

MAREK TAMM, PEETER TOROP (EDS.),
THE COMPANION TO JURI LOTMAN. A
SEMIOTIC THEORY OF CULTURE. LONDON,
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 534 PAGES.

The Companion was published last year when centenary celebrations of Lotman's birth were taking place in Estonia and around the world. It can be considered one of the most significant publications on Juri Lotman's work to appear in recent years. The two co-editors, Marek Tamm and Peeter Torop, are renowned and established Estonian scholars who have made it their mission to bring together the diverse voices of researchers, influenced to one degree or another by the semiotician's academic legacy. As they themselves write: "This is the very first attempt to offer a collective, systematic and interdisciplinary approach to Lotman's intellectual legacy, bringing together forty-three scholars from thirteen countries" (2). Since the limitations of this text do not allow us to thoroughly present each author's point of view, this brief overview of the work in question will highlight only a few selected aspects that can give the reader a basic insight into its structure and main aims, as well as the context of its creation.

The aforementioned commemoration of Lotman's centenary was international in character at all levels, and was aimed primarily at the West. The Companion is no different in this respect, and it is why English was chosen as the language of publication. This ensures readers can consistently follow the thoughts of individual authors through Lotman's works translated into English. References to his English articles and monographs are used throughout the work wherever possible. This strategy,

which gives the Companion a special status within the Lotmaniana, is also extended in the form of a remarkable bibliography by Remo Gramigna. The bibliography covers English-language publications by and about Lotman, and contains a total of 404 entries, 148 of which are Lotman's writings published in English between 1973 and 2020. This provides a solid foundation for communicating Lotman's ideas abroad, and allows some gaps to be filled and his achievements to be even more visible in the eyes of an international academic audience.

The editorial principles for structuring the content are already set out by the co-editors in the introduction, namely that the Companion is divided into three main thematic sections through which the reader can progress step by step in exploring the "Lotmanian semiosphere". Beginning with a brief biographical sketch, the first part of the book places Lotman's work in the context of the traditions of various schools of thought and sheds light on his predecessors. The second part narrows the focus to Lotman's basic theoretical concepts, while the third part presents various contemporary approaches to his semiotics in different academic disciplines.

In addition to the above-mentioned editorial structuring of the work and its adjustment to the international field, and the transdisciplinary knitting of semiotic connections between disciplines that are, at first glance, quite different in their object of research, the work is also an important attempt to cover the period following Lotman's death and all that has taken place in semiotics in connection with his legacy. In doing so, we aim at the points where the conception of his work has changed the most. This is inextricably linked to the actualisation of the research questions Lotman himself

had already posed, and their illumination from contemporary disciplinary perspectives. The intergenerational character of the Companion is also particularly noteworthy, as the authors range from representatives of the older generation of semioticians to authors who are still at the very beginning of their academic careers. The openness of Lotman's work and the dialogical potential of his intellectual legacy support the bridging not only of disciplinary but also of generational boundaries, and allow the authors to introduce themselves and their work within semiotics, even though they focus relatively narrowly on segments of Lotman's theoretical framework. In other words, it is impossible to introduce Lotman's work without the authors also introducing their own, due to their conceptual interconnectedness. This points to a common denominator that is explicitly or implicitly present in most of the Companion's texts – the orientation towards the future that poses questions, which this work seeks to answer. How can the tradition of Lotmanian thought be continued and semiotics further developed on the foundations of the Tartu-Moscow School? The third part of the book offers a variety of answers to this question.

The Companion is to be understood as a selection or a compendium, and since selection implies exclusion, there are parts that leave us wanting. Just as context was crucial for Lotman, so it must be for the reader of the Companion. Its publication was limited by time constraints, the selection and coordination of individual chapters and their authors, cancellations, and other minor setbacks, but the result is nevertheless an exemplary work. The condensed format of the volume, and the remarkable conciseness of the chapters in terms of content (and consequently form), have certainly played

an important role in making the volume manageable not only for the editors but also for the readers. This is especially welcome for beginners who want to familiarise themselves with Lotman's work and have access to condensed information in one place – the book provides them with a map and compass with which to effectively navigate the Lotmanian semiosphere.

So what has been omitted? What may the reader expect and not find? In the Slovenian context, Lotman is particularly well known among researchers in the field of Russian studies, who would have expected a section on certain periods of Russian literature or authors (e.g. Pushkin, Dostoevsky), particularities in Russian cultural history, and a more detailed treatment of certain concepts (e.g. the "minus device"). I would have expected a chapter highlighting the applicability of Lotman's theoretical concepts in the field of folklore studies. However, these wishes should not be misunderstood as criticisms, for the Companion fulfils its intended role and is aimed at a wide range of readers, from experts to beginners. This publication, dedicated to an individual who left a deep mark in many areas, will certainly not be the last project of its kind.

The reception of such multifaceted publications may be compared to seeds that sprout only where the soil allows, and yet there is also barren soil from which seeds unexpectedly sprout. This is the beauty of works that dare bring together a variety of viewpoints and different research directions in contemporary scholarship – in this case they draw from the same source. This is particularly important in the case of the Slovenian reception and gives hope that these ideas, although not new, may be rediscovered in certain research spheres, and that something new may emerge from

them. The Companion will help researchers better conceptualise, understand and reflect on their own work – at least the part that draws on Lotman. Knowing him will help us better understand our work and the dynamics between them. We may well conclude that although Lotman’s work is not a unified doctrine but reflects a particular way of thinking, the Companion fulfils the role it plays as a unique tribute to this semiotic way of thinking.

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**SUZANA MARJANIĆ, MITOVI I RE/
KONSTRUKCIJE: TRAGOM NODILOVE “STARE
VJERE” SRBA I HRVATA.** ZAGREB: INSTITUT
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STRANA.

Osnovni predmet studije Suzane Marjanić *Mitovi i re/konstrukcije: tragom Nodilove “stare vjere” Srba i Hrvata* jeste znamenita knjiga Natka Nodila *Stara vjera Srba i Hrvata* (objavljivana najpre pod naslovom *Religija Srba i Hrvata, na glavnoj osnovi pjesama, priča i govora narodnog*) (1885–1890), prva rasprava o hrvatskoj i srpskoj (južnoslovenskoj) mitologiji. Ona se, kako ističe autorka, tematski može podeliti na dve veće celine – na vidovnu/solarnu mitologiju, i na studije o Gromovniku (Perunu), Ognju, vilama (meteorološka mitologija), religiju groba (antropologija smrti) i Mesečevu (lunarnu) mitologiju, i tu strukturu prati knjiga koja je pred nama. Sastoji se od uvodnog (Mitski uvodnik: Nodilova re/konstrukcija „stare vjere“ Srba i Hrvata) i još dvanaest poglavlja, koja se nižu sledećim redom: I. Mitsko u epskom ili božansko u ljudskom i svetačkom; II. Religija nebesnoga vidila; III. (Dijadna) boginja i duoteizam; IV. Temeljni mitski agon: Svantevid i njegov polionimijski protivnik; V. Blizanačka (embriološka) mitologija: dijada i trijada astralne mitologije; VI. O Suncu, ali bez prvenstva solarne mitološke teorije: noćna trilogija Sunca; VII. Solarna heptalogija i dodekalogija vs. vučja historija; VIII. Hod Sunca kroz godinu: ep o dodekalogiji; IX. Nodilova munjevnja teorija: (feminina) aždaja i (maskulini) zmaj; X. Vatra kao domovina smrti u Nodilovoj Religiji groba; XI. Lunarna mitologija; XII. Autotematizacijsko traganje za zaključnom sintezom o Nodilovoj re/konstrukciji srpsko-hrvatske/hrvatsko-srpske mitologije, te obimnog spiska