CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis the trilogy was read from within the time-space of its main protagonists and the time-space of its creators - its author, readers, critics, performers and spectators. However this is a personalised reading, carried out from within my time-space which is unique as well as grounded in a particular tradition of literary studies.

Each chapter of this thesis contains concluding remarks which summarise the main points; hence I will only reiterate the most significant ones and focus on those aspects which were not dealt with in detail because they were either peripheral to the main project or because the limited size of a thesis such as this did not permit that sort of extravagance.

In setting the scene for reading the trilogy I have argued that the social and cultural landscape in which it was written, performed and evaluated was marked by the cults of the ‘positive’ hero and socialist realism. The Twenty-Second Party Congress in 1961 adopted the new party program and approved a new moral code for the ‘builder’ of communism which contributed to strengthening the cult of the ‘positive’ hero. The Twenty-Fourth Party Congress, held in 1971, postulated the utopia of scientific-technical revolution and was followed by the 1972 Decree on Art and Literary Criticism which resurrected the hegemony of socialist realism. The utopia of scientific-technical revolution and the cult of socialist realism paved the way for the re-emergence of ‘production’ plays. The classics of this genre of plays are complex and their popularity is an indication that they were read and seen not merely as tools of party propaganda. However the visibility and the status of ‘positive’ heroes in them turned them into yardsticks for judging good and bad plays.

Radzinskii’s plays on contemporary themes were criticised because they lacked ‘positive heroes’. However, it can also be argued that this very accent on locating positive heroes in every work became one of the main reasons why the overtly political plays of the trilogy were allowed to be published and performed. As I have argued in the final chapter of the thesis, it was quite easy to appropriate the images of Socrates and Lunin and recast them as ‘positive heroes’.

Referring to Radzinskii’s perestroika-period interviews, I have argued in the first chapter that he wrote the trilogy because it was easier for him to tell stories about contemporary Soviet reality by dressing his protagonists in historical costumes. He wanted to narrate the story of Sakharov and Solzhenitsyn but could only do it by turning
them into Socrates. It is true that these plays can be read as attempts to employ historical allegories or parables, but to reduce them only to this single theme is to overlook the other significant aspect of these plays which, as I have argued, is associated with the way they tell the story. Zorin's play *The Decembrists* depicts the struggle of the Decembrists against Tsarist despotism but the story is told from within a realist tradition. It is straightforward and simple. *Lunin* ... tells a similar story but in a different way. The play is not only set in one of the most horrible prisons in Siberia but the prison functions like a stage of a theatre where Lunin's life-drama is enacted by a cast of actor-characters playing multiple roles. If Zorin's *The Decembrist* tends to mask its genre, its tools of the trade, *Lunin* ... fosters a stylised aesthetics and foregrounds the genre, the theatricality of theatre and life. It can be argued that since Radzinskii opts to tell the story of the Decembrists in such a stylised way, the story itself changes. It does not remain the story told in *The Decembrists*.

This engagement with not only the story but also with the mode and the act of storytelling is an important aspect of the trilogy. I have explored this question in some detail in the third chapter where I have discussed differences in the modes of storytelling employed by drama and the novel and examined the extent to which these plays are novelised. I have demonstrated that the three plays fail to follow the conventional framing device of dramatic texts. They neither carry sub-titles nor do they contain lists of characters and the text is not divided into acts. However, the most distinguishing feature is the use of the past tense in the extra-dialogic text. This feature is more pronounced in *Lunin* ... where it can be argued that the changes in the tense are related to the position of the mediating narrator in the play. In that part of the play which constitutes the present time of the play and is set in the prison, the mediating narrator is present as an independent voice and the verbs in the extra-dialogic texts are in the past tense. This is in contrast to the other part in which Lunin begins to enact events of his past life. Here Lunin is the narrator and the mediating narrator merges with him and the extra-dialogic text, as demanded by conventions, uses verbs in the present tense.

The decoding of the novelised nature of these plays and in particular of *Lunin* ... is an important point which needs to be considered by performers because, as I have argued in the third and the eighth chapters, the persona of a mediating narrator can be used as a device to subvert the time-space re-presented in the trilogy.

In discussing the concept of the chronotope in the second chapter it was mentioned that Bakhtin used it to define the genre of novelistic texts. It is worth asking if the notion of the generic chronotope can also be used to define the difference between various forms of literary texts such as the novel, drama, and poetry. This is an important question which requires detailed exploration elsewhere. However, dramatic
conventions, which were discussed in the third chapter, can provide an interesting starting point.

I have argued in the third chapter that dramatic texts are determined by the ‘here and now’ of the performance. This phrase not only expresses the aspect of ‘showing’ in a dramatic text, but also foregrounds the presentness of time in dramatic narratives where past and future times are controlled by their present time, which finds its expression in the present tense used by them. Past time is reported, described or enacted in that present time, and hence becomes a part of it, even subordinate to it. In the same way future time is also represented in terms of present time. It is also reported, described or enacted in the present time. This presentness of time seems to be the temporal component of the chronotope of drama. But what about the spatial component? It can be argued that the word ‘here’ of the phrase ‘here and now’ reflects the spatial component of the chronotope. It represents the stage or a platform or any space that is defined as the acting space during a performance. The space which is used in a play as a setting is to be shown within the acting space. Hence, it can be argued that the phrase ‘here and now’ can be used define the chronotope of drama as a form of literary narrative.

The trilogy is called Theatre of the Times ..., and in reading and translating the Russian title Театр Времен ... in this way, I have tried to underline the fact that time is not only a structuring device of the narrative but is also one of its main protagonists. These two inter-related functions of time are discussed in the fourth chapter, the basis for which is provided by Bakhtin’s understanding of the forms of narrative time and how it is related to the lives of the protagonists and the society which they represent.

The trilogy can be read as biographies of its main protagonists who are well-known ‘historical’ figures; hence the dominant form of narrative time is biographical time. However, this biographical time is inseparably linked with historical time because re-presentation of the life-stories of these ‘historical’ protagonists is also a representation of the history of their times and places. The events of their lives serve as plot-constitutive elements of the history of their societies.

But the most significant feature of this time is its crisis mode because in each play the main protagonists is faced with execution which occurs in the finale of each play. The tension created by this crisis is visible throughout the plays. The protagonists talk continually about it, and it affects them physically and emotionally. Their actions and speeches become distorted and disjointed, like the slogans announced by the horse-senator in Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca.
This crisis time also places constraints on the modes of narration, and, as I have argued in the fourth chapter, the plays employ complicated intertwining of present and past events, including the use of the ‘flash-back’ in Lunin ... and of reporting with simultaneous enactment in Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca.

The type of narration mentioned above imparts a special role to space or the setting, which was discussed in three separate chapters using Bakhtinian concepts of real and literary chronotopes. In Dialogues with Socrates the chronotopes of the ‘drawing room’, the acropolis and the prison-cell function as main plot-constitutive devices, and there seems to be a specific pattern in the use of public and private spaces. In contrast to the public spaces, the private, interior spaces of houses are used as the sites for conspiracies.

Based on the significance of the acropolis and prison, the real chronotopes, in the everyday life of Athens, I have argued that these chronotopes are able to create an adequate re-presentation of Socrates’ times. By employing the chronotope of the acropolis the play foregrounds the public or open nature of Socrates’ life who spent his whole life conversing with people in the streets and markets of Athens.

Although this play closely follows Plato’s The Last Days of Socrates, the Socrates constituted in this play bears the marks of the twentieth-century time-space, reflected in the use of the chronotope of the ‘drawing room’ in the first act. Ancient Greek narratives such as biographies and tragedies did not employ this chronotope. These narratives operated on the belief that there was no personal domain in the life of human beings which was always open and public. The influence of the twentieth-century time-space can also be seen in the image of Socrates, created in the play. He is a philosopher and a great teacher but he is also a loving husband, a compassionate master, and a kind father.

In Lunin ... the main chronotope is the prison, which serves as the site for enacting Lunin’s life story. He is given three hours to tell the story of his past sixty years, and like a hasty and confused director, he assembles a cast of four main actors: the ‘first and the second uniforms’, the ‘uniform of the Tsar’, ‘she’ and he himself, and starts to enact the play of his life. It is argued that the prison cell begins to resemble a theatrical stage, providing the setting for a prison as well as a masked-ball. However, the most interesting aspect of the play is the merging of two chronotopes, the prison and the masked-ball. Even when the enactment of Lunin’s life-drama is taking place the setting of the masked-ball retains the signs of a prison-cell. It is a ball in a prison.

Prison is also one of the main chronotopes of Dialogues with Socrates, however as I have argued in the sixth chapter the prison in Lunin ... is quite a different place from
that in *Dialogues with Socrates*. In *Lunin* ... prison is a violent and oppressive place because the question of individual liberty is central in *Lunin* ..., for whose Decembrist protagonist serfdom was a curse. This engagement with the question of individual liberty can also be read in the title of the play and in the frequent references to Jacques and his master. The conflation of the chronotopes of the prison and the masked-ball, which I mentioned earlier, also reinforces the centrality of the question of individual liberty.

The reference to Jacques and his master in this play raises a number of important questions such as, what happens to the time-space of a narrative such as *Lunin* ... when it is intruded on by other narratives. What happens when protagonists of one narrative start appropriating the words and actions of the protagonists of other narratives? It needs to be stressed that Lunin’s relations with the Tsar and his brothers are seen by him in terms of the relation between the fatalist Jacques and his master and his speech and words are influenced by it. He often talks like the fatalist Jacques. According to Bakhtin one always speaks through the words of other people. The ‘living word’ according to him is the word which always meets someone else’s words. It seems to me that this idea of Bakhtin or Kristeva’s notion of intertextuality, which is significantly influenced by Bakhtin’s heteroglossia and dialogism, can serve as interesting starting points in exploring answers to the above questions.¹

*Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca*, the last play of the trilogy, contains several elements and motifs of the first two plays, but they are organised into a more complicated narrative structure, which is achieved by setting the play in the arena of a circus. In this play the motifs of show-trial, execution, and the devices of multiple role playing and the ‘play within a play’ structure reach a new level of intensity.

Although the play is set in the circus-arena it is transformed during the play into a number of public and private spaces. The arena of the circus thus operates like the stage of a theatre and this is the reason why I have chosen the word circus-theatre to describe the main chronotope of this play. Through this I want to emphasise the merging of two chronotopes.

If Nero’s Rome was a place of public spectacles, the emphasis was not on drama or theatre but on games and the circus. To borrow Bakhtin’s words the Roman circus had become the space in which time, historical and biographical, was ‘released and made to flow’. Perhaps that is why the chronotope of the circus-theatre functions as an

---

effective device for adequately re-presenting the times and the world of Nero and Seneca.

The chronotope of the circus-theatre is also able to bring out the full potential of the ‘play within a play’ structure. The repeated metamorphoses and the associated multiple role playing by actors or characters alluding to the use of masks in the Greek and Roman theatres turns theatre and theatricality into objects of re-presentation.

The technique of multiple role playing dominates the narrative structure of this play and its effect is so pronounced that readers are always uncertain about the identities of its characters. Thus the chronotope of the circus-theatre becomes a device with the help of which the play is able to question the conventions about illusion and reality which constitute the basis of theatre and life outside theatre.

In the final chapter of this work I linked the literary chronotopes of the trilogy with the real chronotopes of the world in which they were created. The chronotope of the prison is the dominant chronotope of Dialogues with Socrates and Lunin ... Even in Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca the chronotope of the circus-theatre resembles a prison. Apart from prison all three plays contain the motifs of trial and execution. It is hard to imagine that Soviet readers and spectators did not interact with the chronotopes of the prison and the motifs of trial and execution from within their own historical experience of prisons, concentration camps and show trials, because they were the main chronotopes of their real-life narratives.

All three plays also contain ‘a play within the play’ structure which reaches its maximum potential in the play about Nero and Seneca, where the motifs of multiple role playing and metamorphoses are combined with the chronotope of the circus-theatre. It is clear that these plays which foreground the theatricality of theatre and life outside theatre were created within the prevailing theatrical conventions of realist and socialist realist theatre which constituted the real chronotope of the theatre in the Soviet Union. Most performances and readings of the trilogy and of the performances operate within these conventions. That is why they underline the historical time-space of the trilogy and overlook its engagement with the boundaries of its genre.

Some productions which used devices of the stylised theatre were criticised because they, according to the reviewers, distorted the historical time-space by making it ambiguous. However almost all reviewers went into a great deal of trouble to show that these historical plays were relevant to contemporary Soviet reality. As a result the Socrates and the Lunin of the trilogy were turned into ‘positive’ heroes and role models. It is interesting that in order to assimilate a controversial figure such as Seneca, a well-
known Soviet critic coined a new term representing a character who is in the ‘process of becoming a positive hero’.

In the introduction as well as in the second chapter I have outlined the main reasons for choosing Bakhtinian concepts of the chronotope and the forms of narrative time to read the trilogy. Although the second chapter is a summary of Bakhtin’s book-size essay I have in the final part explored the difference between Bakhtin’s chronotope and other apparently similar concepts such as device, motif, theme, metaphor and topos. I have argued that one of the most interesting aspects of the chronotope is its functioning at three inter-related levels. I have used it as a chronotope-motif and demonstrated its plot-constitutive and time-visualising functions. I have used the evaluative or axiological dimension of the chronotope to show how space and time are invested with different values by different protagonists. However, the most rewarding aspect of the chronotope is the relation between literary and real chronotopes. This relation reflects the complicated interaction between a literary narrative and the world outside it. I have used it not only to explore how the chronotopes of the prison, the masked-ball and the circus-theatre are related to real chronotopes of the world of the protagonists of the trilogy but also to examine how the creators of the trilogy, its authors, readers, performers and spectators negotiated these chronotopes from within their own real chronotopes.

Thus because of the concept of the chronotope and the understanding of narrative time as biographical and historical time I have been able to avoid the traps of realist, formalist and structuralist paradigms. Although I have focused on detailed textual and narratological analysis of the trilogy, my reading is not limited to it. It has always maintained a foot-hold in the world outside the textual world but without reducing it to a reflection or representation of it. Similarly, although I have discussed Radzinskii’s creative biography and some important events of his life, my reading of the trilogy does not establish any direct or causal link between them. Thus the concept of the chronotope has provided me a vantage point which represents a boundary between the text and the world, between the creating world and the world created in the text. My project thus represents a journey along the boundary, a dialogue undertaken from a threshold.
REFERENCES


^_________. “The Novel of Upbringing and Its Significance in the History of Realism.” [Роман воспитания и его значение в истории реализма.] In Aesthetics of


“Political History and Literary Chronotope: Some Soviet Case Studies.”


Diloyan, M. “Face to Face.” [“Лицом к лицу.”] Komsomolets, 26 October 1986.


Lotman, Yu. M. “Theatre and Theatricality in the Structure of Culture in Early Nineteenth Century.” [“Театр и таитрантьсоть в строе культуры начала XIX века.”] In Essays on
the Typology of Culture [Статьи по типологии культуры]. Tartu: Tartu State University, 1973, pp. 42-63.

“"The Theme of Cards and Card-Game in Russian Literature in the Beginning of XIX Century." ["Тема карт и карточной игры в Русской литературе начала XIX века."] In Contributions on the Systems of Signs [Труды по знаковым системам]. VII, Tartu: Tartu State University, 1975, pp. 120-142.


Plyat, R. "This is Assigned to Me!" ["Это поручается мне!"] *Teatr*, No. 11 (1961), 5.


Pozharskaya, M. “At the Exhibition - Summing up the 1974/75 Season.” [“На Выставке - Итоги Сезона 1974/75г.”] _Teatr_, No. 4 (1976), pp. 77-84.


__________. “In the Search of Completeness.” ["В поисках цельности."] Vorposy Literatury, 12. (1986), pp. 3-32.


_________. *Socrates and We: Different Notes on the Same Topic* [*Сократ и мы: разные очерки на одну и ту же тему*]. Moscow: Politizdat, 1981.


_________. "Three Hours and Three Thousand Years." [*"Три часа и три тысячи лет"] *Teatr* No. 3 (1980), pp. 30-42.


Unsigned Articles Reviews and Films

Moskovskii Komsomolets, 6 October 1979.


“Trial after the Ball” ["Суд после балла."] Molodezh Estonii, 13 March 1982.


“Who is the Contemporary Hero?” ["Современный герой, каков он?"] Voprosy Literatury, No. 6, (1973).