Memory

Memória

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Memory[1]

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Abstract: This essay analyzes how the Memory category runs through Lotman's theoretical production. The Russian thinker analyzes a new theory of memory that he develops as an essential part of culture conceived as a semiotic system, a concept developed in the works of the Tartu-Moscow school. Aiming to describe the techniques of self-interpretation and self-modeling (transformation, translation, transcoding) through which a culture tries to stabilize itself.

Resumo: Este ensaio analisa como a categoria Memória percorre a produção teórica de Lotman. O pensador russo analisa uma nova teoria da memória, que ele desenvolve como parte essencial da cultura concebida como um sistema semiótico, conceito desenvolvido nas obras da escola Tártu-Moscou. Visando descrever as técnicas de autointerpretação e automodelagem (transformação, tradução, transcodificação) por meio do qual uma cultura tenta se estabilizar.

Keywords: Memory; Culture; Self-interpretation; Self-modeling
Palavras-chave: Memória; Cultura; Autointerpretação; Automodelagem

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'Only that which has been translated into a system of signs can be appropriated by memory; in this sense, the intellectual history of mankind can be regarded as a struggle for memory".[2] With this cardinal statement, Juri Lotman invites us to follow the historical formation of a concept which is vitally connected with the human mind and which is accompanied by or realized in different techniques of remembering. Memoria (the Greek mneme), the fourth of the five sections in classical rhetoric, comprises a system of rules (or devices) to help remember a speech or narration. These rules are described in rhetorical treatises dating from Aristotle to the end of the eighteenth century, when rhetoric as a discipline lost its importance. The notion and art of memory, however, were not confined to these rules, because from its advent ars memoriae decisively shaped an influential tradition in European

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[1]This essay makes up one of the most important publications outside Russia in 2022: The Companion to juri lotman: a semiotic theory of culture, organized by Peeter Torop and Marek Tamm (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022). After the dense introductory study by the organizers and an essay on the life and work of Lotman by Tatyana Kuzovkina, it is composed of three blocks. The first is Lotman and in context on relations with Saussure, Russian Formalism, Jakobson, Bakhtin, Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics and the transnational context. The following, where the essay below is inserted, dedicated to the main concepts: Language, Text, Culture, Communication, Modeling, Narration, Space, Symbol, Image, History, Biography, Power, Explosion and Semiosphere. The last one with the theoretical segments French Teory, Cultural Studies, New History, Cultural Studies, Social Media Studies and others. Thanks to Joe Kreuser, Senior Marketing Manager at Bloomsbury Publishing, for permission to reproduce this essay. (Gutemberg Medeiros)

[2] LOTMAN, 2000, p. 397.

culture serving as a pragmatic aid that helped to improve and sharpen recollection; beyond this it was established as a distinct part of the cultural domain (the social stock of knowledge), meaning that generation after generation could draw upon its contents.

From various treatises, one can conclude that in antiquity *memoria* was conceived as both memoria naturalis and memoria artificialis, the inborn ability and the skill acquired through learning. Not only was the perfect construction of speech or text at stake but also was the physical and intellectual perception of the world. The division between body and mind has accompanied the "phenomenon" of memory ever since (phrenology/ biology on the one hand and philosophy/ sociology on the other).

Lotman canalizes this struggle of mankind with a new theory of memory which he develops as the essential part of culture conceived of as a semiotic system, a concept developed in the works of the Tartu-Moscow school. The latter operates with an inventory of categories for the analysis of cultural processes which are meant to totally describe the techniques of self-interpretation and self-modelling (transformation, translation, transcoding) by means of which a culture attempts to stabilize itself. Such categories are "self-description', "cultural metalanguage" or "metatext', "cultural grammar', "dynamic mechanism" (e.g. LOTMAN, 1977 and LOTMAN; USPENSKY, 1978).

The typology of culture that Lotman proposes starts out with the cardinal question of what does "to have meaning" mean. This typology is dependent on studies analysing the role of the text and the role of signs in individual cultures or in individual stages of a culture's development. The sign type (text type) preferred at a given time becomes a parameter for describing culture. This notion of culture (understood as a unified text governed by a unified code and as the sum total of all texts governed by such codes) develops specific modes of producing meaning (see Chapter 10). In general terms, it is thus necessary to ask how a culture functioning as a semiotic system relates to the sign and to semioticity. This relation

to sign and semioticity is reflected, on the one hand, in the "self-assessment" of a culture, in its descriptive system, that is, in the grammars it develops about itself, and, on the other hand, in the way the texts produced by the culture or relevant to it are evaluated with regard to their functionality. The questions about the character of the sign type and the text type are related, for both questions are concerned with the problem of "semioticity" (*znakovost*). Text can be conceived of as an ordered sign sequence that can appear in different forms as literature, pieces of art, performances, and so on. The concept of text allows the interpretation of sign events as a kind of reading that follows the rules of cultural grammar (see Chapter 9).

Lotman's typological models are constructed as dichotomies. The duality of the cultural codes that he reconstructs and which can define both the diachrony and the synchrony of a culture is founded on the following criteria: how a culture models its relationship with extra-culture, what role a culture ascribes to texts and how a culture ascribes value to signs. To the extent a culture recognizes or denies semioticity, it draws a boundary line between itself and extra-culture, which it either defines as anticulture (thus having a negative semioticity) or as non-culture (having no semioticity whatsoever). Cultural mechanism, that is, the displacement of one cultural type by another, takes place according to the same principle. Thus, in Lotman's concept, cultural dynamism reveals itself as based on the desemiotization of areas that have been accorded semioticity in the preceding stage of a culture and in the semiotization of new areas. Yet in Lotman's concept, mnemonic processes are closely connected with cultural types according to their changing semioticity.[3]

The key element of cultural semiotics is a memory concept defined less by anthropology than by culturology. This emphasis allows us to grasp the following statement:

> We understand culture as the *nonhereditary memory of the community*, a memory expressing itself in a system of constraints and prescriptions. […] Furthermore, insofar as culture is *memory* or, in other words, a record in the memory

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3 LACHMANN, 1995, pp. 192-213.

of what the community has experienced, it is, of necessity, connected to past historical experience. Consequently, at the moment of its appearance, culture cannot be recorded as such, for it is only perceived ex post facto. [4]

Cultural semiotics describes more than just concepts such as storing cultural experience and cultural meaning and the indelibility of signs set by culture and kept available via its modes of reconstruction. The models essayed thus focus on the complex entanglement of a culture's attempts at self-description and its semiotic dynamics (whereby the metalanguage and modelling of cultural semiotics can themselves become the object of study). Cultural semiotics itself now advances compensating concepts to counter the idea – implicit in the assumption that meaning grows – that there is a certain indestructibility to the ever-increasing semantic potential of a culture that seems to reckon neither with the regulation provided by selection nor with the fact that meaning is suppressed and forgotten. The crucial factor is that which presupposes a mechanism of inclusion and exclusion of cultural meaning, which allows us to interpret forgetting as a pause for rest, in the sense of temporary inactivity in the system of meaning, and the shift between forgetting and remembering as an inherent movement of culture. In other words, cultural semiotics assumes a mechanism guaranteeing the stable functioning of cultural communication, a mechanism which, always legitimized and directed in different ways by a culture's model of self-description, serves to regulate the existing inventory of signs.

This mechanism is set in motion by specific techniques manifested as the de- and resemioticizing of cultural signs. Desemioticizing means that a sign vehicle loses its signifying quality, that is, both the semantic and the pragmatic function it fulfilled within the system and its institutions. If an element loses its signifying quality, this means it becomes culturally inactive, although not erased, since the "vacant" signs remain within the culture in a kind of reserve that acts like a negative store. In a later phase in its development, due to changes in its

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4 LOTMAN; USPENSKY, 1978, p. 213.

self-description model that make certain exclusions appear problematic, culture can reinclude and thus resemioticize the forgotten elements. In other words, the signs whose relegation to latency creates cultural forgetting are taken up by the semiotic process and can be reactualized in the existing culture.

On the one hand, this mechanism guarantees semiotic invariance, preserving the identity of a culture, by means of certain constant texts and constant codes, by means of a certain lawlike regularity in the transformation of cultural information. On the other hand, however, this same mechanism also allows for a generative apparatus that calls attention to new mechanisms of transformation. In this context of cultural semiotics, the rivalry between texts functioning as accumulators and texts functioning as generators appear as the very subject of cultural description.

What is essential in this respect is that Lotman defines the semiotic structure of culture as language: "Defining culture as a sign system subjected to structural rules allows us to view it as a language, in the general semiotic sense of the term. […] Yet culture includes not only a certain combination of semiotic systems [languages], but the sum of all historically existent messages (texts) in these languages".[5] Marek Tamm emphasizes this aspect, implicitly referring to other Lotmanian statements: "Thus, from a semiotic perspective, culture is a multilingual system in which, side by side with natural languages, there exist cultural languages or secondary modelling systems (secondary to natural language as a primary modelling system) based on the former".[6] Lotman stresses the mobility of culture as a semiotic system: "Culture can be presented as an aggregate of texts; however, from the point of view of the researcher, it is more exact to consider culture as a mechanism creating an aggregate of texts and texts as the realization of culture".[7] Texts in which culture is realized function, firstly, by "accumulating" cultural meaning and, sec-

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5 LOTMAN, 2000, pp. 396–397.

6 TAMM, 2015, p. 130.

7 LOTMAN; USPENSKY, 1978, p. 218.

ondly, by generating it. A decisive element for the dynamic conception postulated by cultural semiotics is that the accumulated meaning is not merely "stored" but "grows" in the cultural memory.

Using constant texts common to the collective, constant codes and a certain regularity in the transmission of cultural information, this mechanism guarantees cultural invariance while also offering generative potential revealing new mechanisms of transformation.[8] The cultural space is defined as a space belonging to a "common memory" in which certain common texts can be stored and updated. Culture seen from a semiotic perspective is conceived of as a collective intelligence and as collective memory interpreted as a supra-individual mechanism of preserving and transmitting information (texts) and of creating new ones.[9] This statement includes the assumption of a domain of common memory in which certain common texts can be stored and actualized according to a certain conceptual invariant (*smyslovogo invarianta*) that ensures, in the context of a new epoch, that the given text preserves its identity in spite of different variants of interpretation. This means that the common memory of a given culture can rely on the existence of some constant texts and on a unity of codes or their invariancy, or on the continuity and the legitimate character of their transformation. A second statement in this "mnemonic-declaration" refers to the inherent multifoldedness of culture, that is, its unity exists only on a certain level and includes the existence of particular "dialects of memory".[10]

The concept of dividing culture-language into dialects corresponds to the statement that the existence of cultural substructures leads to elliptic texts which circulate in "cultural subcollectives" (*subkollektivy*) and to "local semantics" (*lokal'nykh semantik*). Lotman admits that the tendency towards an individualization of memory represents the second pole of its dynamic structure. In other words: "memory is not

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8 LOTMAN, 2019, p. 136.

9 LOTMAN, 2019, p. 133.

10 LOTMAN, 2019, p. 133.

a passive storehouse for culture but a constitutive part of its text-generating mechanism".[11]

To ensure the meaning of elliptic texts (having left the context of a given subcollective), they have to be replenished with meaning. Lotman illustrates this statement by referring to Gavriil Derzhavin, a prominent eighteenth-century poet who wrote a commentary on his odes so that he could recapture their lost meaning for a contemporary generation and to highlight the importance of genre. In this context, Lotman quotes Mikhail Bakhtin's famous idea of "genre memory"[12] – an idea that shattered concepts of literary history – emphasizing the aspect of supra-individuality (collectives alter, the genre persists). The appearance of commentaries and glossaries and the filling of gaps in texts shows in Lotman's view that the latter are reread by a (new, younger) collective with another capacity of memory. The recollection of forgotten texts means that even their former rejection is not final, there can always be a "resurrection" on a later stage of cultural memory including essential changes in their semantic value. The history of icon painting, which earned its significance as an object of art only in post-Petrine Russian culture, serves as an example.

The formation of a new concept

The essence of culture is such that in it what is past does not "pass away", that is, does not disappear as events do in the natural flow of time. By fixing itself in the memory of the culture the past acquires a constant, but at the same time potential, existence. This cultural memory, however, is constructed not only as a storehouse of texts, but also as a kind of generative mechanism. A culture which is united with its past by memory generates not only its own future, but also its own past, and in this sense is a mechanism that counteracts natural time.[13]

11 LOTMAN, 2019, p. 137.

12 BAKHTIN, 1984, p. 10.

13 LOTMAN; USPENSKY, 1984, p. 28.

In order to designate this new approach to the mnemonic conditions of culture Lotman coined the term "cultural memory" (*kul'turnaia pamiat'*) (LOTMAN, 2019), which he specified with the functional differentiation of memory as informative and as creative, addressing the complex process of inclusion and exclusion of cultural meaning.[14] Lotman clearly distinguishes two types of cultural self-modelling: on the one hand, a culture that selectively conceptualizes its involvement with the past and the available store of knowledge, and, on the other hand, a mechanism that regulates processes of storage and erasure in the service of a stable cultural communication. In this respect, the distinction between informative memory – which functions in linear terms and has a temporal dimension – and creative memory, which is conceived as panchronic and spatially continuous, and in which the entire textual body of a culture is potentially active is of decisive importance. Creative memory resists time. If it can be said that every culture develops a specific mechanism for storing and forgetting, a mechanism that is itself subject to change, then creative memory is characterized by a negative storage of the forgotten, the repressed, and that which has lost its semiotic quality. This means that there is no erasure in cultural memory; what is forgotten can be culturally reactivated and can take on its own (or a different) semiotic value.

Lotman does not discuss Maurice Halbwachs's theory of "collective memory";[15] the frequent use of *kollektivnyi* (alternating with "common'), however, presupposes a certain affinity especially concerning the concept of surpra-individuality and the presumption of certain schemes in mnemonic processes. Yet, Halbwachs's focus is on the mnemonic behaviour of a given society (or social group), Lotman's focus is on the dynamism of culture as memory (see also Chapter 28).

In Halbwachs's theory, one is led to understand that what he calls "cadres sociaux" function as instruments which are to capture the past, these frames being the language (as the

14 LOTMAN, 2019, p. 134.

15 HALBWACHS, 1980.

most important instrument or rather factor, its loss, aphasia hinders recollection), time, space and experience. Collective memory is always, partial, not totalitarian; various groups of people have collective memories, which in turn give rise to different modes of behaviour; this idea of a fragmented memory resonates in Lotman's "subcollective". Whereas Lotman does not refer explicitly to Halbwachs's theory Jan Assmann does, in proposing two variants of memory, the communicative and the cultural, the latter being a quotation of Lotman's coinage.

> The concept of cultural memory comprises that body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose "cultivation" serves to stabilize and convey that society's self-image. Upon such collective knowledge for the most part (but not exclusively) of the past, each group bases its awareness of unity and particularity.[16]

This concept of "cultural memory" has a certain affinity to one of the two variants of cultural memory which Lotman distinguishes, namely the "creative", whereas the "informative" variant resonates in Assmann's "communicative memory".[17]

Aspects of the history of *memoria* as a concept and as a technique

If the function of memory is understood not just as an act of storing, but also as a structuring schema – one that both forms and represents a system – a connection to mnemotechnics in general is opened up. For in the latter, it is not simply

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16 ASSMANN, 1995, p. 132.

17 For a more detailed comparison of Assmann's and Lotman's approaches to memory, see TAMM, 2015, p. 128, 133.. A comparison between Lotman's culturological approach to memory with Alexander Luria's mnemonic concept shows a different striving for supra-individuality. Luria states that the progress of memory studies is "bound up with the development of a new branch of technology, bionics, which has forced us to take a closer look at every possible indication of how the human memory operates', claiming that "an analysis of an exceptional memory . . . should initiate this type of research" (Luria [1958] 1968: 6). Though he is interested in the interaction of memory and individual psychic "behaviour', he, too, intends to discover a mechanism, a definite structure, a model, that is, supra-individual rules independent of social and even cultural conditions.

a question of storage, but also of creating a figurative or schematic space:

> In rhetoric, memory craft is a stage in composing a work; presupposed is the axiom that recollection is an act of investigation and recreation in the service of conscious artifice. Its practitioners would not have been surprized to learn what was to them already obvious: that recollection is a kind of composition, and by its very nature is selective and formal.[18]

From a Lotmanian perspective one could argue, that a culture's semiotic mechanism consists in the alternation of its mnemonic paradigms, steering inclusion and exclusion, remembering and forgetting. "Forgetting', as the exclusion of elements that have become passive (temporary desemiotization), is a necessary component of the cultural communication process that ultimately counteracts cultural forgetting in the sense of erasure.

Of these alternating, competing and interacting paradigms which always participate in different ways in the mnemonic construction of culture, especially those that have produced their own techniques, disciplines and consistent concepts are to be emphasized and examined in terms of their systematic place within cultural models. Such paradigms include the mnemotechnical, the diagrammatic and the diegetic. The argument is that mnemonic paradigms themselves are part (i.e. subjects) of cultural memory (the overarching metalanguage). Lotman's own mnemonic paradigm is subject to description and simultaneously the meta-paradigm. In this respect the following statement is telling:

> Every culture defines its own paradigm for what should be remembered, that is, preserved, and what should be relegated to oblivion. The latter is erased from the cultural memory and apparently "ceases to exist'. But time changes along with systems of cultural codes and paradigms of remembering/ forgetting.[19]

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18 CARRUTHERS, 2008, p. 138.

19 LOTMAN, 2019, p. 135.

The three historically different paradigms to be discussed in the following have a different focus. They are either arts or scholarly techniques, they either rely on imagination or on concepts. The mnemotechnical paradigm has a legendary source. The story of its invention by the Greek poet Simonides Melicus, passed down by Cicero and Quintilian, conceals an ancient myth narrating the development of the art of memory, at the threshold between an ancient epoch of ancestor cults from a later time when the deceased were mourned but not worshipped.[20] The fundamental concepts of the art, place (locus) and image (imago) may be derived from the old cults. But the object of the disguised legend, mnemotechnics, has been handed down only in its postmythical form: as a prescription for acts of recollection and, on the other hand, as a tool for both the structuring and the presentation, open or encoded, of knowledge. Both aspects are central in Frances Yates's (1966) seminal history of the art of memory. No other art or scholarly method of antiquity has been legitimized through a detailed legend of its origin as that of the ars memoriae, and none is linked with an inventor whose name has been so emphatically inscribed in cultural memory as that of Simonides through the marble tablet of Paros.

Forgetting is the catastrophe; a given semiotic order is obliterated. It can only be restored by instituting a discipline that re-establishes semiotic "generation" and interpretation. The mnemotechnical paradigm means that pictures stored in marked positions in a structured room help to remember a shattered order. Here, special rules are used to refine the transposition of the object of memory into its pictorial representation and its sequential placement in space. These rules regulate the semantic relations between that which is to be remembered (the signified) and the image (the signifier), determine the modes of their designation and guide the selection of the memory space. When the person doing the remembering turns an imagined architectural or other structured room into a memory space, the internal memory (what

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20 GOLDBERG, 1989, pp. 43–66.

Plato described using the metaphor of the wax tablet) is externalized. The internal site of memory, the mind, the brain, is reproduced in an imagined external architecture (an early phrenological model?), as a space with passages, pillars and recesses.

The *diagrammatical paradigm* emerges with a new focus: the reproduction of knowledge, insight and finding truth. It is the transition from pictorial storage to systematics. Admittedly, deductive knowledge also requires "reproduction'. This is performed by the diagram, which avails itself not of iconic signs, but of symbolic ones: geometric figures, letters, numbers or certain figures performed by cultural semantics such as trees, wheels or ladders. Mnemonists work with schemas, insofar as they sketch diagrams to designate those themes that they wish to have at their disposal in the future. The diagrams are devices for use in a future where their own construction will already belong to the past. The formation of schemas, however, also refers to lost themes. In reference to the past, the formation of schemas entails the projection of a diagram, or, more precisely, the idea of a diagram, onto that which is absent – a diagram that bears as its first inscription the questions of the present. In the seventeenth century, the process of accumulating knowledge and of ordering it systematically reached its peak. The Baroque period is marked by the emergence of different modes governing the organization and transmission of knowledge. The programme underlying these modes originated with Raimundus Lullus. The German Jesuit Athanasius Kircher, scholar, linguist and founder of Egyptology, represents one model and Johannes Amos Comenius, philosopher in the Erasmian tradition, another. Kircher constructs a sophisticated edifice of erudition based on calculation and his ars combinatoria in order to reveal the inner structure of the world hidden in the accumulated data, Comenius formulates a lucid view of the nature of learning: things to be known and names to be remembered. Both strive for an exhaustive encyclopaedic summary of all knowledge to be remembered. Kircher's diagrams in his *Ars Magna Sciendi sive combinatoria* (1669) employ numeric and alphabetic devices

derived from the Lullistic tradition. Comenius's *Orbis sensua-lium pictus* (1658) invites adolescents to enter the visible, perceptible world with the aid of *pictura* and *nomenclatura* that comprise all fundamental things, actions and notions of the world to be remembered.

The concept of accumulated sums of knowledge owing to deductive calculation trusts in the countability of the things constituting the world, both visible and invisible. All schemata, from those of Raimundus Lullus to those of Giordano Bruno and Leibniz, lay universal claim to knowledge of the world.[21] The diagrammatic paradigm does not refer to temporal and social categories; it is transindividually oriented, relying on definite procedures of reconstruction, with knowledge being the only object of recollection. To reactivate certain elements of knowledge means to remember the rules of their storage. This means the assumption of a human faculty to deal with it. In this sense, Lotman's Lectures on Structural Poetics (1964) is a book that lectures on the laws governing the interrelationship between textual elements, the rule of narration, the interdependence of the literary series of signs and the extraliterary. Such an analysis conveys not only the knowledge of the text as a structured object but also the memory of such a knowledge.

A shift towards an anthropological treatment of memory can be seen in Giambattista Vico's treatise Scienza Nuova (1744), in which Vico defines p*hantasia*, *memoria* and *ingenium* as human faculties or capacities that are indivisible to each other.[22] Whereas fantasy transforms what memory offers, ingenium is the faculty that orders and registers what has been remembered. *Memoria* is what Vico calls "*un universale fantastico*', a coinage that combines the notion of a stable quantity of memorabilia with that of its imaginary quality. Marcel Danesi, comparing Vico's and Lotman's (the "two ground-breaking thinkers') sign systems, emphasizes the *fantasia* aspect, imagination being the driving force in the mnemonic modelling of the world, an interpretation of Lotman's semiotics in which

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21 ROSSI, 1983, p. 203.

22 TRABANT, 1993, pp. 406-424.

mind replaces the system (DANESI, 2000). The diegetic paradigm neither replaces nor competes with the two approaches mentioned earlier. In cultures that have developed neither a mnemotechnic nor a diagrammatic model, the diegetic paradigm features as the universal representation of memoria, which, however, functions as a semiotic matrix of all the guiding concepts of culture (its mythologemes and ideologemes). This matrix – which affects spheres of individual and social action, forms of social cohesion, organizations of life, practices of remembering and forgetting, or recalling – is a complex and controversial process of reconstruction that takes place in literal and oral genres: myth, epos, historiography and, of course, the historical novel. In societies without mnemotechnical concepts and without disciplines established for their cultivation, this paradigm represents the totality of memory reflecting the various ways in which collective life is organized. In the epic tradition, reproduction and repetition of oral texts (having recourse to certain schemes in metrics, *epitheta ornantia* and syntactic parallelisms) are such forms of memorizing. At the same time, they record events of the heroic past, which are constitutive of the way the epic community understands itself. The oral art of memorizing coexists with or is replaced by literal representation.

Literature appears to be the most prominent representative of the diegetic paradigm, the mnemonic art par excellence, not as a simple recording device but as a body of commemorative actions that include the knowledge stored by a culture, and virtually all texts a culture has produced and by which a culture is constituted. Writing is both an act of memory and a new interpretation, by which every new text is etched into memory space. Involvement with the extant texts of a culture, which every new text reflects (whether as convergence or divergence, assimilation or repulsion), stands in reciprocal relation to the conception of memory that this culture implies. The authors of texts draw on other texts, both ancient and recent, belonging to their own or another culture and refer to them in various ways. "Intertextuality" is the term introduced by Julia Kristeva (based on Bakhtin's "dialogicity of texts') to

capture this interchange and contact, formal and semantic, between texts both literary and non-literary. Lotman expands this concept with the concept of "transposition" (*transpozitsiia*) by including other non-linguistic sign systems in the dialogue of texts.[23] In her later works, Kristeva replaced the term *intertextualité*, which itself, incidentally, considers the transition of one sign system into another with transposition.[24]

Intertextuality as the memory of the text demonstrates the process by which a culture continually rewrites and retranscribes itself. Every concrete text, as a sketched-out memory space, connotes the macrospace of memory that either represents a culture or appears as that culture. Furthermore, literature recovers and revives knowledge in reincorporating some of its formerly rejected unofficial or arcane traditions. (The particular mode of writing which deals with such knowledge is fantastic literature, especially in Romanticism. This mode of writing supported and nourished suppressed traditions of knowledge which ran as an undercurrent below the mainstream of the Enlightenment.) Authors of literary texts like to explicate their own memory concepts. The manifestos of avant-gardist movements (e.g. Italian and Russian futurism) proclaim the death of the established artistic—literary tradition in order to begin anew in its ruins. The corresponding literary theory, formulated by Russian formalism, sees literary (cultural) evolution as an alternation of systems, advocating discontinuity and disrupture as the moving force. Lotman describes changes in the annihilation of cultural heritage (referring to the futuristic formula "thrown from the steamship of modernity" on the one hand and its veneration "placed upon a pedestal" on the other hand) as having a sinus like character. Which is especially true of the Acmeists, who acquired a certain version of Henri Bergson's notions of *mémoire, durée irréversible and évolution créatrice*.[25] Instead of defending the idea of a tabula rasa, the Acmeists "yearn for the world

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23 LOTMAN, 1969, pp. 206–238.

24 KRISTEVA, 1978, p. 69.

25 LACHMANN, 1997, pp. 231–261.

culture" (Mandelshtam) as an imperishable thesaurus that they want to incorporate and to repeat, that is, to memorize, transforming it into a text.

In his readings of Nikolay Karamzin and Alexander Pushkin, Lotman not only applies diagrammatically his method of structural analysis, integrating a new interpretation of Eugene Onegin, but also follows the diegetic paradigm in those parts dedicated to biography.[26] This paradigm definitely dominates his work on the cultural history of Russian nobility.[27] Here a definite sociological view accompanies his vivisection of certain parts of Russian society of the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. One reads this history, which he calls *Conversations about Russian Culture*, as the "concretization" of his semiotic models – they are packed with social facts. His description of the Petrine reforms, especially of rank, as well as his narration of the habits of the nobility (balls, duels) are devoid of abstract terminology and deploy a definite literary quality. In this late work, Lotman relies on literature in addition to historical information. Literary texts (epic, dramatic, lyrical) serve as the memory place. Without explicitly referring to their artistic nature text fragments from prominent authors are quoted as witnesses of events and social conditions. One could say that in this comprehensive work Lotman applies his semiotically construed memory theory to perusing the vast complex of the Russian cultural cosmos, which was his perennial target.

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26 LOTMAN, 1995; 1997.

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