

Yuri Tynianov, Jan Mukařovský and Nikolai Marr in Juri Lotman's Concept of History of Humanities

Original study

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Abstract: This article focuses on Juri Lotman's views of the origins of Tartu-Moscow structuralism. He reconstructed the genesis of the Tartu-Moscow School using the Hegelian model (thesis – antithesis – synthesis). In Lotman's concepts of the 1960s and 1970s, the role of the “thesis” was always played by the Petrograd Association of Russian Formalists (OPOlaZ). Lotman selected different movements as the “antithesis”. In the 1960s, the productive antithesis to OPOlaZ was, for Lotman, the “semantic paleontology” of Nikolai Marr and his followers (such as Olga Freidenberg). In the 1970s, Lotman assigned this role to the functionalist structuralism of the Prague School (with a special focus on the work of Jan Mukařovský), but he never abandoned his sympathy for the work of Freidenberg.

Keywords: Juri Lotman, formalism, structuralism, Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics, history of humanities, Nikolai Marr, Olga Freidenberg, semantic paleontology.

INTRODUCTION: CONTEXT

The third volume of the Tartu *Sign Systems Studies* (1967) was distinguished by the appearance of a new section, “Reviews and Publications” [Обзоры и публикации]. This section owes much of its appearance to Pavel Florensky's article “Reverse Perspective” [Обратная перспектива], the typescript of which Boris Uspenskij obtained in Moscow and soon offered to Lotman for publication in the Tartu series: there was no hope of publishing the works of an “idealist philosopher and religious thinker” like Florensky in Moscow. In a letter to Lotman dated 25 October 1965, Uspenskij, who said that he “would give a lot to have this article published in full” (Lotman, Uspenskij 2016, 46), characterized the significance of its publication very positively:

The article seems remarkable to me: it very much reflects the versatility of its author, particularly the combination of his humanitarian erudition with the mathematical. From one point of view, this is among

the first, unique attempts to apply a mathematical apparatus to address issues in the study of art [...]; on the other hand, this is a profound philosophical analysis of the essence of a painting, above all its symbolic essence. (Lotman, Uspenskij 2016, 46)

The publication of the Florensky was indeed one of the highlights of the entire volume, and the section devoted to the history of humanities was preceded by a separate four-page preface written by Lotman and entitled “On the Tasks of the Section of Reviews and Publications” [О задачах раздела обзоров и публикаций]. However, only the two final paragraphs of this preface were devoted to Florensky's voluminous publication. The three pages preceding these paragraphs, which introduced a significant polemical charge into it, were devoted to a discussion of an article by Alexander Zholkovsky and Yuri Shcheglov, “From the Prehistory of Soviet Works on Structural Poetics” [Из предыстории

советских работ по структурной поэтике], published in the same section.

Zholkovsky and Shcheglov constructed the genesis of the structural poetics of the 1960s in the following way. Viktor Shklovsky was the first scholar to speak about the opposition between practical and poetic language, art and "non-art". Yuri Tynianov criticized his colleague at OPOlaZ for his "mechanistic approach" when analyzing poetic language and posed the problem of dynamization of form, asserting that content is not predetermined but is created in the process of the artistic act. The dynamic correlation of "content" and "form" entails the question of structure and functions. According to Zholkovsky and Shcheglov, decomposition into functions "is subject not only to such a clearly composite construction as a plot but also to people and even objects, no matter how simple and indecomposable they may seem within the practical series" (Zholkovsky, Shcheglov 1967, 372). From this point of view, Sergey Eisenstein's work is of the greatest interest to the authors of this article as an example of "structural poetics in action". The famous film director's "view of art as a means of expressing thoughts and 'strengthening emotions' is uniquely combined with a steady tracing of how a thing is built from bottom to top and how an 'image of a theme' is born from the properties of objects" (Zholkovsky, Shcheglov 1967, 374).

Lotman insisted that the problem of the "historical roots of modern structural studies of literature and semiotic methods in the humanities" was not limited to the legacy of OPOlaZ. As other sources of the structuralism of the 1960s, Lotman identified Aleksey Shakhmatov's works on the reconstruction of the Old Russian texts, the pre-WWII works of Soviet textologists and scholars of Pushkin, and the experiments in constructing a typology of literature, primarily those of Mikhail Bakhtin and Grigori Gukovsky. Thus, the article by Zholkovsky and Shcheglov appears to Lotman as "a review of one of the aspects that should be supplemented by other studies" (Lotman 1967b, 366).

Publication of the article by Zholkovsky and Shcheglov with Lotman's polemical preface was preceded by his correspondence with Viktor Rosenzweig, a linguist and one of the organizers of cybernetics and work on machine translation in the USSR. Rosenzweig directly asked to publish Zholkovsky and Shcheglov's article, and Lotman directly replied, "We [the editorial board] are not satisfied with the article by Zholkovsky and Shcheglov in terms of its quality"¹:

Rosenzweig to Lotman, 20 November 1965

I am familiar with their [Zholkovsky's and Shcheglov's] works on linguistics, which I believe are quite serious studies, and the results they obtain appear to be substantially related to the same mindset towards idea-content [идейность], simplicity, and rejection

of "pretentiousness" [вумничание] that they strive to apply in poetics.

It is likely that this is not the sole possible path for developing poetics. But I am certain you will agree that there is no current in semiotics that can claim uniqueness.

Lotman to Rosenzweig, 23 November 1965

We are not satisfied with the article by Zholkovsky and Shcheglov in terms of its quality. While very useful for people who need to be reminded of the existence of Shklovsky's or Propp's works, it does nothing for those who already know this and does not even indicate it. I take the issue of structuralism's historical roots in Russian literary criticism very seriously. [...] for a reader already informed on this issue, both a number of judgments and the choice of material in Zholkovsky and Shcheglov's article seem superficial.

Lotman did not send his letter to Rosenzweig (which is why it is preserved in Lotman's archive with letters from Rosenzweig), and the article by Zholkovsky and Shcheglov was published in *Sign Systems Studies*. However, in declaring his serious attitude to the historical roots of structuralism, Lotman in fact stated that he had his own concept of the genesis of structuralism that differed from that of Zholkovsky and Shcheglov.

This close attention to the problem of genesis was related to the need for self-legitimation in the field of scholarship, dictated largely by extra-scholarly circumstances. Lotman's academic career as a structuralist scholar began with polemics in which his opponents allowed themselves such arguments as "modern followers of OPOlaZ are reviving its worst aspects", which, in Soviet reality, resembled political accusations of "formalism". However, Lotman needed self-legitimation not only to integrate the Tartu-Moscow branch of structuralism into the official structure of Soviet literary theory, but also to understand his own scholarly creativity in the context of the works of his predecessors. In the mid-1960s, Lotman claimed that the informal association of scholars that would soon be called the Tartu-Moscow School of semiotics (TMS) was deeply rooted in the scholarly tradition and represented a natural stage in the development of science.

One of Lotman's overarching thoughts in the mid-1960s was to reclaim the tradition of the 1920s and use it as a basis for creating new directions for scholarly research. Synchronic formalist methods dominated literary studies in the 1920s; they were supplanted by diachronic, historical-literary methods in the 1930s. For Lotman, the late 1960s were a time of synthesis. Later, whenever Lotman proposed different ways of describing the genesis of the TMS, he would invariably interpret the development of literary theory in terms of the Hegelian 'thesis-antithesis-synthesis' triad. This is more

1 University of Tartu Library, Department of Manuscripts and Rare Books, fund 135, folder Br1228, pp. 1-4.

interesting when one considers that, as Mihhail Lotman has shown, it was not Hegel but Kant who played the leading role in Lotman's philosophical background: "Lotman was a Kantian. Although he does not often refer to Kant's ideas and writings (the most significant references appear in his latest works), Kant was his habitual interlocutor over many years, and in his lectures, the name of the Königsberg thinker appeared much more frequently than in written texts. [...] The most fundamental constructs of the Tartu school reveal a clearly Kantian foundation" (Lotman, M. 2000, 26; 1995, 216).

The role of thesis in this Hegelian scheme was always played by OPOlaZ and the role of synthesis by the TMS, whereas the role of antithesis depended on which directions in scholarship Lotman and his associates considered most relevant at a particular time. These were the schools and scholars who focused on semantics without losing attention to form, such as the late Gukovsky's version of stadial literary evolution (as a neo-Hegelian antidote to official Marxism) in the early period, followed successively by Marrist paleontological semantics (predominantly, Olga Freidenberg's), the Prague School's functionalist literary structuralism (first and foremost, Jan Mukařovský's), and semiotic aesthetics with Tynianov as the main forerunner of Prague functionalism (see Pilshchikov, Poseliagin, Trunin 2018, 45–46).

YURI TYNIANOV

In his first structuralist book *Lectures on Structural Poetics*, Lotman criticizes Viktor Shklovsky's concept of "device" [приём] and the mechanistic model of a literary work as a "sum-total of devices" (Shklovsky 1921, 8). By the very first pages of his *Lektsii*, Lotman is already contrasting this "mechanistic-inventorial" approach with Tynianov's functional approach, Gukovsky's historical-typological approach and Propp's proto-structuralist approach. Shklovsky "saw the purpose of the device 'in having us perceive things [...] as artistic'. However," objects Lotman, "the history of art knows of aesthetic systems and eras in the history of art when it was precisely the rejection of 'artistry' that was perceived as the highest artistic achievement" (Lotman 1964, 160). The text cannot be understood without our knowing what is intentionally absent from it. Lotman gives this phenomenon a name: the "minus-device". The term "device" was obviously suggested by the formalists, and one source of Lotman's conceptual framework is Tynianov's argument about the effectiveness of the "minus sign" [отрицательный признак], as opposed to the "polished device" [сглаженный приём] (Tynianov 2019 [1924], 157). Lotman distinguished Tynianov's conceptual framework from that of other OPOlaZ members, defining it not as "formalism" but as "the attempt at transitioning to a representation of the functional nature of the artistic system" (Lotman 1964, 13). In other words,

functionalism. Tynianov's works turned out to harmonize with the structuralist-Saussurean spirit of the *Lektsii*: "Art is always functional, always a relationship" (Lotman 1964, 22), claims Lotman. By analogy with linguistic elements, elements of an artistic structure are defined not by their substantial properties, but by their relations among one another and by their functions in an overall system.

The opposition between the "dynamic" Tynianov and the "mechanistic" Shklovsky was the focal point around which Lotman built his understanding of Russian formalism in the late 1960s. We can see this clearly in an article written shortly after the *Lektsii*, known by the title "The Study of Literature Must be a Science" [Литературоведение должно быть наукой]. This title has often been interpreted as the motto of the TMS in the late 1960s, though it came not from Lotman but from the editorial board of the journal *Voprosy literatury*, where the article was published in early 1967. The author had another title in mind: "On the Principles of Structuralism in Literary Studies" [О принципах структурализма в литературоведении]. Since Lotman's article was published as a response to polemics about structuralism, roughly one-third of it is occupied by the polemics themselves. The other two-thirds, however, are devoted to presenting the basic principles of structuralism in literary studies.

Lotman's first argument already refers to the opposition described earlier: structuralism is not mechanistic, and "one of structuralism's basic principles is its rejection of analysis based on a mechanical list of features: a work of art is not the sum of its features, but a functioning system, a structure" (Lotman 1967a, 93–94; 2018, 71). His next argument declares, "Structuralism is not the enemy of historicism." Studying any functioning system or structure presumes to analyse it synchronically. However, the contrast between synchrony and diachrony is "not fundamental, but heuristic in nature" (Lotman 1967a, 94; 2018, 72). This issue had first been raised in an argument by Tynianov and Jakobson in their article "Problems in the Study of Language and Literature", in which the co-authors announce their reconsideration both of Saussure's "synchronic conception" and of the early works of their own OPOlaZ colleagues, primarily Shklovsky (see Tynianov, Jakobson 2019 [1928], 280; see also Pilshchikov, Trunin 2016, 375–377). Though Lotman does not refer to these works in his *Lektsii* nor in his article published in *Voprosy literatury*, he saw Tynianov and Jakobson as pioneers of the structural-functional approach to literature.

JAN MUKAŘOVSKÝ

In the late 1960s, Lotman became acquainted with the scholarly work of Jan Mukařovský, one of the founders of Czech structuralism, whose selected works he intended to publish in Russian. In an introductory article to the then-failed publication of Mukařovský², Lotman wrote:

2 On the history of the initial, unrealized edition and its prohibition, see Pilshchikov, Trunin 2018; 2021.

Only the kind of critique of formalists that complimented analysis of the syntagmatic structure with a semantic one, that regarded the entirety of the artistic construction as a mutual tension between these two principles of organization, could be fruitful. Critique that simply tossed aside the very problem of syntagmatic analysis of a text's internal structure was a step backwards. (Lotman 1994 [1970], 13; 2018, 363)

The Prague Linguistic Circle (PLC) developed OPOlaZ ideas to the point of rejecting some of its original, "mechanistic" postulates. The Prague school, Lotman says, "managed to carry out constructive criticism of formalism, unwittingly confirming Tynianov's proposition that there were no more dangerous critics in the field of culture than one's direct successors" (1994, 14; 2018, 365).

This kind of research trajectory meant a transition from the study of language to the study of the text, which later became one of the brands of TMS, or as Mihhail Lotman put it, "A specific feature of the Tartu structuralist semiotic school is its pronounced textocentricity: its conceptual system is not focused on the language, the sign, the structure, the binary oppositions or the grammar rules but on the text" (Lotman, M. 2000, 23; 1995, 214). Putting the text at the centre of the research field entails the study of its three main aspects: syntactics, semantics and pragmatics. Lotman connects their study with the stages of development of structuralism: the immanent study of texts, the study of the relationship between the structural organization of texts and their meaning, and finally, "the examination of the place of literary texts in the overall system of culture: the correlation of literature with ideological models of various levels and eras"³ (Lotman 2018, 241). It seems that this is where the Hegelian triad mentioned above originates.

This kind of concept is outlined in Lotman's unpublished article, "Some Problems in the Comparative Study of Artistic Texts" [Некоторые проблемы сравнительного изучения художественных текстов]. This article was written approximately at the same time as the preface to Mukařovský's edition, as well as the article "Olga Freidenberg as a Student of Culture" (which will be discussed later), and may be dated 1970 or 1971⁴. The article interests us not only from a methodological point of view, but also from the point of view of the history of science;

this second aspect turns out to be more important for Lotman. In this article, as in the preface to Mukařovský, the PLC fits into the genesis of the TMS:

Mukařovský developed a functional approach to art, [...] a doctrine correlating text and function. [...]

Any culture, from Mukařovský's point of view, represents a hierarchically organized structure of functions. That structure of functions is the realization of a given society's social structure. The functions of culture are serviced by texts. No matter how different in nature various texts may be, they find themselves in a comparable position insofar as they are able to serve the same function. On the other hand, the transfer of a text to another system may be accompanied by a shift in its function in the general system of culture, which leads to a rethinking of it. As it transfers to another function, the text seems no longer equal to itself. When a comparison of single-functional texts emphasizes positional similarity, sometimes with deep textual difference, then, as the function changes with the text transferring from system to system, the difference in social role comes to the fore, and occasionally with complete textual identity.

Under this approach, culture would appear not as the sum of mechanically connected texts, but as a dialectical unity. The structure of functions turns out to be some semantic invariant to which various texts are assigned. Those functions represent the basis of comparison.⁵

Russian formalists succeeded more than others in the immanent study of texts (Lotman singles out Tynianov as a researcher who had the greatest interest in the semantics of the artistic form)⁶. The real "sublation" (*Aufhebung*) of "thesis" and "antithesis", according to Lotman, is the functional structuralism of the Prague school (primarily the works of Jakobson⁷ and Mukařovský). However, there was no consensus within the TMS on the question of which predecessors should be considered pioneers in the study of semantics. And while Lotman named pre-WWII scholars of Pushkin, as well as Bakhtin and Gukovsky⁸, as such figures when arguing with Zholkovsky

3 From Lotman's article "Literary structuralism", commissioned by *The Concise Literary Encyclopedia* [Краткая литературная энциклопедия] in the late 1960s but unpublished until 2012 and 2018.

4 The article was written for the collection "Historical and Philological Studies (Semiotics. Typology. Comparative Literary Studies)" [Историко-филологические исследования (Семиотика. Компаративистика. Типология)], which was prepared for publication in Yerevan (Armenia) in 1972 and was supposed to be published there in 1973. The publication of the collection, however, was prohibited due to non-scientific circumstances. On the history of preparation and prohibition, see Trunin 2018, 196–200.

5 Tallinn University, Juri Lotman Semiotics Repository, fund 1, unpublished typescript, pp. 16–17.

6 See also Trunin 2022, 54–58.

7 On Lotman and Jakobson, see Pilshchikov, Sütiste 2022.

8 The problem of Marr's influence on Gukovsky's concept of stadial literary evolution, which previously attracted the attention of many scholars, is not considered in this article.

and Shcheglov in the 1960s, in the early 1970s he – with all the necessary reservations – turned to the legacy of scholars involved in semantic paleontology, primarily Olga Freidenberg, a student and partisan of Nikolai Marr.

NIKOLAI MARR AND MARRISM

I quote from Lotman's preface to the Mukářovský edition:

[...] let us recall the critique of formalism that literary scholars influenced by Marr's methodology advanced in the 1930s. Neither the talent, breadth of erudition, nor scholarly enthusiasm of that group can be denied. [...]

The method that the scientists of this group called semantic, in contrast to the formal method, was based on uncovering deeper meanings, on reconstructing a semantic paleontology. Marr's followers expressed many profound scientific ideas by revealing the ancient identity in plot/semantic units that are opposed to or simply unrelated to modern consciousness, or by establishing a reflection of rituals or the thought processes of archaic society in plots. However, when studying the semantic relation of an element of a text to extra-textual (mainly archaic) realities, the Marrists completely ignored the meanings that this element acquires in relation to the total structure of the given text. (Lotman 1994 [1970], 14; 2018, 364)

The same idea is clearly outlined in Lotman's article "Some Problems in the Comparative Study of Artistic Texts" mentioned above. Both Marr and Marrism have their place:

Everything related to the comparative study of texts constitutes the domain of comparative research. However, this seemingly clear approach gives rise to difficulties once we move to its practical application. Any comparison implies a previously established fact of similarity. In addition to a difference, the objects being compared must have a certain minimum quantity of identical features, otherwise the comparison would be logically impossible. [...] there are often cases where we have to make certain that things and phenomena we consider obviously similar are by no means so in the context of the culture we are studying – the similarity belongs here to our consciousness; consequently, including it in the object of study would amount to a logical error. At the same time, what in the context of our culture [...] represent obviously distant and incomparable phenomena may seem similar or even identical under other historical conditions and for another consciousness.

This question has already attracted the attention of researchers. In the 1930s, a group of scholars at

the Research Institute for the Comparative History of Literature and Languages of the West and East under the leadership of Acad[emician] Marr actively worked on it. [...] In a position paper written on behalf of the entire team, a scholarly article serving as the introduction to the group's collective work on "Tristan and Isolde," Freidenberg wrote: "We must distinguish the functional essence of things without clinging to formal similarity."

However, and contrary to its declarations, the school of Academician Marr represented not the application of the principles of linguistic doctrine to ethnological material but a transfer of the achievements of ethnology into linguistics. Therefore the strengths of the school were more clearly manifested in archaeology, ethnology, and folklore, and its weaknesses explicitly in linguistics.⁹

Boris Uspenskij¹⁰ once told me that, for the linguists who made up the Moscow branch of the TMS, the name Marr was synonymous with tyranny and incompetence, and Marr's theory was dangerous for linguistics. It was no secret that Soviet science (especially social sciences and humanities) existed under the oppression of Communist-Party ideology. This ideology was orthodox Marxism whose dogmata were considered as the only truth. Marx and Engels were not professional linguists and did not propose their own linguistic theory. Marr with his Japhetic theory (Marr adopted the term "Japhetic" from Japheth, the name of one of the sons of Noah), or as it was called officially "New linguistic doctrine" [Новое учение о языке], was not just convenient for the Soviet regime but might be considered a symbolic figure of the 1920–1930s era. His theory gained favour for ideological reasons, as it was thought to represent "proletarian science" as opposed to "bourgeois science". Marr's theory was never set out in cohesive and consistent terms, but it might be worth outlining its basic provisions here to make clear that we are dealing with a linguistic myth that, for non-scientific reasons, occupied the dominant position in Soviet linguistics for several decades.

Marr believed that language, like religion, philosophy, art, and so forth, represents a "superstructure" [надстройка] over social (production) relations. After applying the theory of class struggle to language, Marr took the next step to the question of glottogenesis: though the languages of different peoples arose independently of one another, humanity shares one unified culture (note that this claim is crucial for the argument that follows), and linguistics is, therefore, able to reconstruct the fundamental principles common to all languages of the world. If production relations are the "basis" [базис] of language, then language was the result of their evolution from "labor outcries" [трудовые выкрики], which originally were magic combinations of sounds.

9 Tallinn University, Juri Lotman Semiotics Repository, fund 1, unpublished typescript, pp. 14–15.

10 B. Uspenskij, personal communication, Moscow, July 2018.

These sounds later began to acquire more concrete meanings that differed depending on the social group. Marr believed that he had managed to reconstruct the four "primary elements": SAL [сал], BER [бер], JON [йон], and ROSH [рош]. Every word in every language derives from these (or from some combination of these), and the foremost task of linguistics is to identify these "primary elements" and construct a classification of languages on their basis. This is what Marr called "semantic paleontology" (the term itself existed before him, but it was reinterpreted here).¹¹

What made the situation in Soviet linguistics in this period so dramatic in nature is that Marr died in 1934 (according to some memoirs of his pupils, Marr was already clinically insane a few years before his death¹²), but his theory was supported by the Soviet power until the end of the 1940s. With the publication of Stalin's pamphlet *Marxism and Problems of Linguistics* [Марксизм и вопросы языкознания] in the 1950s, Marrism, which managed to cause a lot of troubles for Soviet linguistics, was officially defeated and replaced by another ideology, Stalinism. Neither had anything in common with science, but the latter was at that moment less destructive.

At the same time, Lotman identifies the "semantic paleontology" of Marr and his school as a possible historical and scientific antithesis to the formalism of OPOlaZ. To be fair, Lotman knew full well that Marr's "Japhetic theory" was an instrument of ideological pressure on academia during the Stalin era; therefore, among the Marrists, Lotman appreciates and is prepared to defend Freidenberg seriously.

In volume six of *Sign Systems Studies* (1973), in the same "Reviews and Publications" section, Lotman published three short articles of Freidenberg and her bibliography with his apologetic preface (soon translated into English), which resurrected Freidenberg's works from oblivion. Here the perspective of the history of humanities again turns out to be the crucial point for Lotman:

As early as 1964, in the first issue of *Works on Semiotics* [Труды по знаковым системам], in speaking of the historical roots of structural-semiotic studies we felt it necessary to recall that the structural method studies, above all, the meaning, the semantics of literature, folklore, and myth. Therefore, it would be of interest to trace its contact with those trends in Soviet literary scholarship that sought to investigate historical semantics and, to some degree, reflected the most fruitful sides of Marr's linguistic teaching [...]. Adopting a view of the prehistory of structural poetics somewhat different from that sketched by Zholkovsky and Shcheglov, we would consider it useful to direct attention to the way structural-semiotic methods formed and blazed a path for themselves within the framework of different and sometimes conflicting trends in scholarly thought. The method that its

own creators sometimes defined as "semantic" and elsewhere as "semantic-pale[ont]oloical", counterposed itself to formalism. (Lotman 1976, 4–5; 1973, 483)

Recalling his dispute with Zholkovsky and Shcheglov six years earlier, Lotman continues to insist on the significance of his notion of the genesis of the TMS. And Freidenberg, despite her Marrism, plays a significant role here. Firstly, no one has succeeded in studying semantics in the same way that Russian formalists have succeeded in studying form: "The formal school singled out study of the syntagmatic structure of a text as an independent and fundamental scientific problem. Immanent-relational meanings overshadowed the semantic. The reaction to this was an attempt to concentrate attention on semantics – sociological, cultural, and religious-mythological" (Lotman 1976, 6; 1973, 483). And secondly, considering methodology, Lotman outlines an important opposition between semantic paleontology and structuralism. It was not linguistics but ethnology that constituted the Marrists' main area of expertise and methodological point of reference: "The historical paradox lay in the fact that it was precisely in linguistics that the weakest sides of the 'new linguistic doctrine' emerged. The direction of scholarly thought within the framework of this school was directly opposed to one of the principal trends characterizing the humanities in the twentieth century. This tendency may be defined as an intrusion of linguistic methods into the non-linguistic disciplines. Marrism, on the other hand, is distinguished by the intrusion of non-linguistic methods into the realm of linguistics. This trend proved to be historically sterile" (Lotman 1976, 4; 1973, 482).

The research programme of the TMS, as is well known, was successful precisely because linguistics methods were transferred into other fields of studies of culture. For example, an encounter between Jakobson and Lévi-Strauss in New York in 1942 resulted in Lévi-Strauss's transfer of phonological methods to anthropology. The same methodological drive – orientation towards language as a useful and most revealing object of description – was the key characteristic of the TMS research from the very beginning. Finally, it was in the early 1970s that Lotman began to write about the typology of cultures, which he builds by analogy with the typology of languages.

Both in the article "The Study of Literature Must be a Science" (discussed above), and in the article "Some Results and Problems of Applying Exact Methods in Soviet Literary Studies" [Некоторые итоги и проблемы применения точных методов в советском литературоведении], published in Italian in 1967, Lotman advocated combining structural-typological studies with historical ones, presenting "the relationship between historical-cultural typology and actual historical-cultural material" as corresponding to a certain extent to "Saussure's opposition of language

11 More on Marr and his "New linguistic doctrine" see Alpatov 2004, 6–78.

12 See Freidenberg 1988 and others, see also Alpatov 2004, 79–167.

(*langue*) and speech (*parole*)” (Lotman 2018, 115) and expressing the hope that “in the field general typology of culture, structural and historical methods of studying literature have found solid ground for agreement and interaction” (Lotman 2018, 117). Lotman undertook the search for this kind of interaction in his *Articles on the Typology of Culture*. In the final chapter of the pamphlet, which was based on the article “On the Typological Study of Literature” (1969), Lotman talks about the interest in cultural universals, and he considers the typology of cultures as a comparative semiotics of cultures¹³:

Comparative studies have traditionally looked at the genetic relationships of similar elements. The typological approach requires comparing comparable tables of functions and the texts that serve them. Therefore, the very concept of comparability will not be limited to any external similarity but will be revealed as a dialectical unity of coincidences and discrepancies, and the scholar must be prepared for the fact that a striking external similarity may sometimes be combined with a deep functional difference, while a seeming incomparability conceals a functional identity. (Lotman 1970, 101–102)

Lotman considered it the undoubted merit of Freidenberg and the Marrists that “the object of their study was culture as such, not some particular side of it. It is precisely here, within the framework of our native scholarship, that it has most clearly and consistently been shown that linguistics or the study of literature is merely part of the theory of culture” (Lotman 1976, 9; 1973, 485–486). The weak point of this position was the lack of appropriate methods. The TMS suggested a research programme in which the necessary methods have been developed: “Only synchronic description of certain sign systems, natural languages above all, could open the way to [the] semiotic study of culture as a whole” (Lotman 1976, 10; 1973, 486).

At the end of his unpublished article “Some Problems in the Comparative Study of Artistic Texts” Lotman argues that “the comparative study of cultures is the way to create a science of the Culture of the Earth”¹⁴. No less important is the fact that this article replaces the phrase “structural-typological” [структурно-типологический] with the new terminological combination “structural-semiotic” [структурно-семиотический], which directly indicates the connection between structural-typological methods of studying literature and the semiotics of culture.

Finally, let us turn to Lotman’s late book *Culture and Explosion* (1992). Speaking on different types of dynamics, Lotman mentions Marr in a neutral, if not positive, way:

It is known that the concept of qualitative breaks in the development of language proposed by Marr and founded on Hegelian dialectics contrasted sharply with the reality of linguistics development [...]. It is all the more remarkable then, that where the ideas of Marr returned to their native domain – to the region of culture, folklore and literature, they no longer appeared to be quite absurd. [...] Freidenberg drew attention to the explosive nature of processes in culture, folklore and literature. The works of the “marrists”, dedicated to the problems of cultural processes, not only lacked the arbitrary nature noted in the late linguistic works of Marr but also preserved a scientific interest in the topic until our time. [...] History is rich in paradoxes, and oppositions frequently gravitate towards each other. (Lotman 2009, 139–140; 2000, 121–122)

Lotman’s final books have been rightly deemed a philosophical reconsideration of his earlier studies of literature. However, here too we see that Lotman is gesturing towards the expansion of linguistic methods into the studies of culture, not the expansion of cultural methods into linguistics. It was a turn that made the structuralist project successful. And Lotman understood this as early as the mid-1960s.

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13 The article by Tatjana Kuzovkina (2015), which recounts Lotman’s work “Some Problems in the Comparative Study of Artistic Texts” with extensive quotations, states the connection between comparative studies and typology, which is crucial for Lotman, but does not explain it in any way.

14 Tallinn University, Juri Lotman Semiotics Repository, fund 1, unpublished typescript, p. 31.

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