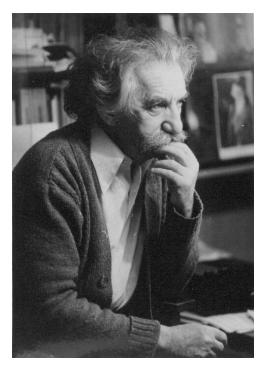
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Юрий Михайлович Лотман Iúri Mikahilovitch Lótman (Saint Petersburg, 1922-Tártu, 1993)

Between Turbulences and Unpredictability of Historical Time: the Semiotics of Yuri Lotman¹ / Uma semiótica que se move entre perturbações e imprevisibilidades do tempo histórico

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More than a quarter of a century has passed since the death of Russian semiotician Yuri Lotman (1922-1993), and more than ever his semiotic perspective, developed during

¹ While Lotman's first name is also spelled 'Juri' or 'Jurij' in English, we have adopted the more frequent spelling of 'Yuri'. This title is a version of the title in Portuguese - *Uma semiótica que se move entre perturbações e imprevisibilidades do tempo histórico*. [TN]

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the second half of the 20th century at the University of Tartu in the small country bordering the Baltic Sea, Estonia, offers such promising analytical paths to forming sound discourses on the inconsistencies in historical time – its problems and unpredictability. These discourses, having matured over the years, paved the way for much of the future semiotic work that investigated the semiotics of space, and the relationships between cultures unfamiliar to one another, but which nevertheless interact. Lotman developed his semiotic analysis asking how such distinct cultures dialogue. Many of these inquiries foment the necessary debate on the semiotics of culture today.

In homage to Yuri Lotman, the journal Bakhtiniana. Revista de Estudos do Discurso [Bakhtinian. Discourse Studies Journal] has gathered together studies dedicated to Yuri Lotman, to promote a dialogue between Lotman and Bakhtin who, evidently, were not accustomed to these exchanges. However, as this space privileges Bakhtinian studies, the homage to Lotman serves as an invitation to this intellectual dialogue. It is a dialogue woven from discourses of renowned researchers who dedicate themselves to the semiotic approach of Yuri Lotman, and his select group of semioticians who idealized his work in the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics, beginning in the 1960s.² The scholars who collaborated on this issue of the journal have perfected this semiotic analysis within a framework of diverse events, and the cultural challenges inaugurating the 21st century, which neither Lotman, nor Bakhtin reached. With this, the dialogue not only becomes more convincing, but it is possible to verify continuities, and incongruities, of issues affecting us today. In this sense, the studies gathered here regarding the semiotics of Slavic culture, construct a kind of updated guide of reflections about Lotman's work in dialogue with the ideas of its vast intellectual universe, which extends far beyond the Baltic. These reflections projected, thus, ways of thinking about the present, keeping a lotmanian commitment to the semiotics of historical time alive.

The opening text of this edition hails us with the words of one of Lotman's direct disciples, who continued conducting his work within the Department of Semiotics at the University of Tartu. In *Teoria russa e semiótica da cultura: história e perspectivas* [Russian theory and the semiotics of culture: history and perspectives], Peeter Torop

² At the beginning Tartu's semiotic studies was attended by, among others, V. Ivánov, I. Revzin, V. Toporov, E. Melytinsky, D. Segal, A. Piatigorski, B. Ogibenin, Y. Levin, B Uspensky. Under Lotman's leadership, new generations of researchers who were graduating from the Semiotics Department are now part of the group (GRZYBEK, 1998, p.423; MARGOLIN, 1994, pp.515-20; PREVIGNANO, 1979, pp.23-99; SEBEOK, 1998, pp.20-39); TOROP, 1983-4, pp.9-14).

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clarifies misconceptions that, due to unfamiliarity, we commit in our analyses of the Russian theoretical process. To situate the distinction, he constructs an historical framework that shows how the so-called Russian theory largely emerged from bases very distinct from those that promoted consecrated concepts, and theories, in the post-war Western world – precisely, Western Europe. It deals with, in fact, a different interlocutional context with historically delineated boundaries. Conceptions as misunderstood and massacred as Russian Formalism, constituted an environment of theory in the Russian context that is rarely considered.³ Torop follows the entire unfolding of the ideas that brought, for example, the semiotics of culture to a historical perspective as postulated by Yuri Tinianov, followed by Jakobson, and recognized by Bakhtin, and that directly held sway on the characteristically synchronic concepts, great time, and transversality. This line of thinking equally favored the formation of the notion of text as the basis of the web of cultural relations. At that time, Torop examined the set of conceptions held by I. Tinianov, R. Jakobson, M.M. Bakhtin, and I. Lotman. However, the work didn't stop there, as it deals with a field of critical reflection that confirms its theoretical force as it is projected in concepts such as inter-cross-transmedialities, which are considered processes generated in the internal dynamic of cultural texts. In fact, from the Russian perspective, the marked notion of temporalities – of great time⁴ – is not disconnected from the intense debate about evolving processes that do not follow conventional linearity, but that enact connections and dissipations, as Ilya Prigogine postulated years later.⁵

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³ Although they are cited by many scholars, many of the Russian formalists' concepts find opposition among critics who condemns the adherence of the formal exercise to the contingent. Concepts, among others, as the singularization of esthetic procedure by making estrange, by Viktor Shklovsky; the poetic language, by Roman Jakobson; the dynamics of literary evolution based on historical series, by Juri Tynianov; the film language as a result of Boris Eikhenbaum's photogeny and the reading of cinematic framework, would define methodological directions for language analysis in different twentieth-century historical-cultural productions. A representative set of formalist thought was assembled and published in Portuguese thanks to the efforts of scholars, especially Boris Schnaiderman (See Toledo, 1976).

⁴ Great time is a notion formulated by M.M. Bakhtin to signify the life of the work in the culture that, although it develops in a historical alignment, the dynamics of its relations is not limited to the present and extends to distinct times. In this sense, the work goes beyond the borders of its time to enjoy the great time of cultures (BAKHTIN, 1996, p.4).

⁵ Ilya Prigogine (1917-2003), a Russian-Belgian chemist, awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1977, exerted a great influence on Lotman's thinking in his understanding of cultural systems as unpredictable processes. With Prigogine, Lotman learns to look at historical time as a movement that operates by leap and dissipation, that is, by instabilities, shocks, fluctuations, guided by Prigogine's discoveries about the paradox of time as a dissipative structure marked by the non-balance process (LOTMAN, 2013; PRIGOGINE, 1996; PRIGOGINE; STENGERS, 1988).

Clearly, a focus on the Russian context must continually be observed and conserved in studies on the semiotics of culture. In this sense, the study A linguagem da escola Tartu- Moscou e as traduções de Iúri Lótman no Brasil [Language at the Tartu-Moscow school and the translations of Yuri Lotman in Brazil, by Ekaterina Vólkova Américo (Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brasil), presents a distinct and lucid direction. She does so, in the first place, by situating the internal demand of a semiotic analysis at a moment of resurgence from the post-war in which the policy of prohibitions comes to dominate. Semiotics, thus, became a vital necessity for the resistance, including linguistics. Américo highlights as resistance the fact that these scholars created a hermetic language, and abstracted the official soviet themes, which would justify, at first glance, the adoption of a codified language. However, examining the issue in retrospect, one cannot forget that it was by perceiving the importance of the cultural codes that the semiotics of culture builds its base in relation to text/language, with space for understanding texts founded on codes from memory, and from cultural information. Actually, there are more exercises of discovery that Volkova also experiments with in discussing the translation of studies on the semiotics of culture in Brazil. All this in the name of shedding light on what the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics was, and its role in history.

It is evident that the character and the distinctions of Russian semiotics appear insufficient when the parameter of consideration is the intellectual world of Western Europe. Differently from Bakhtin, Lotman was not lucky enough to gain the sympathy of innumerable foreign spokespersons. If, on the one hand, the theories were preserved by being translated according to the western cultural directives, on the other hand, the thought did not find its dialogical platform. In a study by Jacque Fontanille (Université de Limoges, France), entitled, *A semiosfera colocada à prova pela enunciação antroposemiotica* [The semiosphere put to test by the antropo-semiotic⁶ utterance], the author proposes to confront three theories: Lotman's, Greimas', and that of modern anthropology. The exercise here is not to clarify concepts, but to carry out a critical

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⁶ Anthropo-semiotics refers to the conceptual field in which Fontanille's ideas move when considering semiotics within the scope not only of human communication, but also in relation to anthropology. In the Semiotics of discourse, the field is composed of ethnology and the contemporary social practices (advertising, fashion, design, etc). The Fontanille's article joins to Eduardo Viveiros de Castro's anthropology study, which serves as a parameter to analyze the concept of the semiosphere that Lotman conceives in correlation with the study of the biosphere.

review according to the parameters of the translaton in the gremasian universe of the conceptions about semiosphere. In this sense, for the first time, we read how gremasian semiotics translates the lotmanaian conceptions, as well as the lines of force of the semiosphere – assymetry, irregularity, heterogeneity – so as to permit its insertion in the concept of semiosphere from the relations of the square greimasian semiotics. It is a view that deserves to be discussed, since it shows how much there still is to study and understand in Lotman's semiotic perspective that like Bakhtin, and Jakobson, never were constituted into a theory.

What can be affirmed is that, in the semiotics of culture, there may not have been the ambition to construct a theory or an epistemology, nonetheless, certainly all of its concepts., analyses, and actions lead to being a semiotic approach committed to its era, and with the dimensions of time implicated in it. It is a semiotics that does not hesiitate to examine the new cultural epistemes, particularly those produced by the dynamic of means of communication.

In the study *Entre tempos e espaços: poliglotismo e policronismo em Iúri Lótman* [Between time and space: polyglotism and polychronism in Yuri Lotman], by Anna Maria Lorusso (Università di Bologna-Italia), readers enter into contact with this trajectory, which is so fundamentally important in understanding the relations between time and space constituted in the new communicational relations. It is from there that an understanding of the space of culture as the border of conflict between what belongs and what is outside is derived, and, subsequently, the foreign is always defined by this dramatic place of not belonging to one or another space. Nonetheless, the discovery of the place of the foreign does not hide its contradictory condition of being located in diverse temporalities as well. Lorusso proposes to conceptually further and formulate the notion of polychromy, which already holds the analytical view point of transversalized relationships in the synchronic layers and fragments that will be opportunely developed in the semiosphere study. Polychromy implicates the dynamic of the view point, the ways of seeing the past, of constructing memory and projecting it. It addresses, then, the view

⁷ Semiotic square signifies the generative semantic model by Julien Algirdas Greimas (1917-1992) whose elementary structure is oriented not by binary oppositions but by trajectories between surface structures from the simplest to the most complex; from abstract to concrete. Starting from the most elementary to the most complex, it is possible to distinguish: the fundamental structures, the narrative structures and the discursive structures. (GREIMAS, 1990, pp.157-163).

that time is indeterminate, which Lotman apprehended with Ilya Prigogine (LOTMAN, 1998, pp.152-162; PRIGOGINE, 1996; PRIGOGINE; STENGERS, 1990).

The immersion into historical time illuminates Lotman's conceptual field with new formulations that begin to approach those of western authors who responded to many of his concerns. Lotman lived through the beginning of the events that were only made to aggravate situations that today reach the paroxysm: the worsening of convulsions, the fragmentation of the social fabric, the concentration of capital, cyber warfare sustaining movements of power, and decisions on the destiny of thousands of human beings displaced while poverty rises to unacceptable heights of misery, and of the acute ecological imbalances currently at play. All this draws a very complex picture that is not restricted to the power of new technological realities, but interferes irreversibly on human nature. Faced with this scenario, one of Lotman's major questions returns: What are we to do with ourselves, others, nature, all of humanity? Inquiring repeated in the works of the later Lotman (1994; 1999; 2013). Although this runs through his work and his perspective of the historical study of semiotics, it is important to highlight here Lotman's thought on fundamental questions of complexity, which he explored in his last writings. In this edition, the task of proceeding to rigorously examine the implication of this thought befits the work of the scholar Julieta Haidar.

The text, *Iúri Lotman: a análise da cultura segundo a perspectiva da complexidade e da transdiciplinaridade* [Yuri Lotman: the analysis of culture according to the perspective of complexity and transdisciplinarity], by Juliet Haidar (Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, México), discusses complexity, not by comparing theories, but reflecting on three lines of articulation of the lotmanian analysis of culture as semiosphere – a concept that was being formulated throughout his perception of culture in its space-time dynamic. It gained theoretical force in the final texts he wrote before his death in 1993. Haidar adopts three lines of study: one takes up the concept of semiosphere in its dialectical and polysemic character, generated by the dynamic of the semiotc border between texts, which, in dialogue, carry out cultural, intercultural, and transcultural translation: another line of inquiry repositions the condition of the culture faced with phenomena such as the "anticultural", and the "non-cultural", seeing that distinct semiospheres are constituted in these; finally, she relates the notion of unpredictabilty in cultural processes as premises for complexity, and transdisciplinarity,

which are examined from recent cultural phenomena, such as contemporary migratory flows, and decolonial matrixes in the globalized world.

In the realm of conflict on the cultural borders, the interactions are only possible if one considers the variable of the incommunicability against which the translation is set as a modelizing mechanism. Even from the 1950s, the semioticians of culture count on the operators who direct a dialogical gaze toward cultural relations that, dimensioned by the paradoxical variable of incommunicability – given the interactive nature of human relations – becomes a dominant factor of exclusion in the world of many divisions deriving from the post-war era. From that period, Lotman understood information as a generating mechanism of structurality based on semiotic-cultural factors. With this he did not mean to propose anything that didn't mark the increasing presence of codes in (inter)cultural relationships. What do we currently perceive in the scenes of the great flux of displaced peoples, provoked by ethnic, religious, and bellical confrontations? Nothing more than a narrowing in the links between informational memories – of the displaced communities, of the cultures, and of the languages themselves. One way of thinking about this is directed, moreover, by the comprehension of the cultural semiosis of historical time in all of its complexity.

Understanding the role of the cybernetic nature of communication in the historical times of digital mediations of numerical processes would be a fundamental task that few recognize even today, in the full swing of the 21st century. In the 1950s, the Soviet context experienced the Sputnik era intensely, and life was dominated by prospects of the geopolitical control of space. With the exception of V. Ivanov (1977, pp.27-38), the other semioticians of culture did not address the scientific discovery directly, but rather the modelizing process that was possible due to the process of cultural cybernization. In other words: the possibility of working with models of communication, and the production of language at levels of increasingly greater abstraction, from the cultural codes (not models). The study *Lótman e o procedimento modelizador: a formulação sobre* "invariante intelectual" da cultura [Lotman and the modelizing procedure" the formulation of "intellectual invariant" of the culture], by Regiane Nakagawa (Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia – UFRB, Brasil), contextualizes the concept and the context of modelization within this process of the abstraction of language through codification. She bases her premise not only on the cybernetic environment, but

also on dialoguing with the phenomenology of C. S. Pierce, particularly in his schematic studies on the existential *grapho*, which greatly facilitates understanding the diagramatic process of the action of the codes in languages, and in cultural texts. The study situates the processes of self-regulation of the culture when in bouts of unpredictability – the definition, again, can only be derived from the internal regulations of the system itself.

Evidently, a cultural system that directs semiotic thought with respect to unpredictability cannot fail to have a modelizing device itself. The semioticians of culture find this device in art: the system that not only generates codes and languages, but also moves through the spheres of unpredictability generated within predictabilities. Even though they have been articulated from his first studies, Lotman's later work undertakes systematic comprehension of the unpredictable explosive processes in which the artistic text is born, and from which it is nourished. On observing that art produces texts that challenge and transgress rules and norms, Lotman extends his perception to cultural texts of literature, fine arts, theatre, opera, dance, cinema and animation, which bring the transgressions to their ultimate consequences.

In the study, O tonto e o louco: notas sobre a cena cultural contemporânea [The fool and the lunatic: notes on the contemporary cultural scene.] Pampa Arán (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina) examines how on seeking the figures of the lunatic and the fool, Lotman not only places himself before the paradigmatic characters of this subversion, enacted inside the cultural system, but also creating possibilities of reaching reverse movements in relation to the center, and the margins. Besides confronting dimensionalities in the semiosphere, the characters redesign frameworks of unpredictable relationships. The work opens the set of studies that is dedicated to the theme of the stranger, the displaced one, the outlaw, as a way of reaching cultural procedures of living within the borders of struggle. This is the case of the study, Semiótica do absurdo e do sem-sentido: uma perspectiva lotmaninana, [Semiotics of the absurd and nonsense: a lotmanian perspective, by Aleksei Semenenko (Umeå University, Sweden), in which, the absurd is focused on with the semiotic-linguistic, since the production of meaning is not limited to the meanings alone, but extrapolates limits, and embraces paradoxical constituents such as noise, errors, and misunderstandings. On examining previously consecrated literary texts, the study shows how the constitutive part

of human culture, includes the "non-sense", the absurd, as well as all the indeterminism of its uses.

The semiotics of the culture necessarily stem from the idea that we are subjects of the language, and untiring agents of production of many diverse cultural texts. To translate the world is the immediate demand of relating to surroundings, which we carry out with the modelization of codes, and language, according to different ideological positions, experiences, feelings, and knowledges. In the final analysis, we transform into order, into organization, into disperse and indeterminate models. Much of this is part of a single and striking political gesture, since it is through the cultural semiosis that information becomes texts woven through history, and in which convergent (such as the cultural codes transformations) and divergent (such as the unpredictable experiences of scientific and artistic discoveries) movements are recovered. In the line of studies that investment in the politics of the cultural texts are the studies on unpredictable movements, and explosives, and, above all, on the memory, and cultural spaces, of the projection of oppressive historical conditions.

The text, Lótman continua a surpreender: revoluções e emoções coletivas [Lotman continues to surprise: revolutions and collective emoticons] by Laura Gherlone (Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina) is dedicated to examining the cultural construction of beings averse to the norms: barbarians, scape-goats, and witches. Through the study of these groups, the work engages Lotman's understanding of certain repercussions, such as fear and collective hysteria, while historically situating the role of women in these scenarios. Thus, she provides us with a valuable contribution to the semiotic study of fear that, evidently, becomes the great block to contemplating freedom. In this respect, her reflection continues unbeatable. Her understanding about how each era conceives freedom within the mechanism of culture, and about the set of relations that maintain the semioshpere, also positionings in the face of aggression, is organized in reasoning very clear to her: We do not know what freedom is if we do not know our limits, Lotman says, ultimately, because freedom does not exist without borders, without social, political and cultural limitations, and many times it does not exist without violence, struggle or convulsion.

Studies on barbarians are directed to the past, but are projected into tangible regions of the future. The study, *Memória do futuro*, *explosão*, *pancronia: a semiótica de*

Lótman e os estudos da memória e do tempo nas teatralidades juvenis, [Memory of the future, explosion panchrony: the semiotics of Lotman and studies of memory and time in youth theatricalities] by Monica Rebecca Ferreira Nunes (Escola Superior de Propaganda e Marketing, Brasil), examines how malleable historical time is in representations that are not directed to a progressive line. In this context, room has been given to work on memory, which, in Lotman, is covered in a dynamic quality of unfolding and of movement, which carries out displacements in time and space. With this, the semiosphere of the cultural texts can be dimensioned in its panchrony. The study takes as its empirical field, youth movements that theatricalize eras in apparitions that socially resemble ritualized celebrations outside of time and space, experiences, but perfectly inserted into a *continuum* of creative, transformative movements.

As a way of assuring an integrated vision of Lotman's semiotic thought, a study that seeks to locate the concept of unpredictability in Lotman's works was reserved to close this edition of the journal, since he wrote them with the aid of a typist, while in the hospital. In Sobre as questões da imprevisibilidade na cultura: o legado de Lótman para a compreensão dos mecanismos e trabalhos da semiosis da cultura [Regarding questions of unpredictability - as formulated in the posthumously edited book⁸ - in the culture: the legacy of Lotman on the comprehension of the mechanisms and work of the semiotics of culture], the semiotics of the cultural research group, Andreia Moura, Douglas Galan and Livia Machado (Universidade de São Paulo - USP, Brasil), endeavor to translate Lotman's work into Portuguese, and produce a report of his researches that deal with the concepts supporting the dynamic of the dialogical relations in the cultural semiosphere. Along with confronting the concepts, it aims to proceed to the refinement of processes that art elaborates as a part of its activities or discoveries, and experimentations, in different cultural fields. In this sense, if, thanks to the plasticity of its procedures, all artistic creativity leads to explosion, then the behaviors of art are manifested in different ways as cultural productions. Thus, there is a need to reframe the aesthetically constituted gaze to embrace these explosions well. One reasoning of this nature frames art as the inexhaustible source of the semiotic mechanisms of culture, which exist both in languages

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⁸ In the posthumous work (Lotman, 1994 [Italian edition]; 2013 [Russian, Estonian and English edition]), the concept of unpredictability guides the thinking about the mechanisms of culture that, in the context of gradual development, provides the emergence of instabilities and indeterminations that lead to unpredictable events, which Lotman examined in different contexts: from art to politics, from science to customs, to fashion, and to social practices.

and in the most diverse texts of the culture, whether constructed as science, politics, ideology, ultimately, the social world.

Throughout his life, Lotman sought to understand the semiotic mechanisms of culture in its vast diversity and multidimensional mobility. He left a legacy that continues to dialogue with generations of scholars who are avid to become historical subjects in the knowledge they produce with respect to the challenges armed by the borders of unpredictability. We can say that when Lotman's thought reached its final stage in 1993, there was, in fact, a period, an end-stop, delimited by death. Regardless of this irreversibility, right there, in that period, this end-stop actually mobilized his thought, and launched challenges and provocations with new questions about formulations that he had announced, though never developing them further, such as Bakhtin had done in his time. It represents a new turbulence, a type of outside-the-box, of variations of manifest meanings, which serve to convoke other movements of indignation, other paths of reflection, other prospections.

When the journal Bakhtiniana gives room to Lotman's semiotic thought so that it may share the space of dialogue constructed by the studies of the Bakhtin Circle, the feeling is grandiose, as we recognize that the efforts put forth by semioticians of culture have not been in vain. Despite the fact that the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics managed to flourish in such adverse terrain, there is nothing obtuse in thinking that the concept of the semiosphere could only be the fruit of emergent notions of a field of struggle and resistance in spaces of consecrated hegemonies.

The organizers responsible for the *ad hoc* editing of the present issue thank the renowned Scientific Editors of the journal for the opportunity to broaden the spectrum of the discourses uttered here by scholars of various research centers and interests. We would like to give special thanks and recognition to the collaborators. Please accept our "thanks" resounding in the various languages of each one of the cultures that have come to comprise the semiotic border with this privileged space of dialogue.

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