CHAPTER 3
TIME, SPACE AND THE MEDIATING NARRATOR IN DRAMA

The previous chapter discussed the concept of the chronotope. Bakhtin used it to explore how literary narratives, in particular novels, employed different chronotopes to re-present time, place and human beings.

Drama is one of the oldest forms of literary narrative. It is much older than the novel, and in spite of many similarities with other literary narratives, it has developed specific devices to re-present ‘reality’. This chapter aims to provide a short overview of these devices. It will discuss how notions about the nature of time and space, which are culture specific, have determined the narrative structure of drama and in the course of which they have also defined the ways in which drama engages in the re-presentation of real time, place and human beings.

The chapter will also discuss the basic difference between the modes of narration employed by drama and the novel and highlight devices which are used to frame dramatic texts. This discussion will refer to the Bakhtinian notion of the novelisation of literary narratives and explore the influence of novelisation on dramatic texts.

The final part of this chapter will discuss Radzinskii’s trilogy which was first published in 1986 but was republished in 1989 in two separate editions of a prose collection The Last One from the House of the Romanovs [Последняя из дома Романовых]. The title page of this collection describes the prose pieces as Novels in Dialogues (The Accelerated Prose) [Повести в диалогах (Торопливая проза)].

It will be argued that the three plays have undergone varying degrees of novelisation and can be called as ‘novelised plays’. They do not employ the conventional framing devices of dramatic texts and also foreground the presence of a mediating narrator. The presence of the mediating narrator is an important feature of these plays, and it will be argued that a recognition of this feature by theatre practitioners can add new meanings to these texts.

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What is a Dramatic Text?

The extreme diversity of dramatic texts has continuously frustrated attempts to develop a unifying and universal poetics of drama. Most attempts to define a dramatic text have met failure, because any definition, while catching the essence of some types of texts has always left a corpus of texts which are to be explained as exceptions. The known theories of drama use some historically specific forms of dramatic texts to create a general, trans-historical and normative notion of dramatic texts. For instance, Aristotle’s poetics of drama was based on the experience of Greek drama, but remained in use as a normative theory even up to the nineteenth century. For Aristotle, drama was dominantly an imitation of an action in speech and this process of imitation of an action had to follow the rule of the unity or closed nature of time and place. The classical tragedies, the European Renaissance drama, and the drama of the German and French classicism, on the other hand generated a poetics of drama in which conflict was identified as the essence of drama.

In the twentieth century, a number of influential experiments in drama and theatre such as Brecht’s epic theatre, Antonin Artaud’s theatre of cruelty, Grotowski’s total theatre, the theatre of the absurd, the street theatre and happenings have undermined the normative theories of drama. Although the emergence of formalism, structuralism and structuralist linguistics in the beginning of the twentieth century has altered the paradigm of literature and literary studies, it has, somehow, left drama largely untouched. The development of semiotics pioneered by Saussure and Pierce, however, has seen the emergence of a number of studies in the semiotics of drama and theatre. These studies largely operate on the premise that drama and theatre can be approximated to communicative models and that they can be described in terms of communication of the verbal and non-verbal information between authors and readers. Martin Pfister seems to reiterate a common opinion when he suggests that, until very recently, the multimedia nature of the dramatic text had been ignored and the study of drama had been institutionally separated into the fields of literary and theatre studies. Literary studies showed a strong bias towards the printed page or the literary text whilst the theatre studies had an equally strong bias towards the presentation of the text on the stage. The

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multimedia nature of the dramatic text is now being more readily recognised and the 'tyranny of the written text', is being overcome.\textsuperscript{3} 

Although the multimedia approach to dramatic texts has diffused differences between 'drama' and 'theatre' and brought them close together, it has been stressed by many authors, that the distinction between the two is useful, and should be recognised and maintained. According to Elam, drama is 'the mode of fiction designed for stage representation and constructed according to particular (dramatic) conventions.'\textsuperscript{4} Theatre, on the other hand, 'is a complex of phenomena associated with the performer-audience transaction' where the production and communication of meaning takes place 'in the performance itself' using 'systems underlying it.'\textsuperscript{5} Elam notes the importance of recognising two types of textual material in the study of drama and theatre: the dramatic and the performance texts. The dramatic text according to him is the text which is composed for the theatre whilst performance text is that which is produced in the theatre.

This emphasis on the potential theatrical context within the dramatic text is shared by many researchers. For instance, Esslin suggests that the essential 'element which distinguishes drama from other types of fictions is that of performance.'\textsuperscript{6} For him, an 'unperformed dramatic text is literature.'\textsuperscript{7} Keir Elam quotes Paolo Guilli Pugliati, according to whom, the articulation unit of the dramatic text 'should not be seen as units of the linguistic text translatable into stage practice' but rather as 'a linguistic transcription of a stage potentiality which is the motive force of the written text.'\textsuperscript{8} Peter Reynolds considers a dramatist's printed text 'as a text and not the text.'\textsuperscript{9} He stresses that plays, i.e. the written texts should be studied in the context of their performance. In his approach, which he calls, text-into-performance, the written or printed text is that object from which the analysis of a play should begin. Thus, the element of performance is seen as the most essential aspect of a dramatic text. This means that dramatic texts come into being from within theatrical conventions prevalent at a given time and place.

David Birch also attacks the stranglehold of literary methods on the analysis and evaluation of drama. According to him, 'criteria derived from one semiotic system, i.e. literature can not be applied straightforwardly onto drama-productions which represent a different type of semiotic system.'\textsuperscript{10}

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\textsuperscript{3} See for example Nick Kayne, \textit{Postmodernism and Performance} (London: Macmillan, 1994).
\textsuperscript{4} Elam, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{5} Elam, p. 2.
\textsuperscript{6} Esslin, p. 20.
\textsuperscript{7} Esslin, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{8} Elam, p. 209.
\textsuperscript{9} Reynolds, p. 12.
In many of the above-mentioned approaches, which stress the performance element in dramatic texts, and which highlight the complex system of signs operating in drama and theatre, the underlying assumption is that the originator (i.e. the author or the director) encodes a message or information in the text and that specific message is later on decoded by the reader or the audience. Although, it is recognised that dramatic as well as performance texts have multiple meanings, the ultimate authority of the author or the director over the meanings of the dramatic and performance texts is not questioned. Both dramatic as well as the performance texts are viewed as closed and final. David Birch, however, interrogates this notion of the completeness of the text and suggests that 'no text is ever completed.'\(^{11}\) For him, meanings are always in process and that any performance, however thorough or detailed it might be, never completes the process of meaning generation. The performance 'creates a new text for a particular time and place of reception.'\(^{12}\)

**Dramatic versus Novelistic Texts**

Although like any other form of literary narrative, dramatic texts tell stories, the mode of narration is quite different from that employed by other literary narratives, in particular by the novel.

Based on the experience of Greek tragedy, comedy, poetry and epic, Plato and Aristotle outlined the basic distinction between a simple narration and a narration through imitation or impersonation. Plato, in the third book of *The Republic* distinguished three forms of story-telling: a simple narration in which the author or the poet himself carried out the narration; a narration through imitation such as in a tragedy or a comedy; and a narration where both the above mentioned modes are employed.\(^{13}\) According to Plato, the Greek epic poetry was an example of a mixed type of narration. Aristotle expressed the same distinction when he suggested that the narration can be carried out 'in the manner of a narrator either in his own person throughout' (i.e. straight narrative without direct speech) 'or by assuming other personalities' (i.e. narratives through characters who themselves speak) as Homer does, or 'by presenting the personages ... as actually performing actions before the audience' (i.e. dramatic presentation without narrative). Comparing narrative styles of Sophocles and Aristophanes, Aristotle suggested that the works of the two Greek classics could be called 'dramas because they represent men doing'.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{11}\) Birch, p. 12.  
\(^{12}\) Birch, p. 12.  
According to Martin Pfister, the above distinction can be described in terms of the difference in the communicative relationship between the author and the reader. He suggests that this basic distinction still remains operative and goes on to describe communicative models for narrative and dramatic texts. Although changes in the forms of literary narratives, the emergence of the novel as one of the major forms of narratives, and the complex evolution of dramatic genres have made the dividing lines between ‘pure’ narrative and ‘pure’ dramatic texts very tenuous, the above-mentioned categorical distinction between the two modes of literary communication still remains fundamentally important. In the opinion of Martin Pfister, ‘the receiver of a dramatic text feels directly confronted with the characters represented whilst in narrative texts, readers are mediated by a more or less concrete narrator figure.’

Keir Elam also emphasises this distinction between the two types of texts and notes that in the dramatic text, the world is presented to the spectators or readers without ‘narrative mediation’; ‘the world is apparently shown or ostended, rather than being stipulated or described.’ This means that when a novel is read, the reader is not conscious of the possibility that the events and people represented in it are to be shown on a theatrical stage, but a dramatic text always keeps the reader reminding that the text is to be performed. It is not to be told as a story is told by a narrator but the narrator is also to be shown telling that story.

The Voice of the Author or Narrator in Dramatic Texts

In dramatic texts the author’s voice is always present but its mode of mediation is significantly different from that in novels. Historically, drama and theatre have developed rhetorical conventions about the presence of a narrator and about the nature of his or her mediation.

In some plays, the mediating narrator is directly present in the play. For instance, Medieval dramas, which took place in streets, market places, at courts or in the hall of a lord’s house, used a number of ‘presentation’ techniques, the most important of which was the presenter whose function was very similar to that of a Greek chorus. The ‘presenter’ was later replaced by prologues and epilogues. According to Elizabeth Burns, as ‘drama developed into an art independent of traditional story-telling, it often dispensed with these presenting devices.’

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15 Pfister, p. 3.
16 Elam, p. 111.
The late nineteenth and early twentieth century realist and naturalist drama almost totally discarded these 'presentation' and story-telling devices. The figure of the narrator became superfluous. A distancing of the text from the author, in particular when the text was performed on the stage, imparted a kind of autonomy to these texts. It has been suggested by many authors that the realist convention of the so-called 'fourth wall' - the imaginary wall separating the acting and the spectating spaces - which became a feature of the realist theatre of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, represents the spatial and architectural manifestation of the notion of the absolute autonomy of dramatic narration. The use of the lighting and the proscenium curtain to differentiate between the darkened spectating space and the illuminated acting space also reflected the same notion.

Presentation devices were reintroduced in the twentieth century drama, which also saw the emergence of a theatrical practice which foregrounded its theatrical nature. The autonomy of dramatic narration was subverted by using a number of devices. The most significant in this regard is Brecht's epic theatre which used various techniques of generating alienation, and raising audience awareness of the fictional nature of theatrical representation.

An important device which disrupted the notion of the autonomy of dramatic narration was the reintroduction of the figure of the narrator. The narrator either began to appear as a protagonist involved partially or fully in the play or shifted its position from that of a character-narrator to that of a character. Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie* is one of the more interesting examples of this type. In this play Tom, one of the key characters, also acts like a mediating narrator who as a 'presenter' introduces scenes, and provides commentaries on the whole play.\(^{18}\) As a narrator he stands outside the play entering it later as a character.

In plays, adapted from novels, the mediating narrator also appears as a character. For instance, in an adaptation of Nabokov's *Lolita* by Edward Albee, the narrator is involved in the play as a character. He shifts in and out of the action, controlling and regulating it. He talks to the audience, and operates like a focusing device by drawing attention to a particular aspect of the play. Thus, in dramatic texts the narrator is always present in the list of characters, the implication being, that the narrator is to be shown, and the act of telling is also to be performed. He or she can never be completely outside the play.

\(^{18}\) Tennessee Williams, *Sweet Bird of Youth, A Streetcar Named Desire, The Glass Menagerie* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986). In the play *The Glass Menagerie*, in the first scene, Tom as a narrator comments: 'The play is memory. Being a memory play, it is dimly lighted, it is sentimental, it is not realistic...' (p. 235).
In all dramatic texts including those which opt for a direct presence of a mediating narrator, the author’s voice and intentions can be directly heard in the extra dialogic text. An increased sensitivity in making the authorial intention clear, forced some writers to append detailed directions and clarifications about their plays. For instance, Strindberg added a thirteen page long preface to his forty one page play Miss Julie. Similarly, most of the plays of George Bernard Shaw include long explanatory prefaces. But these prefaces precede the main texts and are mainly directed at specialised readers who want to read them for the purpose of theatrical productions. However, some authors like Pirandello include equally long extra dialogic texts within the main text of the play. Some radio and television plays and mimes of Beckett such as Act Without Words I and Act Without Words II are extreme examples of this approach. These texts represent an increased authorial mediation, and according to Martin Pfister’s relatively rigid approach, create a ‘mediated communication system that undermines the essential criteria for differentiating between dramatic and narrative texts’.

**The Nature of Time and Space in Dramatic Texts**

The basic difference in the mode of narration employed by drama and other literary narratives, in particular by novels, affects the way time and space participate in the narrative structure of dramatic texts, and the way they are re-presented in these texts.

In the novel, the presence of a narrator creates the possibility of ‘playing’ with the structuring of time and space. The normal chronology of events, i.e. the linearity of time, can be altered, the narrative time can be shrunk or extended, and past or future times can be made more significant than the present time. The space, correspondingly, can also be made more pliable; the locales can be altered, extended or shrunk. In fact the, normal conventions about real time and space can be challenged and subverted.

In dramatic texts, particularly in those in which the narrator is absent, time and space has to be ‘shown’ rather than ‘described’. The authorial mediation is achieved through the sequencing of scenic units such as acts and scenes, and through the extra-dialogic text, which serves as the dominant means of realising authorial control on the representation of time and space. But the notion of ‘the invariable continuity and

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19 Most authors follow Roman Ingarden’s notion of ‘main’ or ‘primary’ (Haupttext) and ‘side’ or ‘secondary’ (Nebentext), where the former represents ‘the main body of a dramatic text’ and the latter represents ‘the text containing stage directions’ (Aston and Savona, p. 51). This division implies a hierarchical reading of dramatic text. The extra-dialogic text is same as the ‘secondary’ text of Roman Ingarden and refers to that part of a dramatic text which is not included in the dialogues of the protagonists. The terms dialogic and extra-dialogic texts are borrowed from Aston and Savona (p. 72).

20 For instance, Pirandello’s play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* includes a lengthy extra-dialogic text. His other play *Each in His Own Way*, includes a three page long extra dialogic text in the first act which is longer than the text at the opening of each act.

21 Pfister, p. 21.
homogeneity of time and space within the chosen unit’, that has operated as the dominant normative convention of drama, puts restrictions on the ways time and space can be represented in dramatic texts.\(^{22}\)

Dramatic texts represent real time and space and the people living in it, by employing a combination of rhetorical and authenticating conventions which operate within the theatre at a particular time and place. Rhetorical conventions are concerned ‘with modes of interaction between actors and spectators’\(^{23}\) and deal with techniques of defining space, setting and time in dramatic performances. These are the conventions which authors and performers follow when they write and perform plays. Authenticating conventions are concerned with interactions between actors as characters on the stage and ‘model social conventions in use at a specific time and in a specific place or milieu.’\(^{24}\) These two sets of conventions are closely related to similar conventions about behaviour in life outside theatre. Within the theatre itself they function as complex and interrelated framing devices for each other.

**The Nature of Time in Dramatic Texts**

Although dramatic texts concentrate on ‘showing’ rather than ‘describing’, time or the sequencing of events in a dramatic text is as important in constructing the plot as in the other forms of literary narratives. It is through this sequencing of events that the fictional world is created in a dramatic text.

Formalist and structuralist readings of drama describe the function of time by dividing it into categories such as: chronological time, plot time, performance time and discourse or present time.\(^{25}\)

The time represented by the sequence of events which constitute the story or fabula in a dramatic text is defined as chronological time. It includes events which are extracted from the plot and events which are reported in the text. For instance, the chronological time in *The Cherry Orchard* will include not only the time constituted by events in its four acts but will also take into account the past events such as the death of Ranevskaya’s young son, the days of her childhood, and the childhood of Lopakhin.

The mute sequence of events which constitutes the story or fabula of a narrative is presented in a plot. In a plot the abstract sequence of events is reset and deformed. The plot time is the time constituted by these events. Through plot ruptures and shifts in the

\(^{22}\) Pfister, p. 5.

\(^{23}\) Burns, p. 32.

\(^{24}\) Burns, p. 32.

\(^{25}\) Elam also distinguishes historical time ‘which identifies more closely the precise counterfactual background to the dramatic action’ (Elam, p. 117).
normal chronological sequence of events are achieved. Plots employ devices such as reportage and the flashback to achieve immediacy, the 'here and now', in a dramatic text.

Because dramatic texts are written for performances, they bear the marks of the constraints imposed by performance time. The spectators and readers are aware that the text will come to a physical end within a finite period of time, for instance within 'a single revolution of the sun' for the Greek tragedies and within about three hours in the contemporary theatre. The author of a dramatic text is also aware of these limits, and the text is written keeping in view the prevalent conventions about the performance time. In many plays, this finite period of time, during which the events have to reach their climax, is announced clearly in the prologue or in primary or secondary texts. The spectators’ or the readers’ awareness of these limits adds to the tension associated with the plot time.  

In dramas, there often exists a discrepancy between the duration of fictional events i.e. the chronological time and the performance time. Such discrepancies are overcome by the plot. Events that happened in the past are recalled and those happening at a different locale are reported and commented upon. This is also achieved by compressing fictional time i.e. by compressing duration of certain fictional events. The well-known final soliloquy of Dr. Faustus in Christopher Marlowe’s play is a good example. In this soliloquy, the fictional time of one hour is compressed into approximately three minutes of the performance time.

Discourse or present time refers to the fictional present defined by the text either through the characters or through the extra dialogic text. It is that present or that ‘here and now’ which is pointed out to the spectator and the reader. For instance, the time of the day mentioned in the opening exchanges between Lopakhin and Dunyasha in Chekhov’s The Cherry Orchard transposes the reader and the spectator to that fictional present time-space.  

Discourse time or present time is, however, different from the actual present time in which the act of reading or spectating takes place. One could argue that it does not differ from the actual present time in which the reader reads a novel or a poem. But because a dramatic text is written for performance, and the element of performance is ingrained in it, the actual present time acquires a special character. This immediacy of the performance makes the actual present time a generic feature of drama. It can be argued that in the case

\[26\] Aston and Savona mention Ionesco’s Exit the King, in which ‘the King Berenger is informed by Marguerite, the elder of his two queens, that he is going to die in an hour and half’ .... ‘at the end of the show (Aston and Savona, p. 29). In all three plays of Radzinski’s Theatre of the Times trilogy, readers and spectators are also made aware of the impending death of the main protagonists.

\[27\] For instance, Radzinski’s play Lunin or Death of Jacques Recorded in the Presence of the Master, which will be discussed in the following chapter uses a number of verbal and non-verbal devices to define the ‘here and now’ of the text.
of dramatic texts there exists a specific narratological tension between the fictional present or the 'here and now' and the actual present of the reading or performance. Both Elam and Pfister quote Thornton Wilder, according to whom the immediacy of the presentation of text and the all-encompassing nature of the fictional present provide a vitality to dramatic text:

A play is what takes place. A novel is what one person tells took place. The novel is a past reported in the present. On the stage it is always now. This confers upon the action an increased vitality which the novelist longs in vain to incorporate into his work.\textsuperscript{28}

The dominance of the present time or the fictional now is more strongly felt during a performance. For a reader, this effect is muted, unless he or she is conscious of the performance element associated with dramatic texts.

The immediacy of the present time in a dramatic text is reflected in the dominance of the present tense. Martin Pfister associates it with the absence of a mediating narrator, and suggests that this absence 'means that the most dominant tense used in a dramatic text is the present tense.'\textsuperscript{29} Even in those situations in which past events are narrated, reported or represented on the stage, the act of narration and representation takes place in the fictional 'now' or the fictional present time.

**The Nature of Space in Dramatic Texts**

If space is an essential element in the structuring of all literary narrative, it is even more important for a dramatic text, because it is written for the theatre and can not be read only diachronically, i.e. within the temporal sequence. It is spatially arranged or spatialised. Martin Pfister expresses a similar opinion when he first quotes Oskar Schlemmer's radical suggestion that 'the art of the theatre is the art of space' and then replaces it by a less radical formulation that 'drama is also an art of space.'\textsuperscript{30} If other narratives represent space verbally, dramatic texts take into account the fact that the space

\textsuperscript{28} Pfister, p. 275. Elam also quotes German critic Peter Szondi: '... dramatic action always occurs in the present. This does not imply any staticness; it simply indicates the particular type of passage of time in the drama - the present passes and is transformed into the past, but as such ceases to be the present. The present passes effecting a change, and from its antithesis there arises a new and different present. The passage of time in the drama is an absolute succession of 'presents' (Elam, p. 118).

\textsuperscript{29} Pfister, p. 275.

has to acquire concrete visual forms, that when mounted on the stage, it will become a concrete place in which real living human beings will be enacting the story.

In narratives such as a novel, the voice of the author or the narrator is the main instrument of representing space. In a dramatic text, however, this is achieved through the secondary text and/or through the actions and the verbal exchanges of the protagonists. If in a novel the place and the setting are described with painstaking detail, in dramatic texts this description is sketchy because its main function is not the construction of an imaginary space but to help directors to reconstruct it physically on the stage.

As was mentioned above, dramatic texts follow existing rhetorical conventions. These theatrical conventions ‘over the same period of historical time reflect, embody and interpret, into something approaching meaningful social convention’, and change with ‘changes in the social dimensions and significance of the space and time we ordinarily inhabit.’

All known Greek tragedies and comedies are set in public spaces such as streets, squares (the agora or the acropolis), roads, and assembly houses. They are never set inside private buildings such as palaces, houses and temples but use the public space in front of these buildings. The events happening inside private houses and palaces are never shown directly but are reported. These plays are known to have been performed in open theatres with a stage setting which remained essentially the same, reducing its signifying role to the minimum. In the early centuries of the “Middle ages” when the theatre came out of the church floor it remained confined to open public spaces: streets, market places, courts, and halls. The raised platform or a decorated wagon constituted the main acting space. The wagons were usually elaborately decorated to represent a specific location. This was a significant change with respect to the uniform setting employed by Greek tragedies.

By the end of the fifteenth century, drama began to move into permanent architectural space and in the sixteenth century public theatres became the main sites of theatrical performances. In the Elizabethan theatre, various emblematic objects such as mountains and caves began to be added as stage properties. The classical French drama saw the addition of two-dimensional painted backdrops which were operated mostly as index signs. The new theatres of Restoration period England, not only had a proscenium

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31 Burns, p. 72.
32 For instance, in Aristophanes’ comedy The Frogs, the action is set in the outskirts of Athens. The stage shows a building which in the first act represents the house of Heracles but in the second act without any alterations starts to represent the palace of Pluto.
33 The aim of this short excursion into the history of theatre is to map only the major changes with respect to the representation of space. Elizabeth Burns in her book presents a detailed historical account of the changes. Similar information can be found in many standard textbooks on theatre such as Robert Cohen’s Theatre.
arch but the stage carried elaborate setting and complicated stage machinery which converted the stage into a living picture.34

The emergence of the naturalist or realist theatre, introduced a radical shift in the representation of space. A number of crucial technological developments such as machinery and lighting in the preceding centuries had contributed to this change. The naturalist theatre believed in recreating the fictional world as real and authentic as possible. The proscenium arch and curtain were now perceived as the imaginary fourth wall which separated the theatre space into two nearly autonomous worlds. The world on the stage was thought to be a photographic image of the world outside theatre. This theatrical convention saw the emergence of so-called domestic plays, where the interior and exterior spaces of private houses became the dominant setting.

The non-realist and anti-illusionist theatre questioned the above convention of representing space as a photographic image of the real space. Brecht’s epic theatre was able to highlight the malleable nature of the space represented on the stage. It did not attempt to represent the setting as complete or fixed. The incomplete and movable structures which were arranged and rearranged during the performance in full view of the audience, emphasised the absence of fixity of the space. The most extreme form of the ‘placelessness’ was the theatre of Artaud and the plays of the absurdist theatre. Commenting on the plays by Ionesco and Beckett, Elizabeth Burns remarks that this ‘placeless, timeless and plotless’ drama asked the audience ‘to accept the convention that space and time are divorced from geography and chronology ....’35

The Convention on the Unity of Time and Space in Dramatic Texts

Because dramatic texts are written for performance, one convention which has remained in operation in various forms, is the notion about the unity of time, space and plot. This convention has also defined the modes by which drama represents real time and space.

The above notion is attributed to Aristotle, although his original idea has been variously interpreted by critics, authors and theatre practitioners. Greek and Roman drama followed this convention with some degree of flexibility, but some critics and authors of the Renaissance period opted for a more rigid interpretation and called for a comprehensive form of chronological and spatial continuity over the whole text of the play. It was argued that an audience sitting at the same place during the performance would not be able to cope with the rapid changes of locale and discontinuities of time.

34 Burns, p. 75; In the English theatre the proscenium arch was first used in 1605 (Burns, p. 74), but the proscenium curtain was introduced only in the late eighteenth century (Pfister, p. 21).
35 Burns, p. 87.
Opponents of this rigid interpretation, on the other hand, argued that Aristotle only professed the unity of plot and did not say anything with respect to the unity of space. As regards the length of the play, he was flexible, suggesting that ‘the tragedy should tend to fall within a single revolution of the sun.’

It has been noted by a number of critics that in the seventeenth century both these approaches were employed by dramatists. The French theatre opted for a more rigid interpretation which was reflected in the plays of Racine and Corneille. The English theatre, in particular the theatre of Shakespeare, was more flexible. In fact, Samuel Johnson used the experience of the Shakespearean drama to attack the rigid notion of the unities, suggesting that the drama remains credible even if the unity of time and space is consciously subverted because the spectators and readers are always aware of the fictional nature of a performance; they know that ‘stage is only a stage’ and not a real locale.

It seems that, to a large extent, the debate is concerned with the scale or level at which the notion about the unity of time and place is to be applied. It can be applied to the whole text of the play or can be limited to its smaller units such as acts and scenes. The necessity of adhering to this convention at least at the level of acts and scenes arises from the fact that the text has to be performed on the stage within a given span of time. The stage has its own physical boundaries, which unlike cinema, limits the rapid change of the setting.

Historically, dramas have employed the convention of the unity of time and space differently. There are texts which have closed structures of time and space as opposed to texts in which they are open. Plays with closed structures were particularly common in naturalist theatre. In them a single locale was preserved and the fictional time-span of the play was roughly equivalent to the performance time. This strictness was the result of the system of aesthetics on which naturalist theatre was based, a system which called for a photographic representation of reality.

Open structures of time and space, in some ways, go against the basic convention about drama which underlines the absolute autonomy and immediate quality of dramatic texts. They undermine the unmediated communication model of drama and foreground the presence of mediation. In the eyes of some critics open structures of time and space lead to the introduction of epic structures in drama.

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36 Pfister, p. 250.
37 Pfister, p. 251.
38 Pfister cites The Selicke Family, a play by the two German naturalist playwrights Arno Holz and Johannes Schlaf as a play with close structures of time and space.
39 Pfister discusses Shakespeare’s trilogy Henry VI as an example of open structures of time and space.
Usually, the closed structures of space are linked with closed structures of time. But often this relationship becomes discordant, i.e. an open structure of one is linked with a closed structure of the other. A common example of such a discordant linkage occurs when the closed structure of space is combined with an open structure of time. For instance, in Thornton Wilder’s play *The Long Christmas Dinner*, one dramatic space, the dining room, is used as the setting for representing ninety years in the life of a family. The opposite situation, when space is structured openly and time remains closed, is more difficult to be realised in drama, and hence the only example which can be found of such a play is *Oh! What a Lovely War* by Joan Littlewood. In this play the montage techniques are used to show the simultaneous preparation for war by Germany, France, Russia and England.40

Generally, in most dramatic texts, there exists a correlation between the linearity of the fictional time (the chronological time) and the actual performance time. This is true of the texts that have both closed and open structures of time and space. The underlying convention is that the events presented in successive scenes should follow the same successive pattern as the fictional chronology, i.e. successive scenes should follow each other directly.41 If otherwise, they should be separated by gaps of varying length. Whenever this convention is broken, the dramatic or the performance text has appropriate markers for that. For instance, several simultaneous events are usually indicated by appropriate extra-dialogic directions and are performed in a stage-area divided into several distinct spaces. These simultaneous scenes can also be presented successively but this rupture in the linearity of time is appropriately indicated by visual or acoustic signs.42

**Novelisation of Drama**

The preceding section discussed dramatic conventions of representing time and space. It was argued that because dramatic texts are written for performance the mode of narration, and the mode of representation of time and space are controlled by the ‘here and now’ of a theatrical performance. This presentness of time and the immediacy of communication are the most distinctive features of dramatic texts. It was also argued that in dramatic texts the representation of time and space is not mediated as in other narratives such as the novel, and whenever dramatic texts opt for the figure of a narrator, the

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40 Pfister, p. 256.

41 An interesting exception is the J. B. Priestley’s play *Time and Conways*. In this play all three acts take place in the same room but whilst Acts I and III take place in 1919, Act II takes place in 1937. Acts I and III are linked by the singing of a Schumann song which is first sung in the finale of Act I and appears again in the beginning of the Act III (Pfister, p. 278).

42 Martin Pfister refers to a play *Death on the Wedding Day*, by Johann Nestroy. In this play the simultaneity of the successive acts is signalled by the fact that the action of the second act forms an acoustic backdrop to the first and the action of the first an acoustic backdrop to the second (Pfister, p. 278).
narrator as well as the act of narration also become objects of representation. The narrator becomes a character of the play. The immediacy of narration and the dominance of ‘showing’ demands a certain degree of closedness of time and space in dramatic texts. Dramatic texts which employ open structures of time and space are considered by the purists as not dramatic. They are read as texts which are invaded by epic structures of narration. Their mode of narration is thought to be close to that of a novel.

Bakhtin expresses a similar idea when he discusses the novelisation of literary narratives including drama. Scholars of Bakhtinian literary philosophy have underlined Bakhtin’s bias in favour of the novel and have criticised him for marginalising other forms of literary arts such as poetry and drama. It is important, however, to note that this bias needs to be understood in the context of Bakhtin’s overall project of bringing the ‘poetics’ of literature away from those literary-critical discourses which used the study of poetry as their basis, and to develop a ‘prosaics’ of literature, i.e. a literary-critical discourse based on the study of the novel.

In Bakhtin’s opinion, the novel is ‘the leading hero of the drama of literary development in modern times’, and amongst all literary narratives only ‘the novel is capable of representing reality more deeply, essentially, sensitively and rapidly.’ In the essay Epic and Novel [Эпос и Роман] Bakhtin focuses on the nature of interaction between various genres in the literature of a specific period and notes that in the periods of dominance by the novel, all other genres undergo novelisation:

В Эпоху господства романа почти все остальные жанры "романизируются": романизируется драма (например, драма Ибсена, Гауптмана, вся натуралпестикская драма), поэма (например "Чайльд Гарольд" и особенно "Дон Жуан" Байрона), даже лирика (резкий пример - Лирика Гейне). This novelisation introduces a number of significant changes in them:

Они становятся свободнее и пластичнее, и их язык обновляется за счет романных пластов литературного языка, они дилогизируются, в них, дадее, широко проникают смех, ирония юмор, элементы самопородирования, наконец, - и это самое главное, роман вносит в них проблемность, специфическую смысловую незавершенность и живой контакт с неготовой, становящейся современностью (незавершенным настоящим).

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44 Bakhtin, p. 395.

45 Bakhtin, p. 395.
Apart from affecting their language, novelisation introduces in these texts ‘dialogism’ and adds to them ‘unfinalisibility’ or ‘unconsummatedness.’ Although dramatic texts are based on dialogues they are not ‘dialogic’ in the Bakhtinian sense, because in them the author’s voice, although not present as directly as in novels, serves as ideological and artistic centre of the whole narrative.

If the basic difference between dramatic and novelistic texts is the absence of a mediating narrator in dramatic texts, novelisation of drama and the introduction of ‘dialogism’ through it should make the presence of the mediating narrator more visible. In this regard, it is interesting that instead of citing medieval drama or drama which employed various presentation techniques, Bakhtin cites naturalist drama of Ibsen and Hauptman as examples of novelised plays.

**Framing Devices of Dramatic Texts**

The distinction between dramatic and novelistic texts is also reflected in the way a dramatic text is framed i.e. written and printed. These framing devices are culture and time specific and control the circulation of a text as a dramatic text. Based on these simple or complex, clearly visible or masked devices, readers, spectators, book sellers and librarians distinguish drama from a poem, a novel or a short story.

Most common of these devices are the subtitles of plays. Usually the title is followed by a subtitle which defines its genre, such as: ‘a comedy in three acts’; ‘a tragedy in two acts’; ‘a farce’; ‘a historical play’. For instance, *Uncle Vanya* is called ‘Scenes from the life in a country-side in four acts’ [Сцены из деревенской жизни в четырех действиях], whilst *The Cherry Orchard* is presented as a ‘comedy in four acts’ [Комедия в четырех действиях]. Even a play which has become a classic of the absurdist theatre, Ionesco’s *The Chairs*, is framed as ‘a tragic farce’.

The relative length of a play is also defined by specifying the number of acts or scenes included in the play. This is followed

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46 As pointed out by Morson and Emerson, Bakhtin uses the notion of ‘dialogue’ in at least three distinct senses. In its most general sense it is used as a global concept, i.e. as a view of truth and the world. At the level of language the notion is used to define the concept of utterance. In Bakhtin’s discourse every utterance is by definition ‘dialogic’. In the third sense ‘dialogue’ is used as an opposite of ‘monologue’, i.e. dialogic versus monologic. This means that Bakhtin allows some utterance to be framed in such a way that they become monologic (Morson and Emerson, p.130-131).

47 The concept of ‘unfinalisibility’ or ‘unconsummatedness’ [незавешенность] is one of those concepts which frequently appears in Bakhtinian discourse. In his discourse on the constitution of the self, where the ‘self’ is authored by the ‘other’ as a hero of a narrative is constructed by the author, the self or the hero always resists to be consummated or finalised by the author. In monologic narratives an author’s consciousness controls the consciousness of its protagonists. In dialogic or polyphonic narratives, and according to Bakhtin novels as a genre are more polyphonic than any other genre, the author’s consciousness is not able to completely control the voice of the protagonists. In Bakhtin’s opinion the novel is potentially more dialogic than other genres of literary narratives such as poetry and drama, but it does not mean that, for him all novels are polyphonic.

48 Samuel Beckett’s famous play *Waiting for Godot* is presented as ‘a tragi-comedy in two acts’.
by a list of characters involved in the play and provides information about their gender, age, social status, attire, and physical and psychological states.

However, the most important distinguishing feature of a dramatic text is in the clear distinction which it makes between the dialogic and the extra dialogic texts. The dialogic text is always attached to a character whilst the extra dialogic text is printed usually in smaller size, is italicised, and included in parentheses. It is believed that the main function of the extra dialogic text is to assist specialised readers such as directors, actors, stage designers, and composers, to transform the text into a performance text. However, the extra-dialogic text also forces a non-specialised reader to read it as if it was written not only for reading but also for performance.

**Novelisation of Plays in the Trilogy *Theatre of the Times* ...**

The preceding sections underlined the basic difference between dramatic and novelistic texts, and introduced the Bakhtinian notion of novelisation of literary genres. It was argued that dramatic texts, which lack the presence of a mediating narrator, tell stories by showing them. All dramatic texts contain in them the voice of the author, but only certain types opt for the direct presence of a narrator, who, following the basic convention about drama, is included in the list of characters, and finds a place on the stage. It was also suggested that practices of writing and printing have developed specific conventions about framing dramatic texts. After having discussed these questions, it will be interesting to examine to what degree the three plays of the *Theatre of the Times* ... follow dramatic conventions, and to what extent they have been novelised.

The three plays do not follow all the above mentioned conventions about framing dramatic texts. They do not carry subtitles, and are not formally divided into acts, although the play *Dialogues with Socrates* is separated into three sections: *The Feast [Пир]*, *The Trial [Суд]*, and *The Prison [Тюрьма]*. These sections can be read as three acts, because the extra dialogic text in the beginning of each section indicates a change in the place and time of the action. In *Lumin* ... and *Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca*, however, there is no such division. Both these plays demonstrate a unity of place and time, and the action takes place within the same space: the space of Lumin’s prison cell in *Lumin* ... and the arena of a circus in *Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca*.

The plays are also not divided formally into scenes, although the text of each play is broken into sections and the extra-dialogic text indicates a shift in the place and time of the action. For instance, in the first section *The Feast in Dialogues with Socrates*, the scenes are marked by a shift in the action from Prodicus’ palace to a street in Athens. Similarly in the play *Lumin* ... the scenes are defined by a shift from Lumin’s prison cell to the adjacent
cell. In *Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca*, however, the text is not divided even into scenes. The whole action begins and ends in the arena of a circus.

None of the plays contain a list of characters and consequently no attempt is made to provide precise information about them. Most of the information about them has to be extracted from the main text of the play, i.e. from both dialogic and extra-dialogic texts.

Generally, a common feature of the extra-dialogic text, in particular that which is placed at the opening of an act or a scene, is the use of the terms such as: curtain, back-stage, up-stage, centre-stage, fore-stage, and wings. These words define acting space on the stage, and are aimed to assist people like stage-designers and directors to construct the fictional place in which the events are to unfold. They are also meant to assist actors to act in that space. It is interesting that the extra-dialogic text which opens the three plays does not employ words referring to the stage. For instance, the opening of *Dialogues with Socrates* clearly specifies that action will take place in Prodicus’ palace but does not provide information on location of the guest room on the stage. Similarly, the text that opens *Luni...* defines very clearly that the action is going to unfold in the prison cell of Luni, but does not describe the location on the stage. The same is true for the third play, in which a very short and sketchy description of a Roman circus-stage is presented, but the relation between the arena of a Roman circus and the real acting space, the stage of a theatre, is not provided.

**The Mediating Narrator in *Theatre of the Times*...**

Although the above mentioned features of the three plays are important, they are concerned mainly with the appearance of these texts on the page of a book. The more significant aspect of these plays, however, is associated with the mode of narration employed by them. If novelisation has affected these plays, it should in Bakhtinian terms, first and foremost, be reflected in their style of narration.

It is interesting that the three plays foreground the presence of the mediating narrator to varying degrees. From this point, *Dialogues with Socrates* is more conventional, and therefore it is not so novelised. In this play the mediating narrator and the voice of the author is masked behind dialogic and extra-dialogic texts. However, in the other two plays of the trilogy, the presence of the narrator is more explicit. The second play *Luni...* is exceptional in this regard. The play opens with these words:

Смешок.

Потом зажгли свечу — и тускловспыхнули золотое шитье и золотые ... Вся глубина камеры оказалась заполнена толпой: лица терялись во тьме, лиц небыло — только блестели мундари ....... Потом свечу передвинули — и из тьмы

возникли очертания женской фигуры. И тогда старик, державший эту свечу, протянул к неей руку...

И вновь раздался его сухой, шелкающий смешок.

Старик этот и был Михаил Сергеевич Лунин.

.... А потом он зашелталь, обращаясь туда — в темноту — к Ней: — Сегодня я забылся сном только на рассвете. В груди болело. Сон был дурен .... Знобило. И тогда, в дурноте, я увидел ясно готическое окно и Вислу сквозь него .... Был ветер за окном .... И воды реки были покрыты пенистыми пятнами. Веспакое движение в природе так отличалось от тишины вокруг нас .... Ударил колокол .... Звонили к вечерне. Я знал мне нужно обернуться, чтобы увидеть твое лицо. Но я не мог! Я не мог! Я не мог! ... Я так и не увидел твоего лица ... Потому что я забыл его!

Смешок.

Он опускается на колени и все тянет руки к женской темной фигуре. И она, беспомощная, темное видение с белыми голыми руками, протянутыми к нему [73] (emphasis added).

The above passage is neither a typical dialogic nor an extra-dialogic text. The first part of this passage, in which the verbs are in the past tense (see the highlighted words), seems to come from a narrator. The narrator is describing events from the past: the lighting of a candle, a prison cell filled with a crowd of uniforms with golden embroidery and epaulette, an old man holding the candle, and the appearance of a female figure. This segment ends with the introduction of an the old man as Mikhail Lunin, the main character of the play.

The second part of this passage is in Lunin’s voice. He is describing events of the last night. This description is interspersed with recollections about his last night in Poland.

The third part of the passage, which follows Lunin’s description, can be read as an interjection by the narrator. It reads similar to an extra-dialogic text. The verbs are in the present tense, and they describe the actions of Lunin and the female figure. However, this part is not printed in italics.

The above passage is followed by a short passage printed in italics, but the action is reported in the past tense:

В это время в другом помещении два человека обговаривали дело. Один — поручик Григорьев, молоденький, нервный, хорошоенкий офицер, а другой — Писарь — тоже молоденький, но степенный и огромный [73] (emphasis added).
The above two passages, which open the play, read very similar to an extract from a novel. As in a novel, the past events are narrated and are mixed with the commentary of the narrator. The voice of the narrator is also used to introduce the other two characters of the play.

It was argued earlier that the most important feature of time in dramatic texts is its 'here and now' nature; the action and events unfold 'here and now', i.e. in the immediate present of the audience. This immediate presentness of time is usually reflected in the present tense of the verbs used to describe the action of the protagonists; the extra-dialogic text is always written with verbs in the present tense. The plays *Dialogues with Socrates* and *Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca* follow this convention. But in the play *Lunin* ... the extra-dialogic text often uses verbs in the past tense.\(^49\) For instance,

*Поручик вышел из помещения и некоторое время, поеживаясь ходил в коридоре перед камерой где в тусклом свете все так же на коленях, протягивая руки во тьму, стоял Лунин. Наконец Григорьев отворил камеру и вошел.*

*Григорьев. Добрый вечер, Михаил Сергеевич.*

*Лунин. (обернулся и некоторое время рассматривал его, будто сильясь понять; и только потом поднялся с колен). А-а-а. пурчич (Он оживился, даже улыбнулся.) Рад вас приветствовать в моем гробу.*

\([75]\) (emphasis added).

In the above passage the first part is printed in italics, and actions are described in the past tense (highlighted words). Most of the above passage can be read as the voice of a narrator. The extra-dialogic text, which is included in the parentheses also represents an interjection by the narrator. This text describes Lunin’s actions, but does that with the verbs in the past tense. For comparison, it will be useful to see the following text from the play *Dialogues with Socrates*:

*Входит Ксантиппа и ученики Сократа. Среди них – Первый и Второй.*

*Сократ. (проложная со счастливой улыбкой растирать ноги).* [63]

This short passage is in conformity with the conventions of dramatic texts. The extra-dialogic text describing the entrance of Xanthippe and Socrates’ pupils, and the text describing Socrates’ actions are reported in the present tense.

\(^{49}\) It needs to be stressed that although Russian verbs have three tenses they have two, imperfective and perfective, aspects. If imperfective verbs have all three tenses, the perfective verbs have only two: a past and a future. In *Lunin*... the past tense verbs have very often perfective aspect which stresses that the actions described have been brought to completion.
In the play Lunin ... the use of past tense verbs in the extra-dialogic text is not confined to the extra-dialogic text, but is interspersed throughout the main text. The following passage is a good example:

Лунин. Это вы его повесили, любезнейший! А я его не вешал. (Смешок.)
Фраза?
Последнее слово он произносит смеясь, туда в темноту, в толпу миниров.
- Я ведь шутник, господа ....
И Лунин захохотал еще пуще. И тогда поручик сказал вдруг совсем серьезно:
- Не время шутить, Михаил Сергеевич, поверьте. [76] (emphasis added).

This passage opens with Lunin’s remark and is followed by a text (underlined), which can be read as an interjection by the narrator. The narrator interjects again after Lunin’s second phrase. However, the second interjection uses verbs in the past tense.

In the play Lunin ... the use of the past tense verbs in the extra dialogic text is confined to that part of the play which is set in a prison cell. This part of the play constitutes the present time of the play. It represents those events which are taking place in the prison on Lunin’s last night. In contrast, the extra-dialogic text in the ‘play within the play’, uses verbs in the present tense. This ‘play within the play’ constitutes Lunin’s life drama, i.e. his past life.50 During the enactment of Lunin’s life-drama the prison cell is temporarily and partially transformed into a masquerade-ball room. Thus the play turns the past time, i.e. Lunin’s past life, into the present time, the ‘here and now’, whereas Lunin’s last night, the present time, is made the ‘past’. This subversion or transposition of time is also related to the change in the position of the narrator.

In that part of the play which is set directly in the prison cell, and in which the extra-dialogic text frequently uses verbs in the past tense, the narrator seems to be occupying the position of a voyeur independent of the protagonists. However, as soon as the enactment of Lunin’s life drama begins, the verbs in the past tense disappear indicating a change in the position of the narrator. The narrator seems to have merged with Lunin, who becomes the main narrator. The narrator reappears again in the scene that follows Lunin’s execution. In this short scene, the narrator is employed to describe the prison clerk who is finishing his report:

В тишине — хриплый смешок. И молчание ...

50 The ‘play within a play’ structure of Lunin... will be discussed in the Chapter 6.
Потом зажигают свечи. Это в соседнюю комнату вошел Писарь. Писарь вынимает дело, бормоча, диктует себе и пишет. [126] (emphasis added).

In *Theatre of the Times of Nero and Seneca*, the voice of the narrator is not so explicit, although the opening extra-dialogic text does contain verbs in the past tense. Thus, in *Lunin ...*, the presence of a mediating narrator is much more explicit, and because of this, it reads partially as a novel in dialogues.\(^{51}\)

As was mentioned above, the three plays have been published in a number of different collections. In a collection of plays called *Dialogues with Socrates* published in 1982, only two plays of the trilogy are included.\(^{52}\) In the second collection of plays *Theatre* the three plays are published as a trilogy.\(^{53}\) The three plays were also published in 1989 in two separate editions of a collection of prose pieces called *The Last One from the House of the Romanovs*. This collection carries a subtitle which defines these prose pieces as *Novels in Dialogues (The Accelerated Prose)* [Повести в Диалогах (Торопливая проза)]. A second edition of the same book was published in the same year, and carried only a shortened subtitle omitting the words ‘The Accelerated Prose’.\(^{54}\) A comparison of the three plays included in the collection of plays and in the prose collections reveals very minor changes. Most of these changes are concerned with the printing of the text. For instance, in the prose collections, the extra-dialogic text of the plays is not printed in the italics.

An interesting feature of the two editions of the prose collections, however, is a subtitle on the third page: “World-Theatre” [%Мир - Театр ...%]. The implication seems to be that the prose pieces in the collection, including the three plays which were previously published as a trilogy, *Theatre of the Times...* are to be read as ‘novels in dialogues’ in which the world is represented as a theatre and the theatre as the world.\(^{55}\)

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\(^{51}\) It is important to note that Radzinskii’s play *A Landscape with a River and the Fort-Walls* [Пейзаж с рекой и крепостными стенами] also uses past tense verbs in the extra-dialogic text and in this way also foregrounds the presence of a mediating narrator. Edvard Radzinskii, “A Landscape with a River and the Fort-Walls,” [Пейзаж с рекой и крепостными стенами,] in *Dialogues with Socrates* [Весёды с Сократом], (Moscow: Sovetskii Piatel’, 1982), pp. 239-322.

\(^{52}\) Edvard Radzinskii, *Dialogues with Socrates* [Весёды с Сократом] (Moscow: Sovetskii Piatel’, 1982).


\(^{55}\) Edvard Radzinskii’s plays like those of Pirandello tend to foreground theatricality of the theatre and the world outside it. Perhaps that is why many of his plays have a ‘play within a play’ structure. In fact in the collection *Theatre* he has grouped three of his plays under a subtitle called *Theatre in Theatre*. This question will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.
Concluding Remarks

This chapter explored the novelised nature of the plays in the Theatre of the Times... trilogy. It was pointed out that the three plays were published in two prose collections which were subtitled as ‘novels in dialogues’. By republishing these plays which were successfully staged, as ‘novels in dialogues’ the author seems to be asking his readers to overlook the generic differences between drama and the novel, and to approach them with a certain degree of openness. It is significant that Radzinskii has used this device a number of times. His play Our Decameron [Нащ Декамерон] also has a ‘double face’. A play with this title was published in 1987, but was later included as a short story in a novel with the same name. It is also interesting that one of the main protagonists of the first story of the book Our Decameron is very similar to one of the main characters in the play A Landscape with a River and the Fort-walls [Пейзаж с рекой и крепостными стенами] and has the same name. This migration of characters from one play to another, or from one play to a novel or a short story is also a common feature of Radzinskii’s works and indicates not only a closeness between these narratives but also points at the playful nature with which the author approaches the genre defining conventions of literary narratives.

The chapter also discussed the dramatic and theatrical conventions which determine the genre of dramatic texts. It was argued that all dramatic texts are written for performance, and tell stories by showing them. If in a novel the story is told by the narrator, in a drama the telling is direct, immediate and without mediation. Drama does not very often use the figure of a narrator, but whenever it chooses to do that, the narrator also becomes a character of that play. This unmediated nature of narration of drama affects the way dramatic texts represent time and space, and the way they use time and space to structure themselves. The chapter presented a short survey of dramatic and theatrical conventions about representing time and space, and noted how the convention of ‘here and now’ determines the generic limits of drama.

The chapter also showed that the three plays do not follow the known conventions of framing dramatic texts. They neither carry subtitles nor do they contain lists of characters. Apart from Dialogues with Socrates they are also not formally divided into acts. However, the most distinguishing feature of this trilogy is the way Lunin ... foregrounds the presence of a mediating narrator. His presence is indicated by the use of past tense in the extra-dialogic text. The use of the past tense subverts the notion about the presentness of time in dramatic texts.

All three plays were successfully produced in Soviet theatres, and were also performed in theatres abroad. It is noteworthy, however, that most productions approached Lunin ... as a conventional dramatic text. Its novelised nature was not
recognised. Soviet television produced a film, based on a production of Lunin ... in the Moscow Theatre on Malay Bronnoi. This film did recognise the presence of the mediating narrator and used a 'voice over' to represent him. It can be argued that if the presence of a mediating narrator was recognised and taken into account, theatrical productions of these plays would have been able to add new meanings to them. This question will be discussed in more detail in the last chapter when theatrical productions of the three plays will be analysed.