CHAPTER 2
THE CHRONOTOPE AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN LITERARY NARRATIVES

It is a common belief that temporality is an essential feature of literary narratives, and that telling of stories requires a temporal succession. But an equally important aspect of literary narratives is their engagement with re-presentation of real historical time, space and human beings. Hence, it is not surprising Bakhtin’s essay *Forms of Time and of the Chronotopes in the Novel: Notes on Historical Poetics* [Формы времени и хронотопа в романе: Очерки по исторической поэтике] opens by highlighting this aspect:

Процесс освоения в литературу реального исторического времени и пространства и реального исторического человека, раскрывающегося в них, протекал осложненно и прерывисто. Осваивались отдельные стороны времени и пространства, доступные на данный исторический стадии развития человечества, вырабатывались и соответствующие жанровые методы отражения и художественной обработки освоенных сторон реальности.

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1 For instance Rimmon-Kennan quotes Prince who analysing the following rhyme “Roses are red/Violets are blue/Sugar is sweet/And so are you” notes that “all propositions are simultaneously true; there is no temporal succession in the ‘world’ represented by these statements, and hence no story’ Shlomith Rimmon-Kennan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge), p. 15.

2 Michael Holquist reads Bakhtin’s essay as an attempt to create a historical poetics. According to him, Bakhtin’s essay can be read as an attempt to resolve ‘the apparent contradiction between a history and a poetics, where change, difference, and uniqueness are the stuff of history and stasis, sameness, and similarity are the matter of poetics.’ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and his World* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 108.

3 Mikhail Bakhtin, “Forms of the Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes on Historical Poetics,” [“Формы Времени и Хронотопа в Романе: очерки по исторической поэтике,”] in *Literary-Critical Essays* [Литературово-критические статьи], (Moscow: Khudozhvennaya Literatura, 1986), p. 121. According to S. G. Bocharov and V. V. Kozhinov the editors of Bakhtin’s this collection of essays, Bakhtin wrote this work in 1937-1938. However, “Concluding Remarks” [“Заключительные замечания”] of this essay were written in 1973. The essay was first published in a collection of essays entitled *Problems of Literature and Aesthetics* [Пореблемы литературы и эстетики] (Moscow: Khudozhvennaya Literatura, 1975). In the notes to Mikhail Bakhtin’s another collection of essays entitled *Aesthetics of the Verbal Art* [Эстетика словесного творчества] (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1986) the editors S. S. Averintsev and S. G. Bocharov mention that Bakhtin’s essay on the forms of the time and the chronotopes was written by him as preparatory material for a book he was planning to write under the title *The Novel of Upbringing and Its Significance in the History of Realism* [Роман воспитания и его значение в истории реализма: ]. Two fragments of his prospectus and a relatively complete note on the time and space in the works of Goethe were published in the collection *Aesthetics of the Verbal Art* under the above mentioned title. The title of these published fragments was not given by Mikhail Bakhtin but by S. G. Bocharov who edited them (Mikhail Bakhtin, *Aesthetics of the Verbal Art* [Эстетика словесного творчества] (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1986) p. 415.
According to Bakhtin, the process by which literary narratives assimilate real historical time, space and human beings is complicated. At a given historical time they are capable of assimilating and re-presenting reality only partially. Every genre tries to re-present or re-order reality in its own way. The concept of literary and real chronotopes developed by Bakhtin is an attempt to investigate the process of assimilating real historical time, space and human beings by literary narratives.

What is a Chronotope?

In a footnote to Forms of Time and of the Chronotopes in the Novel, Bakhtin notes that Kant in his Transcendental Aesthetics defined space and time as essential forms of all types of knowledge. Bakhtin agrees with this Kantian notion but remarks that unlike Kant he does not understand space and time as transcendental forms but as forms of actual reality. Throughout this essay Bakhtin emphasises the inseparable connectedness of space and time in human perception. He underlines this connectedness by using a word chronotope which literally means time-space. The chronotope, according to Bakhtin represents

... существенная взаимосвязь временных и пространственных отношений, художественно освоенных в литературе ....

The above 'definition' does not imply that Bakhtin's use of the term chronotope is limited to literature. As will be discussed later he recognised the significance of time-space relations outside arts and literature and used the term 'real' or 'actual' chronotopes to represent them. In general, the term represents the inseparable connectedness of time and space both within and outside literary works. Bakhtin notes that the term is employed by him 'almost as a metaphor', and adds that through this term he aims to 'express the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth axis of space).'

Many critics, including Holquist, have stressed the lack of rigour in Bakhtin's approach in defining his key concepts. He seems to be more certain and less expansive with regard to the concept of the chronotope but as has been pointed out by Holquist, after reading Bakhtin's essay on the chronotope, many readers are still left guessing as to the exact meaning of the term. Holquist asks readers to treat this term, as most terms characteristic of dialogism, 'bifocally', carefully 'discriminating between its use as a lens for close-up work and its ability to serve as an optic for seeing at a distance.'

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4 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 121.
5 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 121.
6 Holquist, p. 113.
Following Holquist’s suggestion, one can distinguish at least three different levels of the usage of this term: at the first level, restricted to a particular literary text, the chronotope is used to highlight its narrative structure. Gary Morson and Caryl Emerson use the term ‘chronotope-motif’ for this function. At the second level it is used to characterise the genre of a literary narrative, expressed by the term ‘generic chronotope’. On the third and more general level Bakhtin invokes this concept to define the relation of a literary text to the extra-textual reality.

**Chronotope as a Plot-Constitutive Device**

At the level of a single literary text, chronotopes are understood by Bakhtin as plot-constitutive devices:

Хронотопы являются организационными центрами основных сюжетных событий романа. В хронотопе завязываются и развязываются сюжетные узлы. Можно прямо сказать, что им принадлежит основное сюжетообразующее значение.

In order to illustrate the plot-constitutive function of the chronotopes, Bakhtin presents an interesting reading of the ancient Greek, Roman and more recent narratives. For instance, he sees the chronotope of the path or the road to be the dominant chronotope of the Greek adventure novels such as Petronius’ *Satyricon* and Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*. The path represents a space where events unfold, where people meet and part, and where fortunes are made or destroyed. The public space of the path becomes the organising centre of these narratives.

The plot-constitutive significance of the path is retained in many more recent adventure and historical novels, although its function and importance change. It plays a dominant role in the medieval chivalric novels and in the sixteenth-century Spanish picaresque novels. In Cervantes’ *Don Quixote*, the path constitutes the narrative centre of all significant events. In Gogol’s *Dead Souls* and Pushkin’s *The Captain’s Daughter*, the chronotope of the path also functions as the most significant plot-organising device. The

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7 Gary S. Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 375. In the notes, Morson and Emerson acknowledge that ‘the importance of distinguishing chronotopes as genres from chronotopic motifs’ was indicated to them by Donald Fanger (Morson and Emerson, p. 489). According to Morson and Emerson the ‘generic chronotope is not a congealed event, but a whole complex of concepts, an integral way of understanding experience, and a ground for visualising and representing human life’ (Morson and Emerson, p. 375).

8 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 282.

9 It was noted above that Bakhtin was contemplating to write a book on the novels of becoming, the *Bildungsroman*, and the essay on the forms of time and the chronotopes was conceived as introductory material to this book. Some parts of this book have been published under the title of *The Novel of Upbringing and its Significance in the History of Realism*. In this essay Bakhtin presents a preliminary classification of novels and discusses main chronotopes and the forms of time in the novels of becoming using Goethe’s novels as examples. For a more detailed discussion on this topic, see Morson and Emerson, pp. 405-419.
twentieth-century travel novels, road movies, and TV serials such as The Star Trek are organised around the chronotope of the path.

The ancient Greek biographies employed the public space of the ‘agora’ to portray an individual’s life-story. In the nineteenth-century French and Russian realist novels the interior spaces of salons and ball-rooms became the dominant sites for setting literary narratives. For instance, in Balzac’s novels, the French salon is the single most important space, in Tolstoy’s War and Peace and Anna Karenina, the ball-rooms and the drawing-rooms are some of the dominant spaces in which the events unfold. In Griboedov’s Woe from Wit, the most significant events in the narrative take place in the ball-room. The rumour about Chatskii’s madness is created in the ball-room and is spread during the party. In Pushkin’s Evgenii Onegin, the meeting of Onegin and Tatiyana takes place in the drawing-room and an incident in the drawing-room leads to a duel between Lenskii and Onegin. In the final part of this narrative, the meeting of Onegin and Tatiyana takes place in a ball-room.

Although Bakhtin in his discussion is more concerned with the novel, other forms of literary narratives, including plays, also employ chronotopes as plot-constitutive devices. For instance, almost all Greek tragedies and comedies are set in open public spaces such as: the acropolis, in front of palaces, temples, in market places, on sea and ocean beaches, and mountains. The events occurring in interior or private spaces are not shown, but reported by the chorus, slaves, and messengers. In nineteenth and twentieth-century drama the interior space of country and townhouses and drawing and ball-rooms become dominant. For example, in Chekhov’s The Sea Gull, the action takes place either in the drawing-room or in the garden surrounding the estate. In the second act of this play, the narrative unfolds on a specially created stage, where Treplev’s decadent play is enacted by Nina. Pirandello’s plays, in particular his plays of the theatre in the theatre trilogy which includes Six Characters in Search of an Author, uses the chronotopes of the stage and the theatre.

**Chronotope as a Time-Visualising Device**

Apart from organising events in a story, chronotopes provide appropriate spaces for their graphical portrayal. According to Bakhtin:

О событии можно сообщить, осведомить, можно при этом дать точные указания о месте и времени его совершения, но событие не становится образом. Хронотоп же дает существенную почву для показа-изображения события ..... Время приобретает

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10 The role of space in dramatic texts is much more significant than in the novel. This is an interesting question and requires an independent study. It is also important to compare the dominant chronotopes of drama and the novel of a particular time and place.
In literary narratives time and place can be portrayed only through verbal signs. They can not be shown directly as in paintings and theatrical performances. Literary narratives thus require appropriate time-spaces - the chronotopes - in which time and event can be graphically represented. For instance, the chronotope of the path is a space in which, according to Bakhtin, ‘time is poured into and flows through it, creating its own flow path.’ On the path, for example, Don Quixote meets several people. The whole of Spain and its history seem to be condensed into this space. According to Bakhtin, the metaphorical use of the word path in phrases such as, ‘the life path’, ‘to step onto a new path’, ‘the historical path’ is a result of the capacity of this chronotope to portray time fully and effectively.

The chronotope of the ‘drawing-room or salon’ in French realist novels plays a similar role. Most important events and verbal exchanges take place in salons. Here people come and meet, and intrigues are plotted and exposed. Salons function as indicators of the political and business life of the community. Here the wealthy and the powerful rub shoulders with each other and the private and public aspects of an individual’s life come face to face. The life of an individual intersects the life of his or her group or class. According to Bakhtin, in salons ‘the epoch becomes graphically visible ...

In the Russian nineteenth-century novel, a similar and possibly more significant role is played by the chronotope of the ball and masquerade-room. Important events are unfolded in the ball and masquerade rooms and halls where members of the Russian nobility come to see, to show and to be seen. In Tolstoy’s War and Peace and Anna Karenina, Griboedov’s Woe from Wit, Pushkin’s Evgenii Onegin and Lermontov’s The Masquerade, the ball and masquerade-rooms are employed to parade the most influential and powerful layers of nineteenth-century Russian society.

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11 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 282.
12 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 283.
13 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 276.
The Generic Chronotope

In Bakhtin's understanding of the history of literature, the concept of the chronotope occupies a central place. If the chronotope-motif has a relatively localised application, the notion of the generic chronotope is broader. Bakhtin uses it to identify similarities between narratives, to classify them into groups and to discuss the emergence of new genres. The study of the genres of novels was an important project for Bakhtin. In the essay on the forms of time and the chronotope, Bakhtin discusses a number of ancient and recent novels, and although he does not focus on classifying them into genres, the division of the essay into sections and their headings seem to reflect a general classification. The focus on classification is more evident in The Novel of Upbringing and its Significance in the History of Realism [Роман воспитания и его значение в истории реализма], where Bakhtin discusses the emergence of the German Bildungsroman.14

Emphasising the genre-specifying function of a chronotope, Bakhtin notes:

Хронотоп в литературе имеет существенное жанровое значение. Можно прямо сказать, что жанр и жанровые разновидности определяются именно хронотопом ...15

and further

Рассмотренные нами разновидности имеют жанрово-типический характер, они лежат в основе определенных разновидностей романного жанра, сложившегося и развивающегося на протяжении веков (правда, функции, например хронотопа дороги изменились в этом процессе развития).16

Bakhtin describes the generic chronotopes of the ancient Greek 'adventure novels of ordeal', and the 'adventure novels of everyday life'. He presents a detailed discussion of the ancient forms of biography and autobiography and describes how voyeuristic figures, such as the rogue, the clown, and the fool, were assimilated by literary narratives to develop a technique by which an author could narrate the private and personal events of a protagonist's life. He discusses the generic chronotopes of the medieval chivalric novels and demonstrates the folkloric basis of Rabelaisian and idyllic novels.

In the ancient Greek adventure novels of ordeal the generic chronotope is constituted by a combination of a specific form of adventure time with 'an extensive but abstract space'. Bakhtin notes that in these novels the protagonists do not show any change. The ordeals and the adventures do not leave any mark on them; they remain physically and emotionally unaltered; they do not age, nor does their love for each other

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14 Morson and Emerson present a table showing a classification of novels based on Bakhtin's works (Morson and Emerson, pp. 412-413).
15 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 122.
16 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 283.
change. The biographical time constituted by the two events in their biography, their initial meeting and separation and their final union, remains disassociated from and uninvolved in the sequence of adventures. Biographical time remains unrelated to adventure time. Bakhtin calls this adventure time empty, because the sequence of adventures represented in the narrative does not bear any discernible causal relationship. This emptiness of adventure time and its separateness from biographical time necessitates that this time should not acquire any historical localisation. The description of countries, cities, buildings and the works of art included in such narratives do not show any discrete signs of their historical time. In this way the adventure time also remains unrelated to historical time.

The genre of the second type of ancient Greek novels, the adventure novel of everyday life, has its own specific chronotope. The adventure time in such narratives is not empty but is intertwined with biographical time of the protagonists. It affects and transforms their lives, leaving irreversible marks on them. One of the dominant features of these narratives is the use of metamorphosis as a narrative-structuring device. The individual is shown to become something other than he or she was. For instance, in *The Golden Ass*, Lucius’ life goes through a sequence of metamorphoses: the metamorphosis into an ass; ordeal as an ass and metamorphosis back to a human being. This sequence around metamorphosis corresponds to the protagonist’s biographical sequence where he passes from a state of guilt, through punishment to the state of redemption. It is interesting that in Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*, which has many similarities with the genre of adventure novels, one of the main protagonists also undergoes similar transformations: first from a man into a goat and then back from a goat into a man. Because the adventure time of this type of narrative is associated with biographical as well as everyday time, the space represented in the narratives is not as abstract as that in the adventure novel of ordeal. The spatial features become filled with real meaning of life and acquire a significant associatedness with the hero and his or her fate.

The generic chronotope of the medieval chivalric novel is constituted by the ‘miraculous world’ immersed in ‘adventure time’. In the chivalric novels, adventure time is viewed in a very different way from the Greek adventure novels. In the Greek adventure novels the time of adventures is presented to be technically-true-to-life; a day is equal to a day and a year to a year. But in chivalric novels the adventure time becomes miraculous, losing its true-to-life nature. The time is hyperbolised, stretched and condensed at the will of the protagonists. It starts being influenced by dreams and is deformed as in dreams. The space and the world of the chivalric novel is also miraculous; every normal phenomenon in this world loses its normality and becomes miraculous. It,
like time, also becomes a part of the protagonist’s game-playing, losing it’s elementary spatial characteristics and dimensions.

According to Bakhtin, the generic chronotope of the Rabelaisian novels has a folkloric base. The time in these novels has all the positive features of the folkloric time, which is characterised by its situatedness within collective labour and everyday activities. The space of Rabelaisian novels is the open space of public activities. It is the space of battlefields, travels and journeys and is spread over many lands and countries. From this point of view, these novels are not very different from the Greek adventure novels and chivalric novels. A distinguishing feature of Rabelaisian novels is the specific relation between human beings and the spatio-temporal world in which they act and in which various events of their lives unfold. Bakhtin calls this relation, ‘the relation of adequacy and proportionality between the degrees of quality (values) and the spatial-temporal quantities (dimensions).’\(^{17}\) This means that whatever is presented as positive, good and useful has proportional values in spatial and temporal terms; the good has the capacity to spread itself as far as possible in space and has to continue in time for as long as possible. Simply speaking, good in these novels is spatially large and temporally long while bad is always represented as small and temporally short.

The generic chronotope of the French eighteenth and nineteenth-century realist novels is determined by the combination of biographical time and the private spaces of drawing and lounge rooms. In Flaubert’s *Madam Bovary*, the space of the provincial town is combined with cyclic and monotonous nature of everyday time. In this novel ‘there are no events but situations which constantly repeat themselves. The time is ‘devoid of gradual historical progression and moves in narrow circles.’\(^{18}\)

Nineteenth-century Russian novels combine biographical time with the interior spaces of country and town-houses of the nobility. Comparing the novels of Dostoevskii and Tolstoy, Bakhtin remarks that in Dostoevskii’s novels, the space of the threshold, the stairways, the front hall, the corridor, the street and the square, combine with crisis time in the biography of protagonists. In Tolstoy’s novels, on the other hand, normal biographical time unfolds in the interior spaces of palaces and country and town-houses:

В отличие от Достоевского, в творчестве Л. Н. Толстого основная хронотоп — биографическое время, протекающее во внутренних пространствах дворянских домов и усадеб.\(^{19}\)

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\(^{18}\) Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 280.

\(^{19}\) Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 281.
The above discussion shows that in Bakhtin’s understanding of novelistic genres, the combination of a specific form of time with an equally specific form of space defines the generic chronotope. For instance, the Greek adventure novels of ordeal, the medieval chivalric novels and Rabelaisian novels have the same adventure time which is associated with open public space, but in the chivalric novel the relation of time and space is such that both time and space are miraculous. In Rabelaisian novels the relation between the two is also very specific, and as was mentioned earlier, Bakhtin describes it as the relation of adequacy and proportionality between the quality and the spatial-temporal quantities. The generic chronotope of literary narratives, thus, is constituted by the forms of time and space and the specific mode of their combinations. In this combination, the leading role, however, is played by time:

Можно прямо сказать, что жанр и жанровые разновидности определяются именно хронотопом, причем в литературе ведущим началом в хронотопе является время.

In his essay Bakhtin also discusses the relation between the generic chronotope and the chronotope-motif. He notes that, although literary narratives of different genres often employ the same chronotope-motifs, their function within the narrative changes, depending upon the generic chronotope within which they are framed. For instance, the chronotope of the path is present in both types of Greek adventure novels but in the adventure novel of ordeal this chronotope is much more real and concrete; it undergoes metaphorisation so that the path of journeys and adventures start symbolising the actual life path of the protagonist. Bakhtin notes that the chronotope of the path has played significant although differing functions in various types of narratives belonging to different genres. In a similar way, the chronotope-motif of the prison functions differently in Plato’s Crito and Phaedo and in Solzhenitsyn’s The First Circle.

**Chronotopes and the Portrayal of Human Beings in Literary Narratives**

Although the title of Bakhtin’s essay only mentions the forms of time and the chronotopes, it also presents a comprehensive discussion of the way literary narratives, in

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20 Katerina Clark in an interesting study of Stalinist social realist novels notes that ‘socialist realism as a distinctive tradition is defined by….. the deep structures of its chronotope’ (Clark, p. 231). This chronotope was characterised by the presence of ‘two orders of time-place’ (Clark, p. 233). In addition to the present-day time of the novels they have ‘simultaneous imprint of the two Great Times of Stalinist culture, the earlier heroic era of Lenin’s time and the future time of communism’ (Clark, p. 232). The two orders of place are represented by ordinary places such as a collective farm, a factory, an army unit and by Moscow which was a symbol of a higher-order place. Katerina Clark, “Political History and Literary Chronotope: Some Soviet Case Studies,” in Literature and History: Theoretical Problems and Russian Case Studies, ed. Gary S. Morson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986) pp. 230-246.

21 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 122.

22 The prison appear as a dominant chronotope-motif in two of the three plays by Radzinskii. Their role in the narrative structure of these plays will be discussed in the following chapters.
particular the novel, re-present human beings. In the essay on the German novels of becoming the portrayal of human beings becomes a central theme which is reflected in the title of this essay.

In most commentaries on Bakhtin’s essay, and in most articles which use the Bakhtinian concept of the chronotope, Bakhtin’s discussion of the image of human beings in literature has not received adequate attention.\textsuperscript{23} In a recent paper Anne Nesbitt and Eric Neiman have suggested that a significant theme in Bakhtin’s essay on the chronotopes is the mode of portraying human beings or human bodies in literature.\textsuperscript{24} According to them, the intersection of the social with the personal which is so important in Bakhtin’s work is represented not by the chronotopes but by the ‘chronosomes’. The chronosomes, in their opinion, ‘represent interrelation between individuals and the state at a particular moment of cultural development.’\textsuperscript{25}

Bakhtin notes that,

Хронотоп как формально-содержательная категория определяет (в значительной мере) и образ человека; этот образ всегда существенно хронотопичен.\textsuperscript{26}

Here Bakhtin makes two important and inter-related points: firstly, the literary chronotope determines, in a significant way, the image of human beings constituted in and by that narrative. The second point, which is more important for understanding Bakhtin’s ideas on the constitution of the subject, emphasises its chronotopic nature, i.e. constitution of the subject in and by discourses is time-space specific.

Based on the nature of portrayal of human beings in the novel, Bakhtin distinguishes the novels of a person’s emergence or becoming [roman становления человека] from the novels in which the image of the hero remains static and fixed.

The ancient Greek adventure novel of ordeal is the best example of novels in which the images of the protagonists remain essentially fixed. In these novels, where the emptiness of adventure time is associated with an abstractness of the space, and all initiative resides with ‘chance’, human beings are portrayed as passive beings devoid of any initiative. Whatever actions are taken by them result from their being coerced by

\textsuperscript{23} Morson and Emerson in their book present a classification of the novel based on Bakhtin’s works and use the modes of portraying human beings in the novel as the basis of such a classification. For instance, they identify two major groups as ‘Novels without emergence (in which the image of a hero lacks development)’ and ‘Novels with emergence (in which the image of a person develops)’ (Morson and Emerson, p. 413).


\textsuperscript{25} Nesbitt and Neiman, p. 91.

\textsuperscript{26} Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 122.
‘chance’ of which they are the targets. Something always happens to them. All their movements in space and time, which in a way are the measures of the passage of time and the extensiveness of the space, are forced movements. They do not change in the narrative. Fate and chance do not cause any physical or psychological transformations. According to Bakhtin, ‘a distinctive correspondence with one’s own identity or selfhood is the organising centre of the human image’ in this type of Greek adventure novel.\(^{27}\)

Bakhtin suggests that in this type of narrative human beings are portrayed as individuals isolated from each other. Because adventure time is excluded from biographical and historical times and place is abstract, devoid of historical or geographical identity, human beings are correspondingly portrayed as devoid of history and location in space. Privateness and isolation are the essential features of the image of human beings in Greek narratives of this type.

The ancient Greek adventure novel of everyday life does not portray a person in his or her real emergence, although both biographical and everyday time intrude in adventure time. Compared with the novel of ordeal, space becomes more concrete and acquires history and geographical location. The supremacy of ‘chance’ in controlling the sequence of events is significantly reduced. As a result, human beings portrayed in such narratives (e.g. Lucius in Apuleius’ *The Golden Ass*) assume initiative, although, as Bakhtin suggests, this initiative is of the negative kind because it results from their mistakes and sins, through which they invite the wrath of fate and chance on themselves. But human beings even in these narratives still remain private and isolated individuals. The whole sequence of sin, punishment, redemption, blessedness through which an individual passes, according to Bakhtin, remains that individual’s personal concern. Because of their own fate, they undergo transformations (metamorphosis) but the world surrounding them remains unchanged. It is not transformed by them. The transformations of an individual manifest ‘a personal, non-creative character.’\(^{28}\)

This image of personal and isolated human beings, so characteristic of the Greek adventure novels is in stark contrast with the utter exteriority and public image of the human beings as constructed by ancient Greek and Roman narratives belonging to the genre of biography and autobiography. In these narratives, biographical time in combination with the space of a public square, the agora, generated a new all-encompassing chronotope which became the precursor of nineteenth and twentieth-century biographical and autobiographical narratives. At the base of these narratives,

\(^{27}\) Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 142.

\(^{28}\) Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 156.
according to Bakhtin, one can find the ‘Greek encomia - the civic funeral and memorial speech which had replaced the ancient lament.’

The central plot-constitutive chronotope, the chronotope-motif, of these narratives was the public square, the ‘agora’, in which all hierarchies of power ‘including the state were discretely represented and made visible and given a face’. In ‘this concrete and all-encompassing chronotope the unfolding and examination of a citizen’s whole life took place and a public and civic verification of his life was undertaken.’ Highlighting the exteriority and openness of the images of the people represented in these biographies and autobiographies, Bakhtin notes that in such portrayals:

не было и не могло быть ничего интимно-приватного, секретно-личного, повернутого к себе самому, принципиально-одинокого. Человек здесь открыт во все стороны, он все вовне, в нем нет ничего "для себя одного", нет ничего, что не подлежало бы публично-государственному контролю и отчету. Здесь все сплошь и до конца было публично.

In Bakhtin’s opinion, the image of human beings in these ancient forms of biographies and autobiographies had a completeness which was destroyed in historically later forms of biographies and autobiographies.

Most of these ancient forms of the novel did not portray a person in its true emergence. Even in biographies and autobiographies, which represented the life-path of their heroes, a true emergence or development was lacking. Although these narratives describe heroic deeds, sacrifices and services of the hero, the image of the hero remains essentially unchanged. The real and significant change in the image of the hero is portrayed, according to Bakhtin, in the novels of emergence. In contrast with the novel where the hero is a kind of ‘ready-made’, in the novels of emergence:

Сам герой, его характер становятся переменной величиной .... Изменение самого героя приобретает сюжетное значение, а в связи с этим в корне переосмысливается и перестраивается весь сюжет романа. Время вносится вовнутрь человека, входит в самый образ его, существенно изменив значение всех моментов его судьбы и жизни.

(emphasis in the original)

29 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 168.
30 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 169.
31 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 169.
33 Bakhtin, NOUb, p. 212.
Bakhtin discusses five types of the novel of emergence, including, the German *Bildungsroman*, biography and autobiography, didactic-pedagogical novels and the novels of historical emergence. All these types of novels differ in the way they re-present real historical time. Bakhtin considered Rabelais’ *Gargantua and Pantagruel* and Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* as the most fitting examples of the novel of emergence because in them the person ‘emerges along with the world’ and ‘reflects through him the historical emergence of the world itself.’

Most Stalinist social realist novels which centred around the image of the ‘positive hero’ can also be considered as novels of emergence. However they can be seen to lack a true emergence because the protagonists in them move to a state which is ‘ready-made’, given or pre-determined. They either act as ideal communists or the ‘builders of communism’ or aim to become true communists.

This short summary of Bakhtin’s discussion on modes of portrayal of human beings in literary narratives shows that the chronotopes which define their genre and function as a plot-constitutive devices also determine the ways in which human beings are portrayed in them. When Bakhtin suggests that in literature the image of human being is ‘intrinsically chronotopic’, he seems to imply that the portrayal of human being is not only time-space specific, but that our beliefs about the nature of time-space itself also determine the way human beings are portrayed in them.

**Literary and Real Chronotopes: The Relation between Literature and Reality**

In his essay, Bakhtin discusses several examples of the emergence of new literary chronotopes. According to him every new genre of the novel developed its own chronotope, employed new chronotope-motifs or re-employed old chronotope-motifs in a new way. The chronotope for Bakhtin thus becomes a basis to develop a historical poetics of the novel which is based on the assumption that all literary narratives are, in some complicated way, related to the extra-textual reality.

For instance, the nineteenth-century Russian novel saw the emergence of a new chronotope-motif in the form of the ball or masquerade room. This new chronotope can

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34 Bakhtin, NOUb, p. 214.

35 If this is true, the fractured temporality of the so-called magic realist novels, in particular the novels of Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Salman Rushdie, and Louisa Venezuela, and the fractured images of the protagonists in them, can be attributed to the contemporary notions about subjectivity and the contemporary beliefs on the nature of time and space.

36 Michael Holquist reads Bakhtin’s essay and the concept of the chronotope as a ‘dialogue of history and poetics’. In his opinion the notion of the chronotope represents an attempt to resolve the contradiction between history (change, difference) and poetics (unchanging, recurring patterns) (Holquist, p. 108).
not be explained only by the literary genius of the writers such as Pushkin, Lermontov and Griboedov who were able to perceive its cultural significance. In some ways, the appearance of this chronotope was also related to the fact that in nineteenth-century urban Russia this space had acquired a particular cultural significance, and had become an important site of representation and constitution of identities. But it would be a mistake to assume that the ‘real’ ball-room, i.e. the real chronotope was ‘the same’ as that in the works of Pushkin and Lermontov. There exists a complicated relationship between the ‘real’ ball-rooms and the ball-rooms in literary narratives. This relationship is mediated by a discourse about the ball rooms, and literary narratives constitute a significant part of this discourse. The real ball-room is thus perceived by people within and through this discourse and its place in the cultural life and even its physical essence is determined by the way people use this discourse and are influenced by it. According to Bakhtin:

... всякое конкретное слова (высказывание) находит тот предмет, на который оно направлено, всегда, так сказать, уже оговоренным, оспоренным, оцененным, окутаным затемняющей его дымкой или, напротив, светом уже сказанных чужих слов о нем. Он опутан и пронизан общими мыслями, точками зрения, чужими оценками, акцентами.37

Thus the real ball-room, its essence and its function are negotiated by people through a maze of discourses about it, and in this process of negotiation the physical space of the ball-room itself changes. For instance, a member of nineteenth-century Russian society will perceive the ball-room based not only on the first-hand experience of that room but also on the things he or she has read and heard about it, because they will, to a large extent, determine the nature of the first-hand experience. For a reader like me, who is separated from the real ball-room by a considerable time-span, the image of the ball-room will be even more dependent on what I have seen, heard and read about it.

A similar complexity overshadows the relation between the real and literary chronotopes with regard to the French salon, the dominant chronotope of the nineteenth-century French novels and the castle, the dominant chronotope of the English eighteenth-century Gothic novels.

This complex relation between the real and literary chronotopes stems from an equally complex relation between art/literature and reality/life. According to Bakhtin, a literary chronotope:

37 Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse is the Novel," ["Слово в Романе,"] in Problems of Literature and Aesthetics [Вопросы литературы и эстетики], (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1975), pp. 89-90.
... определяет художественное единство литературного произведения в его отношении к реальной действительности.38

Literary chronotopes thus define the relation between a literary text and the extra-textual reality. For instance, the chronotope of the provincial town in Flaubert’s *Madam Bovary* or in Gogol’s *Dead Souls* and *The Inspector General* determines the relation between these narratives and the world in which they were produced. But in Bakhtin’s opinion this relation is far from simple. According to him, art and literature are not merely mirror reflections of reality. Expanding on Bakhtin’s idea that ‘when a man is in art, he is not in life, and vice versa’, Holquist uses the chronotope of the house to illustrate Bakhtin’s understanding of the relation between art and reality. Holquist suggests that ‘just as when I am in the kitchen, I am not in the bedroom but nevertheless I am still in the same house, so art and life are recognised by Bakhtin to be different places contained by a larger unit of which they are constituents.’39

So the two, the literary text and the extra-textual reality, are not completely cut off but neither are they related mechanically as mirror reflections. The two acquire their inseparable connectedness through the activities of writing or speaking and reading or listening subjects. In other words, the relation between a literary text and the extra-textual reality is realised in the sphere of social and cultural practices.

Any literary text, according to Bakhtin, is spatially localised, i.e. occupies a definite place in space, but its creation and recreation or reading take place through time. The author, the originator of the text and the text are located in some real time-space. The readers who interact with the text are also located in some real time-space and very often the real time-space of the author-originator and of the reader are not the same but separated by centuries and by large spatial distances, but the three: the text, the author and the readers are ‘located in a unitary and unfinalised historical world which is separated from the world portrayed in the text by a sharp and real boundary.’40 The world that creates a text, i.e. ‘the creating world’[изображающий или создавший мир], is constituted by the reality reflected in the text, the author, and the reader. According to Bakhtin:

Изображённый мир, каким бы он не был реалистическим и правдивым, никогда не может быть хронотопически тождественным с изображающим реальным миром ...41

The most significant aspect of the relation between the two worlds, the creating and the created world, is that their time-spaces, i.e. the chronotopes can never be equivalent.

38 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 275.
39 Holquist, p. 111.
40 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 287.
41 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 288.
There always exists a boundary between the two worlds. Realism tends to diffuse this boundary; it tends to prioritise the real world over the portrayed world. For instance, a realism-inspired reading will approach Lermontov’s *The Masquerade* exclusively from within the time-space of nineteenth-century Russia, i.e. from within that Russia in which Lermontov wrote his play. The real world thus will become a measure of a work’s literary quality. On the other hand, if the distinction between Lermontov - the author, and Lermontov - the person, is diffused, strictly personal aspects of Lermontov’s life will take priority in the reading of *The Masquerade* and the meaning of the text will be constructed, to a large extent, on personal traits of Lermontov such as his short height, his unhappy childhood, or his service in the military.

Although Bakhtin concedes the existence of a sharp boundary between the ‘creating’ and the ‘created’ worlds, he also stresses that this boundary is not ‘absolute’ or ‘impenetrable’. The two worlds never merge, but they are inseparable and in continuous interaction with each other. Their relationship is akin to that between a living organism and its environment: ‘till the organism is alive it does not merge with the environment but when it is isolated from the environment it dies.’

The creating and the portrayed worlds of a literary narrative always interact with each other. Every literary work has its formal beginning and ending and so do the events described or recreated in the text but the two beginnings and the two endings, according to Bakhtin, belong to two different worlds, two different time-spaces, i.e. two different chronotopes. There exists a basic difference between the events represented in the work and the event or the act of their representation. For instance, the execution of Lunin in Radzinskii’s play *Lunin …*, and the act of representing that execution in the play are chronotopically different, i.e. are located in different time-spaces. However, these two events, the execution and the act of its representation, are inseparably linked to create ‘one unitary but complex event, which is the work itself in its complete existential wholeness [произведение в его событийной полноте] that includes the external, material form of the work, its text, the portrayed world, the author and the reader.’ This means that the wholeness of Radzinskii’s play is created by the simultaneous presence of the following: its external material form (e.g. the book), its text, Radzinskii, and its readers. Thus, in Bakhtin’s opinion, the complete unity of a literary text is achieved through the interaction (dialogue) between the speaking and listening subjects and their worlds. Moreover, both the speaker or the author and the listener or the reader are located in their own complex and unfinalised contemporaneity, which includes not only that contemporary to the author or reader, literature or culture, but the total field of literature and culture.

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42 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 287.
43 Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 287.
contemporaneity constitutes the context within which it becomes possible to understand a text and the position of its author.

**Axiological Dimension of Chronotopes**

In the above discussion on the relation between art and reality it was emphasised that, in Bakhtin's understanding, literary chronotopes are not merely intrinsic features of texts. They are related to real chronotopes, are derived from them, and define the relation of a text with outside reality:

Из реальных хронотопов этого изображающего мира и выходят отраженные и созданные хронотопы изображенного в произведении (в тексте) мира (*emphasis in the original*).\(^{44}\)

Because of this relation with the actual chronotopes, literary chronotopes always carry an 'evaluative moment':

Поэтому хронотоп в произведении всегда включает в себя ценностный момент, который может быть выделен из целого художественного хронотопа только в абстрактном анализе. Все временно-пространственные определения в искусстве и литературе неотделимы друг от друга и всегда эмоционально-ценностно окрашены.\(^{45}\)

For Bakhtin, the presence of human subjects, speaking or listening, writing or reading, performing or watching, was central to his theorising about art and literature. The concept of the chronotope also assumes this presence, and because of this, the chronotope acquires an 'axiological' aspect; it always carries some type of value attached to it.\(^{46}\) The space and time described in literary works are not merely abstract mathematical space and time, they always carry positive or negative. Stressing this 'axiological' aspect of the concept of the chronotope, Holquist notes that 'this term brings together not just two concepts, but four: a time, plus its value; and a space, plus its value.'\(^{47}\)

A good example of the axiological dimension of a chronotope is Chekhov's play *The Cherry Orchard*. The chronotope of the cherry orchard does not operate in the play as an abstract time-space. Its functions are symbolic and metaphorical, and this is because every protagonist who talks and dreams about it, attaches a definite value to it. They seem to invest in the orchard their likings and dislikings, their fears, and their past and future.

\(^{44}\) Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 285.

\(^{45}\) Bakhtin, FTCN, p. 275.

\(^{46}\) Holquist, p. 152.

\(^{47}\) Holquist, p. 155.
Lopakhin thinks the orchard to be ‘useless’ because it lacks commercial value. However, he also wants to save it for Ranevskaya. For Ranevskaya, it is both ‘good’ and ‘bad’, because the good and the bad events of her life seem to be reflected in it. For Anna, Ranevskaya’s daughter, the orchard is the focus of her childhood memories, but she also fears that the orchard might turn into a ‘prison’ from where it would be difficult to escape and begin a new life.

As was mentioned earlier, Bakhtin employs the concept of the chronotope at a number of different but interconnected levels. At its more general level, it is used by him to define the unity or boundary of a literary text and to examine its relation with the outside world. As a generic chronotope, it is employed to define the genre of narratives and to map their history. At the level of an individual text it is used as a chronotope-motif where it functions like an organising centre of the narrative and assists in an adequate portrayal of real time and people. A structuralist reading of Bakhtin’s chronotope and its functions will perhaps conclude that this concept is in no way different from other similar concepts such as the motif, device and metaphor. It is true that at the level of an individual text it functions like a ‘motif’ or a ‘device’ but, as it will be argued later, it is a special type of device. Why is the chronotope a special type of device? In what way is it different from the device or the motif? What is the philosophical basis of these differences?

The following section will explore answers to these questions. It will define the formalist notions of the motif, device and function and discuss Bakhtin’s criticism of these notions to underline their difference with the chronotope.

**Chronotope and Its Difference with Formalist ‘Device’ and ‘Motif’**

The concepts of motif, device and functions were central to the poetics developed by Russian formalists such as Shklovskii, Tytynov, Yakobson, and Tomashevskii. These concepts occupy a central place in their project of developing a universal, ahistorical and general theory of literariness.

Bakhtin’s criticism of formalist and structuralist modes of conceptualising art and literature is well known. In his essay, *The Problem of Content, Material and Form in Verbal Art* [Проблема содержания, материала и формы в словесном художественном творчестве] written in 1924, Bakhtin attacks the lack of a general philosophical and aesthetical basis in the formalist understanding of literature and literariness. His other book, *Formal Method in Literary Studies: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*

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which appeared with P. Medvedev as the author, presents a more detailed critique of formalism.49

According to Shklovskii, every work of art has to be understood and studied in terms of the devices it uses. Through them art achieves its main aim - 'to make stone stony, to make things not only recognisable but to make them perceptible as visions', to defamiliarise them from habitual and automatic status, and by doing this to become art.50 R. Yakobson stresses the same point when he suggests that 'devices have to be recognized as the sole heroes, if the study of literature is to be turned into a true science.'51 Shklovskii, like other formalists, understands art as a structure in which devices play the vital role of creating a work of art from non-aesthetic material:

Во всяком искусстве есть свой строй – то, что превращает его материал в нечто художественно переживаемое. Этот строй находит выражение себя в различных

49 This book published under the name of P. N. Medvedev belongs to a group of disputed works that are attributed to the so-called Bakhtin circle. An appreciable body of literature has developed on the authorship of these texts in both Russian and non-Russian scholarship of Bakhtin's thought. Michael Holquist in his book Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World cites a number of papers published outside Russia on this topic (Holquist, p. 199). Recently S. G. Bocharov has published an article "About One Conversation and around It" ["Об одном разговоре и вокруг него"] in which he describes his last conversations before Bakhtin's death. These conversations and Bocharov's comments on them throw some new light on the controversy surrounding the authorship of disputed works. Bocharov notes that Bakhtin did not like to talk about these works, and avoided any discussion about them, but when probed more seriously about them confessed that:

... что три книги ("Фрейдизм", "Формальный метод в литературоведении", Марксизм и философия языка ") и статья 1926 г. "Слово в жизни и слово в поэзии" были написаны им, и даже "с начала до конца" но написаны для друзей, которым отданы авторские права (из беседы 21. XI.1974) (Bocharov, p. 73).

Thus it seems that the three books including two Freudianism: A Critical Sketch, and Marxism and the Philosophy of Language published under the name of V. N. Voloshinov, and The Formal Method in Literary Study, published under the name of P. N. Medvedev were written by Bakhtin himself from 'the beginning to the end'. Similarly an article "Discourse in Life And in Art," published under the name of V. N. Voloshinov was also written by Bakhtin. According to Bakhtin, they were written for his friends and the copy right was given to them. When Bakhtin was asked about the motives he explained:

"Это были мои друзья, им нужны были книги, а я собирался еще написать свои" (21.XI.1974) (Bocharov, p. 73).

Bocharov, however, notes that the motives were not so simple because Bakhtin had also remarked that, "Публикации не под своим именем выставляли: считал, что не в моё время" (Bocharov, p. 73). I am not sure whether Bocharov's article resolves the dispute but it provides enough clues to suspect that the above mentioned three works and the article were written by Bakhtin. In this chapter the book The Formal Method in Literary Study has been attributed to P. N. Medvedev, with an understanding that the book was most probably written by Bakhtin himself. S. G. Bocharov, "About One Conversation And Around It," ["Об одном разговоре и вокруг него,"] Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, No. 2 (1993), pp. 70-109.


and further:

Не я попробую доказать, что душа литературного произведения есть не что иное, как его строй и форма. Или, употребляя мою формулу: "Содержание (душа сюда же) литературного произведения равно сумме его стилистических приемов."

Shklovskii describes common poetical devices such as poetical images, rhyme, rhythm, hyperbole, parallelism, comparison, and repetition and discusses the 'staircase' and the 'loop' type constructions of narratives.

For motif, Shklovskii retains the formulation by A. N. Veselovskii, according to whom the motif is 'the simplest narrative unit which, like an image, corresponds figuratively to various demands of the primitive mind or everyday observation'. According to Shklovskii:

Сказка, новелла, роман - комбинация мотивов; песня - комбинация стилистических мотивов.

Thus a literary text is reduced to a combination of motifs which are organised with the help of devices to construct poetry and narratives. According to Tomashevskii, motif is 'the theme of an indivisible part of a work', and when motifs are combined into a logical causal-temporal chain, they create fabula.

Although Shklovskii retains the basic formulation of Veselovskii, true to his formalist project, he discards any reference to the extra-textual origin of the motif, implied in Veselovskii's formulation, and uses it as a textual element only. He criticises the


54 A more detailed discussion can be found in Shklovskii's essays, "The Relation of Plot-Construction Devices with General Stylistic Devices" ["Связь приемов сюжетосложения с общей приемами стиля"] and "The Structure of Story and the Novel" ["Строение рассказа и романа"]. In these essays, he discusses how motifs in narratives are organised with the help of various devices to generate the 'staircase' and the 'ring' or the 'loop' type constructions. The staircase and loop constructions are achieved by using the following devices: repetition with rhyme as its specific case, tautology, the tautological parallelism, psychological parallelism, retardation or delay, epic repetitions, fairy-tale rituals, peripetias, task, abduction, framing, and stringing.


56 O'Toole and Shukman, p. 40.
ethnographic model of the origin of motifs according to which the similarities in the motifs of narratives (such as folk and fairy tales) result from the similarities in the religious beliefs and in the forms of every-day life of people. According to him, the similarities in folk and fairy tales of historically and geographically different people and communities are not accidental but can be explained by the existence and operation of 'specific rules of plot-construction.'

Thus, both the concept of device as well as motif, in the formalist theorising of literature, remain rigidly grounded within the boundaries of literary texts and are isolated from any extra-textual reference. But their confinement within the impenetrable boundaries of literary texts does not mean that these devices and motifs are unchangeable. According to Shklovskii and Tynyanov the old devices become automatised and habitual and require defamiliarisation so as to be able to create a true artistic perception. Discussing the role of rhythm as a poetical device, Shklovskii notes that the disruption of rhythm in a poetical text should be such that it can not be guessed; a mode of disruption which becomes traditional, habitual and canonical will not be able to create a poetical effect. Tradition will make it easily readable and recognisable and hence it will have to be further disrupted in order to function as a device for defamiliarisation:

в самом деле, ведь вопрос идет не об осложненном ритме, о нарушении ритма и притом таком, которое не может быть предусмотрено; если это нарушение войдет в канон, то оно потеряет свою силу затрудняющего приема.

Tynyanov introduced the concept of ‘function’ when it was recognised that the defamiliarising devices themselves can become automatised. Tynyanov stressed that devices should be studied keeping in view the functions they discharge within the structure of a text. The defamiliarising effect of a new text may result not from the invention of new devices but making ‘new use of old devices.’ For example, according to Shklovskii, the habitual and automatised language of Pushkin’s time was the heightened language of Derzhavin, and Pushkin in his poetry used ‘simple everyday language as a device to catch the attention of his readers.’

The formalist history of literature and devices and motifs in narrative operates totally within the limits of texts. The dominant devices in a particular period and genre with time become familiar and easily recognisable and thus cease to generate real artistic effect. New literary texts, in order to become artistically perceptible, either add new functions to these devices or introduce devices from marginal genres. Thus, the history of

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57 Shklovskii, RPDS, p. 27.
58 Shklovskii, AD, p. 20.
59 O’Toole and Shukman, p. 38.
60 Shklovskii, AD, p. 21.
devices, motifs and literature is viewed in isolation from changes in the extra-literary field of social and cultural practices. Old devices provide the basis to establish the newness of new devices; the new form is judged and perceived on the background of old forms; old literary texts constitute the background against which the newness of new texts is judged. This self-sufficiency and self-containedness of art and literature and its autonomy from cultural practices is the basic principle of formalism. According to Shklovskii:

Произведение искусства воспринимается на фоне и путем ассоциации с другими произведениями искусства, определяется отношением к другим, до него существовавшим, формам. Не пародия только, но и всякое вообще произведение искусства создается как параллель и противоположение какому-нибудь образу. Новая форма является не для того, чтобы заменить старую форму, уже потерявшую свою художественность.61

Thus formalistic notions of device and motif are associated with a more broader and general formalistic theory of art and literature, according to which art and literature are autonomous and self-referential. Bakhtin’s chronotope, at one level, also functions as a plot-constitutive device, but it operates within Bakhtin’s basic paradigm, according to which art achieves its autonomy only through becoming a part of a broader cultural practice. For Bakhtin, art and literature can not be isolated from the sphere of cultural and social practices:

Автономия искусства обосновывается и гарантировается его причастностью единству культуры, тем, что оно занимает в ней не только своеобразное, но и необходимое и независимое место.62

By placing art within the sphere of culture, and by giving it a ‘specific but essential and independent place’, Bakhtin imparts to the chronotope a two-fold functionality: on one hand, it works as an element around which the plots of narratives can be seen to be constituted; and on the other hand, it provides a bridge between a literary text and the sphere of cultural practices. According to Bakhtin, literary chronotopes are related inseparably with actual chronotopes and are derived from them.

Medvedev’s criticism of formalism focuses on the formalist notion of the self-referentiality and self-containedness of art and literature. Formalism, in Medvedev’s opinion, opposes the ethnographic and sociological origin of motifs of fairy tales, explaining them only by special rules of plot-construction.

61 Shklovskii, RPDS, p. 31.
Criticising the formalist understanding of the notions of fabula, material, device and form, Medvedev notes that in formalism fabula does not represent an actual event but material for plot-construction; it is a motivation for the construction of plot. Focusing on Shklovskii's analysis of *Don Quixote*, he remarks that, according to Shklovskii, the events and the journeys described in *Don Quixote* are narrated, not because these events are actual events and these journeys the actual journeys of the protagonist, but because they serve as a motivation for using a particular plot-construction device, the stringing of events. Similarly, if a narrative describes difficulties and obstacles which the protagonist overcomes, it is done because they are required as devices for the construction of plot. According to Medvedev, in formalist thought, 'material is just a motivation for the use of a particular device and the device is an end in itself.'\(^{63}\) Medvedev suggests that the formalistic division of the structure of a narrative into device and material is not sustainable, because whatever is understood by them as material is only significant from the point of view of the construction of a narrative and whatever is identified by them as device is 'an empty element which is devoid of any content.'\(^{64}\)

The basic problem of formalism, according to Medvedev, results from the concepts of the trans-sense word [Заумное слово] and the trans-sense language [Заумный язык]. The criticism of these concepts brings out the basic differences in the formalist and Bakhtinian approaches to literature. The trans-sense word is understood by formalists as an opposition to the word with a meaning. According to Shklovskii, a trans-sense is a word abstracted from any meaning. It represents a word only as a sound. Similarly, 'a language devoid of any defined (dead) meaning is the trans-sense language.'\(^{65}\) Calling Sterne a 'revolutionary of forms', Shklovskii suggests that his novel *Tristram Shandy* is a typical example of a narrative in which the plot-construction devices are consciously exposed:

Разница между романом Стерна и романом обычного типа точно такая же, как между обыкновенным стихотворением с звуковым инструментовкой и стихотворением футуриста, написанным на заумном языке.\(^{66}\)

Thus, the trans-sense word and the trans-sense language are proposed as standards, by which the quality of a text as a perfect piece of literary art is to be judged.

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\(^{64}\) Medvedev, p. 159.


According to Medvedev, however, there exists an ineluctable unity between the material presence of a word (i.e. word as a sound or as a written sign) and its meaning. Words as parts of specific utterances are associated with social practice because of which they carry an axiological dimension, i.e. speakers and listeners attach values to their meanings:

Социальная оценка ... есть в каждом слове, поскольку слово входит в конкретное единичное высказывание. Лингвист отвлекается от социальной оценки, так как он отвлекается от конкретных форм высказывания.

A linguist, by which Medvedev means a structuralist or formalist linguist, overlooks specific forms of utterances, concentrating on language as an abstract system of signs. An utterance, in his opinion, is a social act:

Всякое конкретное высказывание – социальный акт. Будучи также единичным материальным комплексом – звуковым, прозносительным, зрительным, высказывание в то же время – часть социальной действительности.

An utterance, thus, has a material as well as a ‘social reality’. Although this formulation comes quite close to the familiar Marxian notions about language, it needs to be read firstly as a counterpoint to formalist notions about language, and secondly within the total framework of Bakhtinian literary philosophy. Utterances and words acquire a reality through their history of participation in social practices. For instance, the literary chronotope of the path, the dominant chronotope of Greek adventure novels, is not only the word ‘path’ but a word with a meaning, and the meaning of this word is realised through its participation in literary as well as non-literary utterances. In this sense the chronotope of the path acquires the status of social reality. Its meaning and significance, contrary to the formalistic belief, cannot be exhausted within the limits of a particular literary text.

Thus, the major difference between the formalistic device and motif and the Bakhtinian chronotope lies in the fact that although the chronotope functions like a plot-constructive element, its significance and its meaning are not confined to and exhausted in literary texts. It is always directed towards an extra-textual reality. It should be pointed out that Bakhtin’s understanding of the relationship between a text and the extra-textual reality is complex and cannot be reduced to a formulation in which art is understood as a mirror-reflection of reality. This question has been discussed in some detail in a preceding section.

67 Medvedev, p. 162.
68 Medvedev, p. 163.
The other significant difference between the formalistic motifs and devices and the Bakhtinian chronotope is that the chronotope, as the term itself indicates, represents a time-space unity. Formalistic devices such as rhyme, rhythm, repetition, retardation, represent technical elements used in constructing the structure of a narrative. The chronotope on the other hand has both temporal and spatial dimensions absent in formalistic devices.

Because literary arts are dominantly temporal and engage in the re-presentation of time and space, the Bakhtinian chronotope provides a more powerful tool to understand the modes of organising narratives than formalistic devices and motifs. The temporal organisation of events in narratives and the representation of space and time in them, according to Bakhtin, does not result from technical motives but reflects in a very complicated way the beliefs about time and space of authors and readers.

**Chronotope and the Concepts of Metaphor, Theme and Topos**

The difference between Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope and the formalistic concepts of device, motifs and functions was discussed above in some detail. However, literary critics have traditionally used concepts such as ‘metaphor’, ‘theme’ and ‘topos’ which are apparently similar to the chronotope. But behind the apparent similarity of these concepts there lies a number of fundamental differences. The phrase ‘the chronotope of the path’ is not the same as the ‘metaphor of the path’ or the ‘theme of the path’. Similarly, what is intended by and read in the phrase ‘the chronotope of the theatre or the theatrical stage’ is significantly different from that which is read in the ‘topos of the theatre or the stage’.

Metaphor is one of the most common tropes or figures of speech, and there exists a massive literature on this topic. In general terms, metaphor is ‘a figure of equivalence which proposes a different entity as having an equivalent status to the one that forms the main subject of the figure.’ For instance, in the metaphor ‘the world is a stage’ a level of equivalence is proposed between the ‘world’ and the ‘stage’. It, like every other metaphor, is based on proposed similarity and dissimilarity between the literal subject, the world, and its metaphorical substitute, the stage. Roman Yakobson, who studied the functioning of metaphor and metonymy, suggested that the two tropes functioned as binarily opposed polarities underpinning the binary process of selection and combination by which linguistic signs are formed and operate. Metaphor is generally ‘associative’ or ‘paradigmatic’ in character and is formed by using the process of ‘selection’. Metonymy, on the other hand, is generally ‘syntagmatic’ in character and is formed by the process of ‘combination. For instance, in the metaphor ‘the world is a stage’, the word ‘stage’ is

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selected from a ‘storehouse’ of several possibilities such as ‘cards’, ‘ship’, ‘journey’, ‘path’, and ‘prison’ and is combined with the word ‘world’.

Although metaphors function in diverse ways in language and literature, their dominant function is the establishing of a degree of equivalence and comparison between the literal subject and its metaphorical substitute. There is a view that metaphors work by a process of interaction between the two and that apart from drawing attention to some similarity already existing they create a new similarity between the literal subject and its metaphorical substitute. For instance, the metaphor ‘the world is a stage’ not only points out the known similarities between the world and the stage but creates some new similarities resulting from an interaction of the ‘world’ and the ‘stage’. But after repeated usage metaphors become automatized turning into ‘dead’ phrases which lose their capacity to amaze and ‘defamiliarise’.

‘Topos’ or ‘topoi’ represent those familiar metaphors or motifs which have been repeatedly used under some stable and ‘fixed’ meanings. They represent such easily recognisable ‘places’ in the topography of literature and reflect a standardised pattern of literary usage. The concept of the topoi is commonly used to compare literary narratives. For instance, the topos of the theatre can be used to compare the nineteenth century English and Russian novels. This type of usage of the ‘topos’ is, in some ways, similar to the genre-specifying role of the chronotope.

The concept of the ‘theme’ is in many ways similar to that of metaphor and topos. Lotman agrees that the concept of the theme is, in some ways, similar to the concept of ‘motif’ as defined by Russian formalist A. N. Veselovskii. According to Lotman, the ‘theme’ represents such words in a narrative which:

в силу особой важности и частой повторяемости их в культуре данного типа обрести устойчивыми значениями, ситуативными связями, пережить процесс "мифологизации" - они становятся знаками-сигналами других текстов, связываются с определенными сюжетами, внешними по отношению к данному. Такие слова могут конденсировать в себе цепь комплексов текстов.

70 R. Fowler, A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms (London: Routledge, 1987). p. 146. The idea of creativity associated with the operation of metaphors is attributed to Max Black.


Thus, words which, because of their specific importance and consistent repeatability within a specific culture, acquire a stable signification are called themes. These words undergo a certain level of mythologisation and begin to function as ‘signals’. They condense in themselves a large number of texts and through them various texts interpenetrate each other. It seems that the ‘theme’ begins to look like a chronotope because it is grounded in specific cultures, and as a result, its functioning is not confined within the limits of literary texts. This aspect of the functioning of the theme brings it closer to a literary chronotope because literary chronotopes are inseparable from real and chronotopes.

Lotman gives a list of important themes such as: home, path, fire, card games, prison, duel, parade, the holy book. According to him, some themes, such as ‘path’, ‘home’, turn into forms with which space can be artistically modelled whilst others such as, ‘duel’, ‘battle’, and ‘game’ model the nature of conflicts. In his essay, Lotman analyses the semiotic significance of the theme of ‘card-games’ in the nineteenth-century Russian novels such as Pushkin’s *The Queen of Spades* and Dostoevskii’s *The Gambler*.

**Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has focused on a number of significant moments of Bakhtin’s concept of the chronotope and has shown that,

- chronotopes are words which contain an ineluctable unity of temporal and spatial elements;
- at the level of an individual text chronotopes operate as plot-constitutive devices providing organising centres for the narrative;
- chronotopes function as time-visualising devices and provide appropriate space for graphical re-presentation of time;
- chronotopes operate as genre-specifying devices, and can be used to study the history of literary narratives;
- literary chronotopes are closely associated with real chronotopes which are located outside literary texts, and that the relation between literary and real chronotopes reflects the complex interaction between texts and the extra-textual reality;
- chronotopes always carry an axiological dimension because they cannot be separated from the actions of writing and reading subjects.

Compared to this multiple functioning of the chronotope, other concepts such as motif, device, function, metaphor, topos and theme have relatively restricted application.

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74 Lotman, p. 121.
in the analysis of literary narratives. For instance, metaphors have hardly been used as plot-constitutive devices, although because of the notion of equivalence ingrained in their functioning they are helpful in showing connections between textual material and the extra-textual reality. When it is said that a particular narrative uses the metaphor of the stage for representing life in this world, the connotation is to see the functioning of the word ‘stage’ as standing for or equivalent to the word, ‘world’. In a similar way, by suggesting that in *The Masquerade* Lermontov uses the metaphor of the masquerade, the intention is to find an entity equivalent to the masquerade portrayed in the play. This type of reading will use masquerade as a symbol for something outside the text.

But a reading focusing on the masquerade as a chronotope will attempt to foreground the role of the masquerade as a plot-constitutive device. However this does not mean that it will remain confined to the text of the play. Because the literary chronotope of the masquerade is closely associated with the actual chronotope of the masquerade in nineteenth-century Russia, it will attempt to show how this chronotope assists in creating an adequate re-presentation of biographical and historical time.

A reading based on the notion of the chronotope will also take into account the way in which a reader negotiates it from within his or her own position. For instance, a twentieth-century reader like me will read the chronotope of the masquerade from within twentieth-century chronotope of the masquerade and from within a discourse that is circulating about masquerade.

It is generally believed that some words, because of their stable and consistent use in specific cultural contexts, achieve a high level of metaphorisation. For instance, the use of the word ‘path’ as an equivalent of an individual’s life in phrases such as ‘her life path’, ‘her historical path’, or of the word ‘stage’ in a phrase such as ‘the world is a stage’, reflects high levels of their metaphorisation. According to Bakhtin, this metaphorisation of the word ‘path’ or the ‘stage’ and their capacity to be used as metaphors results from the fact that they are chronotopes, that they combine temporal and spatial moments in them. Their chronotopic nature makes them capable of making time visible; ‘all events are tied and untied’ in them, and ‘time is poured into’ them and ‘flows through ...’ them.

The concept of the ‘theme’ used so effectively by Lotman, seems to be more functional than the concepts of metaphor and topos. It is quite similar to the chronotope but lacks the unity of time and space, which is an essential feature of a chronotope. It also lacks the capacity to reflect the situatedness of readings of a literary text.

The chronotope, thus, seems to be a more effective tool in reading literary texts and will be central to the reading of Radzinskii’s trilogy. The following chapters will discuss
the main chronotopes of the three plays. They will demonstrate the plot-constitutive role of the chronotopes of the prison cell, the masquerade-ball and the circus stage. This reading will take into account the nature and cultural significance of the actual chronotopes of the prison cell, the masquerade-ball and the circus stage which will be used to illustrate the role of these chronotopes in creating a visual portrayal of the world in which the main protagonists lived.

The final chapter will focus on the interaction between these texts, their literary chronotopes and the real chronotopes of contemporary Soviet readers and spectators. It will argue that not only Radzinskii but most Soviet readers and spectators negotiated the literary chronotopes from within their own time-space, that the writing of these plays and their reading were firmly grounded within the existing literary-artistic paradigm and within the experience of their author and readers. The chapter will demonstrate that the trilogy is able to re-present the world and the times of its protagonists and also paints a vibrant portrayal of the contemporary Soviet society characterised by the presence of a flourishing theatre, public spectacles such as the circus, parades and sport games, as well as gulags, and show-trials.