URBAN SEMIOTICS

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URBAN SEMIOTICS

THE CITY AS
A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL
PHENOMENON

Edited by Igor Pilshchikov

CONTENTS

PREFACE TO THE VOLUME

This collection of essays continues the series of publications associated with the Juri Lotman Days, an annual event organized since 2009 by the Estonian Semiotic Repository at Tallinn University. The first such convention was devoted to cultural and linguistic borderlines, marginal and transitional phenomena, and the challenges associated with comprehension, dialogue, and translation. The participants developed Lotman's views on polyglotism and the theory of the semiosphere, and discussed the challenges of multicultural dialogues from the perspective of his ideas.[1] The second conference focused on such terminological oppositions as "necessity *vs.* chance," "predictable *vs.* unpredictable," "regular *vs.* irregular," "deterministic *vs.* stochastic," "nomothetic *vs.* idiographic," and the application of these concepts to the history of languages, cultures and societies from the perspective suggested by Lotman in his late theoretical works.[2] Among these works, *The Unpredictable Workings of Culture* should be mentioned first. Previously published in Italian and Russian, the work has recently appeared for the first time in English translation.[3]

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[1] Igor Pilshchikov (ed.), *Pogranichnye fenomeny kul'tury: Perevod. Dialog. Semiosfera: Materialy Pervykh Lotmanovskikh dnei v Tallinnskom universitete (4–7 iiunia 2009 g.)* [The borderline phenomena in culture: Translation. Dialogue. Semiosphere: The materials of the First Annual Lotman Days at Tallinn University (4–7 June 2009)], Tallinn: TLU Press, 2011. In transliterating Russian and Ukrainian names and words from the Cyrillic alphabet, we use a modified Library of Congress transliteration in the body of the text, while adhering strictly to the ALA-LC Romanization without diacritics in bibliographic records. The rare exception to this rule is when the author's preferred form of name is known.

[2] Igor Pilshchikov (ed.), *Sluchainost' i nepredskazuemost' v istorii kul'tury: Materialy Vtorykh Lotmanovskikh dnei v Tallinnskom universitete (4–6 iiunia 2010 g.)* [Chance and indeterminism in cultural history: The materials of the Second Annual Lotman Days at Tallinn University (4–6 June 2010)], Tallinn: TLU Press, 2013.

[3] Juri M. Lotman, *The Unpredictable Workings of Culture*, preface by Vyacheslav V. Ivanov, afterword by Mihhail Lotman, translated from the Russian by Brian James Baer, edited by Igor Pilshchikov and Silvi Salupere, Tallinn: TLU Press, 2013.

The book's general thematics link it to Lotman's two final monographs, *Universe of the Mind* and *Culture and Explosion*, which are already well-known to Anglophone readers.[4] All three books are dedicated to questions that occupied Lotman during the last years of his life: first, the need for a common approach to natural, social, and spiritual phenomena; second, the problem of evolutionary and explosive processes in the history of culture; and, third, the question (closely linked to the previous two) of art as a workshop of unpredictability.

The principal event of the Third Annual Juri Lotman Days (3–5 June 2011) was the international conference, *Urban Semiotics: The City as a Cultural-Historical Phenomenon*. The papers delivered there formed two separate volumes. The Russian-language contributions were published by TLU Press in 2014,[5] and the present volume consists of the articles written in English. The Lotman Days hosted other events, as well, including Professor Bogusław Żyłko's (University of Gdańsk) presentation of his new book, *Culture and Signs: Applied Semiotics in the Tartu-Moscow School*, one of whose sections is devoted to urban semiotics.[6] The participants also attended a poetry reading and talk by the poet and scholar, Professor Tomas Venclova of Yale University, who was introduced

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[4]   Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*, translated by Ann Shukman, introduction by Umberto Eco, London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co., 1990; Juri Lotman, *Culture and Explosion*, translated by Wilma Clark, edited by Marina Grishakova, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009 (= Semiotics, communication and cognition, 1).

[5]   See Igor Pilshchikov (ed.), *Semiotika goroda: Materialy Tret'ikh Lotmanovskikh dnei v Tallinnskom universitete (3–5 iiunia 2011 g.)* [Urban Semiotics: The materials of the Third Annual Juri Lotman Days at Tallinn University (3–5 June 2011)], Tallinn: TLU Press, 2014.

[6]   Bogusław Żyłko, *Kultura i znaki: Semiotyka stosowana w szkole tartusko-moskiewskiej*, Gdańsk: Gdańsk University Press, 2011. This is the second part of his two-volume study, the initial part of which was presented at the Lotman Days in Tallinn the year before (see: Idem, *Semiotyka kultury: Szkoła tartusko-moskiewska* [Semiotics of culture: The Tartu-Moscow School], Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz terytoria, 2010).

by Professor Mihhail Lotman (Tallinn University).[7] The conference's keynote speakers were Tomas Venclova and Mark Gottdiener (University at Buffalo—SUNY), who discussed the semiotics of urban space from the perspective of the Tartu-Moscow School in comparison with contemporary approaches.

The Tartu and Moscow semioticians developed no less than three main strategies to explore the city: a structural-historiosophical approach, a cultural-semiotic approach, and a cultural-historical approach. All the three are close to each other in terms of analytical methods, but their aims and goals are rather different. The first trend finds its fullest expression in the works of Vladimir Toporov; the second trend is represented by the studies of Vyacheslav V. Ivanov and other theoreticians of the Moscow semiotic circle; and the third trend manifests itself in the research papers of Zara Mints and the younger generation of scholars affiliated or associated with the University of Tartu. Juri Lotman and Boris Uspensky, at different times, favoured the second and third strategies. Below we describe the basic characteristics of these three approaches.

1. *The structural-historiosophical approach* was focused on the mythological (and, at a deeper level, ontological) substratum of the object under consideration, which was conceived of as a hierarchical sign system, comparable to Saussure's *langue*. Toporov both analysed the text of the city (first and foremost, "the Petersburg Text") and, at the same time, elaborated on it in his own works. It reminds one of the process of inside observation, but unlike a typical insider, Toporov was not simply one of the members of the community that generates a "local myth"—he also performed the part of the ideologue who arranges all the concepts of the given place in a structured system. For him, the Petersburg Text

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[7]   Other Tallinn conferences featured such prominent poets and prose writers as Vladimir Makanin (2009), Natalia Gorbanevskaya (2010), Olga Sedakova (2013), and Lev Rubinshtein (2015).

was not the same as Petersburg in literature. Indeed, 'Petersburg in literature' is something that is contained in literature, whereas the Petersburg Text as such is not, in fact, contained there: it is contained in our thought thanks to Toporov—as his personal "noospheric contribution to Russian and world culture" (in conformity with his own definition of the Petersburg Text).[8]

In the writings of Toporov, the urban text, despite its specific temporal situatedness, becomes, at a deeper layer of analysis, ahistorical, similar to a myth.[9] The scholar thoroughly investigates the distinctive features and functions of the Petersburg Text, but hardly touches upon its genesis and historical-cultural determination. The evolution of the Petersburg Text is described as if from "inside" itself, the priority is given to its complete inner meaning. Being a scholar, Toporov was simultaneously a thinker; being a semiotician, he was also a historiosopher. When combining the structural-semiotic and historiosophical approaches, he conformed the scientific objectivity of the former to the teleological intentionality of the latter. This is the reason, for which Toporov's studies of the mythopoetic space of St. Petersburg are not only and even not so much an empirical research, as a metalanguage and metatext of the Petersburg Text and the Petersburg Myth considered as cultural systems.

It should be pointed out that Toporov was the discoverer of "the Petersburg Text of Russian literature / culture," and not "the myth of Petersburg in Russian literature," which had been studied before him.[10] The scholar considered the Petersburg Text a unique

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[8]   S. G. Bocharov, 'Peterburgskii tekst Vladimira Nikolaevicha Toporova' [The Petersburg Text of Vladimir Nikolaevich Toporov], in: V. N. Toporov, *Peterburgskii tekst*, Moscow: Nauka, 2009, p. 18. Translations are ours unless otherwise stated.

[9]   See Ilya Kalinin, '"Peterburgskii tekst" moskovskoi filologii' [The Petersburg Text of Moscow philology], *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, 2010, no. 70, pp. 319–326.

[10]   See, e. g.: Ettore Lo Gatto, *Il mito di Pietroburgo: Storia, leggenda, poesia*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1960; Johannes Holthusen, 'Petersburg als literarischer Mythos,' in: Johannes Holthusen, *Rußland in Vers und Prosa: Vorträge zur russischen Literatur des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, München: Otto Sagner, 1973, S. 9–34 (= Slavistische Beiträge, Bd. 69).

phenomenon having no analogues in the semiotic history of other cities. Thus, in the descriptions of Moscow he did not reveal the same kind of semantic coherence that would allow him to speak of the "Moscow Text" of Russian culture similar to the Petersburg Text, and he regarded the recurrent comparisons of St. Petersburg and Moscow as a "Moscow" layer of the Petersburg Text.[11] Only in 1992 did Toporov develop an independent "Moscow (Meta)text" around the prose works of Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky, which were then being published for the first time.[12] In his study of the semiotics of Vilnius, Toporov spoke of the myth of the city, rather than the text of the city.[13] Nevertheless, the followers of Toporov adopted his methodology to the description of Moscow, Kiev, Tallinn, Vilnius, London, Rome and other localities, towns, cities, and even entire regions, such as Crimea or Siberia (the "Crimean Text" has recently—and rather unexpectedly—been actualized both politically and ideologically).[14] On the other hand, the existence of the Petersburg Text itself was called into doubt.[15] Some way or another, despite the contradictions between the initial intellectual impetus and further developments, this research paradigm proved productive in the post-Soviet humanities.

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[11]   V. N. Toporov, 'Peterburg i peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury: (Vvedenie v temu)' [Petersburg and the Petersburg Text of Russian literature (An introduction)], *Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 1984, vyp. 664, p. 16 (= Trudy po znakovym sistemam, XVIII: Semiotika goroda i gorodskoi kul'tury. Peterburg); cf.: Bocharov, Op. cit., p. 13.

[12]   V. N. Toporov, '"Minus"-prostranstvo Sigizmunda Krzhizhanovskogo' [Sigizmund Krzhizhanovsky's "Minus"-Space, 1992], in his *Mif. Ritual. Simvol. Obraz (Issledovaniia v oblasti mifopoeticheskogo)*, Moscow: Progress; Kul'tura, 1995, pp. 476–574.

[13]   V. N. Toporov, '*Vilnius, Wilno, Vil'na*: gorod i mif' [*Vilnius, Wilno, Vilna*: the city and the myth], *Balto-slavianskie etnoiazykovye kontakty*, edited by T. M. Sudnik, Moscow: Nauka, 1980, pp. 3–71.

[14]   This topic boasts an extensive bibliography in Russian. See also: *Moscow and Petersburg: The City in Russian Culture*, edited by Ian K. Lilly, Nottingham: Astra Press, 2002; Olga Sazontchik, *Zur Problematik des Moskauer Textes der russischen Literatur*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007 (= Slavische Literaturen:Texte und Abhandlungen, 39).

[15]   See, e. g.: *Sushchestvuet li peterburgskii tekst?* [Does the Petersburg Text really exist?], edited by V. M. Markovich and Wolf Schmid, St. Petersburg: St. Petersburg University Press, 2005 (= Peterburgskii sbornik, 4).

2. *The cultural-semiotic approach* is in many ways similar to the structural-historiosophical view, but the model that it proposes has no inner hierarchy. This concept was clearly formulated by Vyacheslav V. Ivanov:

> In the structure of the big city, from the beginning of its historical existence, one can reveal a manifestation of the same semiotic patterns that can be observed in the structure of the proto-urban settlements.[16] The city is considered as a model of universal space. Accordingly, its organization reflects the structure of the world in general.[17]

In Ivanov's view, the city is a semiotically charged space, in which various sign systems function and interact, but it is not regarded as a text among other texts. The city could be called a variation of Lotman's "semiosphere" (although Ivanov does not use this term), a kind of "system of systems,"[18] within the borders of which semiosis takes place. This includes the idea of the city as a model of the universe, as well as metaphorical identifications of a city and a woman, a city and a monarch, etc. These are equal models generated by particular types of culture, and they can be studied with semiotic tools. The observer takes an outside position, and this is yet another difference between the cultural-semiotic and the structural-historiosophical strategies.

3. *The cultural-historical approach* is closer to traditional historical-literary studies. It should come as no surprise, then, that in

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[16]   That is, primitive settlements.

[17]   Viach. Vs. Ivanov, 'K semioticheskomu izucheniiu kul'turnoi istorii bol'shogo goroda' [On the semiotic research of the cultural history of the big city], *Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 1986, vyp. 720, p. 9 (= Trudy po znakovym sistemam, XIX: Semiotika prostranstva i prostranstvo semiotiki).

[18]   As Yuri Tynianov and Roman Jakobson would call it (cf.: Iu. Tynianov, R. Iakobson, 'Problemy izucheniia literatury i iazyka' [Problems in the study of literature and language], *Novyi Lef*, 1928, no. 12, p. 37). See also: Victor Erlich, *Russian Formalism: History—Doctrine*, Second revised edition, The Hague: Mouton, 1965, pp. 134–135 (= Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, IV).

the Tartu publications on spatial and urban semiotics the structuralist and semiotic papers of Zara Mints, Maria Pliukhanova, Roman Timenchik, Yuri Tsivian and others are presented along with the more traditional academic essays of such historians and literary critics of the older generation as Georgy Vilinbakhov or Dmitry Likhachev. This research paradigm of urban semiotics predominantly focused on chronologically distant objects, rather than contemporary cultural milieu.[19]

Thus, the Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics developed three basic strategies for the semiotic analysis of urban history, the urban myth and the urban text. However, in practice these lines of demarcation blurred, because the peculiarity of each of these strategies was not sufficiently considered until the end of the 1980s, and, as a consequence, many representatives of the School casually switched from one strategy to the other.

Juri Lotman attempted to synthesize the cultural-semiotic and the cultural-historical strategies, oppose them to the structural-historiosophical approach, and include both in his theory of the semiosphere:

> Personally, I can not draw a sharp line where a historical description ends for me, and semiotics begins. There is neither opposition nor gap. For me, these areas are organically linked. It is important to keep this in mind because the semiotic movement began from the denial of historical studies. Abandoning the historical study was necessary in order to *return* to it later.[20]

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[19] Cf.: Sanna Turoma, 'Semiotika gorodskogo prostranstva Iu. M. Lotmana: opyt pereosmysleniia' [Reconsidering Juri Lotman's semiotics of urban space], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 2009, no. 98, pp. 66–76. See also her 'Lotman's Petersburg, Simmel's Venice, and the "Eccentric City" Observed,' in: Ben Hellman, Tomi Huttunen, Gennady Obatnin (eds.), *Varietas et concordia: Essays in Honour of Professor Pekka Pesonen On the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, Helsinki: Helsinki University, 2007, pp. 210–219 (= Slavica Helsingiensia, 31).

[20] Iu. M. Lotman, 'Zimnie zametki o letnikh shkolakh' [Winter notes on summer schools], *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 1993, no. 3, p. 41.

Lotman was not alien to the historical strategy. An eloquent example is the article on the semiotics of Petrine St. Petersburg co-authored by Lotman and Uspensky.[21] However, the situation started to change in the 1980s, when Lotman elaborated on the concept of the semiosphere.

In the editor's preface to the eighteenth volume of *Sign Systems Studies*, Lotman echoes Toporov in his description of St. Petersburg as a city-text, the uniqueness of which lies in the fact that its code (that is, its symbolic life) preceded the text itself (that is, its material existence).[22] However, Lotman's ideas on the symbolism of Petersburg and problems of urban semiotics—which were published in the same issue of the periodical[23]—differ significantly from Toporov's. Lotman interprets the city as a spatial implementation of the semiosphere, the development of which is determined by historical conditions. The city emerges under the influence of various factors (social, geopolitical, cultural, etc.), then grows, expands and begins to determine the further evolution of the respective fields of human culture. Such a view is more compatible with the cultural-semiotic strategy than with the cultural-historical approach: the city is not incorporated, as a higher integral level, in the whole of the hierarchical system of being, but rather forms a territorial space for semiosis and becomes a sort of movable external boundary of the urban semiosphere.

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[21]   Ju. M. Lotman, B. A. Uspenskij, 'Echoes of the Notion "Moscow as the Third Rome" in Peter the Great's Ideology,' translated by N. F. C. Owen, in their *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, edited by Ann Shukman, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan. Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, 1984, pp. 53–67 (= Michigan Slavic Contributions, 11). First published in Russian in 1982.

[22]   Iu. M. Lotman, 'Ot redaktsii' [Editor's preface], *Uchenye zapiski Tartuskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta*, 1984, vyp. 664, p. 3 (= Trudy po znakovym sistemam, XVIII: Semiotika goroda i gorodskoi kul'tury. Peterburg).

[23]   Iu. M. Lotman, 'Simvolika Peterburga i problemy semiotiki goroda' [The symbolism of Petersburg and problems of urban semiotics], *Ibid.*, pp. 30–45. Translated by Ann Shukman as 'The Symbolism of St Petersburg,' in: Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, pp. 191–202.

Lotman also analysed two other spatial incarnations of the semiosphere: the World (as exemplified by *The Divine Comedy*) and Home (as exemplified by Mikhail Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*). This research was summarized in his book trilogy: *Universe of the Mind—The Unpredictable Workings of Culture—Culture and Explosion*, which included, among other parts, some of the case studies published earlier.[24]

Lotman's paradigm for the semiotics of place is critically reconsidered in *Mark Gottdiener*'s paper, which opens the present volume. Gottdiener believes classical structuralism to be too static and schematic to produce cultural theory, and agrees with Umberto Eco that Lotman was in no way bound by this approach.[25] Lotman's critique of static and mechanistic models of early Formalism and his emphasis on dynamism and functionalism are indeed characteristic of his work from the 1960s to the 1980s and 1990s. First and foremost, Lotman was interested in cultural changes—hence his fascination with history, so unusual for a structuralist. Gottdiener compares Lotman's attitude towards culture and history with the French post-structuralist and neo-Marxist views represented by Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Jean Baudrillard and Henri Lefebvre, and criticizes Lotman for what he thinks to be the unsurmountable limitations of structuralism: namely, its underestimation of socially charged meanings of cultural signs and the underlying play of power and control. Lotman's strategy, according to Gottdiener, should be complemented with techniques such as the study of the commodification of place.

The strategies described above are implemented in various ways by the contributors to this book, which consists of four sections. The

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[24]   See: 'The Journey of Ulysses in Dante's *Divine Comedy*,' in: Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, pp. 177–185; 'The 'Home' in Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita*,' *Ibid.*, pp. 185–191; 'A Model of a Bilingual Structure,' in: Lotman, *The Unpredictable Workings of Culture*, pp. 132–153.

[25]   Umberto Eco, 'Introduction,' in: Lotman, *Universe of the Mind*, p. ix.

articles in the first section discuss how "urban texts" function in modern and contemporary Baltic cultures. The papers in the second section focus on the semiotics of place in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Russian culture and Soviet culture from the perspective of linguistic poetics, cultural semiotics, and new materiality. The last two sections are devoted to the visual perceptions of the cityscape and their ideological and poetological interpretations as exemplified by Ukrainian, Estonian, Korean, Chinese, and North American illustrations.

The opening paper of the first section is devoted to the contrastive poetics of two Baltic capitals, Vilnius and Tallinn. *Tomas Venclova* maintains that the principal difference between the "text of Vilnius" and the "text of Tallinn"—as exemplified by various literary works in Lithuanian, Polish, Belorussian, Estonian, and Russian languages—lies in the antithesis of the cyclical and the linear, of the reiterative and the singular. The text of Vilnius is oriented towards a mythic model of the world, where the timeless, the nomothetic, and the reiterant is stressed, in contraposition to the text of Tallinn, where an excess, a casus, and an anecdote are emphasized. The antithesis between the mythic paradigm, on the one hand, and the historical and literary dimension is embodied in the motif of death: unlike the ritually dying and resurrecting Vilnius, Tallinn is a city constantly in motion, a city never finalized or completed.

Epp Annus analyses the experience of the Tallinn townscape in a classic of modern Estonian literature, Mati Unt's novel, *The Autumn Ball* (1977). It describes a particular area of Tallinn—Mustamäe, a new district built in the 1960s and early 1970s. Annus considers Unt's text against the background of Michel de Certeau's "pedestrian rhetoric" (*Walking in the City*) and Gaston Bachelard's "poetics of space." Of these two philosophers, the latter must be listed among the direct inspirations for *The Autumn Ball*: one of the novel's key symbols, lights in the windows, goes back to Bachelard. In Estonian culture, *The Autumn Ball* is not simply a novel about Mustamäe, but the text that created a particular image of the place in Estonian

cultural consciousness. Mustamäe has become a fictional space, the reality of which never coincides with its image, and the image of which has no source in reality: a copy without an original. A project of Soviet modernity has thus turned into a postmodern simulacrum.

Mikhail Trunin discusses another classic of Estonian literature, Jaan Kross's poem "On Mayakovsky and Those Others," which was included in his first poetic book, entitled *The Coal Cleaner* (1958). It is analysed first in the Estonian context and then in the context of the all-Soviet (that is, *ex definitio*, Russian) literary and political situation. After sharp criticism from the president of the Estonian Writers' Union, Juhan Smuul—who, as the author reveals, aimed to help the literary debutant, rather than tear him down—the poem was translated into Russian and turned out to be the most representative Russian-language text of Jaan Kross at that time. The reason for this success is the fortunate coincidence of Kross's image of Mayakovsky with the spirit of the post-Stalin Thaw: on the one hand, the "poet of the Revolution" is referred to as a symbol of modernity, urbanism and industrial power, while, on the other hand, he becomes linked to the important Soviet polemics of the mid-1950s, "on sincerity in literature."

Irina Novikova's paper is devoted to the images of Vilnius, Riga, Tallinn, and Kaliningrad / Königsberg / Karaliaučius in Soviet popular cinema of different genres. Although the Baltic societies were on the political periphery in the USSR, the filmic topographies of "foreignized" Baltic townscapes made them a symbolic geographical embodiment of 'Europeanness,' thus undermining the results of cultural and political Sovietization. The mapping of the region as a Western-type habitable space eventually influenced the Soviet perception of this region and turned its cities into Foucauldian 'heterotopia,' spaces of otherness. This effect was combined with a heterochronic effect in the proliferating genres of adventure and musical films at the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian national studios.

The section devoted to Russian culture begins with a commentary on Evgeny Baratynsky's elegy, "Rome" (1821). *Igor Pilshchikov*

examines the Russian and European intertext to which this poem belongs. As with many other works of Baratynsky, "Rome" is intimately linked to the French poetic tradition. Its topic and phraseology are close to Baratynsky's juvenile descriptive poem, "Recollections" (1819), in which he combined passages translated from Gabriel Legouvé and Jacques Delille. Baratynsky's "Rome" contains numerous French literary clichés, which he rhymes and/or semantically correlates with Church Slavonicisms. In Russian poetry these phrases remained *hapax legomena* and thus contributed to Baratynsky's reputation as the most original poet of the "Pushkin Pleiad." This mode of cultural appropriation, making the unique out of the stereotypical, turning the universal or the foreign into the local and the familiar, is characteristic of Baratynsky's poetics. On the other hand, we envisage the process of universalization of the individual text, its infusion into the cultural (hyper)text—in the present case, "the text of Rome." From this point of view, the "text of the city" transcends all generic, linguistic, and national cultural limitations: multilingual texts on a similar topic function as variants or fragments of a single hypertext.

From the Golden Age—the "aristocratic" period of Russian culture—the book goes on to the democratic "culture of poverty" of the second half of the nineteenth century. The Great Reforms of the 1860s brought the masses of impoverished peasants to the city. *Marica Fasolini* investigates how this "intrusion" transformed the cityscape and how literature and journalism reacted to this transformation. The writers described the slum dwellers with an ethnographic interest, and the paupers behaved respectively: they were often pleased by such an inquisitive attention. The author describes the literary images of such notorious places as Khitrov marketplace in Moscow and the landfill *Goriachee pole* in St. Petersburg.

Ornella Discacciati's paper is devoted to the highly debatable question of the "Moscow Text." The author acknowledges the fragmentariness of the image of Russia's ancient capital, but maintains that the text of Moscow has nevertheless stood the test of time. The

main topic is the description of Moscow in Russian literature of the late 1920s and the early 1930, first and foremost, in the work of Mikhail Bulgakov and Andrei Platonov. In post-revolutionary Russia, such traditional features of Moscow as communality and collectivism[26] persist and even become grossly exaggerated in the cultural consciousness: the difference between the general and the particular, the communal and the private almost disappeared. The new Moscow turned into a mythic space—a hypertrophied house with dark corridors of the streets without names, which resemble a maze of slums and lead to emptiness or nothingness. In the 1930s this imagery remains perceptible against the background of the developing Stalinist ideology of the "flourishing and happy capital of the Soviet Union."

Nikolay Poselyagin discusses the ideologization of materiality in the post-Stalinist village. While Soviet urban architecture has been widely studied, the peasant houses under the Soviet regime remain a blind spot on the map of the Soviet lifeworld. The author argues that, during the 1960–1980s, Soviet peasants were attracted by the new urban-like way of life and new urban-like architectural forms. As a result, the material environment of the village dwellers transformed into a suburban-type environment, and the traditional peasant mentality transformed into a kind of lower middle class ideology. The "Soviet petty bourgeoisie," however, was characterized by total estrangement from the means of production and inability to acquire property in land. The Communist Party initially supported this semi-urbanization of the countryside and the development of urban-type settlements (*posёlki gorodskogo tipa*) until the abrupt return to "Russian traditional values" in the early 1980s. The author demonstrates that this "restoration" of the peasants' style of life was only superficial and analyses the new "materialities" that filled the traditional Russian rural house (*izba*) in the late Soviet period.

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[26] See Ian K. Lilly, 'Conviviality in the Pre-revolutionary "Moscow Text" of Russian Culture,' *Russian Review*, 2004, vol. 63, no. 3, p. 427–448.

The third section of the book begins with *Andrii Portnov* and *Tetiana Portnova*'s analysis of the competing foundation myths of Ekaterinoslav / Dnipropetrovsk. The city celebrated its centenary in 1887 and bicentenary in 1976. Inconsistency between the jubilees is not a misprint. The historians suggest five different starting points (dates and places) for the development of this Ukrainian city. The authors classify them into two schemes, which they define as the "Imperial" plot and the "Cossack" plot, and describe their evolution. They demonstrate that in Soviet times the "imperial" genealogy was combined with the rhetoric of "the proletarian city" and its "revolutionary pride," whereas in the post-Soviet period a Cossack-bound pre-history of the city transformed from an innocuous element of *couleur locale* into the main rival of the "imperial" narrative.

Sungdo Kim introduces the urban semiotics of Seoul. Unlike other studies of the Korean capital, which focus on its political history and geography, the paper aims to investigate the ideological foundations of the urban establishment of this metropolis from the semiotic point of view as well as the diachronic representation of the cultural changes in its urban space. Seoul's way to modernity is in many respects unique: its historical identity and significance have been effectively effaced and thus have lapsed into obscurity. The author attempts to find a humanistic perspective and explore how to make the city a more 'human place,' so that it could move from historical amnesia to a city of memory.

Helena Pires adopts Jia Zhangke's film *Still Life* (2006) as a case study in order to explicate and discuss the way the interrelationship between an individual and the place that s/he navigates is mutually defining and constitutive. Drawing upon the theories of Walter Benjamin and Juri Lotman, the paper follows the main character of the film, Han Saming, as he searches for his lost wife in the ruins of Fengjie, a small town on the Yangtze. The town is slowly being demolished to make space for the building of the Three Gorges Dam. The melancholy cityscape that we see through Han's perspective is