USE OF THESES

This copy is supplied for purposes of private study and research only. Passages from the thesis may not be copied or closely paraphrased without the written consent of the author.
THEATRE OF THE TIMES OF SOCRATES,
LUNIN AND NERO: TIME AND SPACE IN
EDVARD RADZINSKII’S TRILOGY

THEATRE OF THE TIMES ...

by

Subhash Jaireth

A thesis submitted for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the
Australian National University, Canberra

March 1996
STATEMENT

The work embodied in this thesis has not previously been submitted for any other degree or diploma and is my own original work.

Subhash Jaireth
CONTENTS

ABSTRACT vi
PREFACE viii

INTRODUCTION 1

CHAPTER 1 THE SCENE 10
The ‘Thaw’ 11
Brezhnev Strikes Back 14
Drama and Theatre in the Sixties and the Seventies 20
Radzinskii and His Plays 27
Concluding Remarks 37

CHAPTER 2 THE CHRONOTOPE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN LITERARY NARRATIVES 39
What is a Chronotope? 40
Chronotope as a Plot- Constitutive Device 41
Chronotope as a Time- Visualising Device 42
The Generic Chronotope 44
Chronotopes and the Portrayal of Human Beings in Literary Narratives 47
Literary and Real Chronotopes: The Relation between Literature and Reality 51
Axiological Dimension of Chronotopes 55
Chronotope and its Difference with the Formalistic ‘Device’ and ‘Motif’ 56
Chronotope and the Concepts of Metaphor, Theme and Topos 63
Concluding Remarks 65

CHAPTER 3 TIME, SPACE AND THE MEDIATING NARRATOR IN DRAMA 68
What is a Dramatic Text? 69
Dramatic versus Novelistic Texts 71
The Voice of the Author or Narrator in Dramatic Texts 72
The Nature of Time and Space in Dramatic Texts 74
The Nature of Time in Dramatic Texts 75
The Nature of Space in Dramatic Texts  78
The Convention on the Unity of Time and Space in Dramatic Texts  79
Novelisation of Drama  81
Framing Devices of Dramatic Texts  83
Novelisation of Plays in the Trilogy Theatre of the Times ...  84
The Mediating Narrator in Theatre of the Times ...  85
Concluding Remarks  90

CHAPTER 4  BIOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL AND CRISIS TIMES IN THEATRE OF THE TIMES ...  92
Bakhtinian Notion about the Forms of Time in Literary Narratives  92
The Present and Past Time Sequences  95
The Present and Past Times in Dialogues with Socrates  95
The Fusion of Present and Past Times in Lunin ...  97
How Seneca Dies Twice?  101
Narrative Time as Biographical Time  103
Narrative Time as Historical Time  108
Narrative Time as Crisis Time  112
Concluding Remarks  116

CHAPTER 5  THE FEAST-THE TRIAL-THE PRISON: RE-PRESENTING SOCRATES AND HIS TIMES  119
The Feast  120
The Show-Trial of Socrates  121
The Prison  124
The Chronotopes of the Acropolis and the Prison and their Time-Visualising Function  127
The Image of Socrates in Dialogues with Socrates  130
Concluding Remarks  133

CHAPTER 6  DEATH AFTER THE BALL: THE CHRONOTOPE OF THE PRISON AND THE MASKED-BALL IN LUNIN ...  135
The Chronotope of the Prison  136
The Real Chronotope of the Masked-Ball  142
The Chronotope of the Masked-Ball in Lunin ...  148
Multiple Role Playing  153
Concluding Remarks  158
CHAPTER 7  NERO'S CIRCUS: THE CHRONOTOPE OF THE CIRCUS-THEATRE  

The Real and Literary Chronotopes of the Theatre and the Circus  
162
The Real Chronotopes of the Theatre and the Circus in Nero’s Rome  
163
The Chronotope of the Circus-Theatre in Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca  
172
The ‘Play within a Play’ Structure  
174
Multiple Role Playing and Metamorphoses  
177
Concluding Remarks  
188

CHAPTER 8  SOCRATES, LUNIN AND SENeca AS POSITIVE HEROES  

Chronotopes of the ‘Creating’ and the ‘Created’ Worlds  
191
Arrests, Prisons, Concentration Camps, and Show-Trials  
193
Conventions of the Soviet Realist Theatre  
196
‘Marx and Lenin were Socratic’  
198
Mikhail Lunin - ‘The Invincible Hero’  
204
Seneca - Was He a Conformist or a Helpless Philosopher?  
‘History, and How it is Written ?  
212
219
224
226

CONCLUSIONS  

REFERENCES  

230
237
ABSTRACT

Between 1969 and 1980 Edvard Radzinskii wrote three ‘historico-political’ plays which were later published as a trilogy entitled Theatre of the Times.... This thesis attempts to unravel the nature of time in the trilogy and invokes Mikhail Bakhtin’s notion about the forms of time and the chronotope in literary narratives to do that. Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope provides a suitable strategy for reading a trilogy that aims to re-present ‘real’ time, place and human beings. The concept also provides a vantage point from where the trilogy can be read both from within the time-space of its main protagonists and from that of its author, readers, performers and spectators.

Both Dialogues with Socrates and Lunin... are structured around the chronotope of the prison which is associated with the chronotope of the acropolis in Dialogues with Socrates and with the chronotope of the masked-ball in Lunin.... In Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca the circus-theatre functions as the main chronotope. All these chronotopes serve as plot-constitutive devices and provide appropriate space in which the lives and times of the main protagonists can be adequately re-presented. However, the use of the concept of the chronotope in reading the trilogy does not imply that it can be read meaningfully only from within the time-space of its protagonists. The trilogy reconstructs the historical time-space but also engages in a substantial way with contemporary Soviet reality. This is achieved through an interaction between literary and real chronotopes. There is little doubt that most Soviet readers, performers and spectators negotiated the chronotopes of the prison and the circus-theatre and the motifs of show-trial and execution from within their own time-space, their own historical experience. The thesis discusses a large number of reviews published in Soviet media to show that most critics read the trilogy from within the discourses about positive hero and socialist realism, because of which Socrates and Lunin were also turned into positive heroes.

One of the most intriguing aspect of the three plays is the ‘play within a play’ structure which achieves its maximum potential in the final play of the trilogy where it is combined with the theme of metamorphoses and multiple role playing. The trilogy, like Pirandello’s trilogy about theatre, is able to foreground its own theatricality and explore the role of theatricality and role playing in and outside theatre. In Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca the boundary between role playing in life and in theatre becomes so blurred that history begins to resemble the writing and staging of a play.
Apart from exploring the nature of theatricality, the trilogy also questions the conventions of its genre. The three plays do not follow the conventional framing devices employed by dramatic texts and foreground the presence of a mediating narrator. This 'novelisation', is more evident in Lunin... in which the frequent use of verbs in the past tense in the extra-dialogic text can be linked to the presence of a mediating narrator.
PREFACE

This thesis uses a large number of publications in Russian. In referring to these publications the transliteration system of British Standards Institute is followed, although diacritical marks are avoided. Reference to less well-known Russian-language publications is made in English and Russian with Russian titles in square brackets.

All quotations from Russian sources are produced in Russian. In quoting from Edvard Radzinskii’s trilogy the text from the anthology Theatre [Teatr] published in 1986 is used. The page number included in a square bracket with the quotation refers to this edition. Reference material in the text, footnotes and bibliography follow the guidelines of the 1977 MLA handbook.

The thesis uses more than one work by Bakhtin and Shklovskii. The first reference to each of their work in the footnotes is produced in full but in subsequent references an abbreviated version of the title is used. The abbreviations for Bakhtin’s works are:

DiN       Discourse in the Novel [Слово в Романе].
FTCN      Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes on Historical Poetics [Формы Времени и Хронотопа в Романе: очерки по исторической поэтике].
NOUb      The Novel of Upbringing and Its Role in the History of Realism [Роман воспитания и его значение в истории реализма].

The abbreviations of Shklovskii’s works are:

AD        Art as a Device [Искусство как прием].
RPDSO      The Relation of Plot-Construction Devices with General Stylistic Devices [Связь приемов сюжетосложения с общими приемами стиля].

I am grateful to the Australian National University which awarded me a scholarship to undertake this work. I was also fortunate to be given a grant under the Australian National University and the Moscow State University exchange program which helped me to spend two months in Moscow.

It is hard to acknowledge in a proper way the effort made by supervisors of Ph.D students. I am lucky that Rosh Ireland agreed to supervise this work and the fact that we
both equally admire Edvard Radzinskii’s drama proved to be a blessing. His enthusiasm mixed with doses of skepticism always kept me on track. I am very grateful to him for being my guide and navigator.

I am indebted to Dr. Gillian Russell who read through a number of drafts of the thesis and her comments were extremely useful. Prof. Elizabeth Perkins in the English Department of James Cook University and Dr. Geoffrey Borny in the Australian National University were the other two members of the panel to whom I am grateful for their comments. Several chapters of this thesis were read by a number of people in the campus, who made valuable suggestions and comments. Some of these kind friends are Jon Mee, David Windsor, Roger Hillman, Gino Moliterno and Elio Gatti. All members of the department of Modern European Languages in particular of the Russian section of the department were very considerate, accommodating and helpful.

During my stay in Moscow Prof. Boris Bugrov in the Moscow State University was my supervisor who helped me to search new material. I am grateful to the workers of various Moscow libraries and Theatre museums and archives in particular Ekaterina Kazakova, one of the curators of the Bakhruhchin Theatre Museum, for supplying copies of archival material and photographs. The Ostankino channel of the Moscow TV was very kind to provide a copy of a documentary film about Edvard Radzinskii. I am very obliged to Edvard Radzinskii himself who found time to talk to me and gave me copies and video recording of his plays.

I am very grateful to Johanna Sutherland, my partner who not only supported my decision to change my career from Geology to Russian literature but who also provided moral and financial support without which this work would not have been completed. The time spent on my thesis includes that which I could have spent with my daughter and son, playing with them or listening to their stories. They were good to me and I hope I can compensate for the lost time.
INTRODUCTION

Although the purpose of this thesis can be described as interpretative, it is more than that, first of all because the meaning which I attach to the notion of interpretation is broader than that usually assumed in literary analysis. My approach can be described to be close to that suggested in Gadamer's hermeneutics, which is significantly different from that of traditional hermeneutics. William Outhwaite describes the difference between the two by noting that 'traditional hermeneutics postulates a subject who aims to understand an object (text, a social practice, or whatever) as it is in itself. This means that the subject must be open-minded and unprejudiced as possible, approaching the object without preconceptions.'\(^1\) In Gadamer's hermeneutics, by contrast, 'preconceptions or prejudices are what make understanding possible in the first place.'\(^2\) Gadamer stresses the importance of historical situatedness in approaching, interpreting and understanding an object. According to him, 'understanding of a text arises out of our position in a historical tradition, and this is in fact our link with the historical influence or effectivity of the text itself.'\(^3\)

Bakhtin also emphasises the situatedness of understanding of a text when he notes that,

Бесценное понимание невозможно. Нельзя разделить понимание и оценку: они одновременны и составляют единий целостный акт. Понимающий подходит к произведению со своим, уже сложившимся мировоззрением, со своей точки зрения, со своих позиций. Эти позиции в известном мере определяют его оценку, но сами они при этом не остаются неизменным: они подвергаются воздействию произведения, которое всегда носит нечто новое.\(^4\)

Thus understanding of a text cannot be separated from its evaluation and is achieved from a point of view or a vantage point. However, this vantage point is not abstract but located within specific time-space:

---


\(^2\) Outhwaite, p. 25.

\(^3\) Outhwaite, p. 25.

The chronotopic nature of understanding, its situatedness in time-space constitutes what Bakhtin calls the historical and personalised nature of understanding in literature:

Thus the reading of this trilogy is my reading; it is historical and personalised not only because it is undertaken from within my specific time-space but also because it does not overlook the time-space within which these plays were written, performed and seen.

My preconceptions and prejudices are reflected not only in choosing Radzinskii’s trilogy but also in the choice of a particular reading strategy. The act of choosing and the choice, however, are to a large extent determined by the social and cultural time-space from which I as a reading and speaking subject interact with these texts.

I would like to call my interaction with these texts negotiation, instead of interpretation, although in this process I have interpreted and evaluated them. This is because I agree with Bakhtin’s notion of a ‘dialogic communication’ with the ‘object’ of analysis and have tried to see these texts as the sites of location and contestation of different voices through which they are re-created. In Bakhtin’s dialogic communication the object of analysis does not become a target isolated from the voices of speaking and listening subjects. The object:

... в процессе диалогического общения с ним превращается в субъект (другое я). 7
(emphasis in the original)

In my reading I also have tried not to reduce the three plays into innate ‘objects’ of analysis and interpretation but to see in and through them the presence of historically real people who are created by these texts and who create them.

**************

5 Mikhail Bakhtin, FN, 1986, p. 357.
7 Mikhail Bakhtin, FN, 1986, p. 369.
If my preconceptions are an essential part of this project, let me begin by spelling them out. The first question which needs to be answered is why I chose to study Radzinskii’s plays and not those by any of the other equally well-known authors such as Arbuzov, Rozov, Shvarts, Zorin, Vampilov or Petrushevskaya. Although the answer to this question can be extracted from the eight chapters of this thesis, it needs to be mentioned, that in the initial stages of this project, when I was going through a large number of Soviet plays written in the sixties and the seventies, I was immediately impressed by the titles of Radzinskii’s plays. They were catchy, engaging, and invited you to think about the play. They were more attractive than the titles of Arbuzov’s plays, although his titles are also lengthy and interesting. For instance, Arbuzov called one of his romantic comedies as My Poor Marat [Моя бедная Марат] whereas Radzinskii’s first successful romantic play was 104 Pages about Love [104 Страницы про любовь]. Zorin’s play about the Decembrists is entitled The Decembrists [Декабристы] whereas Radzinskii’s play has a lengthy and complex title - Lunin or Death of Jacques Recorded in the Presence of the Master [Лунин, или смерть Жака, записанная в присутствии хозяина]. It is not very hard to detect in this title the presence of at least three voices, that of Lunin, Jacques and the Master. By using the names of the main protagonists of Diderot’s novel in dialogues, the title establishes a textual and extra-textual link between the two narratives. For those readers who have read Milan Kundera’s adaptation of Diderot’s novel into a play and have also read his introduction to the play, Radzinskii’s play about a Decembrist turns into a text which is not only layered, but in which a number of historical and cultural time-spaces are juxtaposed and merge into each other.

Although the multi-layered nature of Radzinskii’s plays and their titles was interesting in itself, the plays also attracted me because of the way they engaged with and explored the notion of theatricality in and outside the theatre. In this regard they reminded me of Pirandello’s trilogy about theatre. If Radzinskii’s contemporary dramatists were generally concerned with telling a story as realistically as possible, these plays were interested in exploring the notion of storytelling itself. Hence it is no surprise that in the anthology Theatre [Театр] three plays are grouped under a separate title of Theatre in Theatre [Театр в Театре ...]. Although the anthology published only three plays under this subtitle, most of Radzinskii’s plays reveal a playful engagement with the genre of drama and the conventions of theatre. An Old Actress for the Role of Dostoevskii’s Wife [Старая актриса на роль жены Достоевского] is perhaps most theatrical of all, although A Monologue about a Woman [Монолог о женщине], I Stand in front of a Restaurant ... [Я стоя у ресторана...] and Our Decameron [Наш Декамерон] are equally interesting.
Radzinskiĭ’s plays about theatre need a separate investigation. In this thesis I have chosen to concentrate on the trilogy *Theatre of the Times* ... [Театр времен ...], which, as will be argued in the thesis, also employs ‘play within a play’ structure. *Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca* [Театр времен Нерона и Сенеки], the final play of this trilogy, is remarkable because in it history begins to resemble the writing and enacting of a play, written and directed by a whip-lashing actor/‘monster’. The boundary between role playing in life and in theatre begins to disappear.

*************

My reading of the trilogy is firmly situated within Bakhtinian literary and philosophical discourse. Although the second chapter explains the main reasons behind this choice, it is important to stress here that the title of the trilogy is an equally important reason. It seems obvious to me that plays which are so concerned with the representation of time-space and human beings need a reading strategy that is conscious of the fact that this re-presentation is closely associated with the role time and space play in their narrative structure. Bakhtin’s notion about the forms of time and the chronotopes provides a suitable vantage point for such a strategy. It is interesting in this regard to note that although there are several examples where the concept of the chronotope has been employed in the reading of literary narratives, in particular the novel, its application to dramatic texts has been relatively limited. I hope that the thesis will be able to demonstrate that the use of two Bakhtinian concepts can provide rewarding insights in the reading of dramatic texts.

Although this reading of the trilogy places the concepts of the chronotope and the forms of time at its centre, they are not employed as isolated ‘tools’ from Bakhtinian ‘workshop’, but are invoked along with the wholeness of Bakhtin’s literary-philosophical discourse. My reading of the trilogy is thus also informed by Bakhtinian understanding on the nature of language and the relationship between literary texts and extra-textual reality. The trilogy is seen to be grounded in the broader sphere of cultural practice which not only includes the realm of cultural practice in which it was created,

---

8 I have deliberately chosen to use ‘re-present’ instead of ‘represent’ and in this I am following Catherine Belsey’s example. By using ‘re-present’ I want to stress the ‘re-presenting’ or the ‘presenting again’ aspect of representation. This is because I want to avoid the reductiveness attached to this word when it is used in phrases such as ‘arts represents reality’ or ‘art is a representation of reality’. I have also used this word to render Bakhtin’s word освоение, literally assimilation, in phrases such as процесс освоения в литературе реального исторического времени...’ Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 168.

9 I have come across only two published studies of plays where the concept of the chronotope has been used. In one of them, Laurin Porter employed it to read Eugene O’Neill’s A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions and in the second study V. V. Frolov used it to read Pushkin’s play Boris Godunov. V. V. Frolov, *Fate of the Genres of Drama: Analysis of Dramatic Genres in Twentieth-Century Russia* [Судьбы жанров драматургии: анализ драматических жанров в России XX века] (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel, 1979); Laurin Porter, “Bakhtin’s Chronotope: Time and Space in A Touch of the Poet and More Stately Mansions,” *Modern Drama*, 34 (1991), pp. 360-382.
read, performed and evaluated but also that form within which I am reading and re-creating it. In this way the trilogy is able to retain its completeness of co-being [событийная полнота].

This Bakhtinian understanding also takes my reading away from strictly structuralist and formalist literary practices. In reading the forms of time in the trilogy I am not interested in plot and story times but in the way narrative time turns into biographical, historical and crisis times. Narrative time is seen by me to exist in and through the actions and the lives of the protagonists. This approach to narrative time is complementary to the approach to space, which is seen not only as the setting of the events but as a stage where three forms of time reveal themselves. In this sense the space becomes a time-space, a chronotope.

In making the role of time and chronotopes in the trilogy central to my project I have resisted making the question of what the trilogy says central and have focused instead on how it does that. However, by framing the problem like this I am not resurrecting the traditional dichotomy between literary content and form, but only suggesting that, by answering the question of how, the answer to the question of what reveals itself automatically. The Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope, in this regard, is a suitable device.

This emphasis on the question of ‘how’ instead of ‘what’ also places this reading on a different plane from other readings of Radzinskii’s plays. It is important to note that, although Radzinskii is one of the most interesting and influential Soviet playwrights in the sixties and the seventies, his work has received little attention. The first long article on Radzinskii in the Soviet Union was published only in 1983, almost twenty years after his first successful play was staged in Moscow.  

This article reviewed several of Radzinskii’s plays including the first two plays of the trilogy and discussed the female characters arguing that in Radzinskii’s ‘historical’ plays as well as plays about contemporary Soviet life, one of the main themes was the place and role of women in society. This was supported by referring to Radzinskii’s article published in the January 1977 issue of Литературная Газета where Radzinskii, using letters written to the editor, discussed the plight of deserted and lonely women.

Maia Kipp in her thesis examined Radzinskii’s plays on ‘... thematic lines suggested by the content and the evolution of Radzinskii’s drama.’  


philosophical trilogy was read to understand Radzinskii’s views of history. In her work
Irina Monisova focused only on Radzinskii’s trilogy but read it along with the historical
plays of another Soviet playwright Yu. Edlis. Monisova argued that the three plays were
historical parables in which the main aim was to explore basic human essence and
eternal truths and in which a strict adherence to authentic portrayal of historical time
and place and to historical details was of minor significance.12

***************

I began working on the thesis in August 1992 almost a year after the failed coup
against Gorbachev’s government which, as we know, changed the political, social and
cultural landscape of the country known as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The
timing proved as a blessing because I was able to locate new material about Radzinskii
and his plays. Radzinskii’s own interviews published after 1985 are quite interesting
and openly discuss the political themes of his trilogy.

Between April and June 1993, I went to Moscow to collect material, where I met
Edvard Radzinskii twice and recorded two three-hour interviews with him. He gave me
video recordings of some of his plays and a recording of a television series about his
own plays which was commissioned by the Ostankino channel of Russian TV.

Most clippings from newspapers and magazines were obtained in the State
Theatre Library and the Central Library of the Union of Theatre Workers in Moscow.
Photographic material on the production of Radzinskii’s plays was gathered in the
Bakhrushin Theatre Museum and in the archives and literary sections of several theatres
in Moscow including The Mayakovskii Theatre, The Theatre on the Maloi Bronnoi, and
The Ermolova Theatre. I also discussed these plays with other Russian playwrights
including Viktor Rozov and Aleksei Kazantsev.

***************

In the first chapter I describe the cultural situation in the Soviet Union in the
sixties and the seventies, drawing general contours of the time-space in which these
plays were written, read and re-created by Soviet readers, performers and critics. The
chapter does not aim to provide a cultural history of the first three decades after Stalin,
but focuses on a number of important events such as the Twenty-Second Party
Congress, which adopted a new moral code for the ‘builder of communism’, the
Twenty-Fourth Party Congress, which coined the phrase ‘scientific and technical
revolution’, and the 1972 decree on literary and art criticism which reinstated the

12 I. V. Monisova, Soviet Historical Drama of the Sixties and the Eighties: Forms of Parables in the
Plays of E. Radzinskii and Yu. Edlis [Советская историческая драматургия 60–80-х годов:
притчевое формы в пьесах Е. Радзинского и Ю. Едлиса] Dissertation Abstracts, Moscow
State University, 1990, p. 1.
authority of socialist realism. In this chapter I briefly review the major themes in Soviet drama in the sixties and the seventies and explore the role and the place of the so-called production plays in Soviet drama. In the final part of this chapter I discuss Radzinskii’s plays on contemporary themes and the way the absence of ‘positive heroes’ was used to criticise them. The plays about contemporary themes and the historical-political plays of the trilogy were written during the same period and this short discussion is aimed to explore the relation between the two themes.

The second chapter presents a review of Bakhtin’s concepts of literary and real chronotopes and discusses the functioning of the chronotope at three separate but interrelated levels as chronotope-motif and generic chronotope and as a more general category that can be invoked to describe the relation between a literary work and the extra-textual reality. The final part of this chapter focuses on the difference between the chronotope and other similar concepts such as metaphor, device, topos and theme which are traditionally used in liberal-humanist, realist, formalist and structuralist discourses. It is argued that, because literary chronotopes are not limited to texts and are inseparably linked with real chronotopes, they provide a framework for reading literary texts as events in the field of cultural practice.

An interesting aspect of several of Radzinskii’s plays including the trilogy is that they appear and reappear in different forms. For instance some plays are included as prose pieces in a collection of novellas whereas stories from novellas are in turn re-written as plays. Thus there seems to be a consistent interflow of themes, characters and stories between plays and novellas. This playful attitude to the conventions which define various forms of literary narratives is an intriguing aspect of Radzinskii’s writing and is explored in some detail in the third chapter. It examines the conventions that distinguish a dramatic text from other forms of literary narratives, in particular the novel, and explores different modes of storytelling employed by them. The chapter discusses the role of time and space in the narrative structure of dramatic texts and the conventions through which dramatic texts re-present real time and space. The chapter examines the place of the mediating narrator in dramatic texts and discusses the framing devices used by them. Bakhtin’s idea of novelisation of literary forms is invoked to discuss the influence of novelistic devices on drama. The final part of the chapter focuses on the absence in the trilogy of several conventional framing devices employed by dramatic texts and discusses the significance of the past tense verbs in the extra-dialogic texts in the trilogy. These features of the trilogy are used to suggest that the plays of the trilogy can be best described as ‘novelised plays’ or ‘novels in dialogues’.

The fourth chapter discusses the forms of time in each play. It is argued that Bakhtin’s approach to the forms of narrative time is radically different from that of
structuralist literary scholars. For them, narrative time is an intrinsic property of the text described by terms such as 'story time' and 'plot time'. Bakhtin's understanding of narrative time operates on its interaction with the actions of the protagonists. Because of this narrative time is described by him as biographical, historical, crisis and adventure time. In this chapter I argue that the three plays are biographies and hence narrative time takes the form of biographical time, intricately intertwined with historical time. However, because in each play the main protagonist is facing death, biographical time is transformed into crisis time. The influence of the crisis mode of time is visible in every event of the three plays, which abound with direct and indirect reference to time. Time thus turns into one of the main protagonists of these plays.

It needs to be emphasised, that although the three plays are biographies, the Socrates, Lunin, Nero and Seneca constituted in and by these plays bear the marks of a specific time-space, the Soviet time-space of the sixties and the seventies. Their constitution is history-specific and personalised as is my reading, during which I in turn reconstitute the figures of Socrates, Lunin, Nero and Seneca. To borrow Bakhtin's words, I negotiate the images of these 'historical' figures through the maze of discourses about them. They are given to me through and because of these discourses. However, it can also be argued that the trilogy also functions like a prism through which I look and read existing discourses about these historical figures.

In the following three chapters I discuss the plot-constitutive and time-visualising functions of the main chronotopes of the trilogy. In Dialogues with Socrates the Athenian acropolis and the prison are the main chronotopes. In the play Lunin ... the main chronotope is the prison which, like the stage of a theatre, is temporarily and partially converted into the site of a masked-ball where Lunin's life-drama is enacted. In Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca, the circus-theatre functions as the main chronotope. In this chapter I briefly discuss the cultural significance of these spaces in the Ancient Greek and Roman and in the nineteenth-century Russian society to demonstrate that these chronotopes provide an appropriate space for re-presenting the time and the world of its protagonists.

Several of Radzinskii's plays on contemporary themes were criticised by Soviet critics for their so-called formalist experimentations and stylised aesthetics. This engagement with the theatricality of theatre and the conventions of drama is also visible in the 'play within a play' structure employed in them. This device attains its maximum effect in the last plays of the trilogy, where the 'play within a play' structure is associated with the chronotope of the circus-theatre and with the motifs of 'multiple role playing' and metamorphoses. In the chapter on the play Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca I discuss the time and culture-specific conventions about theatre and
explore the way the theatre and the circus interact and influence each other. In this chapter I argue that by setting this play in the arena of circus-theatre and by combining it with the motifs of multiple role playing and metamorphoses, the play succeeds in foregrounding the theatricality of the theatre and the outside world.

The three plays had a long and successful run in Soviet theatres. Their popularity is not very hard to explain, but what is hard to understand is the reason why these overtly political plays were allowed by the establishment to be published and performed. The last chapter explores some answers to this question.

If, in the preceding three chapters, each play is read from within the time-space of its main protagonists, the final chapter attempts to read them from within the time-space of its creators - the author, readers, performers and theatre critics. In this chapter, I argue that the three plays are not only aimed to portray the historical time, place and protagonists, but to engage in a substantial way with contemporary Soviet reality. In this chapter I invoke Bakhtin’s idea about the inseparable link between literary and real chronotopes that reflects a complicated relation between a literary work and the world outside it. I also refer to his discussion on the relation between the world portrayed in a work and the world that creates the work and the world portrayed in it. I argue that the main literary chronotopes of the world represented in these plays were closely linked with the real chronotopes of the world which created them, i.e. the real chronotopes of the Soviet Union in the sixties and the seventies. Most Soviet readers and performers interacted with the literary chronotopes of these plays from within their own time-space. For instance, the literary chronotope of the prison cell was read by them in association with the real chronotopes of Stalinist prisons and concentration camps.

This chapter uses a large number of reviews published in Soviet newspapers and literary journals, which show that most Soviet critics read these plays from within the discourse about socialist realism. Most critics looked for ‘positive’ heroes in these plays and did their best to constitute Socrates, Lunin and Seneca as ‘positive’ heroes or heroes in the process of ‘becoming’ [становящиеся герой]. It can be argued that this capacity to be read and circulated as positive heroes was possibly one of the main reasons why these plays were allowed to be published and performed.