

Lotman and the Baroque

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Summary. The title of this article refers to Gilles Deleuze's work titled *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* and supposes a link, which could be established between the Baroque as a type of art, imagery, and a philosophical concept, as it was described by Deleuze, on the one hand, and the culture, its inner structure, and mechanisms (workings), as they were defined by Juri Lotman in his conception of the semiosphere, on the other. The article shows that the main concepts introduced by Leibniz and Deleuze find their counterparts in the semiotic space described by Lotman. Starting with the concept of a monad that both thinkers are concerned with, following conceptual pairs could be identified in their systems: a border – a fold, meaning-making – folding, semiosphere – total art, Deleuzian principle of cone – the hierarchy of monads in the semiosphere of Lotman. In the article, when placed side by side, both systems reveal their proximity as well as new aspects. The analysis leads to a conclusion that Lotman, who started his career as a strict structuralist, in the end, became a post-structural thinker revealing in his works the folded (Baroque) boundary between these two intellectual trends.

Key words: Lotman, Deleuze, monad, meaning-making mechanisms, border, fold, semiosphere, total art.

The idea to research this topic came while reading Juri Lotman's article "Culture as a Subject and Its Own Object" (Lotman 2019 [1989]) in which he searched for a new basis for clarifying his understanding of the workings of culture, and suggested recalling the philosophy of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz and, specifically, his

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concept of a monad. The scholar started by expressing his dissatisfaction with the way some theoretical categories – the distinction between subject and object, as well as the idea of evolution – were reflected in their application to literary and cultural history (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 83). Later in the article, he showed that these main foundations of Western philosophy were not compatible with the dynamic model of culture in which meaning-making presupposes transitions and shifting in subject / object relation, and preserving of the old text despite the emergence of the new ones cannot be explained in terms of evolution. It should be emphasized that it was Leibniz's monad that Lotman considered to be the concept capable of overcoming the culture-distorting effect of the concept of evolution and the division of subject / object, and on which he based the entire construction of his semiosphere. The significance of the Leibnizian monad for the Lotman's understanding of the oneness of the world and the need for its interdisciplinary research have already been discussed (Gherlone 2013). I want to point out, however, the relation of this Leibnizian concept in Lotman's work to the Baroque, since after the publication of the book *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* by Gilles Deleuze (Deleuze 1993, originally published in French as *Le Plis: Leibniz et le Baroque* in 1988), the concept of a monad is associated with the Baroque and its aesthetics as well.

I am going to show that the way Lotman thought about and described the monadic structure of the semiosphere – a semiotic space where meaning-making processes take place – echoes with the concept and the image of the “total art” proposed in *The Fold* by Deleuze and could be developed on its basis. Both authors approached the philosophy of Leibniz almost at the same time and this makes one think about a certain proximity in their relation to the time they lived. I do not presume any real connection between the two scholars (I doubt that Lotman had read Deleuze or that Deleuze was familiar with Lotman's semiotics of culture). In their work, however, a monad – described as a spatial figure – initiated the further spatial images – semiosphere as “an enormous organism

made up of organisms” in Lotman’s case and the baroque “theatre of arts” delineated in Deleuzian work. The title of my paper refers to Deleuze’s work *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* where he examined the link between the Baroque art and the philosophy of Leibniz. Drawing on Deleuze and dealing with figures and metaphors chosen by Lotman to clarify the work of mind and imagination, the article aims to reveal the baroqueness in the way Lotman was thinking about culture in his later works.

It makes sense, however, to start the research of the intersection between Lotman’s work and the Baroque from discussing his understanding of this cultural epoch and its art. As far as I know, there is only one short article in Lotman’s scientific heritage that is dedicated exclusively to the Baroque, more specifically, to the merging of the culture of marketplace and the Baroque art, “Remarks on the Problem of the Baroque in Russian Literature” (Lotman 1968). In the article “The Problem of Signs and Sign Systems, and the Typology of Russian Culture in the 11th-19th Centuries” (Lotman 2000 [1970]), Lotman saw in the Baroque the epoch with *syntactic cultural code* (in contrast to the early Middle Ages which he considered as an epoch with the semantic or symbolic cultural code). The Baroque, according to Lotman, was the culture which produced texts with a musical-architectural structure, prevailed concept of progress, and acknowledged the importance of the opposition of the old and the new in favour of the new (Lotman 2000 [1970]: 410; Salupere 2022: 65-66). I believe that Lotman’s rather deep understanding of Baroque as a cultural epoch, which enabled him to use examples of Baroque literature and art for the illustration of his cultural theory, was due to his supervision of the thesis by Igor Chernov which was defended in 1975 and published in 1976 under the title *From the Lectures on Literary Theory: Baroque. Literature. Literary Theory* (Chernov 1976). In this book, Chernov provided a thorough analysis of three conceptualizations of Baroque – Pitirim Sorokin’s, Arnold Hauser’s, Heinrich Wölfflin’s – and proposed a typological approach to the Russian Baroque culture which was preceded by the tradition of Wölfflin’s

typology and was in accordance with Lotman's view of Baroque in his works on semiosphere.

In the article "Rhetoric" (1981), which was republished in the *Universe of the Mind* (Lotman 1990), Lotman defined the concept of rhetoric as a "mechanism for meaning-generation"¹ and considered the Baroque epoch, along with the Middle Ages, Romanticism, symbolism and the avant-garde, as "wholly or largely oriented towards tropes and in which tropes are the obligatory markers of all artistic discourse, and indeed even of all discourse" (Lotman 1990: 40). This neo-rhetorical approach was already applied in the article "The Text within the Text" (Lotman 1992 [1981]), later reworked and included into the book *Culture and Explosion* (Lotman 2000 [1992]), in which Lotman used the examples of Baroque intertextuality to illustrate meaning-making mechanisms (Lotman 1992 [1981]: 71–73; Lotman 2000 [1992]: 67–68). To conclude the discussion of the Baroque art examples in Lotman's theory, the Baroque functions, primarily, in association with the meaning-making mechanisms and is important as the cultural system of polylogical nature (Lotman 2000 [1987]: 678), the epoch of varied and diverse means of language expression (Lotman 2000 [1974]: 555), the art which creates hybrid texts (Lotman 2000 [1981]: 587) and "meanings of great complexity" (Lotman 1990: 44).

It was precisely on the basis of the article "The Text within the Text", the first research into the relationship between Lotman and the Baroque emerged in the work *Return of the Baroque in Modern Culture* (2004, 2nd edition 2008) by Gregg Lambert. The author dedicated a separate chapter to Lotman's understanding of the structure of "the text within the text" not merely as a rhetorical device, but as a mechanism for reproduction of new meanings. The fact that Lotman was drawing on the examples from the Baroque visual art (mainly on the image of a mirror that reflects and distorts reality at

¹ In the translation of the book *Universe of the Mind* (Lotman 1990) "smysloporozhdenie" is translated as "meaning-generating". In the recent translation of Lotman's essays in cultural semiotics *Culture, Memory and History* (Lotman 2019) the "meaning-making" is preferred.

the same time) was especially important for Lambert's idea of the Baroque emblem. In the interpretation of Lambert, an emblem, a "simple figure, sometimes called a device, a mechanism, a trope, a technique, a trick or lure (e. g., *trompe-d'oeil*) refers to something that appears in the field of representation in the Baroque period, but gradually becomes identified with the historical condition of literary representation at the beginning of the twentieth century" (Lambert 2008, XVI). According to Lambert, the way Lotman described the functioning of the "text within the text" concerns the same problem of representation which both Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida were occupied with, and at this point has to be included into the neo-Baroque paradigm (Lambert 2008, 104-118). Consequently, in the view of Lambert, Lotman was one of the post-structuralist thinkers on representation, whose ideas along with others enabled a link between the Baroque and the (Post) Modern by recovering the same patterns of cultural production characteristics of both epochs.

Lotman's thinking about culture was rooted in literature and visual art which led to the effect that we imagine his semiosphere basically as the space of arts. While Deleuze, in his reading of Leibniz, came to the conviction that Baroque art is the best parallel to philosophical ideas of Leibniz who "provided for the baroque art the philosophy it lacked" (Deleuze 1993: 126), and set out to interpret this philosophy drawing on the description of baroque painting, sculpture, architecture, and, especially, on the interpretation of Italian architecture of the late 16th and 17th centuries by Wölfflin in his work *Renaissance and the Baroque* (1888). This work was the main source and the common ground of the Baroque concept both for Lotman and Deleuze. Deleuze refers to it openly and constantly citing Wölfflin's work to show an affinity between formal attributes characteristic of Baroque architecture and the spatial images of Leibniz's philosophy. Lotman did not mention *Renaissance and the Baroque* in his work, however, he applied Wölfflin's dichotomy of classic and baroque art in culture typology. In addition, in Wölfflin's way, both authors acknowledged the pos-

sibility to find baroque features in art which goes beyond the limits of the Baroque epoch, the “Baroque after Baroque”. Lotman saw baroque traits in the cinematography of Andrzej Wajda (Lotman 2000 [1973]: 509) and Federico Fellini (Lotman 1990: 44), Deleuze extended the list of baroque artists up to Modernism and Postmodernism, speaking about himself and his contemporaries as “us”:

We are all still Leibnizian, although accords no longer convey our world or our texts. We are discovering new ways of folding, akin to new envelopments, but we all remain Leibnizian because what always matters is folding, unfolding, refolding. (Deleuze 1993: 158)

This “we” includes Lotman as well. Consequently, it is only a matter of research with the tools of Deleuzian analysis of the Baroque and Leibniz to prove the baroque-ness of Lotman’s semiosphere. My further analysis rests on the conviction that, due to the preoccupation of Lotman with culture as art, Deleuzian baroque aesthetics, which could be seen as the core of his *Fold*, proposes concepts for understanding what the French philosopher calls “total art” / “unity of arts” / or “theatre of the arts” (Deleuze 1993: 141–142), could also be effective as an analytical tool for the understanding of the spatial model of culture / semiosphere in Lotman’s works, and, perhaps, to add to it aspects that Lotman himself did not add. And vice versa – to reveal aspects of meaning-making in the understanding of the Leibnizian universe or the New Harmony by Deleuze.

The monad, meaning-making, and the fold

In the first sentence of the article “Culture as a Subject and Its Own Object”, Lotman says that “[t]his short exposition on some research principles should not be seen as having any philosophical significance. The author is far from making any such claims” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 83). Thus, one can presume, he was concerned with the monad not because of all possible philosophical implications that could be made. The features of a monad which he highlighted

show that Lotman needed an image, a kind of spatial entity, in which ongoing circulation of the information and the creation of new, non-trivial, and unpredictable meanings could be placed (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 85). The spatial character of the monad was already presumed by Leibniz, who claimed that monads “have no windows, by which anything could come in or go out”. They have neither “openings nor doorways”, as it is cited in *The Fold* by Deleuze (Deleuze 1993: 27). This closure of a monad became the decisive attribute of the meaning-making structure in Lotman’s semiotics:

The invariant model of a meaning-making entity assumes, first and foremost, its definitive delineation and self-sufficiency, and the presence of a border between it and the semiotic space outside it. This makes it possible to define meaning-making structures as their own form of semiotic monad, functioning at all levels of the semiotic universe. (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 85)

The next indispensable prerequisites of cultural meaning-making (after having borders) in Lotman’s theory are the “sufficient complex immanent structure” of a monad, and “a complex polyglotism”. The minimal complex structure should include a binary system which consists “of two semiotic mechanisms (languages) located in a relation of mutual untranslatability and, at the same time, resembling each other, to the extent that each with its own means models the same extra-semiotic reality” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 86). Alongside with the inner binarism of a monad, the complex polyglotism realizes itself in outer convergencies as the “capacity of one and the same monad to enter as a substructure into other monads of a much higher level and, as a result, to remain a whole while becoming a part of other wholes and in that respect being nonidentical to itself” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 88). Therefore, both inner and outer aspects of the monadic existence presuppose *doubling* and *multiplication* of primary entities.

The complex structure proposed by Lotman could be “translated” or “rewritten” using the terms from the Deleuzian analysis

of Leibniz's work – first of all, in terms of the Baroque fold. The concept of a fold – which is crucial for Deleuze – is the main trait of the Baroque, an operative function, since, according to the French philosopher, the Baroque refers not to the essence, but to the “endless” producing of folds: “It does not invent things: there are all kinds of folds coming from the East, Greek, Roman, Romanesque, Gothic, Classical folds... Yet the Baroque trait twists and turns its folds, pushing them to infinity, fold, over fold, one upon the other” (Deleuze 1993: 3). The principle of a fold could be identified everywhere – in a monad, in the natural world, as well as in the structure of individual works of art and the universe of art as “total art”. A monad, which is a kind of spiritual space, finds its equivalents in the material space, “a dark room or chamber decorated only with a stretched canvas ‘diversified by folds’, as if it were a living dermis. Placed on the opaque canvas, these folds, cords, or springs represent an innate form of knowledge” (Deleuze 1993: 4). The easiest way, however, to recognize and understand the function of the fold is to study folds in the pieces of the Baroque art:

If we want to test the definition of the Baroque – the fold to infinity – we cannot be limited to masterpieces alone; we must dig into the everyday recipes or modes of fashion that change a genre. For example, the object of the *still life* is the study of folds. The usual formula of the still life is: drapery, producing folds of air or heavy clouds; a tablecloth with maritime or fluvial folds; jewelry that burns with folds of fire; vegetables, mushrooms, or sugared fruits caught in their earthly folds. The painting is so packed with folds that their results a sort of schizophrenic “stuffing”. They could not be unraveled without going to infinity and thus extracting its spiritual lesson. (Deleuze 1993: 140–141)

As it was already pointed out, in Lotman's monadic structures, folding reveals itself as doubling and multiplication which generate new cultural meanings. Lotman provides us with examples of “double structures of everyday speech and poetry or painting”, or “the right and left hemisphere of the human brain” which all “yield untranslatable but similar images” (Lotman 2019 [1989]:

93). Thus, the binarism produces a primary type of a fold – similarity / untranslatability – which, following the law of structural isomorphism that rules in Lotman’s theory, is characteristic of all the semiosphere: “Meaning-making occurs at all structural levels of a culture. [...] Systems of this type – ranging from minimal semiotic entities to global ones of the type “culture as a self-sufficient universe” – acquire structural isomorphism, despite their material differences” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 85). In addition, the dynamic model of culture presumes that monads can enter as substructures into other monads and constitute more complex formations. In this process, a monad remains a whole and becomes a part of other wholes at the same time. It means that Lotmanian monads are nonidentical to themselves, one can say, they have folded identity. Therefore, folds are inherent in both the latent inner structure (a binary system) of the monad and all the semiosphere, which appears to be constituted of multiplied folded monadic entities.

In Lotman’s concept of meaning-making, the function of the baroque fold could be also identified on the level of the dynamics between the old and the newly generated texts. The scholar claims that the texts which are entering a monad are “used”, transformed and led to the “generation of a new text upon exiting; the initial text, however, remains in its original form and can enter into new relationships with its own transformation” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 85–86). Unlike the disappearance of a mouse which was eaten by a cat or old technical device which was replaced by the new invention, when “a fundamentally new text is created, neither the physical nor the semiotical existence of the initial text is annihilated” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 86)². This description is like a reversion of the concept “text within a text”, a case of intertextuality, which Lotman also relates to the meaning-making processes of the semiosphere (Lotman 1994 [1981]). Actually, the case of

² Mainly at this point, Lotman emphasizes the irrelevance of the notion of evolution which, applied to such a complex cultural phenomenon as art, only distorts the understanding of it.

intertextuality could serve as the perfect example of the ongoing dynamics between monads and their capacity to enter into more complex structures forming the whole of the semiosphere. On the other hand, convergencies of texts could be identified in the cases of the violation of the borders between the arts or art and reality which are characteristic of the Baroque. All these processes of intertextuality produce new formations that are shaped as folds that indicate repetition, difference, and the existence of never-ending multiplication of cultural meanings.

The final issue concerning the monad is the problem of monadic closure. At the first glance, it seems that Lotman does not pay attention to the fact that monads, according to Leibniz from whom he takes the concept, are absolutely closed. In this regard, the “entrance” and the “exit” that Lotman is writing about while explaining meaning-making, should be perceived as a kind of paradox, at least, in the article “Culture as a Subject and Its Own Object”. In the first article on the semiosphere (Lotman 1992 [1984]), however, Lotman explicates the concept of a border by the analogue with the same notion in mathematics which treats a border as a set of points that belong to the inner and outer space at the same time. In the case of the semiosphere, such points function as “filters” for bilingual translation and work as semiotic mechanisms letting certain information enter the semiosphere only by the process of translation / transformation and provoking such communication between separate systems. These border points could be understood as sensual receptors that translate external stimuli into the language of our nervous system (Lotman 1992 [1984]: 13–16).

The communication between inner and outer spaces which Lotman describes as translation / transformation finds its parallel in the relationship between the material and spiritual sides of a monad, how it was explained by Deleuze. In his view, material folds have little openings which enable a contact with the world, and although the monad is completely closed, it “feels” the world by vibrations:

There are souls down below, sensitive, animal; and there even exists a lower level in the souls. The pleats of matter surround and envelop them. [...] It is the upper floor that has no windows. It is a dark room or chamber decorated only with a stretched canvas “diversified by folds”, as if it were a living dermis. Placed on the opaque canvas, these folds, cords, or springs represent an innate form of knowledge, but when solicited by matter they move into action. Matter triggers “vibrations or oscillations” at the lower extremity of the cords, through the intermediary of “some little openings” that exist on the lower level. Leibniz constructs a great Baroque montage that moves between the lower floor, pierced with windows, and the upper floor, blind and closed, but on the other hand, resonating as if it were a musical salon translating the visible movements below into sounds above. (Deleuze 1993: 4)

This “baroque montage” underlines the vertical movement of folds between material and spiritual levels of the world. The expansion of horizontal folds is reflected by Deleuze as the image of the baroque “total art” which could be the illustrious example of Lotman’s notion of the semiosphere. At this point, however, I want to specify the clear proximity between Lotman’s notion of a border and the Deleuzian concept of a fold which both are seen as generators that set the world and its meaning-making on motion or are the territories for such dynamic processes.

Two floors of the Baroque universe and the meaning-making

It was already pointed out, that according to Deleuze, the Baroque fold and the entire universe have the two-floor structure. The philosopher states that, in a monad as well as in all the universe, the Baroque differentiates its folds “in two ways, by moving along two infinities, as if infinity were composed of two stages or floors: the pleats of matter, and the folds in the soul” (Deleuze 1993: 8). The relationship between these floors, between matter and soul, works in such a way that “[b]elow, matter is amassed according to

a first type of fold, and then organized according to a second type” (Deleuze 1993: 8). This means that soul, though being a spiritual entity, actually, structures and rules the material world. According to this, all visible folded baroque forms appear to be kind of imprints of the folded spiritual essence of monads.

In Leibnizian / Deleuzian view, two floors of the universe, a material and a spiritual one, though being absolutely different, are inseparable as well. Proceeding the analysis of architectural examples, Deleuze insists on this “two in one” system:

We move from funerary figures of the Basilica of Saint Laurence to the figures on the ceiling of Saint Ignatius. It might be claimed that physical gravity and religious elevation are quite different and do not pertain to the same world. However, these are two vectors that are allotted as such in the distinction of the two levels or floors of a single and the same world, or of the single and same house. (Deleuze 1993: 11)

In the next sentence, which in its English translation does not reveal the Deleuzian emphasis correctly, the philosopher states that the fact of the inseparability of the soul and the body does not make them less distinct in reality.³ This is how the Baroque creates its allegories or structures architectural mysteries:

The monad is the autonomy of the inside, an inside without an outside. It has as its correlative the independence of the façade, an outside without an inside. [...] a fold passes through living material in order to allot to the absolute interiority of the monad the metaphysical principle of life, and to make the infinite exteriority of matter the physical law of phenomena. [...] “Far from being adjusted to the structure, the Baroque façade only tends to thrust itself forward,”

³ This sentence in English translation is not correct: It is because the body and the soul have no point in being inseparable, for they are not in the least really distinct (Deleuze 1993: 11). In French it is: “C’est que l’âme et le corps ont beau être inséparables, ils n’en sont pas moins réellement distincts” (Deleuze 1988: 17).

while the inside falls back on itself, remains closed, and tends to be offered to the gaze that discovers it entirely from one point of view, “a little coffin containing the absolute.”⁴ (Deleuze 1993: 28–29)

The relation between two floors appears to be the Fold which “is always between two folds, and because the between-two-folds seems to move about everywhere” (Deleuze 1993: 13).

Lotman’s article “Culture as a Subject and Its Own Object” contains arguments which let us state that the scholar limits his theory to the universe of mind (or soul, in Deleuzian terms): “[E]ach monad acquires not a material but a semiotic-informational life” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 85). This means that Lotman separates the level of semiosis from the level of material (art) phenomenon / texts which are the objects of his reflection and constitute the basis for his meaning-making theory. These texts of all kinds – from, let’s say, a sculpture – to the phenomenon of a city – allow the scholar to make his theory explicit. Therefore, the structure of two floors, which Deleuze sees in the Baroque universe, is also presumed by Lotman mainly by his limitation of the theory to semiotic-informational life, though seeing its workings in the material objects, as in the following excerpt from the article “Architecture in the Context of Culture”:

Architectural space is semiotic. But semiotic space cannot be homogeneous: structural-functional heterogeneity is the essence of its nature. It follows from this that architectural space is always an ensemble. An ensemble is an organic whole in which diverse and self-sufficient units act as elements of a certain unity of a higher order: remaining whole, they become parts; while remaining different, they become similar. (Lotman 2000 [1987]: 682)

In this fragment, one can identify the same logic, if not the identical words in which Lotman describes one of the prerequisites for the semiotic monad – the “capacity of one and the same monad to

⁴ Here, Deleuze draws on the work of Jean Rousset *La Littérature de l’âge baroque en France* (Paris: Corti, 1953), 168–171. And, by the same author, *L’intérieur et l’extérieur* (Paris: Corti, 1968).

enter as a substructure into other monads of a much higher level and, as a result, to remain a whole while becoming a part of other wholes and in that respect being nonidentical to itself" (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 88).

The example of the architectural ensemble, in which Lotman finds a parallel for his monadic structure of semiosphere and the process of semiosis, once again brings to light the proximity of his scientific imagination to Deleuzian mind experiments with the meanings of baroque architecture. Deleuze also relays on architecture and points out that the Baroque "invests" in specific architectural spaces "to extract from them power and glory": a cell, a sacristy, a crypt, a church, a theatre, a study, or a print room (Deleuze 1993: 27–28). According to him,

the architectural ideal is a room in black marble, in which light enters only through orifices so well bent that nothing on the outside can be seen through them, yet they illuminate or color décor of a pure inside. [...] The Leibnizian monad and its system of light-mirror-point of view-inner décor cannot be understood if they are not compared to Baroque architecture. The architecture erects chapels and rooms where a crushing light comes from openings invisible to their very inhabitants. One of its first acts is in the Studio of Florence, with its secret room stripped of windows. The monad is a cell. It resembles a sacristy more than an atom: a room with neither doors nor windows, where all activity takes place on the inside. (Deleuze 1993: 28)

In such places, which all are like a prototype for a monad, closed and self-sufficient, folded inside, the process of entering and transforming texts from outside, which is Lotman's concern, could be seen as a performance of the light and its effects in camera obscura:

First of all, camera obscura has one small aperture high up through which light passes, then through the relay of two mirrors it projects on a sheet the objects to be drawn that cannot be seen, the second mirror being tilted according to the position of the sheet. And then transformational decors, painted skies, all kinds of trompe l'oeil that adorn the walls: the monad has furniture and objects only in trompe l'oeil. (Deleuze 1993: 28)

The process of producing visual illusions is one of the possible ways to understand the circulation of texts within Lotman's semiotic space with its "entrances" and "exits" which results in "non-trivial" and "unpredictable" new meanings. Even the aspect of the "not a material" life characteristic of the Lotmanian monad finds its parallel in the Deleuzian depiction of the effects of baroque architecture.

Semiosphere and the baroque "total art" as its realization

When Lotman introduced the concept of the semiosphere in the article "On the semiosphere" (Lotman 1992 [1984]), he drew an analogy to Vladimir Vernadsky's *biosphere*. The conceptual image of the semiosphere was supposed to be in proximity with the natural world, "some kind of mechanism (if not organism)" (Lotman 1992 [1984]: 13)⁵. In addition, Lotman compared it to a multilingual museum, the image that fascinated Umberto Eco due to the idea of a text as a unity (Eco 1990: xii):

...imagine a museum hall where exhibits from different periods are on display, along with inscriptions in known and unknown languages, and instructions for decoding them; there are also the explanations composed by the museum staff, plans for tours and rules for the behaviour of the visitors. Imagine also in this hall tour-leaders and visitors and imagine all this as a single mechanism (which *in a certain sense it is*). This is an image of the semiosphere. Then we have to remember that all elements of the semiosphere are in dynamic, not static, correlations whose terms are constantly changing. We notice this specially at traditional moments which have come down to us from the past. (Lotman 1992: 16, English translation from Eco 1990: xii)

Later on, however, one can suppose that the image of a museum had become insufficient for Lotman, partly because it was too restricted by the old tradition of museumification itself (see the

⁵ Elaborated aspects of „green“ Lotman see in Kull 2015.

critique of a museum in the article "Portrait" (Lotman 2002 [1993]: 374–375). Thus, in the article of 1989 "Culture as a Subject and Its Own Object", he switched to the concept of a monad.

According to Lotman, the constitution of the semiosphere – a semiotic space where meaning-making processes take place – is enabled by the isomorphism predicted for the entire system, and also by the prerequisite of a monad to acquire "a complex polyglotism". The latter means the capacity of a monad to enter into a "convergent relationship with another (or other) monad (monads), forming a bipolar unity at a higher structural level. These two proximate but unrelated elements are transformed into an organic unity at a higher level only when they enter into the same structural union of a higher order" (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 86). Only this process can assure the functioning of a semiotic mechanism. Thus, the activity inside the semiosphere is characterized by constant dynamics, recycling of old texts, production of new ones, mutual contacts, fusions, regroupings inside new formations and the emergence of larger, more universal structures. Lotman writes:

As soon as two monads enter into a relationship, forming a single semiotic mechanism, they shift from a state of mutual neutrality to one of mutual supplementarity and structural autonomy, and begin to cultivate their own particular and mutual contrasts. Symmetry and asymmetry are two sides of a single process that begins in the process of evolution with the formation of sexual symmetry-asymmetry and the symmetrical and asymmetrical functions of the bi-hemispheric human brain (in more profound cultural layers, one can point to the left and right rotation in the structure of matter) and ends with the laws governing complex semiotic entities. (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 87)

This abstract model of "folded/-ing" existence (since all mentioned symmetries create folds) in the semiosphere is, of course, based on Lotman's cultural studies and has its historical counterparts. The baroque examples that Lotman uses in other articles help to understand the significance of the Baroque for his cultural theory. First of all, Lotman chooses them to show how the violations of the boundaries of the monad / text / art / reality are

realized, and the creation of new relationships with the environment is created. In his article “The Text Within the Text”, Lotman refers to Baroque art for validation of his neo-rhetorical approach to intertextuality. It should be noted that texts, in his view, could include “reality” as well. The dynamics of the relationship between fictionality and “reality”, in which the latter acquires gradually a conditional character as if it was an art, also becomes a mechanism of culture:

[W]hen the figures of the baroque sculpture climb or jump down from their pedestal or when the painting leaps out of its frame, this emphasises but does not erase the fact that one of them belongs to material reality whilst the other belongs to artistic reality. The same ludic quality occurs in the perceptions of the audience who experience a different kind of reality when the theatrical drama disappears from the stage and is transferred into the actual everyday space of the auditorium. (Lotman 2009 [1992]: 70)

In the part “The Text as a Meaning-generating Mechanism” of the book *Universe of the Mind*, Lotman approaches the Baroque art theory to demonstrate an inclination for the blurring of the borders even on the level of theoretical self-description:

Lope de Vega, for instance, called Marino “a great painter for the ears”, and Rubens “a great poet for the eyes” [*Marino, grand pintor de los oidos, y Rubens, grand poeta de los ojos*]. Tezauero called architecture “metaphor in stone”. (Lotman 1990: 43)

The characteristic of the Baroque questioning of borders and frames (here, the interpretation by Lotman of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* could be added, see Lotman 2000 [1992]: 72), finds its parallel in Deleuzian notion of “total art”.

According to Deleuze’s interpretation, the world, emerging from the infinity of folding matter, *is* and also *is reflected* in the “unity of the arts” which creates itself “in extension, each art tending to be prolonged and even to be prolonged into the next art, which exceeds the one before” (Deleuze 1993: 141):

[T]he Baroque often confines painting to retables, but it does so because the painting exceeds its frame and is realized in polychrome marble sculpture; and sculptures goes beyond itself by being achieved in architecture; and in turn, architecture discovers a frame in the façade, but the frame itself becomes detached from the inside, and establishes relations with the surroundings so as to realize architecture in city planning. [...] We witness the prodigious development of a continuity in the arts, in breadth or in extension: an interlocking of frames of which each is exceeded by a matter that moves through it. (Deleuze 1993: 141)

This is “total art” or “unity of the arts”, or “theatre of arts” which, on the other hand, reveals the connection with “reality” as well:

This extensive unity of the arts forms a universal theatre that includes air and earth, and even fire and water. In it sculptures play the role of real characters, and the city [is] a décor in which spectators are themselves painted images or figurines. The sum of the arts becomes the Socius, the public social space inhabited by Baroque dancers. (Deleuze 1993: 141–142)

It is possible to develop further linkages between the extended panoramic view of a city formed by arts in Deleuze’s account of the Baroque and Lotman’s theme of the theatricality and artificiality of a city space characteristic of Saint Petersburg. In the part titled “Symbolic Spaces” of his work *Universe of the Mind*, Lotman cited Marquis de Custine who wrote that he was “amazed seeing the endless mixture of two such different arts: architecture and stage decoration: Peter the Great and his successors looked on their capital as a theatre” (Lotman 1990: 197). In Saint Petersburg, which was a city built to represent the glory of the Russian Empire, a “window” from Russia to Europe or to Russia from Europe, features of baroque theatricality were preserved in later epochs, actually, up to the scenography for the dramas represented in the poetry of Joseph Brodsky who, using classical plots, staged his personal collisions in the background of a classical city of the Russian Empire. Lotman’s research on the theatrical patterns of the behaviour of the city dwellers in the 19th century made it pos-

sible for him to formulate his notion of the “language of theatre” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 141–150) which could be the language of the Deleuzian “Baroque dancers” as well. Sculptures, paintings, and spectators who are “themselves painted images or figurines”, merge in the public space of the Baroque city with its “theatre of the arts” (Deleuze 1993: 142).

It should be emphasized that, in these cases, Lotman focuses not on the Baroque art, but on the structure of the “text within the text” and its rhetorical possibilities and effects, or the theatrical characteristic of Saint Peterburg’s space and its inhabitants. However, in terms of meaning-making mechanisms, intertextuality and violation of the border between architecture and stage, function as one of the mechanisms inside the semiosphere. Consequently, it means that the Baroque is a type of culture which could be understood as the concrete realization or even inspiration for the abstract model of the semiosphere that Lotman constructs. For Lotman, the “hybrid texts” (Lotman 2000 [1981]: 587) and “meanings of great complexity” (Lotman 1990: 44), characteristic of Baroque art could be seen as and *are* prototypes for the entire semiotic space. The Deleuzian depiction of the folded Baroque universe of arts helps us to see the baroqueness of Lotman’s mind, which composes the semiosphere as a multi-layered and dynamic system with a permanent process of semiosis of more and more complicated isomorphic units – monads within monads, “texts within the texts”, reality in the text and *vice versa*, which is a realization of the same principle of prolongation of arts (texts / languages) into the next one, the “total art”, to put it in Deleuzian terms. Bearing in mind the rootedness of Lotman’s scientific imagination in literature and arts, the image of the semiosphere as “the unity of the arts” is even more convincing.

The last image of Deleuzian analysis of the Baroque universe which I see as a reflection of Lotman’s metaphors involved in the description of the semiosphere is the figure of a cone, a pyramid, or a cupola:

Even compressed, folded, and enveloped, elements are powers that enlarge and distend the world. [...] It is a broad and floating world, at least on its base, a scene or an immense plateau. But this continuity of the arts, this collective unity in extension, goes out and beyond, toward an entirely different unity that is comprehensive and spiritual, punctual, is indeed *conceptual*: the world as a pyramid or a cone, that joins its broad material base, lost in vapors, to an *apex*, a luminous origin or a point of view. (Deleuze 1993: 142)

The Baroque sculpture and architecture serve for Deleuze as proof that the shape of the material world is originating in the spiritual realm: “Bernini’s Saint Theresa does not find her spiritual unity in the satyr’s little arrow, that merely spreads fire, but in the upper origin of the golden rays above” (Deleuze 1993: 142). “The law of the cupola, a Baroque figure par excellence” functions in all the “universal theatre as a continuity of the arts” which organizes itself accordingly to that law into the mounting structure. The continuity of this structure exists from the base to the summit “because it cannot be said where one [art] begins and the other ends” (Deleuze 1993: 146): “Music is at the apex, while the theatre that moved in that direction is revealed as opera, carrying all the arts toward this higher unity” (Deleuze 1993: 146).

The counterpart for the Deleuzian conical structure of the unity of arts in Lotman’s theory is the hierarchical structure of the semiosphere. On the one hand, it reveals itself as “an enormous organism made up of organisms”, governed by the law of the “isomorphism of parts to the whole and of parts among themselves” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 89). To explain this isomorphism, Lotman chooses “the Biblical image of man’s likeness to God – as a lower unit representing millions of individual variants of a higher, singular essence” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 89). This quite a Leibnizian image of isomorphism is supported by the notion of hierarchy inside the semiotic space: the semiosphere, in Lotman’s words, “represents a special construct, at one and the same time an organizing hierarchy of structures and enormous number of closed semiotic worlds (“individuals”, texts)” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 90–91). The

concept of the hierarchy supplies the semiosphere with a vertical dimension based on the level of complexity, characteristic of monads: “The more complex the organization of the monad, the more autonomous its behaviour” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 91). Here, Lotman is most concerned with the independence of some of the monads which, due to the certain level of semiosis, could be defined as “an intellectual unit, a bearer of Reason” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 89) able “to take an act of intellectual choice” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 90). The existence of these complex monads, notwithstanding, needs the hierarchical structure, in which they implement the unpredictability and enable “an enormous information load and, in fact, unlimited possibilities for development” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 91). Lotman, certainly, deals not only with arts, though Deleuzian image of opera which is closer to the conical apex and is “carrying all the arts toward this higher unity” could be a perfect example of the complex art that possesses the higher position in the hierarchy of arts, as it is seen by Lotman. What concerns him is a subject, precisely – a historian of culture.

At the end of the article, Lotman returns to the opposition of subject and object arguing that this separation in the view of the semiosphere is irrelevant, because the principle of a meaning-making monad says: “every intellectual whole is a part of another intellectual whole and a whole in relationship to its parts” (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 91). Therefore,

[w]ithout forgetting the monadic structure of the semiotic field and understanding oneself as a monad within that field, the historian of culture turns out to be in a position that is more complicated than before but one that is probably more closely aligned with reality. (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 93)

The concept of the subject as the dynamic subject-object relation which appears from the folded nature of the semiosphere echoes Deleuzian “objectless-subject”, “subject-as-fold”, and subject as a point (of view) (Badiou 1994: 62, 68). There is a great temptation to see the analogue for Deleuzian “subject as a point of view” of

the historian of culture which Lotman deals with in the citation. However, to be able to compare the concepts of the subject, knowledge, the body, the truth, and others in the work of both thinkers, one needs to accomplish a more thorough analysis than has been performed here comparing spatial images and metaphors.

Conclusions

Regardless of the different intellectual projects undertaken by Deleuze and Lotman, both scholars used spatial images (first of all – the Leibnizian monad) to compose a system which was characterised by the qualities of structure (stability) and dynamics at the same time. Lotman created his theory of culture as a dynamic system, in which meaning-making mechanisms are set in motion by the latent bilingual structure of a monad. On the other hand, Deleuze draws on Leibniz in his ontology to appropriate the concept of a monad as “absolute interiority” that already possesses its own exteriority, which makes it the same bilingual system as the monad in the understanding of Lotman. The border, the main attribute of the monad as well as all the semiosphere in Lotman’s theory, finds its equivalent in the Deleuzian image of a fold, a substance and function of all the levels of the world. On the other hand, informational flaws that circulate in the monadic universe of Lotman create and multiply folded structures in which semiotic monads, being wholes and parts of bigger wholes, are never identical to themselves and function as folded entities.

Due to Lotman’s interest in literature and arts, his image of the semiosphere could be seen as a realization of the Baroque unity of arts which, according to Deleuze, appears to be the illustration and counterpart of the philosophy of Leibniz. And *vice versa* – all examples of Baroque art in the work of Lotman on cultural mechanisms could be incorporated into the theatre of arts created by the imagination of Deleuze. All Baroque examples extracted from Lotman’s work, as well as the conical structure of Deleuzian Baroque unity of arts, function in their systems as the folds of the

first floor of the Baroque universe as it was seen by Leibniz or Deleuze. In their view, the material world is folded according to spiritual folds that constitute the inner space of monads. The same nonmaterial (spiritual) existence is characteristic of a monad as a semiotic-informational unit in Lotman's theory. In the same way as Deleuze describes a monad (spiritual existence) by interpreting Baroque art (material folds), Lotman identifies meaning-making mechanisms of monads (semiotic-informational entities) by analysing examples of Baroque art (material objects).

Concerning the two floors of the Baroque world, Deleuze sees an individual as "a mind folded everywhere within the body" (Badiou 1994: 61). In Lotman's view, monads could be represented by individual humans, yet "viewed as texts" (Lotman 2019 [1989]: 85). However, does this view of the human as a text has a dimension for the body? Could the body be considered as a monadic "border" and "filter" for circulating information between the inside and the outside, which forms human sensibility and mind? It seems, however, that the notion of a monad, which Lotman chooses for the illustration of the dynamic model of culture, solves the issue of the body by destroying the oppositions (the opposition of body and soul among others) allowing us to see an individual as the unity of body and mind (soul). On the other hand, when he describes the position of a historian of culture viewed as a monad which is both a whole and part of another monad, he presumes that he / she must consider his / her position as embodied in concrete historical time and place.

Lotman considered semiotics "as the study of sign systems and processes, in which the aspect of modelling or meaning-making is explicitly presented" (Kull 2015: 255), and saw the theoretical core of semiotics in the modelling of semiosis. One can presume that in Lotman's work, spatial images are necessary for the explication of the semiosphere, which draws on spatial images or parallels – of the biosphere, a museum hall, a monad. With the help of Leibniz, Deleuze constructs a model of the world based on the Baroque images and metaphors which are mutually translatable with Lotman's

notions. The two thinkers who did not know about each other saw the world and its dynamic processes in a similar way and verified each other's view for their readers. In this article, their minds and imagination have been analysed as if they were two monads from the system of Lotman that enter a more complex formation for the further production of meanings. Lotman's semiotics does not demand to name exactly the result of the semiosis which could be complicated and manifold. One of the possible results of this case, when two systems are placed side by side for comparison, is my conviction that Lotman, in his latest work, was really one of those of whom Deleuze wrote in the last sentence of the *Fold*: "We are discovering new ways of folding, akin to new envelopments, but we all remain Leibnizian because what always matters is folding, unfolding, refolding" (Deleuze 1993: 158). The last text of Lotman, published after his death, "The Portrait", should be seen as an example of the Deleuzian description of the folded monadic universe. In "The Portrait", Lotman examines the specific genre of painting by analysing the system of multiple points of view, the double composition of paintings, and the layered structure of the human existential self-image, thus, in effect, constantly folding its meanings. A strict structuralist at the beginning of his career, Lotman, in the end, became a post-structural thinker revealing in his works the folded (Baroque) boundary between these two intellectual trends.

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