

The Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics: A transnational perspective

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Abstract: This paper seeks to situate the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics of the 1960–1980s within the larger European intellectual-historical context from which it sprang, and in which it played a vital role. Analysing the school members’ engagement with their peers throughout Europe, we outline an “entangled history” (*histoire croisée*) of multi-directional scientific and philosophical influence. In this perspective, we discuss the most productive concepts and methods of Tartu-Moscow semiotics in the fields of general verse theory, intertextual theory and cultural theory.

Keywords: Juri Lotman; Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics; *histoire croisée*

1. The history and cultural functions of semiotics in Central and East European countries were drastically different from those in North America where this science was born (M. Lotman 2013: 262; Chernov 1988: 12; Ivanov 2013: 12). The development of Russian formalism and Prague structuralism lead to total restructuring of the field of literary and cultural studies, so the place which was earlier occupied by general aesthetics was now occupied by semiotics that later would develop into a general theory of culture. Thus, in Europe (and especially in the Tartu School), the semiotics of artistic text and semiotics of culture became the most important branches of the study of signs and sign systems (Chernov 1972; Lachmann 1987; Eimermacher 1987; Torop 1999; M. Lotman 2002, 2013: 263–264). In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the closest ally of the Tartu School was the circle of Moscow semioticians who took an active part in its Summer Schools of Semiotics in Kääriku near Tartu (1964–70) and collaborated with their Tartu colleagues until the late 1980s.¹ Both groups are usually considered as

¹ The Summer Schools took place in Kääriku in 1964, 1966, 1968 and 1970. The next school was to be held in Yerevan Armenia, in 1972 or Kääriku in 1973, but was suppressed, and only a

a single association, the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics (TMS). The importance of TMS in the evolution of humanities in the 20th century can hardly be overstated (Shukman 1978; B. Gasparov 1985; Fleischer 1987; Chernov 1988; Grzybek 1989, 1995; Torop 1995; Neklyudov 1998; Todd 1998; Cherednichenko 2001; Städtke 2002; Zhivov 2009; Žyłko 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Rojek 2012; Uspenskij 2012, 2016; Grishakova, Salupere 2015). However, its intellectual background still has many uncharted areas.

Juri Lotman was, no doubt, the central figure of TMS (Kristeva 1994; Sebeok 1998; Kull *et al.* 2011), and among the TMS members his impact on semiotics has been widely researched (see Shukman 1977, 1978b; Thompson 1977; Städtke 1981; Chernov 1982; Reid 1990; B. Gasparov 1994; Voigt 1995; Bethea 1997; Egorov 1999; Avtonomova 2001, 2009; Žyłko 2001; Arán, Barei 2002; Andrews 2003a; Soo-Hwan 2003; Lepik 2007, 2008, to mention only the most important works). However, neither the contributions of other prominent Estonian members of TMS, nor the interrelations between Estonian, Russian and other branches of European semiotics have been investigated properly. One reason for this lacuna is because the school is often considered “Lotmanocentric” (Torop 1995: 231–232). Another is that most studies devoted to TMS (with few exceptions) do not take a cross-cultural approach: they tend to interpret its rise and consider its evolution almost entirely through the lense of the Soviet context. Moreover, some members of TMS themselves call the school “Russocentric” (Segal 2011: 268), and in the English-speaking world Lotman remains insufficiently known among literary and cultural theorists outside Slavistics (Blaim 1998; Winner 2002; Shukman 2005; Schönle, Shine 2006: 6; Todd 2006; Platt 2008: 321; Kull 2011: 344–345; Ibrus, Torop 2015: 2–3).

Although it is evident that humanities are always based on a constant effort of historical self-reflection (Bourdieu 1995, 2001; Eco 1997), some critics claim the history of science, as such, and the history of the humanities in particular, is not directed towards the acquisition of important new knowledge, but rather to promoting already existing knowledge. However, the history of science and the philosophy of science promote and develop existing (but often largely ignored) methodology, not the existing results, and reveal its undervalued potential.

Contemporary conceptual history focuses on “historical semantic”, i.e. transnational borrowings and influences, significant distortions resulting from translation, emergence of neologisms, etc. (Koselleck 1979, 1998; Gumbrecht 2006). An ‘archaeology’ and ‘genealogy’ (in the Foucauldian sense of these notions) of the basic concepts of Tartu-Moscow semiotics or its ‘*Begriffsgeschichte*’ (in Koselleck’s

Collection of Essays on Secondary Modelling Systems was published in Tartu in 1973. In winter 1974, the All-Union Symposium for the Study of Secondary Modelling Systems was held in Tartu. All these venues were followed by the publications of *Synopses* or *Materials*. The next and the last Summer School of the Soviet period was held in Kääriku in 1986.

sense) have yet to be written. When completed, these will probably demonstrate the transfer of formalist ideas from Russia to Europe with the subsequent formation of Prague structuralism, export of Central European structuralist and semiotic concepts to France, their re-import back to the USSR, and the subsequent poststructuralist reaction. The latter includes the self-reflection of the participants in the discussion on TMS initiated by Boris Gasparov (1989).²

In the history of knowledge, periods of nomothetic development, or “normal science” as Thomas Kuhn calls it, are opposed to the “scientific revolutions” which generate new epistemological paradigms (Kuhn 1970). The formalist breakthroughs in Russia and Poland in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s, as well as the structuralist and semiotic breakthroughs in Western, Central and Eastern Europe in the late 1950s and 1960s were such “revolutions”, i. e. periods of grand conceptual shifts. New scientific growth often emerges from insights which had remained un(der)developed during and after previous scientific revolutions – this is precisely what happened in the 1960s when the structuralists resurrected and revamped formalist ideas.

According to Lotman, the historical evolution is, at each given moment, ambiguous and “potentially capable of resolving itself into any number of variants”. It disambiguates only in retrospect: “A retrospective view intensifies determinacy” (J. Lotman 1990: 233; cf. J. Lotman 1993: 9–10; 2013: 64–71; and a discussion in Zolyan 2013: 42–44). A single, homogeneous history of semiotics such as some scholars have attempted to write is both an empirical and a theoretical dead end: the origins of semiotics are polygenetic, and its development is multidirectional (Schmitter 1983; Eschbach 1983; Eco 1983; Dutz, Schmitter 1986). For this reason, we propose to bring recent methodological and theoretical developments in cultural mobility studies (Greenblatt 2009) and “*histoire croisée*” (“entangled history”) – which describe intellectual-historical evolution as a transcultural, multilateral process (cf. Haupt, Kocka 2010) – to bear on the history of TMS. The relationships between the scholars of different backgrounds and nationalities can be investigated in terms of *reciprocity* and *reversibility*. As Werner and Zimmermann (2006: 38) put it in their seminal “Beyond comparison: *Histoire croisée* and the challenge of reflexivity”,

To investigate relational configurations that are active and asymmetrical, as well as the labile and evolving nature and of things and situations, to scrutinize not only novelty but also change, is one of the aims of *histoire croisée*. Instead of an analytical model – which would result in a static view of things – our aim is on the contrary to articulate various dimensions and place them into movement.

² The first synopsis of the discussion was outlined in Permyakov, Pilshchikov 1992; a comprehensive edition is provided in Neklyudov 1998. We must mention here that one of the authors of the present article, then a recent graduate of the University of Tartu, took part in this polemics (see Amelin, Pilshchikov 1993).

This approach provides a different perspective on transnational history and allows to surpass the shortcomings of classic comparative history (that is, the national perspective). To cite only one example: such important synoptic work as Margherita De Michiel's "On the reception of Juri M. Lotman's works in Italy" (De Michiel 1995) describes the Italian views on Lotman and the Italian editions of his work, but does not fully take into account the parallel development, common interests and mutual awareness of structuralists and semioticians from Western and Eastern Europe. This reciprocity would explain not only the numerous translations of Lotman into Italian, but also such related phenomena as the growing interest in the theoretical works of Umberto Eco in late Soviet and post-Soviet Russia, Lotman's afterword to the Russian edition of Eco's *The Name of the Rose* (J. Lotman 1989) and the role of Eco's introduction to the English-language (not Russian or Italian!) edition of Lotman's *Universe of the Mind* (Eco 1990) in the formation of the international reputation of Lotman's theories.

To enjoy the cognitive benefits of an entangled history, it should be noted that this approach does not aspire to regularize the past, reconcile the conflicts and produce a unified (hi)story. Rather, on the narrative level an "*histoire croisée*" research project will result in an ensemble of complementing histories. However, in this transcultural history, the Tartu-Moscow School emerges as a hub of European semiotics and structuralism and not merely a self-proclaimed progressive outpost of Soviet science.

Although "Lotman's work has been gradually generating interest in English-language cultural studies for several years" now (Ibrus, Torop 2015: 5), and despite such recent forums as *Lotman and Cultural Studies: Encounters and Extensions* (Schönle 2006) and *Explosion und Peripherie: Jurij Lotmans Semiotik der kulturellen Dynamik revisited* (Frank et al. 2012), the value of Lotman's legacy remains questionable for the Western academia. Thus, in a very positive review of *Lotman and Cultural Studies*, Kevin M. F. Platt (2008: 321–322) nevertheless adds:

It is not entirely clear that this excellently produced volume achieves its stated goal of demonstrating the currency of Lotman's ideas in the broader theoretical marketplace. [...] Without a doubt, Lotman's legacy includes an enormous number of seminal analyses of an astonishingly broad range of topics in Russian cultural history – essential reading for any student of this tradition. Yet, one is tempted to conclude, his theoretical innovations were largely parallel to those of other thinkers and in no way constitute 'necessary' additions to the Western theoretical scene at present.

We suppose the writings of TMS (and Lotman's in particular) do contain such "additions", and many of them are still undervalued. To cite only one example, such a fine critic as Caryl Emerson finds the "hardcore claims" of Tartu-Moscow semiotics

“counterintuitive and outrageous” (Emerson 2011: 267). If, however, “softened and made palatable, reasonable, and true, they become uninteresting as a theory, inefficient as an organizing principle, and almost impotent as disruptive tools” (Emerson 2011: 267).

In this paper we will discuss what we consider to be the most productive concepts and methods of Tartu-Moscow semiotics in the fields of general verse theory, theory of intertextuality and cultural theory. We do not aim at addressing all relevant issues in the framework of one article – our aim is to pose new problems. Both scientific and humanistic inquiry first and foremost consists in the ability to ask the right questions and only then to give correct answers; accordingly, there can be no former without the latter.

2. Lotman’s intellectual career is conventionally divided into three periods: a traditional literary historian (1950s), a literary structuralist (1960s), and a founder of the semiotics of culture (1970–80s). As a matter of fact, these periods intermingle and overlap. In particular, the formation of TMS, of which he became a leader, took place in the mid-1960s. For more than two decades it served, despite the Iron Curtain, as an intermediary between Western and Eastern academic communities from France and Italy to Czechoslovakia and Poland, and from Russia to China and Japan.

It comes as no surprise then that Lotman’s archive contains a large mass of documentation with TMS’s international connections (on the archive, see Kuzovkina, Trunin 2012; Pilshchikov *et al.* 2012). Aside from many unpublished scholarly works by Lotman, Zara Mints and other TMS members, the archive also contains Lotman’s correspondence with Estonia’s leading intellectuals (Paul Ariste, Uku Masing, Lennart Meri, Jaan Kross and others), as well as prominent structuralists and semioticians worldwide: Maria-Renata Mayenowa in Poland, Miroslav Drozda and Vladimir Macura in Czechoslovakia, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Algirdas Greimas and Tsvetan Todorov in France, Karl Eimermacher in West Germany, Roman Jakobson and Thomas Sebeok in the USA, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Vladimir Toporov and Boris Uspenskij in Russia, Zhou Qichao in China, Seiji Kitaoka in Japan, and many others (see, in particular, Pilshchikov 2012; Trunin 2013; Ponomareva 2013; Malevich 2013).³ Tallinn University Press has started publishing these materials within the *Bibliotheca Lotmaniana* book series. We hope that these publications will substantially enrich and complicate our present picture of how the Tartu-Moscow School fits into the global history of structuralism and semiotics.

³ Lotman’s international contacts were not confined to the letters preserved in the Archive, and included Stefan Żółkiewski and Lucylla Pszczołowska in Poland, Radegast Parolek, Zdeněk Mathauser, Světa Mathauserová and Miroslav Červenka in Czechoslovakia, Julia Kristeva and Christian Metz in France, and many other scholars. As Lotman wrote in his letter to Maria-Renata Mayenowa of 23 May 1968, “for me, personal contacts form an absolutely necessary part of academic network” (cf. fn. 13).

We believe the success of Lotman's lifelong TMS academic project was related to the specificity of Estonia's position at the crossroads of various cultures. In the early 1970s Lotman wrote:

An aggregate of cultures with certain common codes forms a cultural area. An intra-areal exchange is always more intensive. Of special interest for comparative studies, in this respect, are those geographic regions where cultures of different types have co-existed and found themselves in close spatial communication for a long time. Examples of such regions are Transcaucasia, Baltic countries, the Mediterranean, and Central Europe.⁴

To use Steven Greenblatt's theory, Tartu as a place open for inter-cultural contact, became "a 'contact zone' where cultural goods were exchanged" (Greenblatt 2009: 251). Estonian semiotics was a multicultural and international phenomenon both in terms of its external relations and internal social structure, unifying scholars of Estonian, German, Russian, and Jewish origins (Torop 1998; Kull *et al.* 2011; Kull, M. Lotman 2011, 2012[1995]; Tamm, Kull 2015, 2016; cf. B. Gasparov 1985: 7–8). The research of these relations is topical today, because it can clarify the underestimated role of this phenomenon as a synthesis between "Western" and "Eastern" intellectual traditions. The problem of their interrelation (peaceful and productive or antagonistic and destructive) has far more than a purely theoretical significance, as the recent events in Ukraine have demonstrated.

The connection of TMS to earlier scientific movements and schools is another aspect of its history that has yet to receive proper scholarly treatment. Boris Uspenskij, who seems to be the first to dwell on this problem, stated:

The Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics unifies two traditions: the Moscow linguistic tradition with the Leningrad literary-historical [*literaturovedcheskaya*] tradition, which mutually enrich each other. This symbiosis has proven extraordinarily fruitful for both traditions. (Uspenskij 1987: 21)

Uspenskij's paper was first delivered as a talk at the Institute of Language and Literature of the Academy of Sciences of the German Democratic Republic in Berlin in 1981. The following year, Lotman described the genesis of TMS in a similar way, but added the University of Tartu with its "Europeanness":

⁴ Lotman, Juri. *Nekotorye problemy sravnitel'nogo izucheniya hudozhestvennyh tekstov* [Some problems in a comparative study of artistic texts]. Unpublished manuscript, p. 16. Estonian Semiotic Repository Foundation (Tallinn), f. 1. Translations from languages other than English are ours unless otherwise stated.

The alumni of Moscow University and Leningrad University formed the Soviet school of semiotics as a synthesis of these two traditions in the humanities. To them, a third tradition was added: the University of Tartu. It was not a mere chance: the University of Tartu had its own, well-established linguistic school, and, moreover, was always characterized by a high spirit of academic tolerance, an openness to all-Europe cultural trends.⁵

Indeed, the intellectual lineage of TMS can best be understood in a broader European context. The conceptual transfer of Saussurean linguistics and the paragon of *fin-de-siècle* German formal art criticism to Russia created the formalist breakthrough of the 1910s (Tchougounnikov 2003; Svetlikova 2005; Heller 2005; Romand, Tchougounnikov 2009; Dmitrieva *et al.* 2009). In 1926 a prominent Russian formalist Roman Jakobson became a co-founder of the Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC). Hence, formalism and its successor, structuralism, started to spread over Europe and America (after Jakobson's emigration to the USA). The Russian Formalist School did not possess internal methodological unity, and did not manage to create a new scientific paradigm (in Thomas Kuhn's sense of this word). Thus, from the Kuhnian standpoint, formalism, as Peter Steiner pointed out, "can be termed an 'interparadigmatic stage' in the evolution of Slavic literary scholarship" (Steiner 1984: 269). A formation of the new scientific paradigm was accomplished by the Prague Linguistic Circle in the mid-1930s when the PLC leaders like Roman Jakobson and Jan Mukařovský proposed a programme integrating structural linguistic and semiotic methods for the study of languages, literatures, and cultures (Wellek 1969; Steiner 1976; Winner 1976; Doležel 1982, 1995; Eco 1987; Toman 1995; Sériot 1999; Vachek 2002; Nekula 2003; PrLKD 2012; PrSK 2014).

3. A distinctive feature of TMS was the combination of structuralist and semiotic approaches to language, literature and culture. The origins of this synthesis should be traced back to the 1920s and 1930s. Lotman and Uspenskij considered Opoyaz, the Moscow Linguistic Circle and the Prague Linguistic Circle the predecessors of TMS (Lotman 1972: 16–17; Uspenskij 1987: 19–21).

The theory of literature and poetic language developed by Russian formalists in the 1920s revolutionized 20th-century humanities. Historically, Russian formalism was organized in two distinct groups, the St.Petersburg association of the formalists – The Society for the Study of Poetic Language (Opoyaz), and the organizational centre of Moscow formalism – the Moscow Linguistic Circle (MLC). Opoyaz started to function in 1916–1917 (although Shklovskij's first programmatic statement was published as early as 1914), and dissolved after 1922. Its core members were Viktor Shklovskij, Boris Eichenbaum and Yurij Tynyanov. MLC was established in 1915 (the

⁵ Lotman, Juri. *Universitet – nauka – kul'tura* [University – science – culture]. Unpublished until recently (see J. Lotman 2016[1982]: 684–685).

Statute was ready in 1914), and functioned until 1924. The first president of the MLC was Roman Jakobson, and he held this office until he left Russia in January 1920. Among its members were folklorist Petr Bogatyrev (a co-founder), linguist Grigorij Vinokur (president, 1923–24), medievalist Boris Yarkho, philosopher Gustav Shpet, and others. Roman Jakobson, the leftist critic Osip Brik and the textologist and poetry scholar Boris Tomashevskij were active participants in both Opoyaz and MLC. If Opoyaz, as Eichenbaum put it, represented “journalistic” (that is, anti-academic, but not dilettantish) criticism (see Eichenbaum 1927: 119–120; 1922: 14), then MLC represented academic scholarship: it was founded within Moscow University, and its Statute was approved by the Imperial Academy of Sciences.

However different the two branches of formalism were, they both shared a few basic ideas, and among these was the idea of the study of literature as an autonomous discipline: literature should be regarded as a phenomenon *per se* and not a manifestation of extra-literary phenomena, such as social relations (as in Marxism) or psychological complexes (as in Freudianism). By 1928–29 the study of literature as an autonomous “series” (*ryad* in Russian; resp. *Reihe* in German) was complemented with a complex study of other related “series”, the sum total of which (that is, culture) was considered as a systematically and hierarchically organized whole (that is, structure). Jakobson borrowed the term ‘structuralism’ from contemporary psychology and used it as a programmatic self-description in 1929 in a newspaper note on the First International Congress of Slavists. He wrote it in Czech (Jakobson 1929), and much later, in 1971, it was reproduced in English in the “Retrospect” to the second volume of his *Selected Writings*:

Were we to comprise the leading idea of present-day science in its most various manifestations, we could hardly find a more appropriate designation than *structuralism*. Any set of phenomena examined by contemporary science is treated not as a mechanical agglomeration but as a structural whole, and the basic task is to reveal the inner, whether static or developmental, laws of this system. (Jakobson 1971: 711)

This self-delineation was transferred into the first manifesto of structuralism from Jakobson and Tynyanov’s joint venture, “Problems in the study of literature and language”:

At the present time, the achievements of the synchronic concept force us to reconsider the principles of diachrony as well. The idea of a mechanical agglomeration [*mehanicheskij agglomerat*] of material, having been replaced by the concept of a system or structure in the realm of synchronic study, underwent a corresponding replacement in the realm of diachronic study as well. The history of a system is in turn a system. Pure synchronism now proves to be an illusion: every

synchronic system has its past and its future as inseparable structural elements of the system. (Tynyanov, Jakobson 1981[1928]: 4)⁶

Following Tynyanov and Jakobson, Lotman acquired a structuralist position in the early 1960s, and criticized the mechanistic model suggested by the early Opoyaz – first and foremost, by Viktor Shklovskij (whose work Lotman opposed to Eichenbaum's and Tynyanov's).⁷ In his *Lectures on Structural Poetics*, which became the first issue of *Sign Systems Studies*, Lotman (1964: 13) maintained this criticism:

The main flaw of the so-called 'formal method' is that it often led the scholars to the view of literature as a sum-total of devices, a mechanical conglomerate [*mehaničeskij konglomerat*]. A genuine study of a work of art is possible only if we approach the work as a single, multidimensional, functioning structure. It can hardly be said that this view presents something drastically new in our literary studies. It was already outlined in the works of Yu[rij] N. Tynyanov, G[rigorij] A. Gukovskij, V[ladimir] Ya. Propp and some other scholars.

Structuralism with its "functioning structure" is once again opposed to formalism with its "sum-total of devices" (Shklovsky's formula)⁸ and "mechanical conglomerate" in Lotman's article "Literary structuralism", commissioned by *Kratkaya literaturnaya entsiklopediya* [*The Concise Literary Encyclopedia*] in the late 1960s but remaining unpublished until recently:

Literary structuralism. A trend in literary theory, forming part of a broader scientific movement which seeks to consider works of art and the whole range of texts that make up the culture, as internally organized, and subject to certain structural rules. From the structuralist point of view, a text is not a mechanical conglomerate [*mehaničeskij konglomerat*] of 'devices', 'elements' or 'motifs', but an organic unity. The semantics of the text and its social function are inseparable from its inherent structure. As carriers of certain messages, texts are subject to the general laws of communication systems: they can be considered as a sequence of signs, which is constructed in accordance with certain rules. The text is a realization of a particular sign system which functions in the given group and is related to it as the 'language' of a special kind ('the language of cinema', 'the language of painting', 'the language of ballet'). In this sense, the structural features of genres, literary movements, types of poetry can be described as 'languages' sui generis. This explains the widespread penetration of linguistic methods in structuralism. (J. Lotman quoted in Pilshchikov 2012: 46–47)

⁶ On the role of Tynyanov and Jakobson's paper in the evolution of functional and structural methods see Erlich 1965: 134–135, 198–200; Pomorska 1968: 39–40; Broekman 1974: 49–50.

⁷ See Pilshchikov 2012: 49, 58 and Pilshchikov 2015 for a discussion.

⁸ "A work of literature is the sum-total of all stylistic devices employed in it" (Shklovsky 1921: 15; quoted in Erlich 1965: 90).

For Lotman, just as for Tynyanov and Jakobson, the dichotomy of synchrony and diachrony “is more heuristic than fundamental, defining the aspects of the study and the movement of the research’s thought. A synchronic description and a historical description of the objects of study in literary structuralism are two inseparable stages of cognition” (quoted in Pilshchikov 2012: 60). In contrast to French post-structuralists, Lotman’s attitude to the concepts of history and culture is embodied in the metaphor of reconstruction, rather than deconstruction (see Waldstein 2008: 7; cf. McCarthy 1991). Similarly, Lotman and TMS support a right-centrist or sometimes conservative, but never a leftist agenda.

In the first version of Lotman’s article, structural poetics, structural linguistics and semiotics are compared as more “exact” fields than traditional literary studies:

In an effort to address the accuracy [of the exact sciences] and avoid impressionism in research, structuralism adjoins the disciplines that study communication in human society as a form of cognition and interaction (semiotics, structural linguistics, cybernetics, information theory, and others). (quoted in Pilshchikov 2012: 47)

It was, however, more than that. In the revised version of the same article, Lotman wrote:

The peculiarity of literary structuralism at the present stage is its relationship with the semiotic approach. This has resulted in the definition of the problem of the meaning of the objects under consideration as the primary and ultimate goal, which draws a strong distinction between structuralism and the formal method. (quoted in Pilshchikov 2012: 60)

4. How did it happen then that structuralism became associated and combined with semiotics? It was not only Opoyaz and MLC that were heterogeneous, but MLC itself was not homogeneous either. In the early 1920s some of the young MLC members (Maksim Kenigsberg, Boris Gornung) were followers of Gustav Shpet, the main proponent of Husserl’s ideas in Russia. In contrast to the empirical positivists, who dominated in the Circle when Jakobson was its president, the phenomenologists wanted to build a system of poetics based not on phonology, but on semasiology because they considered language a semiotic phenomenon *par excellence*. The positivists (Jakobson, Yarkho) conceived of poetics as part of linguistics, while the phenomenologists (Shpet, Kenigsberg) regarded poetics as part of semiotics (see Shapir 1994: 75–77, 82–83; Pilshchikov 2011: 86–87). Although in the 1920s this dichotomy led to the collapse of MLC, in his later work Jakobson synthesized these two approaches. In 1934, Jan Mukařovský spoke to the Eighth International Congress of Philosophers in Prague and proposed the concept of semiotics as general aesthetics (Mukařovský 1934; Steiner 1976: 370; Winner 1976: 443–445; Striedter 1989: 4). The next year, Jakobson started

to combine the linguistic approach with the semiotic approach, as if he wanted to “solve” the contradictions between the antagonistic methodologies within the Moscow Linguistic Circle (Pilshchikov 2011: 99). In his course of lectures on Russian formalism, which he delivered in Czech at the University of Brno in 1935, Jakobson recalled:

During the first years of the existence of the formal school ardent debates took place over whether the problem of poetry [...] can be reduced to a linguistic problem, that is do we have a right to reduce the scholarly problem of poetry to the problem of language in its aesthetic function [...] In the poetic form [...] there are elements which [...] do not contain anything specifically linguistic, but represent a semiological problem. Thus, an integral understanding of the sign helps to include poetics [...] in semiology, the study of signs. (Jakobson 2005: 80)

Later, in his celebrated paper, “Linguistics and poetics” (1960: 350–351) Jakobson considered poetics a branch of linguistics, and linguistics – a branch of general semiotics (this position goes back to Saussure). According to Boris Uspenskij, semiotics in the interpretation of TMS is “a *meta-discipline* which unifies various fields in the humanities” (Uspenskij 2015).

Structuralist thought spread around the world after the Second World War, when the emergence of cybernetics and computer science revived interest in mathematical methods in the humanities which became closely associated with structuralism and semiotics (Eimermacher 1969, 1982; Segal 1974; Culler 1975; Thompson 1977; Rudy 1986; Chernov 1988: 9; Dosse 1991–1992; Gerovitch 2002: 199–254; Mirabile 2006; Poselyagin 2011; Semenenko 2012: 10–14). It should be noted in this context that among the first academic institutions in the former Soviet Union, which were entirely devoted to the study of cybernetics, was the Institute of Cybernetics at the Tallinn University of Technology in Estonia: it was established in 1960 as the Institute of Cybernetics of the Academy of Sciences of the Estonian SSR. At the same time, both the Tartu and the Moscow members of TMS collaborated with the linguistic and semiotic sections of the Interdisciplinary Council on Cybernetics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, which was founded in 1959 and led by full member of the Academy, Admiral Axel Berg, while Vyacheslav V. Ivanov was the head of the linguistic section of this council (see Ivanov 1988).

In 1967, Lotman simultaneously published two articles: “The study of literature must be an exact science” in the Russian journal *Voprosy literatury* (Lotman 1967a), and the article “Exact methods in Soviet literary studies” in the Italian periodical *Strumenti critici* (Lotman 1967b). Lotman wrote about quantification of literary studies, and, developing the insights of the Moscow formalists and the Prague structuralists, connected a new methodological turn with the orientation towards exact sciences and mathematics, and within the humanities – with the orientation towards linguistics.

The research project proposed by TMS is considered to be a further expansion of linguistic and semiotic methods into literary and cultural theory (Zhivov 2009: 11–12, 19; cf. Culler 1975: 55 sq.; Seyffert 1985). A few years ago the fruitfulness of this methodological step was challenged by the late linguist Viktor Zhivov, who was close to TMS in the 1980s (Zhivov 2009: 15; see also Zhivov, Timberlake 1997). In our opinion, his counter-arguments are not sufficient to reject the productivity of the linguistically based study of literature and culturally oriented linguistics. These issues were zealously discussed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but only a small part of various polemics reached print. One of the reasons this field remains insufficiently studied is, as in many cases, the lack of availability of primary data.

5. The idea of integrating structural linguistic and semiotic methods into the study of literature originated, as we have shown above, in the Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC), from which it moved on into Moscow and Tartu primarily via Jakobson. Characteristically, various members of TMS were also actively engaged in the preservation and cultivation of the PLC legacy. Important moments in this effort, such as Lotman's involvement in the Russian editions of Mukařovský's works on structural poetics, deserve more attention. The situation is even more complicated by the fact that the intellectual relationships between the older and the younger scholars were paradoxical: as Mikhail Gasparov argued in a provocative paper, Lotman evolved from Marxism to structuralism (M. Gasparov 1996), while the structuralist Mukařovský, *vice versa*, converted to Marxism (Červenka 1991).

Lotman started working on a two-volume edition of Mukařovský in the mid-1960s together with his friend Oleg Malevich, a prominent Russian Bohemist, and Malevich's wife Viktoria Kamenskaya, a leading translator from Czech and Slovak. This edition could have had the same impact on the development of poetics in the USSR as John Burbank and Peter Steiner's English-language editions of Mukařovský had in North America in 1977 and 1978 (cf. Sherr 1988: 134–135). However, the Russian edition was suppressed after the "Prague Spring" of 1968, and two volumes edited by Malevich and Lotman saw the light of day only after Lotman's death (in 1994 and 1996). In the preface to these publications, Lotman (1994: 16; 1996: 15) presented Mukařovský's functionalism as a precursor of cultural semiotics:

The theory of functions, as it was developed by Mukařovský in the first half of the 1930s, sounds quite modern. He found the reference point, moving from which contemporary semiotics transforms itself from the science of deciphering texts into the study of culture [*nauka o kul'ture*] – a general theory of generation, storage and functioning of information in human society.

In an unpublished article, “Some problems in a comparative study of artistic texts” (see fn. 4), Lotman (typescript, 9–10) explained how Mukařovský describes culture as a complex, dynamic, semiotic whole:

From Jan Mukařovský’s point of view, every culture is a hierarchically organized structure of functions. The structure of functions is a realization of the social structure of a given society. Cultural functions are performed by texts. [...] This approach presents culture not as a sum-total of mechanically connected texts, but as a dialectical unity.

The transfer of the early structuralist ideas to Tartu was facilitated thanks to personal communication of the TMS members with Roman Jakobson and Petr Bogatyrev. They were not only among the founders of the MLC and PLC, but also participants in the Kääriku/Tartu Summer Schools on Semiotics. In the seventh volume of *Sign Systems Studies*, which was dedicated to the memory of Bogatyrev, Lotman published his obituary:

P[etr] G. Bogatyrev seemed to personify the living history of semiotic research. A member of the Moscow Linguistic Circle, a member of the Prague Linguistic Circle, he actively contributed with his cooperation to the rise of semiotic research, which became noticeable in our scholarship since the early 1960s. In 1962 he took part in the Moscow symposium on the structural study of sign systems, and later became an active participant in the semiotic meetings in Tartu. [...] The participants of the Second School (1966) recall a memorable evening by the fireplace, during which P[etr] G. Bogatyrev and R[oman] O. Jakobson shared their memories of the Moscow Linguistic Circle and the first steps of semiotic research in Moscow, Petrograd and Prague. (Lotman 1975: 5–6)⁹

TMS and *Sign Systems Studies* were engaged not only in the revival of the legacy of PLC, but also the even more suppressed legacy of MLC, in particular reintroducing the unpublished works of Boris Tomashevskij and Boris Yarkho.

Of Yarkho’s works, *Metodologiya tochnogo literaturovedeniya* is of primary importance. (The title can be translated as *The Methodology of Exact Literary Studies* or *Exact Methods in Literary Studies*.) This opus magnum was written in 1936, but remained unpublished in the author’s lifetime. In 1969 Mikhail Gasparov published an article titled “B. I. Yarkho’s works on the theory of literature” and a synopsis of Yarkho’s

⁹ Scrupulous notes made by Zara Mints during the discussions in Kääriku, in which Jakobson and Bogatyrev participated, are preserved in the Lotman Archive. See also Jakobson’s obituary of Bogatyrev (Jakobson 1976). Another ex-formalist scholar, still active in the 1960s and important for TMS, was Vladimir Propp. The fifth volume of *Sign Systems Studies* (1971) was dedicated to his memory.

Methodology in the fourth volume of *Sign Systems Studies* (Yarkho 1969; M. Gasparov 1969). Only in the last decade was the *Methodology* published in its entirety (Yarkho 2006).

Lazar Fleishman's seminal publication, "Tomashevskij and the Moscow Linguistic Circle" was published in the ninth volume of *Sign Systems Studies* in 1977. It appeared without Fleishman's name because of his emigration to Israel. Continuation of this publication came out the next year in *Slavica Hierosolimitana* (Fleishman 1978).

6. There was a particularly important feature from the domain of sociology of science that unified, or, else, divided various formalist and structuralist associations. Maksim Shapir, one of the main partisans of the traditions of MLC, opposed the Moscow Linguistic Circle to Opoyaz: MLC was more structured than Opoyaz as a community, but did not run its own periodicals and was therefore unable to successfully disseminate its ideas (Shapir 1994a: 202).

In 1965 Jakobson, an ex-member of Opoyaz and the first president of MLC, published an article entitled "An example of migratory terms and institutional models", with the subtitle: "On the fiftieth anniversary of the Moscow Linguistic Circle" (see Jakobson 1971[1965]). In this, he pointed out the fact that MLC served as an institutional model for both PLC and another important centre of European structuralism, the Linguistic Circle of Copenhagen. Both circles were even named so as to echo the name of their Moscow predecessor. An important feature of PLC, however, was the combination of the MLC-type organizational structure with regular meetings, and the Opoyaz-type self-promotion based on the Circle's periodical, *Travaux du Cercle Linguistique de Prague* (published from 1929 to 1939).

This experience was later used in the formation of TMS. In 1975, a prominent member of TMS, Vyacheslav V. Ivanov, published an article entitled "Sign systems of academic behaviour", in which he developed Jakobson's typology of academic communities and classified TMS in the same taxon as PLC:

A necessary condition for the fruitfulness of periodic meetings of scientific groups, the members of which are usually separated in space (these meetings excepted), is a preliminary distribution of written synopses of keynote presentations. This is, in particular, exemplified by the experience of the summer schools of semiotics organized by Prof. Ju[ri] M. Lotman in Tartu since 1964. [...] The need for such fixation of the research results of a regularly meeting scientific group in order to ensure noise-proof transmission of scientific information becomes apparent when we compare the well-known publications of the Prague Linguistic Circle with studies of crucial importance to the history of modern linguistics that preceded the work of the PLC. Due to the scarce opportunities for publication at that time, these studies did not appear in print, and, since they are insufficiently represented in archival manuscript materials, they can currently be only reconstructed from

this incomplete data. International recognition and sober critical assessment of the achievements of the Tartu School as well as the Prague Linguistic Circle, were made possible only thanks to the publications they ran. (Ivanov 1975: 4)

From this point of view, it is difficult to overestimate the role of *Sign Systems Studies* and *Synopses/Essays on Secondary Modelling Systems*.

Jakobson considered PLC to be an organizational pattern and a research programme model for Slavic structural linguistics and poetics. Although Lotman acknowledged both this influence and the genetic scheme proposed by Jakobson (Lotman 1972: 16–17; 1976: 14–16), neither the relationships between the views and research programs of PLC and TMS, nor the organizational similarities between the two groups have been studied (there are only a few mentions of this problem in scholarly works).

Yet another significant aspect is university teaching. After the closure of Opoyaz and MLC, the activities of their members continued in two colleges. One was the State Institute of the History of Arts (*Gosudarstvennyj institut istorii iskusstv*) in Petrograd/Leningrad, where Tynyanov and Eichenbaum conducted their seminar. The other was the State Academy of Artistic Sciences (*Gosudarstvennaya akademiya hudozhestvennyh nauk, GAHN*) in Moscow, where Shpet was Vice-President, and Yarkho was Head of Department. The disciples of Tynyanov and Eichenbaum at the Institute of the History of Arts (Lydia Ginzburg and Boris Buhsteb, among others) are known under the label of ‘junior formalists’ (*mladoformalisty*). Both institutions were closed after 1930, at the time formalism was officially banned.

The Prague Linguistic Circle was closely related to the Czech Charles University in Prague, but continued functioning when the University was closed under Nazi occupation. However, the Circle did not survive long after the revival of the University in 1945 because of the pressure of the pro-Soviet regime established in 1948.¹⁰ The Circle was re-established only after the Velvet Revolution of 1989, but its spirit endured in Czech and Slovak academic life.

It may be no coincidence that Lotman’s first two visits abroad were to Czechoslovakia (cf. Malevich 2013: 496–499). In 1966 and 1967 he gave lectures and participated in conferences at all the five Czechoslovakian universities: in Prague, Brno, Olomouc, Bratislava and Košice. He described his impressions in an article published in the Estonian-language Tartu newspaper *Edasi*. He observes there how “the Czechoslovak universities have much in common with the University of Tartu”, and defines a significance of university life for the making of *homo academicus*:

¹⁰ The Circle’s last meeting was held on 12 May 1952 (PrLKD 2012: 50, 356, 680).

University does not only mean a certain type of knowledge. [...] It also means five years of life lived in a particular, very specific setting. To create a unique kind of a cultural personality who would later, all his/her life, be called a university man, [...] these five years of life in a university atmosphere are no less important than other activities.¹¹

All members of TMS were academic scholars and/or university teachers, but they worked in different colleges.¹² Hence the significance of Summer Schools as the point of communication between generations and the importance of the conferences of young scholars which attracted undergraduate and graduate students from all over the Soviet Union. Tellingly, even today student conferences at the Universities of Tartu and Tallinn continue to play the role of an intermediary between Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia, at least in the province of Slavic studies. The recently revived Summer Schools of Semiotics in Estonia have been both locally and internationally well received.

Lotman's remarks on academic life cited above give us a hint at what we need to research today: the evolution of Estonian semiotics as an institution in the comparatist sociological perspective. In particular, a comparative analysis of Polish, Russian, and Estonian versions of semiotics has never been undertaken, unlike a comparative study of the Polish and Russian versions of formalism (Karcz 2002) or Czech and Tartu-Moscow versions of cultural semiotics (Winner 2010). Meanwhile, the connections between TMS and Poland are not less important for the TMS academic network than the Czech and Slovak connections. A telling example is the list of contacts of TMS members with Maria Renata Mayenowa.

Mayenowa was a disciple of Manfred Kridl – the founder the Polish formalist school. Polish formalists were highly indebted to Russian formalism and at the same time leaned upon their native Polish philosophical tradition (Pomorska 1968: 13). Later Mayenowa organized and headed what now is known as the Department of Theoretical Poetics of the Institute of Literary Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences. Lotman justly considered her a leading figure of Polish structuralism and semiotics. In her turn, Mayenowa contributed a lot to our understanding of Lotman. In 1972 she published a review of the first four volumes of *Sign Systems Studies* and Lotman's *The Structure of the Artistic Text* in the Amsterdam journal *Russian Literature* (Mayenowa 1972), and in 1977 she contributed a paper titled "Lotman as a historian of literature" (Mayenowa 1977) to the special issue of *Russian Literature* devoted to Lotman. Mayenowa and Lotman discussed various scientific and organizational questions in their vast correspondence which is preserved in archives at Tartu, Tallinn

¹¹ Lotman, Juri. *Neskol'ko myslej ob akademicheskoj zhizni* [A few thoughts on academic life]. Unpublished typescript, p. 1–2. Estonian Semiotic Repository Foundation, f. 1. Published in Estonian as Lotman 2010[1967]: 167.

¹² Cf. Kisseljova 1996 and 2003a on Lotman as a university professor and head of department.

and Warsaw. A planned annotated publication of these letters will hopefully enable us to demonstrate how Polish structuralists and semioticians, however specific their approach to culture may have been (see Mayenowa 1983; Łebkowska 2012; Kola, Ulicka 2015), contributed to the general development of European structuralism and semiotics.¹³

Not only did the members of TMS have different cultural and linguistic affiliations; they also came from overlapping, yet different academic communities. Thus, we can only approach TMS as a translinguistic, transnational, transinstitutional, transdisciplinary association, or otherwise known as an “invisible college” – as Igor Chernov (1988: 8) and Peeter Torop (1995: 233) have suggested, using the term introduced by Diana Crane (Crane 1972; cf. Vihalemm, Mürsepp 2007: 174). This “invisible college” spanned all manner of borders, identities and domains: ‘Estonian’, ‘Russian’, ‘Soviet’, ‘Orientalist’, ‘Slavist’, ‘linguist’, ‘philosopher’, ‘historian’, ‘critic’, and so on.

To date, the question of how semiotics became an academic institution in Estonia has largely been ignored by scholars of TMS, with the result that Estonian contributions to the School have been given short shrift. Recent attempts to problematize the sociological aspects of TMS include *The Soviet Empire of Signs* (Waldstein 2008) – Maxim Waldstein’s “barely revised and wholly unedited 2005 dissertation in sociology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign”, as one of the discussants characterizes this book in her perceptive and diagnostic review (Emerson 2011: 263). These attempts, although timely and welcome, are lamentably “Russocentric” and “Sovietocentric” (see Torop 2010; Ventsel 2011). Concentrating on Lotman only (cf. Poselyagin 2011a), they ignore Zara Mints and native Estonians who published in *Sign Systems Studies* and other TMS periodicals: the orientalist Pent Nurmekund and Linnart Mäll, the linguists Huno Rätsep and Mart Rimmel, the verse theorist Jaak Põldmäe and others.¹⁴ The study of their scholarly legacy has only begun,¹⁵ and their role within TMS has yet to be sufficiently described. In particular, Põldmäe’s theory of verse and Mints’s interpretation of intertextuality deserve special attention alongside with Lotman’s concept of “semiosphere” which crowns the TMS version of cultural semiotics.

¹³ In addition, letters from Slavists and semioticians from all over the globe to Mayenowa (including some letters from Lotman and Boris Uspenskij) are now being prepared for publication in Poland. The Lotman Archive contains 46 letters from Mayenowa to Lotman.

¹⁴ Lotman emphasized the importance of the work of Rätsep, Nurmekund and Mäll for TMS in his article “Semiotics and the world today” which was written in 1970 but remained unpublished until 2003 (see Lotman 2003[1970]: 100–101; Kisseljova 2003b: 609).

¹⁵ See Läänemets 1995 and Udam 1998 on Mäll; Väari 1997, Kulmar 2009 and Kurs 2014 on Nurmekund; Toporov 1999, Lavrov 2000 and 2006 (the latter is available as “Neskol’ko slov o Zare Grigor’evne Mints, redaktore i vdohnovitele tartuskikh “Blokovskih sbornikov”. *Toronto Slavic Quarterly* 18. URL: <http://www.utoronto.ca/tsq/18/lavrov18.shtml>), and Bogomolov 2004 on Mints; Ross 2000 on Rimmel.

7. Contemporary verse theory is challenged by many problems that were first recognized and formulated by Jaak Põldmäe. His research was predominantly focused on Estonian verse, but he discussed a wide range of issues that can be called essential for the general theory of verse, such as the interrelations between the poetic rhythm and the metre, a theoretical stochastic model of verse, the “axiomatics” of the systems of versification,¹⁶ the semantics of poetic forms, and an original typology of *vers libre* (see especially Põldmäe 1970, 1977 and 1978, and Põldmäe, Rimmel 1974).¹⁷

In European literatures of the 20th century, *vers libre* became a predominant poetic form. Unlike most European traditions, Russian poetry remained faithful to metrical verse, and Russian verse theory did not develop a full-fledged theory of *vers libre*. In the Soviet Union, all national literatures were involved in the orbit of Russian literature. When the young Estonian poets became the partisans of free poetic forms in the late 1950s and early 1960s, they were at first faced with ideological countermeasures and accusations of formalism and foreign influence, and only then did it become evident that these attempts require theoretical justification (see Olesk 2001; Ehin 2001). It is no surprise then that an original theory of free verse was suggested by an Estonian scholar. Põldmäe put forward a concept of *vers libre* as a system of versification in its own right. It follows that *vers libre* can only be analysed against the background of other systems of versification, and “in practice, the borders between versification systems can only be defined on the basis of statistical criteria” (Põldmäe 1977: 91). Therefore, the definition of any versification system is “corpus-dependent”: its identification depends on the distribution of certain parameters in a chosen corpus of texts. Later, these issues would attract the attention of Mihhail Lotman in Estonia, Mikhail Gasparov and Maksim Shapir in Russia, and Miroslav Červenka in the Czech Republic (see, in particular, Červenka 2002).

The problems described above are intimately linked to each other. Both in terms of how they were formulated and the methodology used for their solution they can be useful for research in other national poetic traditions.¹⁸ To discuss these and similar problems, Põldmäe founded the journal *Studia Metrica et Poetica*. The first issue

¹⁶ The idea goes back to Jakobson via Põldmäe’s supervisor, Vyacheslav V. Ivanov, who substantially revised Jakobson’s approach, but Põldmäe was the first to implement it, followed by Mihhail Lotman and Boris Egorov. See M. Lotman 1998: 205–209 for a discussion.

¹⁷ For details see M. Gasparov *et al.* 1987. For a concise biographical sketch, see Ain Kaalep’s obituary of Põldmäe (Kaalep 1980).

¹⁸ It is important to note in our context that one of the TMS branches of studies in prosody and poetics is Armenian. Rafael Papayan, an Armenian scholar and political activist, who was a postgraduate at the University of Tartu in 1969–72 and defended his PhD dissertation there, based his approach to poetry on *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (Lotman 1970; 1977[1970]). His disciple, Suren Zolyan, is also associated with TMS and has recently visited Estonia as a Juri Lotman Fellow of Tallinn University.

appeared in 1976 as a special issue of *Acta Universitatis Tartuensis*.¹⁹ The original *Studia Metrica et Poetica* was discontinued, but a biannual journal under the same title, edited by Mihhail Lotman, Igor Pilshchikov, and Maria-Kristiina Lotman, was launched by the University of Tartu Press in 2014.

Intertextuality theory is another field in which TMS initiated important developments. Almost a half century ago, in 1967, Julia Kristeva published an article entitled “*Bakhtine, le mot, le dialogue et le roman*”, in which she conceptualized the text-to-text relations as a phenomenon *per se*, and termed it ‘*intertextualité*’. She traced this notion back to Mikhail Bakhtin, and since then the concept of intertextuality has been commonly (mis)interpreted as Bakhtinian or post-Bakhtinian. In effect, Kristeva’s formula “*texte = mosaïque de citations*” is directly borrowed from another Russian literary theorist and prominent linguist, Viktor Vinogradov (see Pilshchikov 2007: 4–5). In the 1920s he was listed among what was called in the early Soviet jargon of that time, “the fellow travellers of the formalists”, while in the post-war period he became the official head of Soviet philology – the Academician-Secretary of the Division of Literature and Language of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, the Director of the Russian Language Institute, the Chair of Russian at Moscow State University, and the founding editor-in-chief of the linguistic journal *Voprosy yazykoznaniiya*. (It is in this journal that Lotman’s first manifesto of literary structuralism was published in 1963.) Vinogradov’s influence on TMS has never been investigated, although there are obvious (but unnoticed) similarities between his work on Pushkin’s *The Queen of Spades* (Vinogradov 1936), and Lotman’s celebrated paper on the semiotics of playing cards in the age of Pushkin (Lotman 1975a, with numerous references to Vinogradov 1936 and 1941).²⁰

Although the TMS methodology is typified by “a certain suspicion of studies in the area of intertextuality” (M. Lotman 1995: 217; 2000: 27),²¹ TMS nevertheless developed an original concept of the poetic intertext. According to TMS, the relationships between the ‘text-result’ and the ‘text-source’ are not mutually univocal, and every poetic text is ‘polygenetic’. The St.Petersburg/Leningrad scholar Viktor Zhirmunskij was the first to describe a case of what he called a ‘polygenesis’ (of the poetic text) in

¹⁹ *Studia Metrica et Poetica* 1 (*Acta Universitatis Tartuensis* 396), followed by *Studia Metrica et Poetica* 2 (*Acta Universitatis Tartuensis* 420) in 1977. It hardly needs to be reminded here that *Sign Systems Studies* also started as a series within the framework of *Acta Universitatis Tartuensis*, and became an independent international journal as late as 1998.

²⁰ Among the works authored by Vinogradov, *The History of the Russian Literary Language* stands out (Vinogradov 1969[1934]). Lotman valued this book highly, but regarded it as belonging to the 19th-century positivist tradition.

²¹ “As every element of text structure is characterized by its position in this structure, the material similarity (or even identity) between fragments of different texts turns out to be of little significance” (M. Lotman 1995: 217–218; 2000: 27).

his book on the symbolist theatre of Aleksandr Blok (Zhirmunskij 1964: 78). In the article entitled “The functions of literary quotations [*reministsentsii*] in the poetry of A[leksandr] Blok” and published in the sixth volume of *Sign Systems Studies*, Zara Mints developed this observation and described Blok’s poetics in general as “polygenetic” (Mints 1973: 402 sq.). This notion was later applied to all poetry of Russian modernism, and generalized to characterize the poetic text: the existence of more than one source is its indispensable feature and a condition *sine qua non* for text generation. Similar ideas were developed by Michel Riffaterre (1978, 1979, etc.), and – within a specific post-TMS version of post-structuralism – by Igor Smirnov (1985). Important implications for translation theory (the role of intermediary versions in the genesis of a translated text) and cross-cultural communication (intralinguistic and interlinguistic intertextuality) should be highlighted here.

Zhirmunskij’s academic and social profile was as ambiguous as Vinogradov’s: a paraformalist, he was close to Opoyaz in the late 1910s and early 1920s, and later became an eminent member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, whereas the TMS scholars set themselves in opposition to the pro-government scholarship. In 1969 Zhirmunskij visited Tartu as second reader of the University of Tartu scholar Petr Rudnev’s PhD dissertation on the prosody of Aleksandr Blok (Lilly, Sherr 1998: 202). His relationships with the Tartu-Moscow School have never been studied.

8. Historical transformations of concepts and meanings are not aggravating flaws, but inevitable conditions and even preconditions of cultural and transcultural communication. Lotman wrote of incomplete translatability, both linguistic and conceptual, as a productive mechanism of cognition and communication (Salupere 2008; Avtonomova 2009, 2011; Żyłko 2011b). Linguistic and cultural polyglotism are indispensable fundamentals in his concept of the ‘semiosphere’ (J. Lotman 1984; see Chernov 1988: 14; Mandelker 1994; Kull 1998; Alexandrov 2000; M. Lotman 2001; Torop 2005; Kotov, Kull 2006; Frank *et al.* 2012; Nöth 2015). He suggested applying this concept to the description of the semiotic nature of cultural borderlines that determine the dynamics of cultural, linguistic and national self-delineation.

Lotman’s cultural semiotics logically and methodologically leads to the idea of the semiosphere, just as Popper’s idea of ‘objective knowledge’ leads to the idea of ‘World Three’. The TMS adds an important condition: this non-physical world is semiotic by nature. “All more important functions and mechanisms of culture are connected with producing, switching, processing, and preserving of signs” (M. Lotman 2013: 262). While North American semiotics consists of various branches: biosemiotics, sociosemiotics, the semiotics of culture, and so on, TMS envisaged the problem of culture from a different angle: semiotics as a discipline is generated by a certain type of culture, it is itself a stage in cultural self-cognition, and culture is semiotic in its

essence. The operational basis of culture is texts. Thus, the TMS concept of cultural semiotics implies a semiotics of text (and, in particular, a semiotics of artistic text) as its indispensable part.

On his way to the concept of semiosphere Lotman reconsidered and transformed Jakobson's schema of communication, which was proposed in "Linguistics and poetics" (Jakobson 1960) and which supplemented Claude Shannon's model of communication (Shannon, Weaver 1949) with Karl Bühler's (1990[1934]) model of language functions developed by the Prague School (see Pilshchikov 2016). Jakobson's version includes six elements, without which communication cannot take place. When "the ADDRESSER (1) sends a MESSAGE (2) to the ADDRESSEE (3)", the message, in order to be operative, requires (4) "a CONTEXT referred to [...], seizable by the addressee", (5) "a CODE fully, or at least partially, common to the addresser and addressee", "and, finally a CONTACT (6), a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication" (Jakobson 1960: 353; see Posner 1988: 156 for a conventional "updated" version of this schema). Lotman sophisticates that model (see J. Lotman 1977: 7-8):

According to Yu. M. Lotman, the act of communication is by no means the transmission of a ready-made message: it is not only language that cannot exist before and outside text – the same holds about all the other components of Jakobson's scheme. Context is co-text (con-text), it cannot exist before text, and like every text is dependent on context, context is also dependent on text. The act of communication is an act of translation, an act of transformation: text transforms language and the addressee, it establishes contact between the addresser and the addressee, it even transforms the addresser. Moreover, text transforms itself and ceases to be identical to itself. (M. Lotman 1995: 218–219; 2000: 27–28)

In his variation of Jakobson's schema Lotman significantly replaces 'code' for 'language'. For him, "language is code with human history built in" (Andrews 2003a: 17):

The abstract model of communication not only implies the use of one and the same code, but also the identical memory capacity of both addresser and addressee. In fact, the substitution of the term 'language' by the term 'code' is not as harmless as it seems. The term 'code' carries with it the idea of an artificial, newly created structure, introduced by instantaneous agreement. A code does not imply history [...]. Language – is a code plus its history. Such an understanding of communication includes within itself some fundamental principles. (J. Lotman 2009: 4)

Lotman insisted that every act of communication involves *more than one* language or idiolect (J. Lotman 2009: 2–3; cf. Andrews 2003a: 13–20, 29, 49–50; Avtonomova

2009: 256–261; 2011: 20–22) and therefore, more than one culture or subculture. It is precisely this sort of translinguistic, transcultural, transnational, and transdisciplinary attitude that we propose to associate with the history of TMS. Thus, such a theoretical imperative in studying the legacy of TMS emerges from the School itself, but it is, of course, in no way bound by this approach or restricted to this research nexus.²²

Unlike Lotman's early books, which were translated into most European languages in the 1970s, and his *Universe of the Mind* (published in English in 1990 and well known to international readers), Lotman's later books have only recently been published in English: *Culture and Explosion* appeared in 2009, and *The Unpredictable Workings of Culture* – as late as 2013. They treat issues which are rarely associated with TMS: first, the need for a common approach to natural, social, and spiritual phenomena; second, the problem of evolutionary and explosive processes in the history of culture; and, third, the question, closely linked to the previous two, of art as a workshop of indeterminism and unpredictability. These ideas have not been widely discussed; in the meantime, they can be productively developed in the context of contemporary humanities (Emerson 2003; Schönle, Shine 2006: 4, 16; Frank *et al.* 2012).

Much of Lotman's later work has been characterized as post-structuralist; however, his emphasis on dynamism and functionalism in these later works was entirely of a piece with his early engagement with (and critique of) the Opoyaz in the early 1960s (cf. Żyłko 2015). Thus, in a sense, much of what is now read as “post-structuralist” is, in fact, “pre-structuralist” – and only such a thoroughgoing analysis of Tartu-Moscow School's broader European roots can provide a corrective direction to this now entrenched, but erroneous reading of Lotman.

A revision of the history of Tartu-Moscow semiotics and recalibration of its theoretical ambiance may, on one hand, offer a unique potential for a new turn in the study of the global history of semiotics. On the other, it may produce a significant impact on semiotic research in the provinces of general verse theory, intertextual theory and cultural theory by addressing in a novel way such basic problems as ‘text and culture’, ‘language and text’, and ‘language and verse’.²³

²² We also believe our approach to be somewhat different from what is now called ‘New Tartu Semiotics’ – an established and respectable trend which attempts to combine cultural semiotics with biosemiotics (Kull 1999; Torop 2000; Andrews 2003a).

²³ **Acknowledgments:** This research was made possible by the Estonian Research Council grant PUT634 (“Estonian semiotics in cross-cultural context: New primary data and prospects for recalibration in the 21st century”). Sections 3, 4 and 7 draw on research for a project of the Institute of Linguistics of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow), supported by the Russian Science Foundation grant 14-28-00130 (“Linguistic technologies of knowledge exchange in the humanities”). The authors are grateful to Mihhail Lotman, Piret Peiker and Joe Peschio for their critical comments and suggestions.

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Тартуско-московская семиотическая школа: транснациональная перспектива

Авторы статьи рассматривают Тартуско-московскую семиотическую школу 1960–1980-х годов в европейском историко-научном контексте, который, с одной стороны, оказал влияние на ее формирование и в котором она, с другой стороны, сама играла важную роль. Анализируя связи участников школы с их коллегами в Европе, авторы намечают основные вехи «перекрестной истории» (*histoire croisée*) разнонаправленных научных и философских влияний. В этой перспективе в статье обсуждаются наиболее продуктивные концепты и методы, выработанные участниками школы в таких дисциплинах, как общая теория стиха, теория интертекста и теория культуры.

Tartu-Moskva semiootikakoolkond: rahvusülene perspektiiv

Artikli eesmärk on asetada 1960–80. aastate eesti ja vene semiootika laiemasse Euroopa teadusajaloo konteksti. See on kontekst, millest Tartu-Moskva semiootikakoolkond välja kasvas ja kus see mängis väga olulist rolli. Sellisest perspektiivist, käsitletakse mainitud rahvusvahelisi teaduslikke ja filosoofilisi mõjutusi “põimunud ajaloona” (*histoire croisée*) ja arutletakse Tartu-Moskva semiootika kõige viljakamate kontseptsioonide ja meetodite üle üldse värsiteooria, intertekstuaalsuse teooria ja kultuuriteooria valdkonnas.