CHAPTER 6
DEATH AFTER THE BALL:
THE CHRONOTOPE OF THE PRISON AND
THE MASKED-BALL IN LUNIN ...

In Dialogues with Socrates, the last act is set in a prison which is one of the dominant chronotopes of the play. Lunin ..., the second play of the trilogy, is set completely in a prison. Prisons thus function as plot-constitutive devices in both these plays; however, the nature of prison and its effect on the main protagonists is quite different. The Athenian prison in which Socrates meets his death is re-presented as a stopover in his ascent to heaven. Lunin’s prison-cell, on the other hand, is oppressive. It is part of ‘the most horrible prison in Russia’ which destroys him psychologically and physically.

In Lunin ... the chronotope of the prison plays a more complex role in the structuring of the narrative than in Dialogues with Socrates. Lunin ... begins and ends in the prison, but during the play it, like the stage of a theatre, is transformed into a hall of a masked-ball, where scenes form Lunin’s life are enacted.¹ This transformation imparts a number of additional levels of signification to this chronotope.

What are these additional levels? In what way do they help to portray Lunin’s life and time? What does the conflation of a masked-ball and the prison-cell lead to? What happens to the masked-ball when it is framed within a prison-cell? This chapter will explore answers to some of these questions.

It will first investigate the plot-constitutive role of the chronotopes of the prison and the masked-ball, which will be accompanied by discussions of the significance of the real chronotopes of the prison and the masked-ball in nineteenth-century Russia. The everyday life of a member of the nineteenth-century Russian nobility was highly theatrical and the chronotopes of the ball and masked-ball were important narratological centres of his or her life stories. This relation between the real chronotopes and their literary counterparts is the basis to argue that the chronotopes of the prison and the masked-ball provide appropriate spaces in which Lunin’s life and time find adequate re-presentation.

¹ It is rather difficult to find a suitable English translation of the Russian word ‘бала́маскарад’. It can be translated as masquerade-ball, which is rather clumsy and does not adequately convey the meaning of the original. The word masked-ball is also not very fitting but seems to be less awkward and hence has been used in the thesis.
The Chronotope of the Prison

If in Dialogues with Socrates, the nature of the space and the setting are very clearly marked in the text as titles of the three segments or acts of the play, in Lunin ... the readers are kept guessing as to space and setting.² The first reference to place appears in the second sentence uttered by the narrator who introduces the setting, the time and the main protagonists of the play. Based just on a single Russian word Kamera [камера] it is difficult for the reader to decide immediately whether the space referred to represents a cell or a chamber.

A little later the place in which the conversation between lieutenant Grigor’ev and the clerk takes place is described as a ‘small room’ [помещение], adjacent to the cell or the chamber referred to in the early segment of the play.

The first specific reference to prison appears in a witness report which the clerk is writing and reading aloud. In this report, prepared on behalf of an illiterate convict, Nikolai Radionov, the place is described as a ‘castle-prison’ [временный замок]. The report notes that Nikolai Radionov ‘on the third day of the month entered the cell [Камера] of the state criminal Lunin to light the stove’ [74]. A reference to the ‘prison castle’ is sufficient to determine that the chamber referred to earlier is in fact a prison cell. However, the witness report of the second convict Mikhail Baranov restores the original ambivalence by describing the place as a ‘room’ [комната] [75].

The prison cell is more clearly identified in the beginning of the next scene, when it is reported that lieutenant Grigor’ev ‘opened the cell and entered’ [75]. Before entering the cell he was in the adjoining ‘room’ [помещение] and was pacing up and down in the ‘corridor’. Thus, the nature of various spaces within the prison is clarified; the main amongst them is the prison cell, whilst the adjoining space in which lieutenant Grigor’ev and the clerk plan their conspiracy, and in which the clerk is allowed to sleep with Marfa, the convict woman, as a reward for his efforts, is a ‘room’ and not a prison cell.

Lunin’s prison cell provides the setting for almost all events in the play. The play begins in the cell, and only a few scenes are set in the adjoining rooms. In the prison cell, Lunin begins to reconstruct his past life. He has only a few hours to do so, during which the prison cell is turned into a stage of a theatre, where his memory resurrects the main protagonists of his life-drama with whom he enacts the scenes from his life.

Lunin, knew that his cell was like a coffin where he was nothing but a dead person. It is also possible that he had some premonition about his execution, which is why, when

² In an earlier chapter it was discussed that the plays of the trilogy are not framed like a play. They are not formally divided into scenes and acts. Therefore the terms ‘scenes’ and ‘acts’ are used only for descriptive purposes.
lieutenant Grigor’ev entered his cell to inform him about his impending execution, Lunin welcomed him by calling his cell a coffin:

Лунин. А-а-а, поручик. (он оживился, даже улыбнулся.) Рад вас привестовать в моем гробу [75] (emphasis added).

Grigor’ev is startled at this welcome and, seeing him uneasy, Lunin tells him about the visit of a senator, an old friend of his, who had come to inspect the prison. Lunin recalls that he had welcomed the senator with the same words:

Лунин. ... Ко мне в камеру заглянул, а на физиономии — участие, мы ведь с ним с глазу на глаз. Рад, говорит, вас видеть, Лунин. А я ему и бражки: "И я вас привестую в гробу". Он так и здряжал. Старик — он и про гроб не любят. А вы ведь совсем молоденький, Григорьев. (С маниакальной подозрительностью.) Отчего же вы так испугались — "про гроб"? [75-76] (emphasis added).

The equivalence between Lunin’s prison-cell and a coffin is thus clearly foregrounded.

The play abounds with references to prison and the prison cell. These along with prison uniforms, and the sound of fetters carried by Lunin create visual and aural images of prison. However, the re-presentation of prison is not neutral or valueless. As was pointed out earlier, like all chronotopes when assimilated into literature, it also carries the imprint of a protagonist’s perception, his or her evaluation. For instance, Lunin in his last note calls it the most horrible prison in Russia:

Лунин. "... Я Михаил Сергеевич Лунин, двадцать лет нахожусь в тюрьмах, на поселениях и сейчас умираю в тюрьме, ужаснее которой нет России ...":[82] (emphasis added).

In the finale of the play the exchange between Lunin and the ‘first uniform’ which represents Lunin’s interrogators once again makes repeated references to prison, in particular the Akatui prison:

Лунин. ... Шутка Хозяина: он не убил Жака сразу, но подвергнул заключению в ужаснейшем из тюрем.

Первый мундир. В строежавшем из тюрем.

Лунин. (Ей). А в империи ... тюрьму ценить умеют ... Акатуй туман, сплюскость. Они ждали что разум мой здесь упраснет! Что с сгнило здесь ... и главное — тихо сойду в безвестность [125] (emphasis added).

Lunin suggests that the ‘master’, instead of executing him, sent him to prison hoping that Lunin would rot there, become old, and senile, and people would forget about
him. But if for Lunin this is the most horrible [ужасный] prison in Russia, for the ‘first uniform’ it is the ‘most strict and secure’ [страшный].

In Lunin’s opinion, the boundaries of the prison were not only confined to the prison at Akatui, but the whole of Tsarist Russia was a prison. In this regard a short scene in the play is quite significant. This scene is part of Lunin’s life-drama which is enacted in his prison-cell that has been turned into a hall of a masked-ball. This transformation, however, is not complete and Lunin foregrounds the duality of the space by showing his inability to distinguish between the two. The ‘voices of the uniforms’ announce the arrival of the Tsar at the ball, but Lunin is surprised:

Голос мундиров. Карету Волконского ... Карету Фонвизина ... Карету Бестужева ...
- Государь ... Государь прибыл!
Лунин. Как ... государь ... здесь?

Смех мундиров.
В тюрьме?! Но почему?

Первый мундир. Мы все здесь [93].

How can the Tsar be in prison? Lunin seems to ask expressing his confusion. The reply of the ‘first uniform’ reinforces this confusion by noting that ‘we are all here’. The word ‘here’ thus stands for both the prison and the masked ball. ‘We all are in the ball’ becomes equivalent to ‘we all are in prison’. The chronotope of the prison and the masked-ball merge partially becoming metaphors of each other as well as of Tsarist Russia. Russia is both a masked-ball and a prison; it is a ball enclosed within a prison. It is important however to stress that these dual and complicated metaphorical relations between Russia, the masked-ball and the prison become possible only because the two chronotopes, the prison and the masked-ball, partially merge. The two spaces overlap and hence acquire more than one level of signification.

The extension of the prison boundaries to cover the whole of Russia is also reflected in frequent references to the fatalist Jacques and his master from Diderot’s novel in dialogues Jacques le Fataliste. The reference appears in the title of the play itself and both Lunin as well the ‘uniform of the Tsar’ frequently refer to the main protagonists of Diderot’s novel. Lunin identifies himself with the slave Jacques and plans to write his last text in the prison in the form of a dialogue using Diderot’s work ‘the conversation of Jacques with his Master’ as an inspiring example [82].

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3 N. Eidel’mann, the well-known Russian historian, who has written a biography of Lunin, notes that after his problems with the Arch-Duke Konstantin, Lunin resigned from the army and went to France. In
According to Lunin, the ‘master’ put him in Siberian prisons, hoping that they would dampen his spirit and the people of Russia would forget about him. But the Jacques in Lunin does not die, although he does undergo a certain degree of spiritual transformation, which is in many ways similar to the one which Socrates underwent in his prison cell.

Lunin was arrested when he was forty and spent more than twenty years in exile and prisons which destroyed his youthful exuberance, his dare-devil spirit, his utter disbelief in his own death. That is why, recalling his duels with his friend Orlov, one of the several roles played by the ‘first uniform’, he asks from him forgiveness:

Лунин. Как страно. Ты не можешь понять "прости". За то, что двадцать лет назад я был молод и жесток ... и гарок ... за то, что после ... тырыма моей я понял это — я в пояс кланяюсь судьбе, а тебе говорю: прости. Но не услышать "прости" сатому животному. (Тихо.) А без "прости" ... как умирать, Алеша? [92-93].

It was mentioned earlier that although both Dialogues with Socrates and Lunin ... employ the chronotope of the prison, the operation of this chronotope in the two plays has important differences. In Dialogues with Socrates the chronotope of the prison is associated with the last thirty days of Socrates’ life. In Lunin ... on the other hand, the duration of the crisis time is much shorter, a little more than three hours, and that is why events in this play seem to unfold at a much more accelerated tempo. They begin to represent a horrid dream or a nightmare in which events overlap and merge, and fail to adhere to the usual rules of temporality and causality.

One possible reason for the difference in the operation of prison as a chronotope could be attributed to the difference between the real chronotopes of the prison in Socrates’ Athens and in nineteenth-century Russia. The Athenian agora did have a state prison, but, as was noted in the previous chapter, the practice of incarceration was not the dominant form of penalty in Athens.

The role of prison within the matrix of the whole penal system and its practices underwent a qualitative change in Europe in the early eighteenth century. Michel Foucault in his book Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison traces the emergence of detention and incarceration as the dominant form of penalty in early-eighteenth century Europe. According to him, ‘the transition from the public execution, with its spectacular rituals, its art mingled with the ceremony of pain, to the penalties of prison buried in

France he read philosophy and literature and gave French language lessons. This information is taken from the theatre-program for the play Lunin... produced in 1979 in the Theatre on the Maloi Bronnoi in Moscow.
architectural masses and guarded by the secrecy of administration is .... a transition from one art of punishing to another.'

In eighteenth-century Europe incarceration and prison had become the penalty *par excellence* because the principle of deprivation of liberty operated in a society in which liberty was considered 'as a good that belong to all in the same way.' The concept of individual liberty so vital for this type of penal practice was based on an understanding of human subject based on the division between the private-personal and the public domains of an individual's life, and which conceded that individuals were born as free human beings. For a Greek citizen such a division between the external and the internal did not exist. The private-personal or 'the internal as we understand' or as a European of the early eighteenth-century understood, 'for a Greek, was located at the same level with the external of our understanding.' For a Greek citizen for whom the question of individual liberty was not central, the principle and the practice of deprivation of that liberty i.e. incarceration, was not a very serious penalty. In fact, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, Greek citizens were sent to prison for execution; the prison for them was an intermediate stopover. In early eighteenth-century Europe, the prison was, in some ways, a replacement for execution, in particular of public execution. It was 'from the outset a form of legal detention entrusted with an additional corrective task, or an enterprise for reforming individuals.'

In Tsarist Russia the history of the penal system and the role of prison in that system show a pattern quite similar to that in the rest of Europe, although there are some features which are quite specific to Russia. In Russia 'since the promulgation of the new legal code in 1649 by the Tsar Aleksi Mikhailovich the attention of law-makers was focused on various forms of exile and deportation rather than incarceration.' The beginning of the nineteenth century saw an increase in the role of prison in the Russian penal system. For instance between 1785 and 1813 there were only four public prisons in Russia but in the ten years after 1820, sixteen new prisons were added and by the end of 1860s there were fifty seven public or general prisons. The penal system underwent reforms in 1845 when a new code was adopted in the 1860s after serfdom was abolished in 1861. Gernet describes several types of prisons which operated in Russia till the end of the nineteenth century. These included prisons in fortresses such as the Peter and Pavlov

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5 Foucault, p. 232.
6 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 171.
7 Foucault, p. 233.
9 Gernet, p. 521.
Fortress and the Shlissel’burgsk Fortress, prisons in monasteries, convict labour gangs [арестантские роты], correctional [исправительные] and labour [рабочие] houses, prisons within estates of landowners [помещичьи] and general prisons [общеголовные].

Siberia, which was used for deportation and exile, had several types of prisons. Most common were the labour camps and colonies attached to factories and mines, but most horrible were the prisons which were meant for the most wanton exiles for whom there was no hope for reformation. The Akatyui prison was one of them. It was built in 1832 not far from a mine of the same name, and consisted of three special wings in a fortress. Mikhail Lunin in a letter in 1842 wrote about this prison that:

Архитектор Актуевского замка, без сомнения, унаследовал воображение Дانتа. Моя предыдущие тюрьмы были будущими по сравнению с тем казематом, которая я занимаю. Меня строгут, не спуская глаз. Часовые у дверей, у окон — везде .... Моя темница так сыра, что книги и платы покрываются плесенью, моя пища так умерена что не остается даже чем накормить кошку.\textsuperscript{10}

This prison was meant for political prisoners and convicts who were imprisoned for life and were expected to die there. It seems that till the beginning of the nineteenth century by concentrating on exile and deportation the Russian penal system was interested only in punishing the offenders. The notions of correction and reformation were introduced only in the nineteenth century when more general prisons and correctional centres were built in major cities and district and provincial centres.

In \textit{Dialogues with Socrates}, Socrates goes to prison with a clear knowledge that after thirty days when the holy chorus will return from Delphi to Athens he will have to die. This inevitability of death perhaps forces Socrates to view it as a blessing and perhaps that is why he asks his pupils to ‘sacrifice a rooster for Asclepius, the god of healing’ after his death. For Lunin, exile to Siberia and incarceration in prisons is an endless process of deprivation of liberty. By the end of 1842 he had realised that his confinement in Akatyui was:

предназначен к медленной смерти в тюрьме, вместо моментальной на эшафоте.\textsuperscript{11}

Therefore, the idea of an execution in the prison cell at the hands of two convicts at three o’clock in the morning is perceived by him and by the readers very differently from the execution of Socrates’ in an Athenian prison.

Long periods of incarceration under the regime of strict isolation and controlled labour force the prisoners to ‘see’ their past. They turn into voyeurs and begin to

\textsuperscript{10} The quotations from Lunin’s letters are taken from a book by S. V. Okun’, \textit{Decembrist Lunin} [Декабрист Лунин] (Leningrad: Leningrad University, 1962), pp. 256-257.

\textsuperscript{11} From Lunin’s letter in S. V. Okun’, p. 257.
construct and narrate their life-stories. In Lunin ... Lunin himself is such a voyeur and narrator. The play can be read either as an extended monologue of Lunin or as a dialogue between Lunin and other protagonists of his life-story.

In prison an individual loses liberty as well as control over time. The time in a day and the succession of days and years begin to be regulated by someone else. The times of walking, feeding, sleeping, the whole daily routine of a prisoner, are controlled by prison officers and guards. There is nothing which a prisoner can call personal or private time. The prisoner also forgoes all initiative with regard to time. He or she cannot interfere with it and change it. It becomes repetitive, cyclic and mechanical. Its monotonous repetitiveness blurs visible signs of its passage, and it becomes invisible. Time thus loses its main character, that of passing. Biographical time loses its main organising principle, the passage of time.

In the play Lunin ... this timelessness of biographical time of a prisoner is broken by the announcement of Lunin’s impending execution. Suddenly time regains its visibility, turning into crisis time. The contingencies associated with crisis time begin to operate like catalysts, accelerating the process of visual crystallisation of biographical as well as historical times. In this rapid process the space of Lunin’s prison-cell metaphorically sheds its walls and is transformed into a space with multiple signification. The cell turns into a theatrical stage where the enactment of Lunin’s life-drama takes place. In this enactment, the theatrical stage acquires the setting of a masked-ball, resulting in the partial merging of two chronotopes: the prison and the masked-ball. The chronotope of the masked-ball becomes the main plot-constitutive device for Lunin’s biographical and ‘autobiographical’ narratives. The main events of his life are narrated by using this chronotope which also functions as a space in which Lunin’s life and the lives of other main protagonists of his life-drama are graphically re-presented. However, in order to understand the capacity of the chronotope of the masked-ball to function as both plot-constitutive and time-visualising devices, it will be useful to discuss the semiotic significance of the real chronotope of the masked-ball in the everyday life of a person in Russia in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Real Chronotope of the Masked-Ball

According to Yu. Lotman the theatre and theatricality had overwhelmingly influenced the everyday life of Russian nobility and the boundary between art and everyday life was destroyed:
Teatr вторгается в жизнь, активно перестраивая бытовое поведение людей. Монолог проникает в письмо, дневник в бытовую речь...... Искусство становится моделью, которая жизнь подражает.12

One of the most compelling indicators of this heightened theatricalisation of everyday life, according to Lotman, was the appearance of many private and household theatres and the frequent staging of amateur theatrical productions. The intrusion of the theatre in everyday life was welcomed because it was felt that this turning to the theatre represented ‘a move from the insincere and abstract life of the higher society into the world of more honest feelings.’13 The members of the Russian nobility in ‘the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had begun to fashion their lives by imitating heroes and protagonists of literature and the theatre.’14 They had started conceptualising their life through the prism of public spectacles, and this was reflected very clearly in the contemporary Russian literature which very often alluded to public spectacles:

Показательно утверждение омываем законами жизни дворянского общества через призму наиболее обычных форм театрального спектакля — маскарада, кукольной комедии и балагана, с чем постоянно встречаемся в литературе конца XVIII — начала XIX вв.15

According to Lotman balls and masked-balls were the popular forms of public spectacles amongst Russian nobility, and played a significant role in the everyday life of Russian nobility.

The behaviour of a male member of Russian nobility was structured on the hierarchical differences in society, which divided people on the basis of their ranks and their noble lineage. A nobleman could, in addition, behave as a person in service or out of service, in the army or the civil service. In addition, he also had the option to move to the country and become a land- and serf-owner. Yu. Lotman in an another interesting article

14 Lotman, 1973, p. 47.
15 Lotman, 1973, p. 60. Lotman quotes from a contemporary short story, which compared the behaviour of Russian nobility and the institution of the masked-ball. This is a story written by I. A. Krylov in which he writes:

"Я не знаю, для того ли они наряжаются таким образом, чтобы показать себя в настоящем своем виде по расположению своих душ, скромствующих, может быть, с твоим прилюдьем или безобразностью; и, что они пьют быть неизвестными и казаться всегда в другом виде, нежели каковы они есть на самом деле. Если сие замечание справедливо, то можно сказать... что сие свет есть не что иное, как общирное здание, в котором собрано великое множество маскированных людей, из коих, может быть, большая часть под наружной личиной в сердцах своих носят обман, эпобу и веропомство."
suggests that although the Decembrist members of Russian nobility behaved differently in different situations they still represented 'a specific cultural and psychological type.' An individual Decembrist 'sometimes acted like a nobleman, an officer/guardsman/hussar, a Russian, a European, a young man, but there existed a set of possibilities of a certain kind of behaviour, a particular type of action and reaction which was specific to the member of the secret societies', of which the Decembrists were members. One of the most interesting feature of the behaviour of an individual Decembrist was its theatrical nature; it was as if 'calculated to affect the spectator.'

The life of a male member of Russian nobility and in particular of a Decembrist can not be visualised without referring to balls, service in the army, parades, duels, card games and the theatre. Almost all aspects of his life were meant to be enacted and shown like a theatrical performance. Balls and masked-balls were the most significant events in the everyday life of a Russian nobleman. N. S. Akushin suggests that in nineteenth-century Russia there existed three types of balls and masquerades: public balls and masquerades organised by the Directorate of the Imperial Theatres; public balls and masquerades organised in the House of Engelgardt in St. Petersburg; and private balls and masquerades. The balls and masquerades in the House of Engelgardt were very popular and were attended by the members of the imperial family. It is said the Tsar Nikolai I also used to attend these public balls.

According to Lotman, 'balls and dances were important structural elements in the everyday life of the gentry.' At a ball, a member of Russian nobility behaved 'neither like a private individual nor like an officer in the service of the government, but like a member of the gentry participating in the gathering of his own community; he was in his own social environment.' The ball had a significant cultural role. It was an important element of social practices by which a person was constituted as a member of the gentry. It provided a mechanism, a ritualised set of practices where conventions about the behaviour appropriate for a member of the gentry were formed, rehearsed and disseminated. The strict ritualisation of the ball led to the development of its own 'grammar', which defined the relationship between the whole ball, and its individual

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17 Lotman, 1984, p. 73.
18 Lotman, 1984, p. 81.
constituent elements such as dances, dresses, card games, music, drinking, gossip, the order of entry onto and exit from the dance floor:

Это повлекло за собой ритуализацию вала, создание строгой последовательности частей, выделение устойчивых и обязательных элементов. Возникла грамматика вала, а сам он складывался в некоторое целостное театральное представление, в котором каждом элементу соответствовали типовые эмоции (от входа в залу до разъезда), фиксированные значения, стили поведения.22

The ball and masquerades had developed their own conventions and norms. Although a ball was not theatre itself, it was saturated with theatricality. The modes of unusual dressing, even cross dressing, were associated with role playing. All participants acted and knew that they acted. It was a strange mixture of the states of disbelief and that of the ‘suspension of disbelief’. An important feature which distinguished it from the theatre as such was the lack of a real distinction between the acting and the spectating spaces. The actors or participants were also the spectators. However there did exist some distinction between them and the spaces, because the dance floor was thronged by spectators and onlookers, who observed the pairs involved in dances.

Although balls and masquerades were very similar to each other, masquerade was a special type of ball. The presence of masks added thrill, suspense, and intrigue to a normal ball, and also provided the possibility of subverting the ritualistic, normalising and disciplining practices of a normal ball. Akushin cites the following remarks of a nineteenth-century Russian commentator, who highlighted the rebellious and subversive nature of the masked-ball:

[Маскарады] демократически соединили верх и низ Петербурга. Тут появлялись гордые графини и княжны. По установившейся маскарадной традиции кавалеры и дами говорили друг другу обязательно "ты". Чтобы не быть узнанными, маски изменили голоса, манеры, походку. Мужчины на энгецидтовских маскарадах бывали в большинстве случаев без масок. Маскарад, как известно, свет на изнанку. Мужчины скромничали и порой даже краснели. Женщины бегают за мужчинами, шепчут им любовые признания, назначают свидания, упрекают в ветренности. Сходство между светом и маскарадом является только в том, что мужчины, и здесь и там пленяясь сладкими словами, остаются дураками.23


23 Ashukin, pp. 225-226. Terry Castle also highlights this carnivalesque topsy-turvy nature of the masquerade: "... A logic of symbolic inversion informed the masquerade. If the masked ball was a kind of anarchy, it was paradoxically a systematic anarchy. ... If one may speak of the rhetoric of masquerade, a topology of costume, the controlling figure was the antithesis: one was obliged to impersonate a being opposite, in some essential feature, to oneself.' Terry Castle, Masquerade and Civilisation: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986), p. 5.
In the opinion of this commentator the masquerade was the 'high society turned inside out'. The prevalent norms of behaviour in high society were not only forgotten but were actively and consciously subverted. The normal gender roles were frequently reversed; ladies hidden under the security of masks enjoyed more freedom to flirt, and chased men. Both ladies and gentlemen addressed each other by using the lower form of the second person pronoun [Ти].

In many ways the space of a ball-room was similar to that of the French salon or drawing room, which functioned as the dominant chronotope of the nineteenth-century French novel. However, there were significant differences between the two. The verbal exchanges, discussions and disputes in the Russian ball-room 'lacked an intellectual rigor' which was so characteristic of French salons.\(^{24}\) The ball-room was perceived predominantly as a site of pleasure and entertainment.

However, in masked-balls the most powerful sections of contemporary Russian society used to gather in full splendour, displaying its hierarchical subdivisions, and attired in appropriate uniforms and marked with equally appropriate insignia. In these halls the young were initiated into high society; marriages were arranged and relations were broken. Here, intrigues were planned and conspiracies hatched. For a young Russian male and female, but more so for a male, life often began with and at a ball and very often used to end there, because the ball was the place where arguments and insults led to fatal duels. The Russian ball-room was thus the most important space of cultural semiosis, a space where time found its most visual representation. It is, therefore not surprising that it made its appearance in many literary narratives of the time.

In addition to balls and masquerades, army-service, and in particular military parades, were the other two forms of human gathering which had achieved a heightened level of ritualisation in nineteenth-century Russia. The military parade was a theatrical and ritualised display of the depersonalising regime associated with uniforms. It was often compulsory for officers to wear uniforms even during the masked-balls and theatrical performances. The uniforms were very potent means of establishing a particular type of power relation, because they not only classified individuals according to hierarchy and power but de-individualised them, by merging them with their uniforms. In this way the cultural significance of parades was different, in some ways, the very opposite of balls and masquerades. If balls and in particular masquerades 'liberated' individuals from the disciplining norms, parades re-established them.

According to Lotman, 'in the Pavlov and Alexendirine times, the army parade, which was an opposite or an antipode of another spectacle, that of war, was perceived as

\(^{24}\) Lotman, 1983, p. 81.
an important spectacle.' The army and consequently the officers and soldiers, were not only trained for a battle but also for the parade. The signifying function of the army on parade was different from that in a war. On a battle field hierarchical differences could be, to a large extent, dissolved, opening possibilities to a young soldier or officer to outperform others and achieve fame. The parade, on the other hand, was aimed at displaying hierarchical differences. It was a ritualised process of regulating behaviour of an individual, turning him into 'a cog in a giant machine.' In a parade, individuals were devoid of any initiative, which rested only with one person, the commander of the parade. Lotman notes that, starting from the times of Pavel I, the Tsar commanded the parade. He cites from a letter by Timofei Von Bok, according to whom 'parade was the celebration of pettiness of the powerful, the emperor. In battle it was not easy to look in the eyes of any soldier. However, on parade the very same soldier was transformed into a mannequin, and the emperor into nothing less than a god.'

Lotman in his above-mentioned articles notes that balls and masquerades were a very common setting for literary narratives of the time. Many writers used balls and masquerades in their plots. Terry Castle makes a similar point with regard to the eighteenth-century England. According to her 'a voluminous literature such as pamphlets, sermons, squibs, moral essays, novels and plays grew up around masquerades.' But balls and masquerades were not confined to popular or so-called lower forms of literary narratives. They were assimilated most successfully by 'serious' forms of literary narratives such as novels, dramas and poetry. In nineteenth-century Russia the narratological significance of the chronotope of the ball and the masquerade was such that it was rather difficult to tell stories without them. Every important literary narrative of that time and about that time uses these chronotopes. For instance, Griboedov's play *Woe from Wit* which was published in 1825 makes an effective use of the chronotope of the ball-room. The most significant events of the play unfold in a ball after rumours about Chatskii’s madness begin to invade the thoughts and actions of every protagonist of the play. In Pushkin’s *Evgenii Onegin* the chronotope of the ball likewise functions as an important plot-constitutive device. If in the above two works the chronotope of the ball is confined to one or two segments of the narrative, in Lermontov’s drama *The Masquerade*, the masquerade not only operates as plot-constitutive and time-visualising devices but itself becomes an object of representation.

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27 Lotman, 1973, p. 64.
28 Castle, p. 3.
The Chronotope of the Masked-Ball in Lunin ...

In Lunin ... as soon as the clock strikes midnight, time enters its crisis mode and the chronotope of the prison cell is transformed into the chronotope of the masked-ball. The prison cell is not replaced by the masked-ball but the two start to coexist, creating a time-space, which, very much like the stage of a theatre, acquires the capacity of multiple signification.

In the opening sequence of the play, the narrator introduces a crowd of uniforms with golden embroidery and epaulettes. He describes a female figure who is dressed in black and ‘whose white hands are stretched towards Lunin’. In the first few scenes, the uniforms and the female figure remain in the background of Lunin’s cell. But, after lieutenant Grigor’ev’s exit from Lunin’s cell, when he informs Lunin about his impending execution, readers find Lunin talking to the female figure, suggesting that:

Лунин (Женщина). Как же я не понял? ... Я всегда встречался с тобой накануне [79].

Soon after, Lunin notices uniforms in the background and starts talking to them addressing them as ‘gentlemen’:

(подмигнув в темноту.) Господа, попались! (Визгливо.) Попались! [79].

Just before the clock strikes midnight, readers find Lunin in his cell, surrounded in the semi-darkness by a ‘crowd of uniforms’, and ‘the silhouette of a woman’. The clock striking midnight throws Lunin into a state of frenzy and he begins a long monologue addressed to the uniforms. He ‘moves towards them but they recede. He again tries to come close to them but they silently move away. He starts to run after them, till ‘she’ from the darkness places her hand on his forehead, and he at once calms down’ [81].

The transformation of the prison cell into a hall of a masked-ball is achieved by a number of visual and aural devices, the foremost among them is the presence of a crowd of uniforms. This crowd of uniforms is not stationary but is endowed with a colourful vibrancy. It moves and slides through the space like a crowd in a masked-ball. It laughs [смех и хохот мундиров], murmurs and mutters [ропот мундиров], breathes loudly [дыхание мундиров], shouts [крики мундиров], talks and announces [голос мундиров]. Its presence is so vital for the enactment of Lunin’s life drama that the crowd of uniforms starts to appear as a protagonist in the form of ‘The Voice of the Uniforms’ [Голос мундиров].

The other very effective device for recreating a masked-ball is the ‘voice from the dark’ which imitates the porter and announces the arrival of carriages at the ball or summons them for the nobleman ready to leave:
Голос во тьме. Карета Волконского ... Карета Чаадева ... Карета Трубецкого ... Карета Фамусова ... [84].

Голос мунтирров (из темноты). Карету Орлого ... Карету Волконского ... Карету Трубецкого ... Карету Пущина ... [87].

Голос (из темноты). Карету Трубецкого ... Карету Волконского ... Карету Муравьева ... ... Карету Репитилова ... [89].

Голос во тьме. Карету Волконского ... Карету Фонвизина ... Карету Вестужева ... [93] (emphasis added).

These extracts mention the names of some important Decembrists such as Volkonskii, Chaadev, Trubetskoii, Pushchin, Murav’ev, Fonvizin and Bestuzhev. Famusov and Repitilov, however, are the names of two characters in Griboedov’s play Woe from Wit. Griboedov was a close friend of many Decembrists and was arrested and interrogated after the failed Decembrist revolt. Many critics believe that Chatskii, the main protagonist of Griboedov’s play thinks, talks and behaves like a Decembrist. This mixing of historical and fictional protagonists in the above extract is an important feature of the play which highlights the way it explores the boundaries between the fictional and the real in real life and literary narratives.

Another important device that helps to re-create a masked-ball in the prison cell is the repeated utterances of the phrase: “Mask, who am I?” [Маска, кто я?]. This phrase is spoken by the ‘voice of the uniforms’, the ‘first uniform’, the ‘second uniform’ and the ‘uniform of the Tsar’. The three devices, discussed above, thus combine to create a visual re-presentation of the masked-ball. For instance, this is how it happens in the opening sequences of the play:

Голос во тьме. Карета Волконского ... Карета Чаадева ... Карета Трубецкого ...

Карета Фамусова ...

Лунин. Я вернулся к началу?

Голос мунтирров. Мaska, кто я?

Лунин. Я не вижу ... Я ничего не вижу. (Смеясь, он тянеться в мундире, выставив руки, будто он с завязанными глазами.)

Общая хохот.

Первый мундир. (Вступая из темноты). Мaska кто я?

Лунин. Это детство! ...

Первый мундир. (Все приближаюсь). Мaska кто я?
Лунин. Нет, нет, ....

Первия мундир. (Совсем приближаясь). Мaska кто я?

Лунин. Нет, это уже макарад! .... [84-85] (emphasis added).

In this masked-ball the mask approaches Lunin, who is either acting like a mask or is enacting the childhood game of the blind-man’s buff [игра в жмурки], and asks him to guess who he is. Lunin names the mask and the mask recedes to be replaced by a new mask with the same question, and the ball continues:

Сермяга. Мaska кто я?

Лунин. Это ты, Пущин.

Мундир. (смех). Признав! ... Мaska кто я?

Лунин. Это ты Завалишин.

Мундир. (смех). Признав! ... Мaska кто я?

Лунин. Это ты Волконский ... [87] (emphasis added).

Card games were an important feature of Russian balls and masquerades, adding an element of thrill and excitement to the whole event. It was normal practice that, when the younger participants of balls and masquerades were busy dancing, the older members moved to the card tables. In Lunin ... the ‘uniforms’ are also shown to be playing cards. It is interesting, however, to note that ‘the first’, and ‘the second uniforms’ and the ‘uniform of the Tsar’ are playing cards whilst Lunin is not involved in the game; he is a spectator, an onlooker. If his life was a game of cards, the cards were not in his hands but in the hands of other people who decided his fate. They were playing with and for his life.

It was mentioned earlier that for a member of Russian nobility, life often began and ended at the ball. In this play, Lunin’s life also begins at a masked-ball:

Лунин. Нет, это уже макарад! .... Ну понятно! Какже я не признал! Жизнь начинается с бала, господа. Ах, жизнь начинается с нашего телячьего восторга. С орехового гирога начинается жизнь! Макарад! И вдруг в зеркале на верхней ступеньке вижу бегущего на встречу высокого молодого кавалергарда .... И понимаю, что он — это я! И задыхаясь от удовольствия .... И через три десятка лет .... (Смехок.) Ах, как это все одинаково: жизнь начинается с веры, данная всмому молодому, живому: что оно, молодое и живое, — навечно .... И что далее — все будет еще счастливее .... Вал! Вал! Вал наших молодых обманов! [85].

The conspiracy against the Tsar is also planned at the ball:
Лунин. ... Ах, какая русская составили мы заговор! Заговор на балу! [87].

The conspiracy is planned in the card room. The ‘first uniform’ is playing whilst Lunin and the ‘second uniform are talking and talking’ [88]. The ‘first uniform’ is talking about the game whilst the ‘second uniform’ is discussing the petition to the Tsar that asks for the abolition of serfdom and adoption of a new constitution:

Вторая мундир. Надо подать широкий адрес государю с просьбой об освобождении крестьян.

Первая мундир. Хожу ... миражолем и проигрывая.

Вторая мундир. Именно широкий, чтобы стало ясно, что все общество требует ...

Первый мундир. Поставил на первую карту и выиграл сонника.

Вторая мундир. Нет, нужно молить государя о конституции.

Лунин. Ах, как это по-нашему ... даже за свободу ... за конституцию ... в ноги бухнуться и лбом прошибить [88].

It is interesting that in this scene where the actions of the ‘first’ and the ‘second uniforms’ recreate the past event during a ball, Lunin’s remark is made in the present, the present time of the prison cell. This is a comment by a person who is defeated and dejected.

Lunin’s numerous duels, including those with Alesha Orlov, also originate at the ball and it is on one of these occasions that he takes the responsibility to kill the Tsar. At one of the balls he meets Tsar Alexandr Pavlovich, and calls that meeting a meeting of Jacques with his Master:

Лунин. Вот она. Встреча Жака с Хозяином на балу! (Представляясь, государь.) Я Михаил Сергеевич Лунин, кавалергард, участник всех сражений Отечественной войны, награжден Золотым оружием за храбрость. В компании тысяча восемьсот пятиго года я был вашим адъютантом. Вал начинался, и вы любили меня тогда, ваше величество, государь Александр Павлович [95] (emphasis added).

Lunin meets his beloved Nataliya Pototskaya and her mother also at a ball. Lunin was thirty-seven and, recollecting his meeting with her, Lunin remarks:

Лунин. Ты? Ты! ... И тогда на балу я встретил тебя ... 

Она. Аве Мария ... Аве Мария.

Лунин. Мне было тридцать семь. Вал кончился ....
Она в темноте начинает танцевать.

... Воже моя ... бал на котором я тебя увидел [101-102] (emphasis added).

Lunin measures his whole life in terms of a ball. When he was young and met the Tsar and the Tsar loved him, the ‘ball’ was only ‘beginning’. After twenty years, when he is thirty-seven and living in Poland, Lunin feels old and useless and the ball seems to be ending.

This fatalistic element associated with the ball and Lunin’s life is reflected in Lunin’s frequent assertions about the ‘trial after the ball’ [суд после бала] or ‘prison after the ball’ [тюрьма после бала]. These phrases also represent the partial merging of the chronotopes of the ball and the prison. As was mentioned above, this conversion is never complete. The space within which Lunin’s memory is enacting his life-drama belongs simultaneously to a prison cell as well as to a ball-room. Because Lunin is now in a prison cell, awaiting his execution, his ball-like life begins to acquire fatalistic tinges, and he starts seeing the inevitability of the trial and imprisonment. However, it is possible that many Decembrists were arrested straight after a ball, and as Lunin describes it, those who were together at the ball were afterwards divided into two groups: those who were seated on one side of the table as judges and interrogators and those who were on the other side as prisoners:

Первый мундир. Мы все были вместе на том балу!

Лунин. (смешок). А после бала уж раздельно: те кто сел ..., и те, кто нас сажал. Одни останутся при крестах, а других пристроят на крестах [90] (emphasis added).

The following exchange between the ‘first uniform’, Lunin and the ‘uniform of the Tsar’ also underlines the relation between the ball and the trial:

Первый мундир. Прямо с бала меня пирвезли к государю разбирать дело.

Лунин. И тогда ... у Константина я вдруг понял: бал кончился. Наступил суд.

Мундир государя. После бала всегда суд ... Это даже философский как-то, а, жак? Хотя с бала на суд непростая дорога [106-107] (emphasis added).

The ‘first uniform’ recalls that he was taken straight from the ball to the Tsar to head the investigation. Lunin, who was with Grand Duke Konstantin in Poland recalls that, after hearing the news of the failed rebellion, he understood that the ‘ball had ended and the trial had begun’. The ‘uniform of the Tsar’ makes a more general statement according to which ‘ball is always followed by a trial’. If the ball is a metaphor of Lunin’s life or life in general, does the word ‘суд’ only represent trial? The word ‘суд’ can be translated both as a trial as well as judgment as in the phrase ‘страшный суд’ meaning ‘the day of judgment’
or ‘the last judgment’. Thus it seems that the phrase суд после бала can be read to represent the final day of judgment which inevitably follows the ball of life.

The merging of the chronotopes of the prison and the ball attains its most visual representation, when in the opening sequences of Lunin’s life-drama, the uniforms undergo metamorphosis: the ‘prisoner-uniform’ converts into the ‘second uniform’. This is how it is achieved:

И тут Сержа обнаруживается - и обнаруживается, что арестантская сермяга только сзади, а спереди, с лица, это такой же великолепный мундир - с блестящим шитьем и эполетами. И этот вторая мундир со столь странный арестантской спиной усаживается рядом с Первым мундиром[88].

In this play the ‘second uniform’ plays the roles of Lunin’s fellow Decembrists who were arrested, tried and either executed or exiled to Siberia. By portraying these young, noble and enthusiastic participants of balls and masquerades, the ‘second uniform’ also stands for the ball itself. The ‘prisoner-uniform’, on the other hand, represents their fate after the failed rebellion. Thus, the same human figure has two sides, two characters, and two faces: the ball and the prison.

Multiple Role Playing

It can be argued that the events which represent the enactment of Lunin’s life-drama constitute in themselves a play which is enclosed within the main play. In Dialogues with Socrates, the trial of Socrates was also constructed like a play. In Lunin ..., however, this ‘play within a play’ structure is more strongly developed and Lunin’s life-drama is enacted in a space which has some resemblance with the stage of a theatre. The ‘play within a play’ structure reveals its full potential in Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca which is the third play of the trilogy.

It is interesting to note that the two plays, the main play and the play re-presenting Lunin’s life-drama, employ a different number of characters. The characters involved in the main play are: Lunin, lieutenant Grigor’ev, the prison clerk, the priest, Marfa and the two convicts. The number of characters involved in the enactment of Lunin’s life-drama are twice as large: Lunin, Lunin’s Decembrist friends, Lunin’s interrogators, the two Tsars and their third brother, Nataliya Pototskaya, her mother, Mariya Volkonskaya and a convict. These characters are, however, played by a handful of ‘actors’. Lunin is played by Lunin. The ‘first uniform’ plays the roles of Lunin’s friends who betrayed him and his Decembrist friends, and who interrogated, and sentenced them. The ‘second uniform’ acts the roles of Lunin’s Decembrist comrades such as Pushchin, Volkonskii, Trubetskoi, Murav’ev, and Zavalishin. The three brothers, the two Tsars and their third brother, are
played by the ‘uniform of the Tsar’. Finally, all female protagonists are played by ‘she’. A ‘crowd of uniforms’ and a female figure representing ‘she’ are present throughout the play, but the crowd differentiates into three distinct types of uniforms only when the enactment of Lunin’s life-drama begins. The function of the character/actor ‘she’ is very intriguing. Unlike the ‘uniforms’, ‘she’ does not change her dress or appearance. She remains dressed in black with her white arms and hands, stretched out from the darkness and plays all the female protagonists in Lunin’s life-drama. Her presence in Lunin’s prison-cell, like a figure from a dream sequence, helps to maintain a link between the present time of the main play and the past time of Lunin’s life-drama.

The switching from one role to another by ‘she’ is swift and the readers are kept guessing which role ‘she’ is playing at a particular time. For instance, in the scene representing Lunin’s parting with her beloved Nataliya Pototskaya, ‘she’ alternately plays the role of Nataliya Pototskaya and her mother without changing her outer appearance:

Она. (после паузы). Это написала я ... ее мать ...... В ту ночь я не ложилась спать. Я услышала: кто-то влез в окно замка ... крепкая по запал ...

Ведая моя ... милая моя ... Это уже не ты ждешь его! Это уже я, твоя мать. Жду! Это не я ... это моя мать ... Это не моя мать ... Это уже моя бабка ... Это ее бабка. ......

Лунин. Милая ... милая ...

Она. “Вы пришли ... вы пришли ... Я только одно прошу сказать: когда они вас увезут?”

....................

Она. Лицо в подушках ... и как сжала грудь своими детскими руками ... И сведеный судорогой рот ...

Лунин. Утро ... Мы прощались в галерее замка. Сквозь окно Высла, и смокнут уста твои.

Она. Я протянула руку ... [112] (emphasis added).

In the opening remark ‘she’ is playing Nataliya Pototskaya’s mother. The second phrase, enclosed within quotes, comes from Nataliya Pototskaya herself. In the third utterance the ‘she’ has switched back to the role of the mother. The mother is commenting on the emotional state of her daughter on the eve of parting with Lunin. Finally, the last words uttered by ‘she’ are the words spoken by Nataliya Pototskaya. Thus in this short extract, ‘she’ shifts twice between the roles of Nataliya Pototskaya and her mother.

An interesting feature of the opening remark where ‘she’ is playing the ‘mother’ is her reference to her mother, her grandmother and her grandmother’s mother. Initially,
referring to her daughter, Nataliya Pototskaya’s mother tells her daughter that it was not she, her daughter, who was waiting for Lunin, her lover, but she, the mother. But in the very next sentence, doubt is raised with regard to her own position when she, the mother, tells that it was not she, the mother, waiting, but her mother who was waiting; that she like her mother and her grandmother and her great grandmother was waiting for ‘him’. The ‘she’ thus begins to represent collectively all mothers or daughters who had waited for their lovers. Similarly, Lunin starts to represent all their lovers.

A similar image is created in the final scenes of the play when Lunin begins to identify ‘she’ with Mariya Volkonskaya, the wife of Lunin’s fellow Decembrist Volkonskii, who is known to have followed her husband into exile in Siberia:

Она. Ты любил без меня?
Лунин. Я любил тебя без тебя.
Она. Как звали меня без меня?
Лунин. Без тебя тебя звали Мария. ..... Она приехала в заточение к мужу ....
Она встретилась с Волконским в тюремном замке и на коленях целовалла его кандылы ... Когда я впервые ее увидел: эти глаза ... и этот голос ... твой голос ... я понял, что после смерти ты вновь пришла ко мне.
Она садится и играет в темноте.
(Долго слушает, а потом кричит.) Не надо играть! Я вас прошу, Мария!
Она. “Что с вами, Лунин?” [119].

The first two questions in this exchange are asked by Nataliya Pototskaya, who wants to know if Lunin loved her even after her death. Lunin replies that ‘he loved her without her’, i.e. even after she had died. Lunin then describes his first meeting with Mariya Volkonskaya in prison where she had come to see her husband. Lunin detects in Mariya Volkonskaya his own Nataliya Pototskaya and suggests that he understood that ‘she had come to see him after her death’. In all subsequent utterances ‘she’ is playing Mariya Volkonskaya. It seems that in the play Lunin ... ‘she’ is a collective image of women named Nataliya and Mariya, including, perhaps, Mary Magdalene. This becomes evident from Lunin’s following remark made just before his execution:

Лунин. “Потому что каждый раз перед головою проявляешь ты, и я должен отдавать тебя ... [119].

In this play ‘she’ is not the only character or actor who functions as a collective image or a type-character. The ‘uniform of the Tsar’ also operates in a similar way, playing the two Tsars and their third brother, but readers are always kept guessing about the true identity
of the character played by it at a particular time. For instance, in the following sentence, the ‘uniform of the Tsar’ is playing Tsar Aleksandr I:

Мундир государя. Тебя должен был полюбить мой брат Константин. Он солдафон, и твои способности к фронту ... Впрочем, я не люблю Константина ... как и брата Николая ... (Ворчает) Я не люблю Константина, я не люблю Николая [96].

Responding to Lunin’s reply that Grand Duke Konstantin was fond of him, the ‘uniform of the Tsar’ begins to play Grand Duke Konstantin:

Мундир государя. ... Кстати, тебя должен был полюбить мой брат Александр...
У него, как у тебя, на языке вечно были Монтель и Руссо ... Я не люблю Александра, как и брата Николая тоже [96].

and further:

Мундир государя. ... Я не хотел выдать тебя брату Николаю, не потому, что я тебя люблю, а потому, что ... (Ворчает) Я не люблю Николая ... Я не люблю Александра ... [96].

For Lunin the three brothers are the same, representing the same ugly and despotic face of the ‘master’:

Лунин. Три брата ... Они похожи ... Эти мешки под глазами ... Этот фамильный медальный греческий профиль. (Хохочет, кричит.) Это одно ... Они — одно! [96].

Lunin finds in the three faces the same face, and the ‘uniform of the Tsar’ seems to agree with him by remarking:

Мундир государя. Я не люблю Александра, я не люблю Николая, я не люблю Константина. [96].

Whose voice is this, if it does not love any of the three brothers? Who is this, if it is not Aleksandr, Nikolai or Konstantin? It seems the individuality and personal specificity of a character has been diffused to its maximum. The ‘uniform of the Tsar’ has turned into a voice, abstracted and generalised. It has separated from three brothers and has begun commenting on its own nature. Two things seem to have happened simultaneously: the ‘uniform of the Tsar’ has, on the one hand, diffused the differences between the three brothers, turning them into a despotic voice, the voice of the ‘master’, and on the other hand, the despotic voice has found a graphic and visible representation in the form of the ‘uniform of the Tsar’.
For Lunin, the three brothers are not only one, but they are continually transforming into one another; they are changing like a ‘Mephistopheles’:

Лунин. Они превращаются друг в друга ... как Мфистофель превращался в пса.

[97].

In this way, Lunin’s narrative gaze transforms the three imperial brothers into a collective image, a single voice, a single type-character. If ‘she’ represented the collective image of all that was loving, kind and inspiring in Lunin’s life, the ‘uniform of the Tsar’ is the equivalent of the powerful and despotic ‘master’ from Diderot’s novel.

As was mentioned earlier, the first and the second uniforms also represent collective images; the ‘first uniform’ stands for Lunin’s friends who betrayed him and the ‘second uniform’ for those who were banished, exiled and executed. Thus, these four: the ‘uniform of the Tsar’, the ‘first uniform’, the ‘second uniform’ and ‘she’ become the main actors in Lunin’s life-drama. Perhaps, that is why, in the finale of the play, just before his execution, Lunin begins to see his life-drama in terms of these four actors/characters. However, he describes them by using the names of biblical characters: Cain, Abel, Caesar, and Mariya:

Лунин. Сидят на одной лавочке? Кай ... Аевъ ... Кесарь ... Вся история бала!

[101]

and again,

Лунин. Моя Кай, Алешка ... Впрочем, какая ты Алешка? Подожди ... Сначала был Орлов (засмеялся), потом был Чернышев ..., потом стал Бенкendorф ... Сначала Александр ..., потом Константин ... потом Николай ... Сначала Наталия, потом Мария ... И вот теперь, когда всё подошло к концу, я понимаю: как детьми мы сокращаем дроби, так и жизнь уничтожает кажущееся многообразие. И вот уже вокруг нет толпы. Жизнь—то свелась к ним, к четырем: Кайн ... Аевъ ... Кесарь ... и Мария - на одной лавочке умещается вся жизнь! [120].

Lunin sees himself as Abel who was murdered by his brother Cain. Lunin’s Caesars are Orlov, Chernyshev, and Benkendorf. The three Caesars are Aleksandr, Konstantin and Nikolai, and the four Mariyas are Nataliya, her mother, Mariya Volkonskaya and Mary Magdalene. Lunin suggests that life just before death ‘destroys all apparent diversity’ leaving only a few main events and a few main protagonists. Thus, the play portrays Lunin’s life as a play which can be enacted only by four actors including him. The play, in this way, foregrounds the parallels between life and a play, between reality and theatre, between acting and role playing.
The masked-ball provides the setting in which Lunin’s life-drama is enacted. In the opening scene of the life-drama, readers find Lunin, blindfolded. His hands are ‘stretched out and his prodding into the crowd of uniforms’ [84]. The masks approach him and address Lunin as a mask and ask him, “Mask, who am I?” This allusion to masks transports Lunin back into his childhood. He is blindfolded and is playing or acting the childhood game with his nanny. The mask and the piece of cloth covering his eyes are replaced by the hands of his nanny, who is washing him in a bath tub. His eyes are closed to prevent soap getting into his eyes. Through the fingers of his nanny’s hands he looks at his body. However, this is not the gaze of a child but of an old Lunin who is tired and defeated. He sees his body as ‘a wooden doll with heaps of bullets, received in the name of faith, the Tsar and the fatherland’ [85]. The bath tub also no longer remains the same bath tub and is perceived as a coffin in which according to Lunin, tomorrow, i.e. after three o’clock in the morning, the same body, saturated with bullets, will come to rest:

Первый мундир. (все приближающаяся). Мaska кто я?

ЛУНИН. ...и через ее пальцы я вижу ... свое тельце ... И та деревянная кукла ... с кучей пуль полученных за веру, царя и отчество, которая лежит завтра здесь ... И то сияющее тельце ...

Первый мундир. (совсем приближаясь). Мaska кто я? [85].

The ‘first uniform’ meanwhile keeps on walking towards Lunin, asking the same question, “Mask, who am I?”, suggesting that the masked-ball is continuing.

In this way the spectacle of the masked-ball, unfolding in the space of Lunin’s cell, which has acquired a resemblance to the stage of a theatre, encompasses the opening scenes and the finale of Lunin’s life-drama. By providing a time-space for Lunin’s childhood game, the chronotope of the masked-ball is able to condense biographical time and make it graphically visible. Within a very short narrative time of less than half a page of the text, a significant part of Lunin’s life is narrated and re-presented.

Concluding Remarks

The play Lunin ... is a biography of Lunin narrated in the form of a play. The events of his biography begin and end in prison. It is the space within which all events of the narrative unfold. Thus the main chronotope of this play is the prison, which is combined with biographical time. However, this biographical time is not present in its normal mode because it has been restructured. Its normality has been violated by imposing cyclicity and mechanical repeatability that is associated with the prison-life. This results in the disfiguring of all those features which measure the flow and passage of
time. But the flow of biographical time is also complicated by the announcement of Lunin’s impending execution at the beginning of the play which transforms it into crisis time. Lunin knows that he has only three hours to live and this imparts tension to the narrative. The events begin to unfold at an accelerated tempo, resembling nightmarish visions, even hallucinations, of its main protagonist.

Lunin has been asked to reconstruct the sixty years of his life within the space of three hours, and he, like a hasty and confused director, begins to direct his memory. His memory 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. The play about Lunin’s life is enacted in Lunin’s prison cell, which like the stage of a theatre is transformed into the space of a masked-ball. In this way, the two main chronotopes of the play, the prison and the masked-ball, are associated with crisis time.

However, the transformation of the prison-cell into a hall of a masked-ball is not complete. Throughout the play, whilst the enactment of Lunin’s life-drama is being carried out, it retains the identity of a prison-cell. The intrusions of lieutenant Grigor’ev, the chanting of prayers by the priest in the adjacent cell, the sounds of fetters carried by Lunin, the presence of uniforms and the clock striking the passage of the present time keep reminding the reader that the space in which Lunin’s life-drama is being enacted is similar to the stage of a theatre which has acquired the setting and the signifiers of the prison and the masked-ball simultaneously. It is a masked-ball arranged in a prison cell and a prison that has intruded into a masked-ball.

In discussing Dialogues with Socrates, which is the first play of the trilogy, it was argued that it was structured like a ‘play within a play’. The trial of Socrates in the play has all the attributes of a Greek court which followed conventions that turned it into public spectacles. In Lunin ... a similar ‘play within a play’ structure appears but the narratological importance and function of this structure is more pronounced in this play. The ‘play within a play’ in Lunin ... serves as a potent device to re-present Lunin’s life. In the third play of the trilogy Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca, which will be discussed in the next chapter, the ‘play within a play’ structure reveals its maximum potential.

The chronotopes of the prison and the masked-ball also function as effective time-visualising devices. The frequent references to Jacques, the fatalist slave, and his master from Diderot’s Jacques le Fataliste helps to extend the boundaries of Lunin’s prison to include the whole of Tsarist Russia. The conflation and partial merging of the chronotopes of the prison and the masked-ball also help to reinforce this.
The balls and masquerades were important forms of public spectacles and represented the heightened theatricality of nineteenth-century Russian society. But these spectacles were meant not only for entertainment and pleasure, and had a broader cultural significance. They were an important part of social practices through which the subjectivity of the male and female members of Russian nobility were constructed and circulated. The balls had developed a distinct ritualistic order and functioned as a system of signs with its own grammar. These constitutive elements such as dances, music, uniforms, card games, initiation ceremonies, gossip, intrigues, and duels created a complicated system of representation. At balls and masquerades Russian nobility presented itself in its full splendour. The life of a young male or female, but more so for a male member of Russian nobility, used to begin and end at a ball or masquerade. They were indispensable elements in the life of people like Lunin, and it was difficult to imagine that a narrative about their life could be constructed without using the real chronotopes of the ball and masquerade. It is because of this that these chronotopes function as appropriate spaces for re-presenting Lunin’s life story.

The uniforms with golden embroidery and epaulettes and masks approaching Lunin, and addressing him as a mask and asking the question “Mask, who am I?” create a vibrant and visual image of the masked-ball. The uniforms holding and throwing cards, the gossip about women, wine, love affairs, duels, and conspiracies hatched at the ball provide a setting in which Lunin’s life-drama is enacted. In this way the chronotope of the masked-ball begins to function as an effective time-visualising device. Lunin’s life, i.e. his biographical time as well as historical time, the time of nineteenth-century Tsarist Russia is condensed and re-presented through the masked-ball.

In the previous chapter, it was argued that Dialogues with Socrates, is a biography of Socrates narrated in the form of a play. In Lunin ..., however, the biography of Lunin is re-presented in a different way. It was mentioned earlier that according to Bakhtin, ‘the image of human beings in literature, and the mode of portraying a human subject in literature is always chronotopic.’ In Dialogues with Socrates, the image of Socrates is constituted without significantly differentiating between the private and the public domains of an individual’s life. In this play the question of individual liberty is not central, and perhaps that is why prison in the play is not presented as a violent and oppressive place. In Lunin ..., however, the question of individual liberty is central. It is central to the way Lunin’s life is portrayed in the play. Without exploring this question his life-story can not be re-presented adequately. Perhaps that is why the figures of Jacques and his master from Diderot’s Jacques le Fataliste attain such a strong metaphorical presence in this play.

29 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 122.
In *Lunin* ... the image of Lunin is not presented as an undifferentiated whole, but as divided, differentiated and fragmentary. The private domain of Lunin’s life is considered significant for re-presenting him as a public figure. In other words, it is impossible to portray Lunin as a Decembrist, and a rebel without referring to the details of his private life: his love affairs, duels, religious beliefs and practices. In Lunin’s biographical narrative the image of the bath tub, in which he as a child is being washed by his nanny, fulfils an important narratological function. It is difficult to imagine if a similar image will be as useful and significant in a narrative about Socrates’ life.

In this chapter the play has been read from the time-space of Lunin, the main protagonist. This was done to show how the chronotopes of the prison and the masked-ball function as effective plot-constitutive and plot-visualising devices. However, as it is true for the other two plays of the trilogy, this play cannot and need not be read only from within the time-space of its main protagonists. Such a limited approach will distort the multiple levels on which this text functions and will isolate it from the immediate cultural and historical context in which it was written and read. This question will be discussed in more detail in a separate chapter. This play has a strong political subtext and it is possible that Soviet theatres were allowed to stage this play because it was read only within the time-space of its main protagonists. Some reviewers, however, found the play relevant and important for contemporary Soviet society because they were able to present Lunin as a ‘positive hero’.