

## Is the semiosphere post-modernist?

George Rossolatos  
University of Kassel

### Abstract

This paper provides arguments for and against M.Lotman's (2002) contention that Y.Lotman's seminal concept of semiosphere is of post-modernist (post-structuralist; Posner 2011) orientation. A comparative reading of the definitional components of the semiosphere, their hierarchical relationship and their interactions is undertaken against the two principal axes of space and subjectivity in the light of Kantian transcendental idealism, as inaugural and authoritative figure of modernity, the Foucauldian discursive turn and the Deleuzian (post) radical empiricism (sic), as representative authors of the highly versatile post-modern vernacular. This comparative reading aims at highlighting not only similarities and differences between the Lotmanian conceptualization of the semiosphere and the concerned modernist and post-modernist authors, but the construct's operational relevance in a post-metanarratives cultural predicament that has been coupled with the so-called spatial turn in cultural studies (Hess-Luttich 2012).

**Keywords:** semiosphere, space, cultural subjectivity, modernity, post-modernity.

## Introduction

In order to start hinting at the prospect of providing definite answers to such a complex and multifaceted question that merely affords to intensify the complexity and the multifaceted nature of the very conceptual construct of semiosphere let us begin by clarifying how post-modernity has been defined. Post-modernity has been defined in two dominant ways. First, as a historical period that is characterized by a highly critical outlook towards the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment (with any and many issues that emerge in such historical demarcations; see Lagopoulos 2010). Nevertheless, Lyotard (1991: 34) himself asserted that "postmodernity is not a new age, but the rewriting of some of the features claimed by modernity". Second, as an ethos (scientific or otherwise) which, regardless of the feasibility of situating its emergence spatiotemporally (and ample arguments have been voiced as to why situating it within a tradition contradicts the very 'post' nature of post-modernity), still it reflects common argumentative patterns and stylistic aspects that recur (not at all invariably) throughout various writers, from Nietzsche to Breton to Deleuze. Post-modernist perspectives also differ based on whether they are of Marxist or non-Marxist affiliation, in which case Marxist perspectives (e.g., Jameson) view post-modernity as the cultural logic of post-industrial capitalism. "Postmodern culture is the result of the extension of the market over cultural production as a whole, whence the need for a political economy of cultural production" (Lagopoulos 2010: 178). Non-Marxist perspectives, largely aligned with Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality (e.g., Perry 1998; regardless of Baudrillard's own leftist affiliations), view post-modernity as a predicament where empirical and cultural reality are largely shaped by the fleeting imagery that is projected through the media. This predicament is marked by a diminution of the centrality of Reason's faculties and operations in conferring judgments about the world (rational, ethical, aesthetic), in the face of a life-stylism without reserve. There are also perspectives that lie in between, such as Habermas's attempt to salvage Kantianism by substituting (with questionable results) the Court of Reason with instrumental reason and pragmatic criteria against the background of a community of rational social actors.

Post-modernism is a highly fragmented research field and certainly this is not the place to engage with the plethora of perspectives across various disciplines that have been laying claim to be of post-modernist orientation. However, insofar as a fundamental question is the semiosphere post-modernist? By George Rossolatos

point of convergence among various post-modernist perspectives has been concerned with a highly critical outlook towards the centrality of Kantian Reason and its architecture in freeing humanity from the yoke of Medievalism and superstition, the Kantian (modernist) outlook to the formation of subjectivity is a core aspect of the modernist vision.

According to some scholars post-modernity does not mark a radical rupture with the tradition of philosophy, but, just like deconstruction (which may be viewed as part of the wider skeptical outlook of post-modernity towards meta-narratives and totalizing/essentializing forms of discourse), an attempt to lay bare latent presuppositions and tropically cloaked syllogistic aporias behind seemingly self-evident 'facts of Reason'. However, this does not entail necessarily that, as Deely (2011: 32) contends, "postmodernity so far as it pertains to philosophy names some epoch within that history". If we subscribe to the argument that 'post' is just another *epoche* (from the Aristotelian *epechei* and *epekeina tes ousias*; see Derrida 1981), the entire 'trend' of post-modernity is reduced to another sublatale *moment* in the linear teleological deployment of an essentializing epiphenomenology, rather than constituting a radically 'other' way of thinking (at least for some post-modernists or authors who have been identified, willingly or not, with post-modernity).

Immanuel Kant has been at the receiving end of vehement attacks that have been traditionally launched by post-modernists against modernity, for the sheer reason that the anti-foundationalist tendencies that have been definitive of post-modern theorists share a common mistrust towards totalizing architectural hyper-constructs, such as the architecture of Pure Reason. In this sense, an examination of arguments for and against the alleged post-modernist orientation of the semiosphere is bound to engage with how equivalent concepts were defined and operationalized by pre post-modern (or modern) and post-modern theorists. To this end, this paper assumes as theoretical groundwork whereupon the ensuing discussion deploys Kant's conception of space and Foucault's, Deleuze's conceptions of space (as indicative authors who have been largely identified with the post-modernist vernacular). The latter camp also features perspectives on cultural geography and cultural spaces which have developed largely from within a post-modernist conceptualization of space.

The analysis begins with an exposition of the concept of the semiosphere by drawing on Lotman's seminal works, as well as on relevant commentaries that have

attempted either to elucidate or to expand this allegedly multifaceted concept. Then it proceeds with an exploration of arguments for and against why the semiosphere is and is not modernist and post-modernist by recourse to key thinkers from each part of the pre/post divide, mainly Kant, Foucault and Deleuze. The discussion concludes by pointing out directions whereby the semiosphere may be fruitfully extended by attending to post-modernist conceptualizations of space and subjectivity.

### **What is the semiosphere (and what is not 'it')?**

“The concept of semiosphere was first put forward by Juri Lotman in the context of cultural semiotics. He introduced the term in the article “On semiosphere” and elaborated it further in *Universe of the Mind* and *Culture and Explosion*” (Kull, Kotov 2011: 179). The semiosphere is a necessary condition for the existence and function of languages and other sign-systems (Kull, Kotov 2011). “In defining the semiosphere Lotman is making a clear shift from the level of individual signs and their functioning in semiotic space toward a higher level of network semiosis and system level phenomena” (Andrews 2003: 34). As repeatedly argued in the relevant literature (e.g., Kull 2005, 2011) the semiosphere is a multi-level and multi-faceted construct that seeks to delineate how cultural spaces are produced as multi-level inscriptions in an all-encompassing semiospheric hyperspace, like *matryoshka* dolls within dolls. The semiosphere constitutes an umbrella concept or metaconcept that designates a semiotic space that is made of various interlocking spheres with identifiable boundaries. “As a metaconcept, semiosphere is a ‘construct of semiotic method’ (Kull 2005) that takes a holistic approach to culture, and as an object it refers to a given semiotic space” (Semenenko 2012: 120). “The semiosphere is heterogeneous space (or communicative medium), enabling qualitative diversity to emerge, to fuse, and to sustain” (Kull 2005: 185). “Lotman especially stresses that the semiosphere is not just the sum total of semiotic systems, but also a necessary condition for any communication act to take place and any language to appear” (Semenenko 2012: 112). Each sphere in a semiospheric space is in a constant dialogue (a point of intersection between Lotman and Bakhtin’s notion of dialogism; cf. Bethea 1997) with every other sphere in varying degrees. “New information in the semiosphere can be produced only as a result of a dialogue between different codes, by which he [Lotman] understands not simply different human or artificial languages, but is the semiosphere post-modernist? By George Rossolatos

different ways of organizing reality into coherent cognitive structures, or different ways of making reality conform to our understanding” (Steiner 2003: 42).

The semiosphere in its most abstract conceptualization, as noted by Kull (2005) and Lotman (2002), is the elementary unit of signification, a postulate that sets apart Tartu School semiotics from atomistic perspectives that seek elementary units at the level of minimal (rather than maximal) concepts (e.g., the theory of double/triple/multiple articulation). “Four fundamental concepts are associated with the semiosphere: heterogeneity, asymmetry, boundedness, binarism” (Andrews 2003: 35). Zylko (2001: 398-400) summarizes the most significant aspects of the concept of semiosphere as follows:

First, “the notion of semiosphere is related to definite homogeneity and individuality [...] Messages from the outside have to force their way through to become facts of a given semiosphere. To do this, they have to adapt to the conditions of a given semiosphere in such a way that the alien may become familiar. What is external becomes internal; what is nontext becomes text.”

Second, “the internal organization of semiosphere is characterized by a lack of predetermined order. The hierarchy of languages and texts is constantly subverted; they collide as if they existed in one level.”

Third, “the organization of semiosphere is marked by internal heterogeneity. The organization and structuring of particular centers can vary considerably. Lotman assigns special meanings to peripheries, which are less formally organized than centers and have more flexible constructions at their disposal [...] In this account, peripheries are considered a reservoir of innovation and a source of dynamic processes, within semiosphere.” In line with his previous theorization of modeling systems and the derivative distinction between primary and secondary modeling systems “natural language takes the central position in the semiosphere because it permeates almost all semiospheric levels and quite a number of semiotic systems are based on it (e.g., literature and partially cinema and theater)” (Semenenko 2012: 113).

Fourth, “the structural unevenness of a semiosphere’s internal organization is determined by the fact that different domains evolve at different speeds.”

Fifth, [...] according to Lotman, “dialogue is the universal law which stipulates how semiosphere exists. This dialogue proceeds in different spheres, ranging from the individual’s cerebral hemispheres to the cultural contact on the national and

international scale. As a consequence, semiosphere consists of levels, which range from each person's autonomous semiosphere to the overall semiosphere of the contemporary world."

Since our focal concern in this paper consists in furnishing answers to the question whether the semiosphere is of post-modernist orientation, two aspects of the semiosphere will be explored in this section in the light of Lotman's prolific writings, but also of relevant commentaries that have surfaced over the past thirty years (cf. Kull 2011 for an extensive review of relevant texts), viz. (i) what kind of space is the semiospheric space (and, by implication, how it gives rise to cultural spacing) (ii) how the semiotic subject is conditioned existentially by the semiosphere that allows for subjects' enculturation who are, in turn, responsible for a semiosphere's extension (or contraction) and its 'creative' propagation. These two pillars of space and cultural subjectivity constitute the principal axes whereupon the comparative reading between Lotmanian semiotics, Kant as inaugural and authoritative modernist author and key post-modernist authors, with a focus on Deleuze and Foucault will be construed.

Lotman's account of the semiosphere is not bereft of ambiguities which have turned out to be particularly inviting to diverse scholarly interpretations<sup>7</sup>. Nöth (2014)

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<sup>7</sup> Kull (2005) identified the following interpretations of the semiosphere upon conducting a relevant survey among scholars at a conference and pursuant to an extensive literature review: "(1) 'semiosphere is a textual whole, a text together with other texts that make it a text' (2) 'semiosphere is anything formed from the (endless) web of interpretations' (3) 'semiosphere is the sphere of communication'. It "consists in communication" (Hoffmeyer 1997: 933) (4) semiosphere is a web of sign processes, or semioses' (5) "Semiosphere is the set of all interconnected umwelten. Any two umwelten, when communicating, are a part of the same semiosphere" (Kull 1998: 305) (6) 'semiosphere is the space of semioses'. The concept of 'space' appears to describe an important aspect of the semiosphere, e.g., (7) 'semiosphere is the space of meaning-generation'. Also, (8) 'semiosphere is the space of whole-part relations' (9) 'semiosphere is where distinguishing occurs, where distinctions are made'. And as a reformulation of this definition, (10) 'semiosphere is the space of qualitative diversity'. (11) 'semiosphere is a sphere of healing'. This is because in a non-semiosphere, there is no such condition as 'healthy' or 'ill' or even 'broken'. There cannot be 'errors' outside the semiosphere. Unlike the physical world, which manifests a single truthful reality, (12) 'semiosphere is the world of multiple truths, of multiple worlds'. (13) "the totality of 'contrapuntal duets' forms the sphere of communication — the semiosphere" (Emmeche et al. 2002: 21). According to T. Sebeok (2001: 164): "Biosemiotics presupposes the axiomatic identity of the semiosphere with the biosphere" (14) "semiosphere is thus the totality of interconnected signs, a sphere that covers the Earth" (Emmeche et al. 2002: 21) (15) 'semiosphere as is the semiosphere post-modernist? By George Rossolatos

rightly claims that Lotman exhibits a considerably varied definitional approach to the concept of 'semiosphere'. "The terms 'semiosphere', 'semiotic space' and 'culture' are not sharply delimited in relation to each other" (Nöth 2014: 2). Despite Lotman's precluding outright the strictly metaphorical essence of the concept ("Lotman, in his first paper 'On the semiosphere' explicitly rejects the metaphorical interpretation of the semiotic space of culture" [Nöth 2006: 251]), as Nöth (2006, 2014) remarks, metaphorical aspects clearly appear to be seething into the semiosphere's definitional scope. However, in order to account more concretely for why the semiosphere is not merely metaphorical, it is suggested that we address, complementary to Nöth's argument for the capacity of the semiosphere to function as modeling blueprint of culture, regardless of whether its existence may be conceived of separately from a strictly delimited in naturalistic terms biosphere, and hence as generativist mechanism of metaphors, rather than being a metaphor itself, Lotman's (1990) own contention that a natural space (e.g., the space of a city) is always already semiotized. "The city is a complex semiotic mechanism, a culture generator, but it carries out this function only because it is a melting pot of texts and codes, belonging to all kinds of languages and levels" (Lotman 1990: 174-175). Hence, even if the semiosphere was not approached from a modeling device viewpoint, still its existence may not be merely metaphorical insofar as a comparison with a non-metaphorical or biospheric space (Vernadsky's original conception), such as the natural space whereupon a city is built does not in itself have meaning prior to its constituting a city. "While the biosphere, according to Vernadsky and Lotman, is 'the totality of and the organic whole of living matter and also the condition for the continuation of life,' the semiosphere is 'the result and the condition for the development of culture' " (Nöth 2006: 253-254). And insofar as the constitution of a city walks hand in hand with its textualization it is always already semiotized. Does this automatically render the city a metaphorical construct? At least based on the original meaning of metaphor as transportation to another place, it certainly does. Yet, this transportation merely attests to the fundamental distinction between space and place. Space, at least natural space, means nothing prior to its transformation into place (see Low and Lawrence-Zuniga

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a continuum of culture' (16) 'semiosphere is the region of multiple realities' (or, semiosphere is the world of several realities).

2007). This transformation by default depends on the semiotization of space. Hence, space depends on place for its existence. Place is the existential condition of space.

Space, which is continuous in human cognition, becomes transformed into a space with discrete loci in the cultural semiosphere. Whereas the cognition of real space presupposes perceptual continuity, the culturally organized semiotic space is as discontinuous as the verbal signs that represent it. Nöth 2006: 254.

By the same token, culture depends on the semiosphere for its existence. What still merits elucidation, at least in the context of the problematic that is raised in this paper, is not so much whether the semiosphere is a metaphorical construct or not, but how it differs from other concepts that have been occasionally employed by Lotman and that seem to be dependent on the semiosphere, as well as concepts that have been employed interchangeably with the semiosphere. More particularly, in order to provide definite answers about the nature of the semiosphere, its contents and/or its levels we should first clarify how the concept functions as either inclusive or structurally homologous to regard to the following concepts: (i) semiosphere(s) vs. sphere(s) (ii) semiotic space(s) (iii) markers of spatial orientation, such as inside/outside (iv) demarcation markers, such as boundary. Our analytic will now turn to the elaboration of the relationships between the semiosphere and these hyponymic (with question-marks) spatial constructs.

### **Semiosphere(s) vs. sphere(s)**

We already saw that semiosphere is an existential condition vis-à-vis cultural spaces and texts. Also, in principle “semiosphere as a metaconcept allows for describing larger entities of semiosis that transcend national borders (e.g., film noir, rock’n’roll music or art nouveau architecture) as well as ‘microcultures’ of various groups or even ‘individual cultures’” (Semenenko 2012: 124). Yet, Lotman (1990) applies the concept of culture, even though largely refraining from explicitly framing it conceptually as such, within geographically demarcated spaces (e.g., the analysis of geographical space in Russian medieval texts; Lotman 1990: 171-176), that is within the boundaries of national cultures (cf. Wodak et al. 2009 for differences between culture and state or national culture) This is highly debatable, especially in the face of globalization and the trans-national  
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predominance of cultural forms, such as fashion and music. It is also question-begging whether, if we pursue the syllogism of a cultural centre as resting with cultural traits that partake of a national culture, then at the centre one would encounter folkloric garments and national anthems which would be of greater gravitas than, say, global fashion icons and musical artists, who would lie at the periphery of a national culture.

The topographical model of cultural centre vs. periphery is most pertinent for mapping out the diachronic evolution of texts and semiotic spaces within a semiosphere, however no assumptions may be made a priori about the relative salience of national culture as against global cultural forms. Even though this is a matter for exploration in a different paper, suffice it to point out that if this indeed were the case, that is an inverse relationship held within nationally geographically demarcated cultures between national culture and global culture, then national cultures would lie at the periphery of a global culture which transcends national boundaries and which lies at the centre of the semiosphere. This would also imply that there is only one semiosphere and not different semiospheres, that is one for each nation. A different viewpoint would be furnished if culture were approached from a nation-centric angle in terms of the internal dynamics of the various semiotic spaces and texts that populate the semiosphere (in which instance one would expect that national cultural traits would not lie at the outskirts of the semiosphere, at least not at the farthest outskirts, but closer to the centre, or somewhere between the centre and the periphery). Surely these are hypotheses that remain to be verified through concrete, empirical research. However, the very problematization of whether semiosphere should be approached *prima facie* as globally uniform or as a multiplicity of nationally demarcated semiospheres resonates a more fundamental issue and an ambiguity that occasionally overshadows Lotman's analytic, viz., whether we may refer to a hierarchically stratified space that consists of various semiospheres or it is only valid to lay claim to a uniform semiospheric space that consists of various spheres.

In the *Universe of the Mind* (1990) Lotman alludes to cultural spheres, obviously as part of a wider semiospheric space. Each semiotic sphere has its own language, from simpler to more complex, and from strictly formalized to more fluid. "These languages are not equivalent to one another, but at the same time are mutually interprojected and have various degrees of translatability" (Semenenko 2012: 113). According to Semenenko, meaning is generated in communicative acts precisely through the tension that exists among the various languages that make up the distinctive spheres of a

semiospheric space. "This makes the semiosphere the universal mechanism of meaning generation" (Semenenko 2012: 113). However, Lotman also lays claim to the existence of different semiospheres.

The problem is that if different semiospheres exist, but also different spheres within semiospheres (not to mention the hierarchically inferior semiotic spaces and texts- and even individual signs), then we are confronted either with a *progressus in infinitum* or with a *regressus ad infinitum*. In order to resolve this pro/regress it would be prudent to view the semiospheric space as all-encompassing with regard to the rest categories that make up this overarching and all-inclusive spatial form, at the exclusion of the possibility of the existence of multiple semiospheres which would mitigate the very unificatory (within heterogeneity) task that this construct is summoned to accomplish. And insofar as the semiosphere is equivalent to the spatial condition of the possibility of semiotic existence, anything that lies beyond the semiospheric space is not part of another semiosphere, but of non-meaningful void.

Nöth (2006) interprets the existence of different semiospheres by recourse to Lotman's early distinction between primary and secondary modeling system, where natural language functions as primary modeling system and cultural forms such as art and religion as secondary modeling systems. "This hierarchy of stratified semiospheres begins above the level that is still without any semiotic modeling, that is, at the level of the 'nonsemiotic world of things.' The transition to the first semiosphere leads to 'the system of signs and social languages'; higher semiospheres are those of myth, art, and religion" (Nöth 2006: 259). However, this distinction was later abandoned by Lotman (see Semenenko 2012) and rightly so insofar as "natural language is rarely a system representing the world in a direct or even simple way, if at all (cf. Sebeok 1991: 58-59)" (Nöth 2006: 258). The same ambiguity emerges, as we shall see in due course, in the instance of the role performed by 'boundary' or 'boundaries' that is whether they unite and divide at the same time two semiospheres (in the sense of a semiosphere and its other, still as semiosphere) or different semiotic spaces or spheres within a uniform semiospheric space. Both interpretations are encountered in the relevant literature, however, again, it is more prudent to operationalize the boundary as intra-semiospheric membranes that allow for cross-fertilizations among distinctive semiotic spaces and the texts that make up each semiotic space.

## Semiotic space(s)

If culture is equivalent to the semiosphere (Lotman 1990), then distinctive cultural spaces are equivalent to discrete semiotic spaces within the semiosphere. However, the semiosphere may not just consist in an aggregate of specific spaces (or places as already semiotized spaces), as this empiricist viewpoint would contravene Lotman's fundamental position concerning the role of the semiosphere as "the semiotic space necessary for the existence and functioning of languages" (Lotman 1990: 123). Lotman's conceptualization of the semiosphere displays considerable similarity to Kantian space as pure form of intuition (as will be shown in the ensuing section), while substituting intuition with semiosis *in abstracto*. However, a contradiction is lurking in the background concerning the equivalence between semiosphere and culture. If culture constitutes a secondary modeling mechanism that is hierarchically superior to natural language and if both natural language and culture exist within the same semiosphere, then the same semiosphere may not accommodate both natural language and culture. This antinomial relationship might be resolved by recourse to hierarchically ordered semiospheres. However, positing two semiospheres would generate a new impasse, viz., if there are two generativist mechanisms that are independent of each other, and given that beyond the boundaries of a semiosphere lies semiotic void, how can the one function as primary modeling system for the other? Hence, the assertion "in this hierarchy of levels, the secondary levels are always conceived of as semiotic space with more dimensions in relation to the space of its lower levels" (Nöth 2006: 259) may not concern different semiospheres, but different semiotic spaces within the same all-encompassing semiospheric space. Yet, semiotic spaces within the semiosphere retain their irreducible heterogeneity (Kull, Kotov 2011). If different cultural forms (e.g., fashion, music) constitute different textual systems and if cultural spacing is rendered possible through textual forms, then the contents of a semiosphere are tantamount to textual forms. A cultural space within the semiosphere is the outcome of textualization. At the same time, according to Lotman, the subject is conditioned by a collective intellect whose memory is engraved in texts. "If individual memory is preserved in the mind, collective memory rests on texts" (Semenenko 2012: 117).

The general text concept used by cultural semiotics is suitable to be used by all disciplines involved in the study of cultural phenomena. It is equally applicable to the subject matter studied by philology, history, architecture, art history, musicology, and the new media disciplines. Its utilization contributes to the bridging of disciplinary boundaries and to the formation of a non-metaphorical conceptual basis for research into the structure and function of sign complexes in all media. (Posner 2004: 115).

“Lotman bases his approach on the broad concept of text according to which every artifact with a function and a coded message can be regarded as a text; he notes, however, that every culture selects from the set of these texts a small subset which its members consider important for their cultural identity” (Posner 2004: 118). Lotman’s emphasis on the criteria for textual selection (and, furthermore, of particular signs from distinctive texts) is most pertinent for mapping dynamically sources of textual formation. “Culture is the totality of texts or one complexly constructed text” (Lotman et al. 1978: 233). Hence, strictly speaking from a Lotmanian point of view, what we are primarily concerned with is what may be called modes of (inter)textual co-conditioning between cultural units (artifacts) and subjects (insofar as a text is always another text’s inter-text; Orr 1987: 814). Cultural units are constantly desemiotized, in Lotman’s terms, and resemiotized in discrete communicative contexts. “The removal of text from the usual norms of semiotic meaning and its outward desemiotization are conditions for the semiotic meaning of the text” (Lotman et al. 1978: 242). Insofar as, for Lotman, existence is inconceivable outside of a community we may infer that the very constitution of the subject is textual. In recapitulation, cultural spaces are delimited by texts, while texts construe and maintain the collective intellect on which a subject depends for its textual existence.

### **Markers of spatial orientation (inside/outside, centre/periphery)**

“We know that spatial categories, such as ‘center versus periphery,’ ‘up versus down’ or ‘foreground versus background’ are omnipresent not only in the verbal representation of space but also in the form of metaphors representing abstract concepts in everyday language” (Nöth 2006: 253). Such spatial categories are instrumental in finding one’s way  
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through the hyperreal cultural maze of the semiosphere. Having already clarified what constitutes the inside of a semiospheric space and what amounts to its outside, let us focus on the notions of cultural centre vs. periphery.

The centre of a semiospheric space is equivalent to the cultural spaces and their accompanying (conditioning) textual forms and texts that are responsible for upholding the uniformity of a culture (a culture's metatexts). The periphery consists of non-integral cultural spaces and texts, what we may call a cultural centre's 'underground'. A dominant cultural centre is always in a dialectical relationship with its periphery. In fact it feeds on the periphery, while the periphery constitutes a non-redundant entropic deposit that poses a threat to a cultural kernel inasmuch as the creative condition of its survival through renewal. Indeed, in an era that is marked by excessive connectivity among social actors on an international scale, enabled by increasingly rapid electronic communications, the rate at which texts and cultural units migrate from periphery to center, but also the scale on which such migrations are effected, could be characterized as being of unparalleled proportions compared to previous historical periods. "Cultural dynamics consists in this fact above others: that nucleus and periphery can change places. What used to be central is now peripheral, and vice versa" (Zylko 2001: 402). Lotman's conception of the relationship between the centre and the periphery of a culture and the relative salience of various textual sources in a semiosphere is crucial for mapping out cultural dynamics.

### **Demarcation markers (boundary/ies)**

Lotman employs the notion of the boundary predominantly in two different senses, as what separates the inside of a semiosphere from its outside (Lotman 1990: 131; Lotman 2004: 115), as well as the porous, membrane-like stuff that unites and separates at the same time, but also allows for the communication amongst distinctive semiotic spaces within a semiosphere. Regarding the first definitional prong, as Nöth (2006: 255) remarks: "In Lotman's cultural semiotics, it is the boundary that separates a culture from nonculture or the culture of alterity. It separates the territory of one's own, good and harmonious culture from its bad, chaotic, or even dangerous anticulture". As regards the second definitional prong, Andrews (2003: 18) contends that "membranes are viewed in Lotman's theory as discontinuities. It is only through discontinuity that the illusion of

continuous perception is possible". "In this way, boundary that is defined as an at least double-coded system of translation filters both determines the identity of the system and allows the translation of messages between the different semiotic systems" (Kull, Kotov 2011: 182-183).

Pursuant to the elucidation of the various spatial forms that make up the semiospheric space let us proceed with the examination of how space has been framed by seminal modernist and post-modernist authors, while drawing parallels and points of divergence with Lotmanian theory.

### **Kant's modernist conceptualization of space as pure form of intuition**

According to Kant's transcendental idealism, space and time constitute pure forms of intuition and primary conditions of empirical understanding and knowledge. As against an empirical realist approach that considers the notion of space as an abstraction from empirically lived spaces, transcendental idealism posits space as an a priori condition of empirical intuition and hence as a formal condition for experiencing phenomena that impinge on sensibility.

Space is not an empirical conception which can be abstracted from external experiences. For in order that certain sensations may be related to something external to me (that is to something in a part of space different from that in which I am), and similarly, in order that I may represent them as outside of and next to each other, and consequently as not merely different from each other but also as in different places, the representation of space must already be there as a basis. (Garnett 1939: 166)

This non-empirically dependent representation of space and hence pure and a prioristic form of intuition (*intuitus purus*) that conditions empirical spatial representations is part and parcel of the architectural mechanism of Pure Reason and hence located in the Mind (not necessarily as physical brain). Objects (of any form, including cultural artefacts) are constituted as such through successive acts of synthesis from various functions and faculties of empirical understanding and of Reason, starting with the synthesis of sensible phenomena against the background of the a priori forms of intuition (space and time) and

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moving progressively through the synthetic acts of apperception, transcendental imagination and conscious judgments that allow us to cognize and recognize, roughly speaking, empirical objects as identical throughout their multifarious manifestations in various contexts. An object, according to Kant, may not be known in itself (as *ding-an-sich* and its noumenal counterpart or object *x*) directly and in an unmediated fashion, that is outside of understanding and Reason's own faculties and forms of sensibility. This would amount to what Kant called in the first *Critique* a paralogism of Pure Reason, that is claiming that objects may be known in themselves regardless of the synthetic activities of Reason's faculties that are responsible for synthesizing objects or for objectifying them as such.

The fact that a self, and by extension a culturally constituted self, cannot exist outside of space does not refer to an empirical self that is located in place A at time Y, but to a transcendental self (as carrier of the transcendental apparatus of Reason) that conditions the empirical self. The transcendental self is equipped with pure forms of sensibility "in so far as they are presupposed in the sensation of things and thus cannot be abstracted from outer sensations" (Caygill 2000: 373) and space is an integral part of these conditions. "They are pure in that they cannot be derived from experience, a priori in that they are antecedent to any and every act of thinking, formal in that they order the manifold of appearance, and intuitions in so far as their manner of ordering the matter of sensibility is distinct from that of a concept (they co-ordinate but do not subsume their manifold)" (Caygill 2000: 374).

If an empirical self is responsible for producing texts and other objects of empirical understanding, this is because it is dependent on a transcendental self who is the carrier of the faculties of Pure Reason (an 'I/me' dialectic that survived through the aeons, reaching up to existential phenomenology). Space is "given to the mind prior to all perceptions" (Garnett 1939: 166). Hence, place and cultural spaces are dependent for their existence on space as pure form of sensibility and integral part of empirical understanding. This conceptualization of space is equivalent to a pure representation insofar as in order to function as a *a priori* form it must not be dependent on sensible content. However, in order to function it requires sensible content. Sensible content is sensible *for* a pure form of sensibility, inasmuch as space as form of sensibility is conditioning vis-a-vis *its* sensible content. In the Kantian sense, space as a priori form is

devoid of content, while the transcendental self to whom this pure form of sensibility belongs may be said to live in a 'void' or empty space (metaphorically speaking).

### **Why the semiosphere is and is not modernist**

The subjugation of the empirical self and its lived spatial reality to the atemporal transcendental subject that is the carrier of the faculties of Pure Reason and hence the former's *sine qua non* has been vehemently criticized by post-modernists on various grounds.

A major and still open ground of ongoing contestation revolves around the possibility of so-called a priori synthetic judgments. In short, a priori synthetic judgments are judgments of empirical understanding, yet whose nature is non-empirically binding. Obviously, in any empirical instance involving other than analytical judgments (e.g., geometrical axioms), due to the cultural relativity and radical situatedness of the subjects that confer judgments about facts-of-the-world, the content and the value of these judgments are likely to vary, thus rendering the a prioristic validity of such judgments particularly question-begging. Judgments of empirical understanding are unquestionably synthetic (from a Kantian point of view) insofar as they consist of subsuming perceptual phenomena under categories of empirical knowledge (e.g., visual appearance X under the empirical category of table-cloth), however the inter-subjectively uniform subsumption of visual phenomenon X under empirical category Y is a subject of cultural agreement and hence not a priori given (in the same manner as forms of pure intuition, that is space and time, are given a priori to the cognizing subject).

If there is no a priori legitimacy in empirical judgments and if empirical judgments are dependent on agreement among members of interpretive communities, then what kind of criteria of legitimacy may be furnished by Pure Reason? "If I am unable to say not only that this A is the sun and this B is a stone but also that this B is at least a body, all the universal and necessary laws that the concepts of the pure intellect guarantee me are worth nothing, because they could refer to any datum of experience" (Eco 2000: 73). "It's always that same modern thing, where we're imposing forms on the world by not being informed by the world" (Clarke 2005: 19). And if the echelons of Reason are always functional for a cognizing subject *qua* situated observer who is by default constrained by culturally constituted interpretative categories for cognizing objects and for producing

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cultural artefacts, then space is not a pure form of intuition, as lower-ranking function of a transcendental subject's apparatus, but of an always already culturally pre-constituted empirical self. If the subject is first and foremost empirical and culturally constituted, then space may also be viewed as a formal condition for cognizing culture, while recognizing one's a priori cultural spacing. In this sense, the semiosphere is certainly not Kantian and hence non-modern, but also more akin to a culturally relativistic post-modern conceptualization. However, it does retain pre post-modernist vestiges in its meta-theoretical nucleus, viz., its constituting a formal condition of cultural production that is not the sum of its parts and hence being posited as a formal condition of the possibility of cultural production which is akin to the Kantian conceptualization.

### **Post-modernist conceptions of space, discursivity and subjectivity: Foucault and Deleuze in focus**

#### **Lotman vs. Foucault**

The production of knowledge as discourse walks hand in hand with power relations for Foucault. "While the human subject is placed in relations of production and signification, he is equally placed in power relations which are very complex" (Foucault 1982: 778). This constitutes a most divergent point of departure in the theorization of how knowledge is produced between modernism and post-modernism. Hence, whereas Kant was mostly concerned with the self-generating epistemic powers of Reason, Foucault is concerned more with the social forces that are conducive to the consolidation and normalization of certain discursive formations at the expense of others. In this context space and discourse are inextricably linked. "The problematics of power encounters spatial organization. Foucault is not generally interested in matters of geography, although he confesses in an interview that his genealogy of knowledge is tied to the techniques and strategies of power, which are deployed through the distribution, delimitation, and control of territories and the organization of domains, leading to a kind of geopolitics" (Lagopoulos 2010: 215). Of course, since Foucault's time, cultural geography "which concentrates upon the ways in which space, place and the environment participate in an unfolding dialogue of meaning" (Shurmer-Smith 2002: 3) has become an entrenched field in cultural studies.

The concept of epistemological space initially delineates a doubling of language, thought, or knowledge by their respective conditions of possibility, which transforms them from linear entities to be interpreted, to exterior “depths” demanding an “archaeological” analysis. Later on Foucault’s concept of space would be further elaborated to supplement a “deep”, “outside” doubling of language, thought and knowledge, by practices, power relations, and material spatial environments. This elaborated concept of space then makes up a *dispositif* (or *apparatus*) of mutually enabling spatial practices. (West-Pavlov 2009: 121).

Lotman does share the genealogical methodological principle that underpins Foucault’s ‘archaeology’, however he does not emphasize the importance of power relations in the production of knowledge and when he refers fleetingly to such relations (e.g., in Lotman 2004) he does not regard them as a proper subject of semiotic analysis (see Schönle 2001: 68-69). He considers the cultural centre in the dialectic between centre and periphery as more of a necessary condition for the avoidance of a culture’s disintegration, rather than the outcome of stabilizing forces in a power play. Concomitantly, Lotman’s conception of the textual constitution of the subject as a direct reflex of a collective mind does display similarities with Foucault’s perspective on the formation of the subject as the outcome of internalization of various discourses, albeit not focusing on how power mechanisms function at the exclusion of some discourses from the centre of a cultural semiospheric space. In this respect Lotman’s semiosphere may be labeled as post-modernist, insofar as it does recognize the discursive constitution of the subject, inasmuch as not post-modernist, insofar as it does not emphasize the power mechanisms that are responsible for the ‘hegemonic’ imposition of which codes, texts, signs give rise to the cultural spaces that make up the centre of a cultural semiospheric space.

Furthermore, whereas Lotman posits the existence of a collective intellect and subscribes to the theory of consciousness as well as to a unified conceptualization of the semiosphere, in which case modernist vestiges are retained in the form of an essentializing knowing subject and a totalizing outlook to the formation of culture (with the proviso of the recognition of heterogeneity as intra-semiospheric organizational principle), Foucault neither endorses the primacy of the subject in knowledge formation, nor the notion of a collective intellect. “In *The Order of Things*, Foucault undermines our

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tendency to think that each of us is a self-sufficient, meaning-giving cogito by recounting the history of the construction of the Cartesian subject and the Kantian agent” (Dreyfus 2004). Above all, he vehemently denounces any validity in attempts at unifying distinctive discursive practices under a totalizing or archi-discourse. Yet, by virtue of acknowledging the influence power structures play in the relative stability and dominance of certain discursive formations, we are certainly not flawed in at least provisionally lending credence to the hypothesis that similar power mechanisms are at play in an attempt to maintain a unifying thread that cuts across different discursive formations, inasmuch as in upholding the boundaries that separate and unite different discourses, or, in Lotman’s terms, in determining which discourses populate the centre and which the periphery of a culture. Moreover, Lotman’s stipulation that a semiotic space and its attendant language may be produced by recourse to a given code and that in a semiospheric space more than one codes are likely to co-exist, each being irreducible to each other, resonates Foucault’s conceptualization of the co-existence of irreducible discursive formations. The difference is that Foucault would be in principle antipathetic to the endorsement of the structuralist conception of code as generativist mechanism (even though it must be borne into mind that such generativism, for Lotman, concerns the modeling capacity of semiotics, rather than an inherent property of a semiotic space, in which case it is a methodological concept, rather than ontological and hence not likely to be dissonant with Foucault’s wider anti-ontological posture).

Another crucial difference between the Foucauldian conception of spatiality and the relationship between spatial metaphors and the production of subjectivity concerns Lotman’s insistence on the existence of a cultural centre. This spatial metaphor connotes the existence of a centralized command-line or, at least, a virtual network of cultural mediators (akin to a *kyberneion*) who issue commands as to which codes and texts will populate the cultural centre in each stage of a semiosphere’s evolution. Regardless of whether robust empirical verification of this speculative remark is pending, Foucault, at least in his post-panopticon (aka *Discipline and Punish*) writings, endorses a completely different outlook to the production of culture in terms of a matrixial and decentralized organization. “The *dispositif* is spread out, sprawling, multidimensional, enveloping extensions both in space and time, interconnecting, without a clear centre or commanding instance” (West-Pavlov 2009: 150).

## Lotman vs. Deleuze (& Guattari)

The semiosphere begins to seriously 'lose on post-modernist points' once compared and contrasted with Deleuze (& Guattari's) conception of 'territory'. Despite the fact that overall Lotman's cultural theory wavers between structuralism (e.g., binarism, hierarchical structures) and post-structuralism (e.g., fluid boundaries among codes and semiotic spaces, not strictly reducible to binarist pairs), clinging onto the possibility of a hierarchical ordering of semiotic spaces and texts in the determination of a cultural centre (driven by an obscure 'necessity' for upholding the uniformity of a culture, also reflected in Andrews' [2003: 109] contention that a culture always selects a set of texts as metatexts which obliterates any human agency from the 'selection' process) is in marked contrast with the *emancipatory* (from *state-regulated*, striated-space), deterritorializing, rhizomatic and non-arborescent discursive structures envisioned by Deleuze & Guattari in the two volumes of *Capitalism & Schizophrenia* (but also in individual works by Deleuze and Guattari).

Deleuze's reflection on space is "rhizomatic" rather than "arborescent". Deleuze's theory of space is not built like a tree, with a central hierarchical trunk from which subordinated 'branches' then spread out, themselves branching off into smaller twig-like subtopics. Rather, his theory of space seems to develop horizontally, spreading out tendrils and runner-shoots which then cross each other at some later point, forming a dense web of allusions and interconnections. (West-Pavlov 2009: 171)

This fundamental premise of Deleuze and Guattari's post-modernist (aka post-hierarchical) theorization of spatial organization as an attempt to endorse the originary flux of becoming without reducing it to binary structures is in stark contrast to the Lotmanian semiosphere which does retain hierarchical structuring and binarism as a fundamental form of organization of a semiotic universe (for example, see Lotman 1990: 124: "Binarism and asymmetry are the two rules binding any semiotic system"). "Deleuze and Guattari eschew the mere inversion of binary hierarchies for the simple reason that such binaries are from the outset bound into the underlying economy of absence and presence. It is this fundamental binary which they wish to eradicate, instead proposing

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flow as an option towards which we would do well to move" (West-Pavlov 2009: 178). However, despite the fact that binarism is recruited by Lotman in the analysis of structures of literary works, in principle and on various instances throughout his writings the attempt to move beyond binarism, at least as fundamental form of semiotic organization, is also evident. Thus, when he talks about mapping dynamic processes whereby a semiospheric space changes, he includes the observer to whom a configuration of semiospheric space appears as such at a certain point in time. The descriptive crystallizations of semiospheric configurations follow a far from tidy binarist structural logic. However, Lotman does not dispense with binarism altogether, as against Deleuze & Guattari.

For Deleuze & Guattari space is first and foremost process, as territorialization. Territory, as this or that space (place), is the outcome of the process of territorialization. Territorialization is not grounded in a pre-given container, as seems to be the case with the semiosphere which does constitute (even metaphorically) a sort of Newtonian container wherein change takes place. "It is not that there is a space that is then qualified; rather, forces produce qualities and qualities produce fields or spaces, 'blocs of becoming' (West-Pavlov 2009: 181). Rather, territories are metaphorical constructs that seek to encapsulate the outcome of a non-ground as process of territorialization. Again, this should be marked as a fundamental distinction between Lotman's pre post-modernist and Deleuze & Guattari's post-modernist account of spacing. "Territoriality is thus a process which creates insides and outsides, limits, zones, unevenness" (West-Pavlov 2009: 180-181). One might say that if Deleuze & Guattari were to rewrite the semiosphere they would probably characterize it as the outcome of the process of semiosis, rather than a hyper-space wherein semiosis is contained. However, the very fluid process of spacing within the semiosphere and the constantly shifting boundaries among cultural spaces, in Lotman's terms, do exhibit considerable similarities with the constant process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization that is put forward by Deleuze & Guattari. "Territoriality takes pre-existing flows, the fluid materiality of being in itself in its state of becoming, and begins to make semi-formalized domains out of it. These domains are by no means permanent. They may dissolve once again back into the flux of being, only to be reformed in another form, in another place, by the desiring attraction and conjunction of several elements" (West-Pavlov 2009: 181).

At this juncture it is also prudent to make a detour towards the earlier analysis on Kant's conceptualization of space and read Deleuze & Guattari's concept of territorialization under a modernist prism, so to speak. In these terms, whereas for Kant the allocation of space to empirical phenomena would be incumbent on a pure form of sensibility as space (as pure representation), for Deleuze & Guattari the very possibility of producing a pure form of sensibility is incumbent on the flux of matter (obviously a paralogism, in Kantian terms). This radical materialist account that echoes Heraclitus' flux seems to constitute a lapse to pre-Kantian empiricism, against which Kant sought to argue. In fact, Deleuze has been particularly pre-occupied with a return to the *ding-an-sich* (as field of intensities) which, according to Kant, is not knowable as such, but only by recourse to the categories of empirical understanding which depend on how objects appear to space and time as pure forms of sensibility. Surely this is an argument that may not be fully tackled within the confines of this paper. However, in order to fully appreciate the differences and perhaps points of intersection between Lotman and post-modernism, we should at least take into account the different tasks that Kant's first *Critique* and Deleuze & Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* sought to accomplish. Thus, whereas the former sought to address epistemological issues and to furnish primary conditions for the possibility of knowledge, the latter were concerned with the possibility of producing emancipatory discourses (e.g., endorsing the singular assemblages that emerge in the flux of schizophrenic discourses as modeling system) that would eschew the totalizing power of striated state-space.

"Smooth space, the "territoriality" of nomadic movement, is not marked by the pre-formed routes of roads, canals and fences which are characteristic of the state, and of the institutionalized attempts to control and subjugate the turbulences of water in the landscape [...] Smooth space is explored without calculation, without being quantified, it is constituted as a body of "rhizomatiques" which are explored in the moment of travelling" (West-Pavlov 2009: 182).

Smooth space, as against semiospheric space, is not demarcated by boundaries, however flexible and membrane-like these boundaries may be, but by singular and non-retraceable 'lines of flight'. Hard as it may be to argue for which modeling metaphor (i.e., Lotman's membranes vs. Deleuze and Guattari's lines of flight) is more apt for the semiosphere post-modernist? By George Rossolatos

encapsulating the non-regimented process of constant reterritorialization, indubitably they both point to the multi-directional cross-fertilizations that take place in cultural hyperspace, with the difference that whereas for the former this taking-place is already situated within the container of the semiosphere, for the latter 'it takes place' in the pure extra-semiospheric void that in fact appears to be *conditioning* the very conceptualization of a semiosphere. "Deleuze and Guattari advocate the construction of nomadic 'lines of flight' in order to experiment with implicit connections currently imperceptible to the subject that could be actualised into new realities" (Lorraine 2005: 163). "A nomadic style of subjectivity consists in the unfolding of patterns that are not referred to an external plan of organisation or conventional notions of space and time, but rather evolve from the force of patterns immanent to the individual in its specific milieu" (Lorraine 2005: 171).

The generation of cultural spaces, from a Deleuzian point of view, entails a prioritization of the production of non consciousness-centric differences, and their non-reduction to binarist pairs. This stance is indicative of the wider polemic that Deleuze launched against Hegelian dialectics as the work of 'negative theology' (see Rossolatos 1995) cloaked under the progressive evolution of *Geist*. On the contrary, Deleuze endorses a purely differential becoming (as originally conceived by Heraclitus), while explicitly positing that any form of oppositional thinking, and hence binarism, constitutes an arbitrary imposition which must be given up in favor of situational vectors that map relative positions and the co-evolution between subject and its natural surroundings (as a proxy to the potential encapsulation of presence in its presencing prior to its succumbing to the thanatographical repetition of re-presentation; see Rossolatos 1995). "Difference, not opposition, is the real movement of thought. It is the principle or origin of the dialectic. For this reason, Deleuze writes, "the negative expires at the gates of being. Opposition ceases its labor and difference begins its play" (Hughes 2009: 49).

Sedentary distribution is the thinking of the 'classical' world (romantic revolt also belongs to this world). Deleuze calls such a thinking the 'philosophy of representation'. The authority which it obeys is the principle of identity, whose mark is found in the iterative prefix RE- of the word 'representation'. Every present must be re-presented, in order that it may be re-discovered as the same; it follows that in this philosophy the unknown is only ever a not-yet-recognised

known, that to learn is to remember, that to encounter is to meet again, that to leave is to return, etc. What eludes this rationalism, then, is difference as such. The difference between discovery and rediscovery is the gap which separates an experience from its reiteration - whence the problem of repetition. (Descombes 1998: 154)

If post-modernity has been identified with the movement of the so-called 'philosophy of difference' and Deleuze & Guattari constitute most prominent representatives, and if the repercussions of the dismantling of consciousness and oppositional thinking as prototypical concepts of the Western philosophical tradition afforded to open up new ways of theorizing space, then Lotman's semiosphere, by virtue of clinging onto binarism and consciousness as integral parts of the semiosphere, may hardly be approached as a post-modernist concept. And yet, insofar as the semiosphere does include a level of dynamism in its constant mutations that is similar to the process of territorialization, it may be said to include facets of the philosophy of difference.

In conclusion, Lotman oscillates constantly between modernity and post-modernity in an attempt to salvage (perhaps) the tradition from the lavaic overflow of the philosophy of difference, while recognizing that if a sufficient account of the formative mechanisms of culture is to be yielded, then we have to move towards post-modernity.

In an attempt to extend Deleuze's anti-oppositional thinking and with view to reconciling it with the Lotmanian semiospheric conception, I would be inclined to argue that they both converge on the pre-Socratic philosopher's Empedocles conception of the 'sphere'. Based on Empedocles' cosmogonical poem (at least the fragments that have been bequeathed to us), phenomena appear through the interplay between the antagonizing forces of Love (*Filotes*) and Strife/Hatred (*Neikos*). These forces are situated at the level of pure becoming, that is the irreducible Many (or sensory manifold in the context of the Kantian *Transcendental Aesthetic*). In fact, the *One* emerges from the *Many*, in contrast to monistic cosmogonical accounts (e.g., Parmenides). The cosmos is conceived in the form of a sphere whose continent is originally stable thanks to the predominance of the forces of Love (hence its denomination as sphere of Love by Guthrie 1980: 166). Once Strife enters the sphere, the once stabilized elements re-enter a trajectory of de-territorialization (as Deleuze would put it). Love intervenes once again, thus culminating in the elements' stabilizing anew in determinate spaces within the

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sphere (they become re-territorialized). Indeed, the similarities in the employment of the spheric metaphor between Lotman and Empedocles are striking, inasmuch as between Deleuze's processes of de-territorialization and re-territorialization (which are akin to Lotman's de- and re-semiotization; see Section 2) and Empedocles' conception of the constant re-organization of the Sphere's space in the context of the conflicting forces of Love and Strife (see Rossolatos 1997).

In this sense, neither Lotman, nor Deleuze are post-modernists, but philosophers of becoming, inasmuch as Heraclitus was a philosopher of becoming, long before his appropriation by Hegel or Marx. Lotman's attempt to theorize culture through a philosophical prism of becoming urged him to revert to such primordial concepts as the sphere in order to transfer us *metaphorically* to a space that is neither dependent on Reason, nor the outcome of thinking processes, but, on the contrary, where Reason, as aspect of cultural production, is machinically assembled with a movement that underlies it and that may be mapped out not strictly through binarist pairs, but as lines of flight and as constantly shifting boundaries (membranes) among provisionally crystallized and constantly shifting semiospheric spaces.

Finally, a point of intersection between Deleuzian materialist ontology and the semiosphere may be discerned in terms of what, most cryptically, has been termed by Lotman as the semiosphere's constituting the minimal unit of analysis: "The unit of semiosis, the smallest functioning mechanism, is not the separate language, but the whole semiotic space of the culture in question. This is the space we term the semiosphere" (Lotman 1990: 125) One would expect that semiosphere, in its all-encompassing capacity vis-à-vis enunciators, texts and individual signs, would be, and has been interpreted repeatedly (cf. Section 2) as being, the plenum of all possible units making up a culture, rather than the minimal unit of analysis. A tentative answer to this paradoxical remark is that insofar as semiosphere includes not only what is manifested as the outcome of territorialization, but the very event (in Deleuzian terms, as a theoretical freeze-frame on the first stages of the formation of empirical concepts according to Kant's first *Critique*) where a stimulus (or a nano-particle of the primary hylean flux) impacts on the sensory apparatus of a subject (the aleatoric point of the encounter that allows for the actualization of signification, yet which, precisely as encounter, always rests in virtuality; cf. Hughes 2009: 143), then semiosphere is also the subject of scrutiny. In short, unless we are capable of accounting for shifts in the materiality of becoming in the first place,

how can we ensure adequacy in any account concerning the communicative sublation whereby the stimulus is appropriated through signs and interpretants that make up a textual edifice? Deleuze seeks constantly to return to this primary *event* as the heart of the paralogically noumenal ding-an-sich that is retained in Lotman's semiosphere as the impossible to be accounted for and at the same time reason for positing the semiosphere as minimal unit of cultural signification.

But doesn't this parallel, one might ponder, reflect more accurately the notion of biosphere and natural space rather than semiosphere and cultural space? Insofar as Deleuze's conception of territorialization does not make this crude distinction or, rather, precedes this distinction (which would merely amount to re-lapsing into a binarist rationale as an after-shock of territorialization), then the parallel not only is justified, but mandatory. Deleuze, inasmuch as Lotman, furnish modeling systems that are outcomes of 'thought-in-becoming', where becoming is viewed from a spatial point of view as process of territorialization (Deleuze) -the spacing that gives space (and let it be noted that in French *donner lieu* [giving space] is synonymous with creating)- or emerging semiotic spaces in a semiosphere, where a semiosphere, just like a territory, is "superabstract and infraconcrete" (Massumi 1996: 99) and hence may be approached at the same time as the minimal unit of analysis inasmuch as the all-encompassing hyperspace that conditions existentially its flow of becoming.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper an attempt was made at shedding light on points of divergence and convergence between Lotman's concept of the semiosphere and seminal modernist and post-modernist conceptualizations of space, the production of discourse and subjectivity. Overall, the semiosphere was found to be rather pre-post-modernist in its undue focus on power relations as constitutive of discursive formations on which the notion of subjectivity is incumbent (compared with Foucault), but also in its (quasi)adherence on binarism and the hierarchical organization of meaning within a semiospheric space. However, these points of divergence do not necessarily render the semiosphere modernist *stricto sensu*. In an attempt to encapsulate multi-directional and multi-faceted becoming within a semiospheric space, Lotman's theory was found to be similar in various salient facets to Deleuze and Guattari's process of territorialization, albeit

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different in its retention of a 'container' rationale. Certainly the scrutinized facets are not exhaustive with regard to the vast conceptual spectrum where such differences and similarities may be pinpointed, however they attain to point out relevant directions whereby the semiosphere may be dialogically extended and enriched with view to finding its proper 'metaspace' amidst the post-modern vernacular.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/html/paper\\_heidandfoucault.html](http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~hdreyfus/html/paper_heidandfoucault.html)

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.academia.edu/2050984/On\\_Hegelian\\_Absolute\\_Spirit\\_paper\\_1995](http://www.academia.edu/2050984/On_Hegelian_Absolute_Spirit_paper_1995)

<sup>10</sup> [https://www.academia.edu/2050988/Lectures\\_and\\_lecture\\_notes\\_on\\_Presocratic\\_philosophers\\_1997](https://www.academia.edu/2050988/Lectures_and_lecture_notes_on_Presocratic_philosophers_1997)