman herself is happening with her body in one strongly male topos, what is Athos. 'Second Body' starts with a motto that represents 'Words on a T-shirt'. Both texts show us different ways of profaning the idea of the so-called 'second body', and along with this a way of trying to reach a sacralization. The three Marys are "out of the temple" all the time, and the body in Pavić's text almost never finds its own "temple", but in all cases the body articulates the metaphysical impulses.<sup>4</sup>

### The multiplicity in articulating the story. The fourfoldness

'... its story is that of a migration, the cycle of the avatars it passes through, far removed from its orig-

1 Another possible message of the book on which an accent is often being put is the idea of criticism towards the political system that can be found in 'The Virgin Mary's Earthly Gardens'. 'Her last novel delivers a clear political message; a protest against the total exclusion of any female creature from a vital 'capital' of religious culture – the monasteries in Mount Athos, Greece'.

KIROVA, M.: Defining the Feminine Presence in Literature. A Search for New Terms. In *Aspasia: The International Yearbook of Central, Eastern, and South-eastern European Women's and Gender History*, 2008, Vol. 2, No. 1, p. 177.

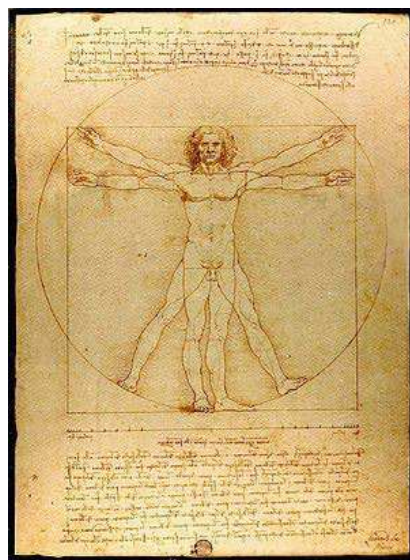
2 As it is defined by John Pier and Jean-Marie Schaeffer, who follows in Gérard Genette's footsteps.

PIER, J., SCHAEFFER, J., M.: *Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la representation*. In PIER, J. (ed.): *La métalepse, aujourd'hui*. Paris : Editions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2005, p. 121-30.

3 In the sense that Stéphane Mallarmé dampens, when speaking about the French language and its analyzing, i.e. about the attempt to de-chronologize and restore it. - *Quant au Livre - Oeuvres complètes, Pleiade*, p. 386.

4 KUNDERA, M.: *Testaments Betrayed: An Essay in Nine Parts*. London : Faber & Faber, 1995, p. 21-25.





The Vitruvian Man by Leonardo da Vinci. [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <<https://www.leonardodavinci.net/the-vitruvian-man.jsp>>.

inal being, down the path of a particular imagination that distorts but never drops it.'

Roland Barthes, 'The Metaphor of the Eye'<sup>5</sup>

'Second Body' is divided into five main parts. The number five has rich semantics. As readers we face the author's representation of the concept of The Vitruvian Man, as a composite picture of four different body postures. Here it comes to the fact that despite being static in structure, it is dynamic in its presentation of a moving, living man. But if we take a look at the semantics of the novel's structure, we can find four voices, which speak about 'the second body'. Thus four are the directions of the controversial thought of the 'second body'. It appears to be a dialog on the idea of this concept, or more precisely, the

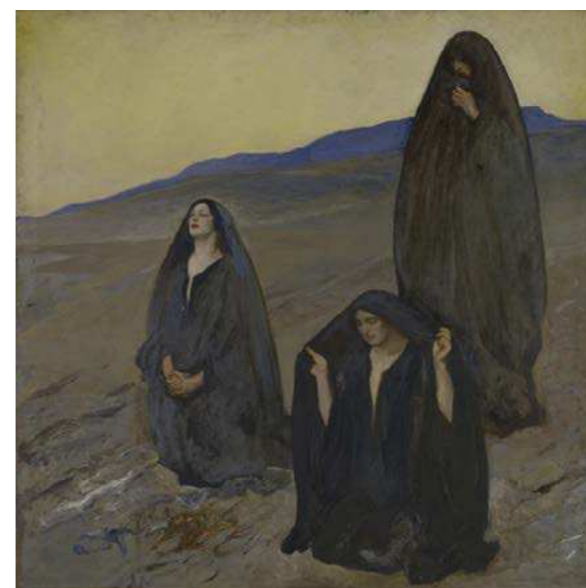
idea of 'the second body' is put into the form of a dialog. This conversation is diachronic, and synchronic as well. The body itself, along with the narrative about it, once goes back to the time of the 18th century, and twice 'lasts' in the present moment with the aim of repeating itself. Just like the history is doomed to repeat itself, so are we, just because we appear to be its simple material, that heaps it up and is at the same time being amassed. The book is often called a symphony in five parts, but if we take a deep look at the text, if we apply the so-called 'close reading', we can rehabilitate one 'string symphony' in four parts. We can restore the 'legitimate' quaternary structure. The story about 'the second body' has been orchestrated four times, so four are the attempts for reaching the fulfilment of this concept. Once by the composition of the text, through which the first interpretation opens and closes the story, what happens in the Lisa Suiff's narrative point of view (Lisa becomes an author herself and writes the ending of the novel in her native language). The second and the third time it elucidates through her husband's thoughts. And the last fourth interpretation comes from Lidia's narrative perspective. If we accept the color-changing stone ring, the tears of the Madonna and the verses as main elements of the ritual, which are represented in the first part of the novel as one cantus firmus, so they are introduced in the beginning of the book with the aim to be brought to an infinite quaternary accumulation.

Notwithstanding the text of Dvoryanova's novel can be separated into at least eight parts, structurally the quadrupling of the voices lasts. The narrators are the three Marys and the omniscient narrator. In the analysis of the structure of Hermann Broch's trilogy 'The Sleepwalkers' Milan Kundera chooses a mathemat-

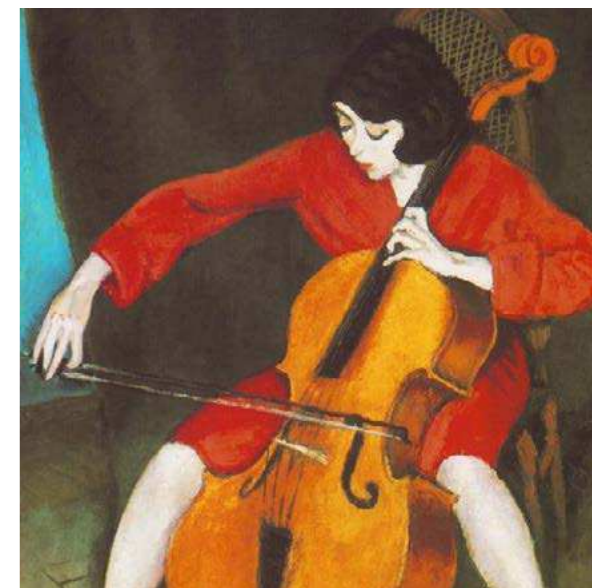


Mariya Nalbantanova in Literary newspaper (32/2017). [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <<https://litvestnik.wordpress.com/2017/04/07/вглеждане-в-женското-тяло-емилия-двор/>>.

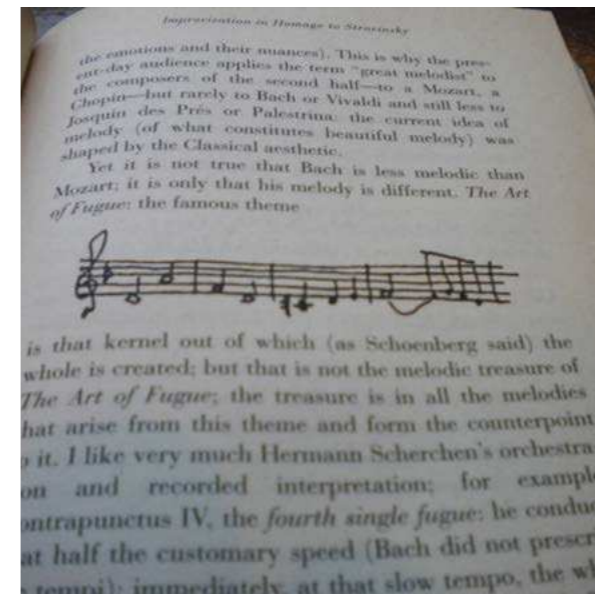
<sup>5</sup> BARTHES, R.: The Metaphor of the Eye. In BARTHES, R.: Critical Essays. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1972, p. 241-248.



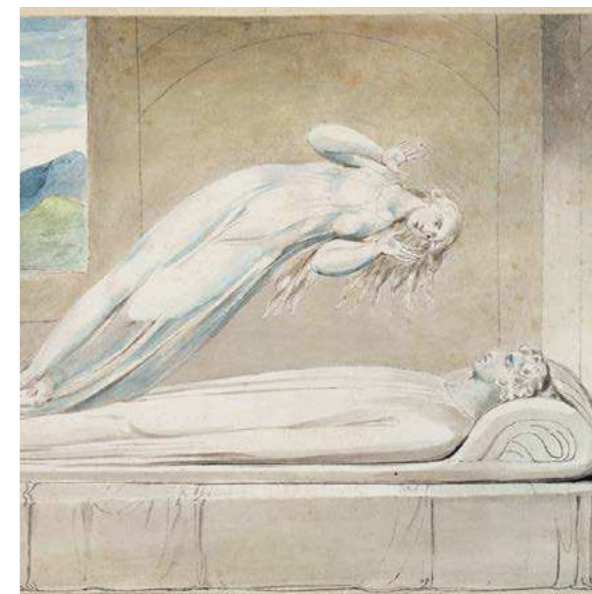
The Three Marys (1905-1910), Edwin Austin Abbey (1852-1911). [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <<https://artgallery.yale.edu/collections/objects/61289>>.



Woman Playing Cello (1928), Róbert Berényi (1887-1953). [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <<https://sk.pinterest.com/pin/145874475403084258/>>.

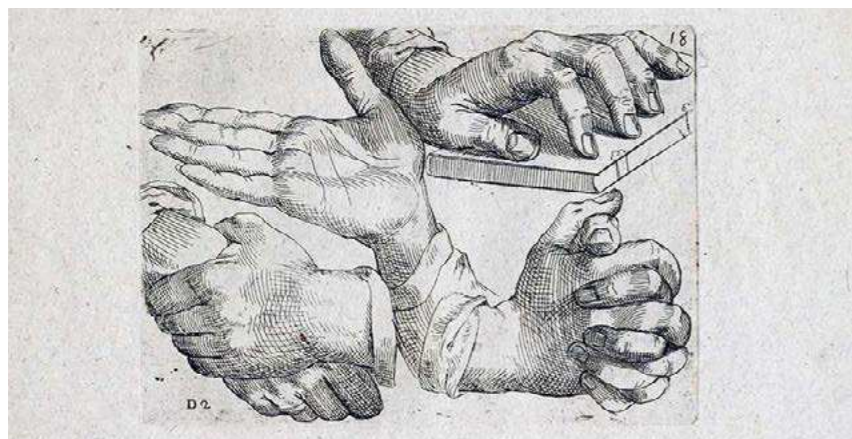


Milan Kundera on Bach's Art of Fugue. [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <<http://soniclabyrinth.blogspot.sk/2010/08/milan-kundera-on-bachs-art-of-fugue.html>>.



The Grave, William Blake (1757-1827). [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <[http://virtualjerusalem.com/jewish\\_news.php?Itemid=24118](http://virtualjerusalem.com/jewish_news.php?Itemid=24118)>.





Tomaso Carnetto's 1st Lecture 2016 'The Intentional Space of Drawing'. [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <<http://www.tomasocarnetto.com/carnettolecture/2016/5/1/1st-lecture-2016-the-intentional-space-of-drawing>>.

ical way to bring the essence out of the book. He separates it into a few parts and compares them in order to sort them by size and position. When he tries to draw a conclusion about the concrete order chosen by the author, he closes his analysis with emphasizing the synthesis of different modes in Broch's book. According to Kundera, here it comes to these several elements – verse, narrative, aphorism, reportage, essay – that remain juxtaposed or blended into a polyphonic unity. He writes about the contrast between the different emotions, that has guided the author. This contrast occupies each of the parts. And the most important part for us of Kundera's analysis is the essential process, in which the five parts mirror each other. This separation he defines as a musical one.<sup>6</sup> That kind of a creative matrix can be used in the analysis of 'The Virgin Mary's Earthly Gardens' too. And it can be done due to the 'twinhood' of the three Marys and the way the narrative points of two of them 'gazes' in the mirror of the third one. Thus Dvoryanova's text

can be defined as quadrivial with two 'diaspasmós' before the final part. The text is happening, it is creating itself in one unusual order of its parts. We can read it even as a chiasmic structure. The main idea is in the center of the text, and the opening and the closing one complete the created circle. Each idea is connected to its 'reflection'. 'Chiasmus afforded a seriously element of internal organization in ancient writing, which did not make use of paragraphs, punctuation, capitalization and other synthetic devices to communicate the conclusion of one idea and the commencement of the next'.<sup>7</sup> The basic essence of the chiasmus is the role it plays as a major structural feature. Dvoryanova's text doesn't follow any fixed syntax rules, it falls apart wherever it wants to, it fragmentizes itself, and at the same time it leads the main thought and concentrates it in its center. In other words, it releases the flow of thought and focuses it upon its own central concept. Emilia Dvoryanova herself speaks about the process of

<sup>6</sup> KUNDERA, M.: Testaments Betrayed: An Essay in Nine Parts. London : Faber & Faber, 1995, p. 21-25.

<sup>7</sup> STOCK, A.: Chiasmic Awareness and Education in Antiquity. In Biblical Theology Bulletin, 1984, Vol. 14, No. 1, . 23.



Emilia Dvoryanova, 'Beside Literature'. [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <<https://litvestnik.wordpress.com/прочетено-днес/яница-радева-емилия-дворянова/>>.



Emilia Dvoryanova, 'Concerto for a Sentence - An Endeavor in the Musical-Erotic'. [online]. [2017-10-18]. Available at: <<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/6041397>>.

'disengaging, separating from the language' and give it the 'simple' name 'parole' as it is determined in the French terminology. It is that 'parole' from the beginning, that is situated before everything, and is a depth and a height at the same time. It is the point, which the Literature aims, when leaves the words' territory.

While in 'The Virgin Mary's Earthly Gardens' we talk about a chiasmically arranged text, in Pavić's case we see a novel of variations. The story is being repeatedly accumulated with all its different variations.<sup>8</sup> The narrating is concentrated around one cantus firmus, and on this cantus fir-

<sup>8</sup> Brian McHale talks about 'The interweaving of different registers in the text of the novel', what considers 'producing the effect of heteroglossia, plurality of discourse; and it is this concrete heteroglossia which serves as the vehicle for the confrontation and dialogue among world-views and ideologies in the novel, its orchestrated polyphony of voices.' MCHALE, B.: Postmodernist Fiction. London, New York : Routledge, 1987, p. 166.

mus are built the four stories of the experience with 'the second body'.

The fourfoldness serves as a forming base in another story in Pavić's book too. The narrative about Jesus is present on a map, which has 'four legs, four branches', it is situated on 'the four-legged letter Shin'.

### The Body

While the body in Dvoryanova's novel is being analyzed with its concreteness, as Mary's body, as 'an exquisite body'<sup>9</sup>, in 'Second Body' it is seen through the idea of the body itself, as an articulation of the secret. The one is the moving body, the other is the invented one, the gender-differentiated against the genderqueer, the non-binary one, the improvising one against the improvised one, the found against the one that is lost forever. In 'The Virgin Mary's Earthly Gardens' the body has only one name - Mary's name, while on the contrary, in Pavić's novel we have a lot of name's variations. However, constant stays the idea of 'the second body' and its entelechy. The main question being put in the

text is about it and through it the text itself turns into a storage for the memory of it. Pavić's body is the one of the child, the 'spiritual', even the body of the clay army<sup>10</sup>. In this novel we see four concepts of the 'second body', i.e. four concepts of reaching the spiritual me. The imagined stories are grounded on the conserved collective memory. The main element in the search of the 'second body' is the moment when a man will have the material body, and the spiritual one too, what means to hold the present moment, to stop the time. Zaharije Orfelin, who is not only a part of the fictive world in the book, but a historical person too, introduces the idea of 'the second body' as a body made of books. In the part named 'The Body' is said 'So the evil one knows that he cannot or dare not destroy life completely. He knows that word can receive a new body'. But this idea of achieving the other body is incorporated in the bigger one from Lisa's story, and is described as born from her husband's imagination.

Zaharije Orfelin 'meets' two female bodies in the novel - Ana's and Za-

<sup>9</sup> In connection with this part of the novel can be applied Ernst Kantorowicz's theory on the so-called 'the king's two bodies'.  
KANTOROWICZ, H., E.: *The King's Two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology*. Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 2016, 632 p.

beta's, - and this happens before his initiation into the idea of 'the second body'. This shared process of searching leads to a few deaths - like these of maestro Jeremiah and Horace Kerouac. While Gavril Stefanović Venclović dies by his own hand. Lisa's story produces the 'seeing' of the other body, when she changes her body with her husband's. In the other stories, on the other hand, the hand tries to achieve it. The hand continues the act of seeing.

The connection between Lisa and the narrator highlights a different idea of the Other. If in the whole text the body is Leib, and Körper, only they both together achieve the concept of Leibkörper (an external body). They find each other in the act of looking at each other, and they find themselves in the other too. In 'Eye and Mind' Merleau-Ponty, taking into consideration Husserl's ideas, defines the eye as 'nothing but the instrument of a distant will'<sup>11</sup>. The process of seeing restores the world by using the hand. 'Seeing is not a certain mode of thought or presence to self; it is the means given me for being absent from myself,

for being present from within at the fission of Being only at the end of which do I close up into myself'.<sup>12</sup>

The same function as continuing the process of seeing has the hand in Dvoryanova's novel too. It creates the 'mute' movement of the eye. The music that comes from the cello creates a new world. And for this world the seeing is not enough, the seeing is just the beginning. Mary - The Other 'testifies' how Mary 'being in love was holding the cello between her legs, and her hands were gently touching it'. And it produces the Mary's desire to be drowned in her own love. This leads again to the main role of the hand, because in Athos first comes the male-only rule, so women are not allowed in men's monasteries. But Mery's hand reaches the forbidden land. The hand plays the strings four tuned in perfect fifths, it continues the thinking and realizes the thought.

In both novels the hand touching itself represents the body's capacity to express, and all the knowledge is in the hand.

### The Ecstasy

The excessive, ecstatic conditions, which a human goes through, are

<sup>11</sup> MERLEAU-PONTY, M.: *Eye and Mind*. In JOHNSON, A., G., SMITH, B., M. (eds.): *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting*. Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 1993, p. 121-150.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 146.

tightly connected with the concept, which supposes that reality includes time and eternity as two distinct modes of real existence. Hermann Schmitz describes the fear as 'an absolute presence' of the body, as a 'Primitive Gegenwart'. As a second concept of the total presence of the body comes the ecstasy. In moments of great fear or severe pain that are actually very close to the one of a great pleasure, we have our 'felt' body (not the corporeality (Leiblichkeit)). Both those conditions – fear and ecstasy – are conditions of a total blindness, they are an ultimate presence in yourself, but an absence from the world. The fear in 'Second Body' is the fear of the beauty. He escapes from it even in his own nightmare. He 'listens' to the ecstasy that happens in the process of playing the piano, but he doesn't want to experience it, to live it up. As an ecstasy can be described the Gavril's ritual, during which he gives all his sins to the hemlock tree, which is told to be a complete purification of the body and soul. His blood and the poisonous sap of the hemlock mingle and he reaches the ultimate point, when he receives his other body. In the 'The Virgin Mary's Earthly Gardens' we have an ecstasy that has its long way through the gentle body's parts. In this novel music, erotics, religion and philosophy are different names for the same thing. All these feelings express the same repeating condition

- uror amore mei (I am 'on fire with love of myself). This is Marys's own coeamus<sup>13</sup>.

Dvoryanova's and Pavic's novels represents two types of speaking on a few historical and cultural codes, that have their roots in the past, but meet again in the present through the medium of the literature. The way to the other body is the way of self-knowledge. What beams from their novels is the melodic importance and the beauty of repetition.

<sup>13</sup> Perstat et alternae deceptus imagine vocis 'Huc coeamus' ait; nullique libentius umquam sponsura sono 'Coeamus!' (III 385-7). [online]. [2017-10-06]. Available at: <<http://www.gottwein.de/Lat/ov/ovmet03339.php>>.

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