CHAPTER 5
THE FEAST-THE TRIAL-THE PRISON:
RE-PRESENTING SOCRATES AND HIS TIMES

After having examined the role of time in the narrative structure of three plays, it is important now to focus on space. Dramatic texts, as was mentioned earlier, are spatialised more than any other literary narratives because they are written for theatre. They need to define space in such a way that it can be converted into concrete places in which the actors can enact the story. The role of space is even more crucial in the trilogy because it employs a mode of narration with a complex intermingling of present and past times.

The Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope provides a useful approach to the understanding of the function of space in the narrative structure of these plays. It foregrounds the plot-constitutive and time-visualising roles of space. This chapter will focus on Dialogues with Socrates, the first play of the trilogy, and will study the main chronotopes used in this play. It will explore their role as plot-constitutive devices, and will also examine how they assist in creating a ‘visual’ re-presentation of Socrates’ times. The Athenian agora, acropolis and the prison are the main chronotopes of this play, and their capacity to re-present Socrates’ time depends largely on the significance of these public spaces in the ancient Athenian society.1 Therefore the chapter will also present a brief discussion about the significance of these spaces in the life of Athens of Socrates’ time.

Dialogues with Socrates is divided into three parts or acts.2 These are: The Feast [Πείρα], The Trial [ὑπαγε], and The Prison [Τέραμες]. The Feast is set in the ‘guest rooms’ of Prodicus and Frasibuclus, and in the streets of Athens. The main scene in The Trial is set in the Athenian acropolis, whereas the final part, The Prison, is set in an Athenian prison. These spaces represent the main chronotopes used in the play.

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1 It needs to be stressed that in this play, as in the other two plays of the trilogy, the functioning of these chronotopes to a large extent depends upon the way Radzinskii, the author, negotiates these ancient Greek chronotopes and also on the way readers including me understand them. Authors and readers interact with them from within their own time-space. This aspect of the functioning of chronotopes is discussed in the last chapter.

2 It was suggested earlier that the three plays are not framed as plays. They are not formally divided into acts and scenes. Hence the terms ‘acts’ and ‘scenes’ in this discussion are used only for the purpose of discussion.
The Feast

The first act opens in a street of Athens where, around midday, a young man makes an announcement about the public action against Socrates initiated by Meletus who has accused Socrates of ‘failing to recognise the gods of the city of Athens and replacing them with other gods’, and of ‘corrupting the minds of the young’. The young man announces that Meletus has demanded ‘capital punishment for the offence’. This is the shortest scene of the play and functions like a prologue.

The second scene is central to this act and represents a feast in the house of Prodicus, a wealthy citizen of Athens. At this feast, whilst Socrates and his ‘first and second pupils’ are happily conversing with each other, the host, the handsome Prodicus who has ‘the face of Zeus, carved like a Greek statue’, rarely opens his mouth. He is silent because he is the host, and also because he is spying on his guests, carefully observing and listening. He starts talking only when Anytus enters and informs Socrates about the impending trial, which has been scheduled for the next morning. The trial thus intrudes in the space of the feast. This intrusion becomes more graphic when Socrates’ wife Xanthippe bursts into the room and brings the feast to an abrupt end, rebuking Socrates for feasting and forgetting about the trial. The word ‘trial’ consistently appears in her utterances. Its presence is felt by every protagonist throughout the following scenes, till the trial itself begins.

In this act there are only two scenes which are set in the interior spaces of houses. One of them is in Prodicus’ ‘drawing room’. This space is both public as well as private; it is private because it is Prodicus’ own private space, and is public because it is meant for receiving and entertaining guests. It is the most public of all spaces within a house. The private space becomes public because of the events, in this case the feast, which are held within this space. But Prodicus is the sole master in this space. His slaves serve him and his guests, bringing and pouring wine, and when Anytus enters, they wash his feet and help him to be seated. Anytus has been specially invited in order to inform Socrates personally about the trial and the charges. Prodicus’ drawing room thus turns into a place of conspiracy and indictment.

The second scene of this type is set in Frasibulus’ house where Anytus brings Meletus to meet Frasibulus, and to plan the impending trial. Meletus agrees to prosecute Socrates, demanding in return that the holy chorus going on a mission to Delphi sing his verse as a hymn to Apollo. Thus, Frasibulus’ ‘drawing room’, like the ‘drawing room of Prodicus also becomes a site where conspiracy is hatched and deals are made. The shadow of Socrates’ trial is present in this scene as well.
However, the most interesting scene is set in the street at night when Socrates, accompanied by his wife Xanthippe and Prodicus, walks back to his house. They are guided by Socrates’ only slave Heracles, carrying a torch. Xanthippe is worried about the trial and warns her husband that she ‘won’t let Socrates enter their home if he loses the trial’ [19]. Socrates, on the other hand, is in the happiest of moods and tells his torch-carrying slave Heracles that ‘soon Heracles would be a free man’, and that Socrates would be soon leaving a will to this effect [18]. The most revealing remark comes at the end of this scene when Socrates, alluding to the fateful night of the feast, notes that ‘on that beautiful last night of freedom he understood that his death was a blessing’ [19]. In this way the first act, set in private and public spaces, becomes impregnated with the possibilities of future events - trial, conviction, sentencing, and execution.

The Show-Trial of Socrates

The second act, The Trial, opens with a scene set in the courtyard of Socrates’ house and takes the readers to the acropolis through the streets of Athens on which Socrates and Meletus are running together to reach the place of the trial in time. All except two scenes of this act are set in open public spaces.

The scene of Socrates’ trial is set in the acropolis, near the wall of Cimon. The chorus on mission to Delphi is standing near the wall. The setting of the trial is similar to the stage of a Greek theatre. This is how the scene and the setting are introduced:

Хор священного посольства в Дельфах. Корифея Хора – немолод, с курчавой бородой и короткими седыми кудрями. Первый актер – юноша, почти мальчик. В то время как Хор, руководимый Корифеем, совершает свои молчаливые передвижения, Первый актер начинает облачаться: он надевает котрукы, перчатки, удлиняющие руки, затем толщики и поверх всего – белый хетон. Потом надевает маску и вставляет в рот глиняный резонатор, чтобы звук был торжественным и рулким [21-22].

The coryphæus, the leading figure of the chorus, conducts and guides the chorus and its movements. The ‘first actor’ of the chorus puts on his buskins, gloves, tunic and mask. Then, bringing a clay resonator close to his mouth, he calls loudly seeking the attention of the audience. This is followed by a short commentary by the coryphæus. It is interesting to note that the Coryphæus’ speech is, in many ways, different from the speeches of the other protagonists in the play. It shows a heightened tone very similar to

3 In Greek mythology, Heracles (in Roman adaptation he is Hercules), the son of Zeus and Alcmena is one of the most famous Greek heroes. Hence the sentence “Socrates’ slave Heracles carrying torch” creates an image full of irony.
the one which is found in religious rituals or, for that matter, even in theatrical performances. His discourse is full of metaphoric allusions:

Корифей (Хору). Мы стоим на холме. Над площадью, где судят мудрейшего из греков. Мы сейчас, как великие боги, которые глядели с высот на битву троянцев с ахейцами. И смерть, и победа, и зубы, грязующие прах, — все зрелище. И актёры торопятся отыграть свою сцену [22] (emphasis added).

The coryphaeus clearly defines the setting of the trial by saying that the chorus is standing on a mound rising above the square from where it is watching the trial like the great gods who watched from above the battle between the Trojans and the Achaeans. However, the most interesting remark of the coryphaeus is that in which he suggests that ‘everything - death, victory, and teeth gnawing at the dirt - is nothing but a spectacle’. In the coryphaeus’ opinion, Socrates’ trial is a spectacle where ‘the actors are hurrying to play their scenes’ [22]. He thus frames Socrates’ trial like a play within a play. Like all trials in Athens of that time, it turns into a theatrical performance. But more significantly, the coryphaeus’ comment reiterates the metaphorical equivalence between the theatre and the world. This metaphor will be explored in more detail in a following chapter when the plot-constitutive role of the chronotope of the stage or the circus-arena will be discussed.

The chorus provides a running commentary on the trial and an ‘actor’ of the chorus informs that ‘the accusers have finished their speeches and the time has come for Socrates to reply’ [22]. Describing the scene of voting they comment:

Корифей. Они голосуют. Пять сотен человек бросают камешки в две урны, чтобы решить судьбу философа.

Хор. Стук камней ... Говор толпы ...

Корифей. Как маленькие дети – все забавы. [26-27]

Their commentary presents visual and aural images of the trial. The coryphaeus finds the action of the jurors similar to that of toddlers playing with pebbles. Once again the element of ‘play’ or ‘fun’ in the trial is foregrounded. When the jurors have voted, the coryphaeus announces the result with the following comment:

Корифей. ... Они поиграли в камешки. [27]

However, the chorus does not act as commentator only; often it is directly involved in the proceedings of the trial. For instance, when ‘Socrates comes forward to make his reply, the chorus moves back, turning into an Athenian crowd’ [22], and begins to shout at Socrates to reply to the charges.
Apart from the trial, the chorus and the coryphaeus are involved in a number of other important scenes. For instance, in the act The Trial, the chorus rehearses its hymn at dawn, while Meletus laughs at the hymn selected by them. In another crucial scene, set in the acropolis just before the dawn, Meletus tries to force the chorus to listen to his poem. In the finale of this scene, the coryphaeus kills Meletus ‘like a sacrificial animal’. The final appearance of the chorus and coryphaeus takes place in the last scene of the play. Socrates has died and they sing the poem he had written in the prison cell.

In this act there are only two short scenes which are set in the interiors of houses. One of them is set at night in the house of Meletus, where Anytus introduces him to the hetaera Harpies. The second scene takes place late in the night in the house of the hetaera Harpies. Meletus is drunk and happy that Socrates has been convicted.

One scene in this act is set in the streets of Athens and shows Socrates returning from the trial. He is accompanied by Pordicus and his pupils. It is late in the evening and they are carrying torches. The ‘second pupil’ invites Socrates to join the feast arranged by his pupils, but Socrates refuses as he wants to spend the last night in his house with his wife Xanthippe:

Сократ. Нет. Сегодня я должен быть с ней. Это моя последняя ночь в моем доме. Я всегда жил на улицах, на базарах, в портиках храмов [29].

In his reply, Socrates notes that his whole life has been spent in public, conversing with people. There was nothing in his life which was hidden from them. Here Socrates confirms a general opinion of cultural historians, that in ancient Greek society, the life of an individual was not divided into private and public components as understood in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An individual’s life, his or her identity were constituted in public spaces. A similar view is expressed by the ‘first pupil’, who is upset that Socrates has started loving his home and wants to spend the last night there. He reminds Socrates of the answer he gave to Cimon when the latter asked him about his clan:

Первый ... Сократ ответил ему: "У меня нет дома, я — гражданин вселенной!"

[29].

The second act ends with a short scene. Socrates wakes up and sits up in his bed. For a moment he is unable to recognise the place. But when he realises that he is in a prison cell, he smiles and pronounces, ‘day’. This single word is more than a suggestion about the time. It seems Socrates is welcoming the day, calling it a ‘glorious day’, the day of his ultimate freedom from life.
In the first act, the most important event took place during a feast in the ‘drawing room’ of Prodicus. In contrast, the most important event of the second act, the trial, is held in the acropolis. As was mentioned above, this trial is framed like a play and follows the ancient Greek conventions about public trials. Thus if the ‘drawing room’ is the main chronotope of the first act, in the second act the Athenian acropolis becomes the main chronotope.

*The Prison*

All except two short scenes of the third act are set in the prison-cell of Socrates. In the cell Socrates is taken ill, and the illness brings about a catharsis that changes him. In the cell Socrates reconstructs crucial events of his seventy-year life through his conversations with Prodicus, Anytus, Xanthippe, the prison warder and his first and second pupils.

Two scenes take place outside Socrates’ prison cell; one is set in Frasibulus’ house and the other in the house of Anytus. In both these scenes, the main topics of discussion are either Socrates, or his execution. Thus, even in the private space of these houses, Socrates’ prison cell remains at the centre of narration.

With this change in the setting, the form of time also changes. The first two acts, *The Feast* and *The Trial* cover just two days in the life of Socrates, but in the prison cell Socrates spends almost thirty days, the last thirty days of his life. Although crisis time is present throughout the play, the intensity of crisis reaches its climax in the third act. The chronotope of prison and crisis time create the conditions in which Socrates reconstructs his own past time and the past time of Athens. The crisis in Socrates’ life becomes a crisis for Athens and forces Frasibulus and Anytus to think about Athens and its history. Comparing their time with the good old times of Pericles, Frasibulus remarks:

Фрасибул. Когда великия Перикл умирал и друзья славословили его деяния, он сказал: “То, за что вы хвалите меня, сделали многие. Хвалите меня лишь за то, что при моем правлении не был казнен ни один афинянин!” Я когда-то мечтал о таких же словах. [42]

Anytus notes the irony and nostalgia for the past in Frasibulus’ remarks and replies:

Анит. Великия Пеникл жил в хорошее время. Мягкость и прощение — удел благосостоятельной страны. Краяность — удел тяжелых времен.

Фрасибул. Крайность делают тяжелые времена проклятыми временами. [43] (emphasis added)
It is interesting to note the frequent use of the words ‘time or times’ in these short exchanges. In a longish monologue which follows this exchange, Frasibulus reminisces about his meeting with Socrates in the battle of Potidæa and recalls how Aristophanes ridiculed Socrates in his comedy and how Socrates refused to serve under Critias, the tyrant.

The reconstruction of Socrates’ own life and the history of Athens continues in his conversations with Prodicus, Anytus and his two pupils. The dialogues between Prodicus and Socrates reveal how intensely Prodicus envied and hated him. Prodicus confesses that he wrote the prosecutor’s speech which was read by Lycaon at Socrates’ trial and also acknowledges that he had commissioned Aristophanes to write a comedy ridiculing Socrates. He is, however, bitter that Aristophanes’ comedy had the opposite effect, only making its target more famous. Prodicus wanted to be famous and published several works, but fame always eluded him. Socrates, on the other hand, never cared or laboured to write down his ideas and publish them, and according to Prodicus, that made Socrates more famous because ‘people started attaching Socrates’ name to every wise idea that was ever uttered’ in Athens [47]. This unfortunate trend, in Prodicus’ opinion, has gone so far that, a few days ago, he found that some of his ideas were being circulated as if it were Socrates’ ideas. In order to inflict a fatal blow to Socrates, Prodicus informs him that Socrates had no sons of his own, and that he, Prodicus, was their real father. This makes Socrates ill and the illness results in a catharsis after which Socrates starts looking at his life from a vantage point, hitherto unknown to him. Life opens to him with its full brightness and joyfulness.

Socrates’ conversations with Anytus and his two pupils are marked with his newfound love for life. For Anytus this change is absurd, and he ridicules Socrates. Socrates’ first pupil is dismayed, and betrays the plan of Socrates’ escape to Anytus. The second pupil Apollodorus wants Socrates to escape but he refuses to do so. In his reply, Socrates justifies his decision by saying that, as an Athenian citizen, he is bound by the Athenian law and will not denounce it because it does not suit him.4

An interesting feature of the conversations that take place in the prison cell is the appearance of Aesop’s name and his fables in Socrates’ utterances. The words of Socrates, the living legend, are intertwined with the words of another Greek legend. Socrates mentions Aesop for the first time in his reply to the prison warders’ complaint that his ugly slave had a nasty character and that ‘he carried a torch at night as if he was doing a favour’ [44]:

Сократ. А может быть, это опять Эзоп?

4 In Dialogues with Socrates, Socrates’ this monologue is very similar to and at places a copy of Plato’s Phædo.
Aesop’s story about a black slave is mentioned again by Socrates in his conversation with Anytus.\(^5\) Anytus wants Socrates to escape in order to kill him while escaping. Socrates understands this and perhaps this is one of the reasons for his refusal to escape. In reply to Anytus’ final concession of letting him escape, Socrates reminds Anytus about Aesop’s famous fable about a black slave whom his master wanted to wash to turn him white. Socrates seems to be indicating that once he has made up his mind not to go against the law and escape he will stick by it, and that Anytus’s efforts in persuading him will not be successful:

Сократ. Есть басня Эзопа, Анит. Некий заботливый хозяин решил отмыть своего черного раба, эфиопа, чтобы тот стал белым. Ты знаешь, чем это кончились [62].

Socrates refers to Aesop once more in his comments about the physical changes which his body was experiencing as the time of his execution was approaching. Socrates notes that a few moments ago ‘his legs were hurting from heavy fetters’, but after realising that the final moment of his life had approached his body was flooded with ‘a sweet and pleasant feeling’ and this according to Socrates, was a good ‘theme for Aesop’s fables’ [63].

The last days in a prison cell had affected Socrates so much that he began writing poems, and the news of this change reached outside the prison, which prompted ‘the second pupil’ to ask Socrates if the reports were true. The reply comes not from Socrates but from ‘the first pupil’:

Первый. Это неправда. Сократ сочинял в тюрьме не свои стихи, а переписал древние басни Эзопа. [63]

After explaining the reasons behind his new love for poetry to ‘the second pupil’, Socrates gives him his poem written in praise of Apollo, which is later sung by the coryphæus of the holy chorus after the philosopher is dead.

Socrates’ life in the prison cell is open as well as closed to the public. It is open because the people like Anytus know everything about him through the eyes of their spy - the warden. It is closed because Socrates’ access to outside the prison life is only

\(^5\) Aesop or Aisopos had become a familiar name in Greece by the latter part of the fifth century, although historians possess little information about him. Most historians refer to the *Histories* of Herodotus in which Herodotus states that Aesop lived in the time of the Egyptian Pharaoh Amasis and was a slave belonging to the Samian citizen Idamon. Thus, it is possible that Socrates while remembering ‘the story about a slave’ is not only remembering Aesop’s famous fable about a black slave, but about Aesop, who himself was a slave.
through his pupils and visitors who can come to him only after bribing the warder. The prison cell, however, transforms Socrates. For instance, asking Anytus to leave him alone, Socrates suggests that it is ‘not impossible to live in a prison’:

Сократ. ... Мне очень хочется жить. Я был не прав. Оказывается, даже в тюрьме можно жить. Более того, в тюрьме можно многое понять [61].

A little later, Socrates tells his second pupil:

Сократ. ... Но в тюрьме ... в тюрьме философия не всегда утешает. И вот после болезни, когда в моей душе проснулось ликование, я попытался творить на самом обычном для муз поприще — я начал слагать стихи. [63]

The prison-cell, where Socrates spends the last thirty days of his life, becomes the site of profound changes in him. It is the site of the most crucial events in the third act and in the whole play, and in that sense, it is the main chronotope of the play. All events in the preceding acts lead to this space and the narrative reaches its climax in the prison-cell. It functions like a stage where Socrates, in conversation with other protagonists, reconstructs his life-story and the history of Athens.

The Chronotopes of the Acropolis and the Prison and their Time-Visualising Function

In the preceding sections it was shown that the main chronotope of the first act is the ‘drawing room’ of Prodicus. It provides the setting for the main event of the act, the feast. The main event of the second act, the trial, is set in the Athenian acropolis, which is the main chronotope of this act. The third act is set in the prison-cell which is the main chronotope of the act and of the whole play. The chronotopes of the ‘drawing room’, the acropolis and the prison-cell function as plot-constitutive devices, because they provide the sites for the plot-forming events. The narrative is structured around them and moves through them to its climax.

However, the role of these chronotopes is not limited to the structuring of the narrative. They provide appropriate sites where Socrates’ life and the history of Athens of his times find adequate re-presentation. In order to understand the time-visualising function of these chronotopes, it would be, however, necessary to refer to the role of these chronotopes in the life of the ancient Athenian society. The discussion which follows is short, and is not aimed to provide even a brief cultural history of these chronotopes. Its main aim is to focus on certain important aspects of these chronotopes and their cultural significance so that their use in the play to re-present Socrates’ time-space can be understood more adequately.
The cultural significance of the Greek agora in the Greek literature and performing arts and in the everyday life of a Greek citizen has been highlighted by many commentators. The acropolis contained a number of important sanctuaries and temples such as the Parthenon - 'the temple of the maiden', and the Propylaea, the temple of Athena. The Greek agora and acropolis were the centre of everyday life of a citizen and perhaps because of this they are the dominant chronotopes of ancient Greek biographical and autobiographical narratives. Almost all known Greek tragedies and comedies are set in the open public spaces adjoining temples and palaces in the agora and the acropolis.

The acropolis and the adjoining spaces were also used for hearing public and private cases. The strong theatricality of everyday life had influenced these hearings and public trials were conducted like theatrical performances. A number of historians have highlighted the similarities between the proceedings in Greek law courts and the performances in the Greek theatre. For instance, Richard Garner suggests that many Greek tragedies and comedies are based on a narrative structure that operates on some type of verbal contest or agon. The relation between the procedures and conventions in law courts and the narrative structure of Greek plays seem to be so consistent that very

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6 Some of the interesting works are, Antony Andrewes, Greek Society (London: Penguin Books, 1991); John M. Camp, The Athenian Agora (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986); Rush Rehm, Greek Tragic Theatre (London: Routledge, 1992); P. Walcot, Greek Drama in its Theatrical and Social Context (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1976). The acropolis or the 'upper town' in Athens was located on a rock plateau and served as a fortress or a sanctuary for the city of Athens. It was enclosed by massive walls which were destroyed by invading armies and rebuilt by Themistocles and Cimon.

7 J. W. Roberts, City of Sokrates: An Introduction to Classical Athens (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984). According to historians in Athens the division between public and private cases depended solely on the nature of the offended party; 'a public case concerned an offence or dispute deemed to affect the community as a whole' (Roberts, p. 57). Because there were no public prosecutors, these public cases could be initiated by anyone other than a slave or a disfranchised citizen. These cases were heard in open public spaces in the acropolis. The private cases such as homicide were initiated by the nearest male relatives and were heard in different places in the acropolis depending upon the nature of the homicide. The cases of homicide admitted by the defendant but claimed by him to be lawful were heard outside the temple of Apollo and Artemis (Roberts, p. 58). The homicide case like idia was heard outside in the open air on the hill Ares. The cases involving unintentional homicide on the other hand met outside the temple of Pallas Athena. The cases of homicide admitted by the defendant but claimed by him to be lawful were heard outside the temple of Apollo and Artemis (Roberts, p. 58). Because there were no public prosecutors, these public cases could be initiated by anyone other than a slave or a disfranchised citizen.

8 The strong theatricality of the everyday life of a Greek citizen has been highlighted by a number of commentators. In Rush Rehm’s opinion, 'the areas of politics, law, religion, athletics, festivals, music, poetry had a very similar to the theatre public and performative nature' (Rehm, p. 3). Even very personal aspects of an individual life, such as various rites of passage, weddings, and funerals, were not only open to the public gaze but were performed in a very theatrical fashion. In addition to the theatricality of the political system of participatory democracy which functioned through regular meetings of the councils and assemblies, the Athenian law courts were also very theatrical. According to Antony Andrewes the Greek world was ‘an open air world, with more public than private life’ (Andrewes, p. 216). It was a world of fierce individual and collective competition and ‘Greeks tended to see any activity as a competition or test - as an agon’ (Andrewes, p. 216).

often they are used to extract information about Greek law courts. The most quoted in this regard is Aeschylus’ *The Eumenides*, in which Orestes is tried for killing his mother Clytemnestra.\(^\text{10}\)

Historians have suggested that the state prison was also located in the ancient Athenian agora.\(^\text{11}\) It is believed that the institution of prison and the practice of incarceration was not a dominant form of penalty in ancient Greece. Describing Socrates’ Athens, J. W. Roberts notes that execution and exile were the penalties for the gravest offences, whilst disfranchisement and fines were the commonest forms of penalties.\(^\text{12}\) The Athenian prison was small and could not have housed many prisoners for a long duration. It was a place where offenders were confined while waiting for their trial or most commonly their execution. In most cases, as the warden tells Socrates in *Dialogues with Socrates*, convicts were executed the day they were brought to the prison. Socrates’ longer stay was, thus, an exception.

The Athenian state prison was in many ways different from the prisons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Central to this difference are the different notions about power, subjectivity, and individual freedom. This question will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter when the plot-constitutive role of the chronotope of the prison-cell in the play *Lunin* ... will be explored.

The Athenian prison, although different, was still a place of incarceration. In it an individual’s life lost its normal temporality. The control over time passed from an individual’s hands to someone who was more powerful, represented by the officials such as prison warders, policemen and the executioners.

Thus the real chronotopes of the acropolis and the prison which become the basis of literary chronotopes employed by the play *Dialogues with Socrates* were important

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\(^\text{10}\) The trial of Orestes is not reported by the protagonists of the play but presented as a separate scene within the play. This trial like Socrates’ trial in *Dialogues with Socrates* is set in the acropolis in front of the temple in Athens. In *The Eumenides*, the chorus of the furies or Eumenides plays the role of the accuser whilst Apollo speaks in defence of Orestes. The jury is composed of twelve Athenian citizens who vote by dropping black and white pebbles in special urns and in the finale when the black and white pebbles are found to be even in number, Athens, the judge adds her pebble to white, thereby acquitting Orestes. The play is not only structured like a trial in a Greek law court but its text is full of words and phrases used in law courts such as: ‘Pallas herself shall hear this case, and judge our pleas’; ‘one plea is now presented, two are to be heard’; ‘injustice must not win the verdict by mere oaths’; ‘claims are not be dismissed’; ‘jurors of homicide, for a perpetual court’.

\(^\text{11}\) John Camp in his book, describes the remains of a building in the Athenian agora which could have served as a state prison in mid-fifth century B. C. The excavations revealed a number of clay medicine bottles from a cistern in the prison which could have served to administer poison. A small marble statuette, possibly of Socrates, was also unearthed in the building, raising the possibility that the building was used as a state prison and that Socrates was executed there. John Camp, *The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the Heart of Classical Athens* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), p. 113.

\(^\text{12}\) Roberts, p. 59. He adds that confiscation of property, demolition of houses, denial of burial in Attike and disfranchisement of descendants were some other form of penalties.
sites in the real life of Athens and its citizens. Their role in representing Socrates’ life is even more significant if one considers that Socrates was a man of the masses who spent his whole life in bazaars and streets conversing with people.

It has been suggested earlier that Socrates’ public trial is framed like a play or a theatrical performance. This is achieved by employing the chorus and its coryphaeus as ‘presentation devices’, which help to foreground the theatricality of Socrates’ trial. The Trial thus is structured according to the conventions of Athenian trials, and is quite similar to the trial of Orestes in Aeschylus’ The Eumenides. Like The Eumenides, the scene of Socrates’ trial in Dialogues with Socrates is a play within a play. The play follows these conventions, and this helps it to portray Socrates’ times accurately, providing it a sense of historical authenticity. However, it can be argued that this is only one of the intentions of the play. The foregrounding of the trial as a ‘show’ fosters another reading of the play in which Socrates’ trial begins to signify numerous Soviet-style show-trials.

If the use of the chronotopes of the acropolis and the prison in the play agrees with Plato’s biographies of Socrates, the chronotope of the ‘drawing room’ employed in the first act does not. As was mentioned earlier this space was hardly ever used by ancient Greek narratives such as the tragedies, comedies and the epics. In Greek tragedies events were set in the interior spaces but were never enacted on the stage. Most often these incidents were reported either after they had happened or were reported in the course of their happening. By employing the chronotope of the ‘drawing room’, the play Dialogues with Socrates departs from Greek dramatic conventions, revealing the influence of the twentieth-century time-space in which the play was written. It seems that the play takes Socrates’ conversations with his pupils which presumably took place in the streets and markets of Athens, and sets them in the space of the ‘drawing room’. The use of the ‘drawing room’ as the setting for the feast underlines the way a twentieth-century writer negotiates the story and legend of Socrates. The influence of the twentieth-century time-space is also visible in the image of Socrates created in the play. This question will be discussed in the following section. The chronotope of the ‘drawing room’, however, is crucial for the play because it hosts the last feast of Socrates and also functions as the site of conspiracy against him. It turns into a place where crisis-time makes its first significant appearance.

The Image of Socrates in Dialogues with Socrates

As was mentioned earlier Dialogues with Socrates is a play-biography, and reconstructs the legend of Socrates in its own specific way. In doing this, the play reconstitutes ‘Socrates’. Socrates is seen and rewritten from the time-space of a
twentieth century Soviet writer. It is therefore interesting to examine in what way the Socrates of this play differs from the Socrates of Plato’s biographies, which seem to have served as the primary source-material for the play. This question is raised here because the image of a protagonist, his or her identity, to a large extent depend upon the time-space or the chronotope.

In a previous chapter on the concept of the chronotope, it was suggested that according to Bakhtin, the re-presentation of human subjects in literary narratives is ‘significantly chronotopic’, associated in a complex way with human beliefs about time, space and subjectivity. Bakhtin discusses this question in the section The Ancient Biography and Autobiography [Античная биография и автобиография] of his essay on the chronotopes. He distinguishes two ancient types of biographies and autobiographies. One of the them, the so-called Platonic type, is discussed on the basis of Plato’s The Apology and Phaedo, which narrate the story of the last days of Socrates. According to Bakhtin, the ancient Greek forms of biography and autobiography are based on ‘the biographical form of time which is combined with an image of the subject constructed in a special way’. This is the image of a person who is ‘passing through his life-path’. Plato’s biographies of Socrates employ the chronotope of ‘the life-path of a person searching for true knowledge’.

The ancient Greek forms of biography and autobiography were based on the use of the chronotope of the agora which seems to have reflected the beliefs of ancient Greeks about the nature of human subjectivity. For ‘an average Greek citizen of the classical period the being or existence was visible as well as audible’:

В самом человеке нет никакого немого и незримого ядра: он весь видим и слышен, весь вовне; но нет и вообще никаких немых и незримых сфер бытья, которым человек был бы причастен и которым он определялся бы.

*Dialogues with Socrates* employs public spaces such as streets and the acropolis of Athens to create its ‘Socrates’. The public space of the acropolis where Socrates’ trial is held is the site where the speeches of the prosecutors and Socrates and Socrates’ conversation with Prodicus are used to constitute his identity. Plato used the space of the prison-cell in his biographies of Socrates, which is also used by *Dialogues with Socrates*. Although this is not an open public space, the events which are used to

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13 *Dialogues with Socrates* seems to derive the bulk of historical material about Socrates from Plato’s *The Apology, Crito* and *Phaedo*.
14 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 167.
15 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 167.
16 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 167.
17 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 171.
construct Socrates’ biography are those which took place in open public spaces, such as the battle of Potidea, the staging of Aristophanes’ comedy ridiculing Socrates, and Socrates confrontation with the Greek tyrant Critias.

One major difference between Plato’s biography of Socrates and the one constructed in *Dialogues with Socrates* is the foregrounding of certain aspects of his family life. The Socrates of this play is not only a great philosopher and teacher but a loving husband and a kind father. The relationship with his wife does not completely follow the existing stereo-type, but is romanticised. His wife’s affair with Prodicus and Prodicus’ confession about fathering Socrates’ children are used to create a crisis in Socrates’ life. This personal or family crisis becomes one of the crucial events in the play.

When Socrates recovers from illness, which has brought profound spiritual changes in him, he repeatedly praises his wife Xanthippe, calling her an ‘extraordinary woman, living with whom was a great pleasure and responsibility’ for him [54]. The play reaches its highest lyrical point when Socrates asks Apollodorus to escort his wife home:

Сократ. Иди к ней, Аполлодор, и скажи, что Сократ – как вакхант, завороженный звуками собственной флейты. Он идет за своими убеждениями, и они гудят в нем, и он не слышит ничего другого! (Хрипта.) И увиди Ксантиппу ... Только, пожалуйста, прояди с нею мимо моего окна ... Я хочу увидеть ее лицо. [55]

Socrates wants to see her face and is amazed at her ‘beauty’:

(Глядя в окно.) Какое у нее лицо! Какое у нее прекрасное лицо! ... [55]

By foregrounding personal and familial relationships in Socrates’ biography, and revealing them in the confined space of a prison cell, *Dialogues with Socrates* departs from Plato’s biographies of Socrates. It can be argued that one of the main reasons behind this departure is the time-space from which the play was written. This twentieth century time-space and the liberal-humanist discourse about human identity seem to determine the way ‘Socrates’ is constituted in this play. The liberal-humanist discourse operates on the separation of the public and the private aspects of the subjectivity into related but separate domains. 18 It underlines the significance of the private domains in

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18 Post-structuralist discourse has foregrounded the essentialising nature of human subjectivity in the liberal-humanist discourse. Post-structuralism and post-modernism deny subjectivity based on 'objective', autonomous and essential criteria. The subjectivities are constructed through social practices. See amongst others, Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics with an afterword by Michel Foucault*, ed. H. L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 208-226; and “Technologies of the Self,” in *Technologies of the Self: a Seminar with Michel Foucault*, eds. L. H. Martin, H. Gutman and P. H.
the constitution of one’s identity. In the second play of the trilogy, *Lunin* ..., the private or personal domains of the protagonist’s biography become central to the image of Lunin.

**Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has shown that in *Dialogues with Socrates* Prodicus’ ‘drawing room’ and Athenian acropolis and prison provide the setting for the most significant events in the play, becoming thus the dominant chronotopes of the play. In Prodicus’ ‘drawing room’ Anytus informs about the public case brought against Socrates. Socrates’ trial and conviction take place in the acropolis, and his last thirty days are spent in the prison cell, where he is taken ill, the illness bringing a profound catharsis in his life. Socrates starts ‘loving life’. In this way the chronotopes of the ‘drawing room’, the acropolis and the prison-cell become the main plot-constitutive devices of the play. However, 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, such as ‘drawing rooms’ are used as the sites for conspiracies where shady deals are made and assassinations are plotted.

A short discussion of the significance of the acropolis and prison, the real chronotopes, in the everyday life of Athens was introduced to explore how these chronotopes in the play help to create a graphic re-presentation of Socrates’ times. The trial and the acropolis become the occasion and the site where Socrates’ life story is told and heard. It is voiced through the speeches of the prosecutors and through Socrates’ own replies. 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. Similarly, the chronotope of the prison-cell is used in the play to write Socrates’ biography through his conversations with his pupils, Anytus, Prodicus, Xanthippe and the prison-warder. By using these two chronotopes, the play follows Plato’s biographies of Socrates.

The play also follows ancient Greek convention by framing the trial of Socrates as a play or a ‘show’. However, the foregrounding of the element of ‘show’ in the trial should also be read in the context of the Soviet show-trials. It is argued that the play reads Socrates from within the twentieth-century time-space which is 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 use this chronotope. These narratives, according to Bakhtin, operated on the belief that human beings and their lives did not have any strictly personal or private domains, and that the life of an individual was

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always open and public; it was constituted by events that were public. By using the chronotope of the ‘drawing room’ the play underlines its own time-space, the time-space of its writing. The influence of the twentieth-century time-space is also visible in the image of Socrates, created in and through the play. The Socrates of this play is a philosopher and a great teacher but he is also a loving husband, a compassionate master, and a kind father.

In this chapter *Dialogues with Socrates* is read primarily from within the time-space of its protagonists. The chronotopes of ‘drawing room’, the acropolis and the prison cell provide adequate sites for re-presenting Socrates’ times. However, this is not the sole intention of the play. For understanding its contemporariness, the play needs to be read from the time-space of its author and readers. It was pointed out in the first chapter that with this first play of the trilogy the author intended to explore and represent the contemporary Soviet society by ‘dressing up his protagonists in historical costumes’. It was also noted that the play’s contemporariness was not overlooked by its readers, and an editor suggested clearly that according to him, the play was not about Socrates but about the trials of Andrei Sakharov and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. The contemporary significance of this play will be discussed in a separate chapter where the play will be read from the time-space of its authors and readers.