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From Cape Town to the Marsh: A Spatial Analysis of J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and Jafar Modarres Sadeqi's *Gavkhuni*

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Abstract
The present paper studies J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* (1983) and Jafar Modarres Sadeqi's *Gavkhuni* (*The Marsh*) (1362 [1983]) through a spatial perspective. To this end, the study avails itself of a constellation of concepts formed around Edward Soja's Thirdspace, Michel Foucault's heterotopia, and Mikhail Bakhtin's chronotope. Reading the selected novels through these key terms shows that despite striking differences concerning the nature and manifestation of space, both novels configure space as belonging to the realm of the father. In *Life & Times of Michael K*, Michael begins a journey across South Africa to escape this paternal realm, while the unnamed narrator of *Gavkhuni*, having failed to escape the memory of Isfahan even after moving to Tehran, starts to write to get rid of his nightmares about his father. At the end of the novels, both protagonists return to their first places: Cape Town and Tehran, respectively. However, as the beginning and ending points of the novels, these cities do not remain the same for them: Michael preserves his identity as a gardener even in Cape Town, and the narrator of *Gavkhuni* reconciles with the ever-present image of the father and *Zayandehrud* in Tehran through writing.

Keywords: Space, Heterotopia, Thirdspace, Chronotope, J.M. Coetzee, Jafar Modarres Sadeqi

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1. Introduction

The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed a growing interest in the concepts of space and spatiology, thus challenging the enormous enshrining of the notions of time and historicism which had dominated vast modes of human knowledge. This shift could specifically be dated to the time after the Second World War when, as Bertrand Westphal argues, "the concept of temporality that had dominated the prewar period had lost much of its legitimacy" (Westphal, 2011: 14). Space, from then on, found its way, and injected itself, into various fields of the human sciences.

With his conception of 'heterotopia', Michel Foucault was one of the most outstanding intellectuals associated with this "spatial turn". Then around the 1990s, Edward Soja shed new light on spatial studies by his coinage of the term Thirdspace. It needs to be emphasized, however, that even before the "spatial turn," some theorists had already embarked on exploring literature in spatial terms. One of the scholars who had considered space in his studies was Mikhail Bakhtin who took into account the notion of space beside that of time in his delineation of the term chronotope in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981).

The "spatial turn," as termed by Soja, was collectively "the increased attention to matters of space, place, and mapping in literary and cultural studies, as well as in social theory, philosophy, and other disciplinary fields" (Tally, 2013: 159). This revolutionizing conception of space "owes much of its force to the prevailing sense that space is not merely a backdrop or setting for events, an empty container to be filled with actions or movements" (ibid.: 119); rather, space is a generative force which figures out the knots and nuances of a narrative; it is "both a product and productive" (ibid.: 120), and plays a much more significant role in the organization and advancement of the narrative, among others.

The present paper draws upon a conceptual constellation configured around the terms heterotopia, Thirdspace and chronotope to study J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and Jafar Modarres Sadeqi's *Gavkhuni* (*The Marsh*). To this end, the paper first provides an introductory delineation of the most decisive places to which Michael K and the unnamed narrator of *Gavkhuni* have been since their childhood. A study of these incongruous places reveals the heterotopic nature (or the lack thereof) of their juxtaposition. Moreover, by entwining the notion of heterotopia with Thirdspace and chronotope, the functions of a heterotopic representation of space are explored in these two novels. The main section of the study, however, is devoted to a thorough analysis of the two protagonists' journeys to demonstrate how the space represented in *Life & Times of Michael K* and

Gavkhuni can lead to a shift in the common, everyday understanding of the notion of space, mainly through an analysis of the cities which are the starting and ending points of the novels.

Thus embedded within a comparative framework and closely reading two literary works from different geographical and cultural backgrounds as well as different linguistic traditions, i.e., English and Persian, the paper builds a bridge between two seemingly disparate narratives by highlighting the predominance of patriarchy and its interwovenness with space in both of them in nearly identical historical periods. In so doing, the paper fulfills two interconnected aims: it attempts to broaden the field of spatial studies while contributing to scholarly work in the field of comparative literature.

2. Mapping the Life & Times of Michael K

With many studies devoted to postcolonial or social interpretations, J.M. Coetzee's *Life &Times of Michael K* has, since its publication in 1983, been scarcely discussed as far as the subject of space and its role in the conception of the narrative is concerned. Nonetheless, in the fifth chapter of *The Ethics of Exile: Colonialism in the Fictions of Charles Brockden Brown and J.M. Coetzee* (2005), Timothy Francis Strode argues that "Michael, forced by circumstances into vagrancy, inhabits new forms of inhabitation, and the narrative is, in part, an exploration on the meanings of being perpetually dislocated from a fixed abode" (Strode, 2005: 181). The heterogeneous assemblage created by these new forms of inhabitation shapes the basic argument of the present study. David Babcock, in his article "Professional Subjectivity and the Attenuation of Character in J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*," reflects on the ambiguity existing between the contemporary comprehensions of the concept of professionalism; while for some, it belongs only to the privileged class, for others professionalism pertains merely to the sense of fulfillment one achieves through work. Babcock argues that in this novel, "the two central characters straddle this ambiguity in different ways: the medical officer, who enjoys professional class privilege yet suffers from existential impoverishment, and Michael K, whose work of gardening is thoroughly conditioned by the state's exploitative labor relations yet allows for something like a life-forming professional identity to emerge" (Babcock, 2012: 891). The significant point to be considered here is Michael's occasional rejection of succumbing to forced labor, as well as his search for a space untouched by others. Through this, his identity is shaped as half institutionalized and half free. Lastly, in "Towards the Garden of the Mothers: Relocating the Capacity to Narrate in J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K*," Erin Mitchell puts forward the idea of the Garden as belonging to the maternal realm, i.e., associated with the principles of the

Mother, while everywhere else belonging to the paternal realm. A discussion based on the concept of Thirdspace, nevertheless, reveals this drawing line not to be much definite and clear-cut as such, as at times the maternal appears in the paternal realm, and vice versa.

In the final pages of the novel, Michael decides to return to his old apartment in Cape Town, where he used to live with his mother during her time of sickness. Passing across a beach, he broods over his times spent hovering between different camps and institutions, being subjected to disciplinary procedures, and acknowledged as an object of charity since his childhood: "Everywhere I go there are people waiting to exercise their forms of charity on me. All these years, and still I carry the look of an orphan. [...] They want me to open my heart and tell them the story of a life lived in cages" (Coetzee, 1983: 246-247). Michael thinks of the story of his life as insignificant and paltry; a life passed between different camps which were no less than prisons, inspected for his every little act, beaten until he was mute and simple in the head. Michael decides that he was able to escape all of these in the end, so he could escape charity too.

Despite Michael's equalization of all the places he has been to as a prison, each one is marked by its own lived experience, in a way that makes it distinct from the others. The following paragraphs shortly discuss the most decisive places Michael has been to since his childhood and the most significant effects each one of them has had on him. These places are, respectively, Huis Norenius, the hospital in Stellenbosch, the Visagie Garden, the Jakkalsdrif camp, and the Kenilworth camp.

Huis Norenius, a school-camp built specifically for "variously afflicted and unfortunate children" (ibid.: 4), severed Michael's aloofness, after he was separated from the bosom of his mother for his disability and created a mental background of self-insufficiency. Stellenbosch, the hospital town in which his mother died, seems to be "a place of ill luck" (ibid.: 250) for Michael. Having failed to treat his mother successfully, the hospital deprives him not only of his mother but also of the only responsibility he thought he had in the world, i.e., to take care of her. The Visagie Garden, noticeably, enables Michael to reside in a self-constructed, privatized world in parallel to the war-stricken country. Erin Mitchell writes that "Michael's appropriation of this land affords him control of space, a control he could not have acquired in apartheid-riven Cape Town" (Mitchell, 1998: 87). Additionally, the garden provides Michael with the chance to work for something and possess what he has worked for; he owns both the labor and the outcome.

Jakkalsdrif, governed with similar rigidity of rules and obligations to Huis Norenius, is a significant point in Michael's journey across the country for two

implicit reasons: first, reinforcing his difference as deviance, it manipulates it to implant this idea in his head that being deviant is counted as a threat to those who conform to the law. Second, the wage that the state pays him and the other inmates is way less than the amount of work that they do. This underestimating of work inculcates a lack of belief in one's abilities and blocks any sort of demand that one would make. Incarceration in Jakkalsdrif provokes in Michael a feeling of dispossession in its utmost sense, resulting in his escape and his subsequent inhabitation in the Visagie House.[1] If Jakkalsdrif people treated Michael with cruelty and meanness, Kenilworth authorities, especially the medical officer, revealed him to be exceedingly thoughtful of his well-being. The officer's superfluous curiosity about Michael and his attempts to define his state of bothering him as much as the despotic behavior of the authorities in Jakkalsdrif did. Michael's escape from Kenilworth enables him to survive the last attempt of the state to domesticate him, this time through charity.

3. Spaces of Life, Moments of Time

A brief discussion of these five places instantly reveals the distinct lived experience embedded in each one. The conglomeration of these sites, in addition to all the places where Michael has passed and been to even for a very short while, like his time of hiding in the mountains, his working as a low-rank gardener for the Council, his stay in the work camp on the railway track, the beach road in Sea Point, his apartment in Cape Town and, most importantly, his residence in Visagie Garden invoke the third of the six principles that Michel Foucault attributes to heterotopias: "[T]he heterotopia has the ability to juxtapose in a single real place several emplacements that are incompatible in themselves" (Foucault, 1998: 181). Heterotopia is, in fact, a mass of inconsistencies, irregularities, and irrelevancies, all jumbled up into the same container. The emplacements in which Michael resides, with principles, values, and traits characteristic of each, are placed beside one another in a ground that embraces their incongruities and allows the unity of paradoxes. The result is an assemblage of heterogeneity created by the propinquity of these places.

The significant point about all of these emplacements, nevertheless, is that in Michael's pursuit of a linear journey, none of them gives him a sense of profoundness as such; he is always in a state of escape, from the camps whose aim is to mark him with and limit him to certain traits that would serve their

1. Michael visits the Visagie House twice: once after his escape from the labor camp, and another time right after his escape from Jakkalsdrif.

ideologies, and at the same time find him guilty of having those traits. Having returned to his old apartment in Sea Point, Michael meditates:

> Now they have camps for children whose parents run away, camps for people who kick and foam at the mouth, camps for people with big heads and people with little heads, camps for people with no visible means of support, camps for people chased off the land, camps for people they find living in stormwater drains, camps for street girls, camps for people who can't add two and two, camps for people who forget their papers at home, camps for people who live in the mountains and blow up bridges in the night. (Coetzee, 1983: 248)

In the state's endless efforts first to define any human being according to its own established, coercive norms, and then to categorize them based on those norms, every little eccentricity is comprehended as an oddity and regarded as unendurable. In Michael's case, these include his physical deformity, his refusal to eat, his cultivation of seeds for no particular aim, his indifference when the mountain guerillas eat his pumpkins, his refusal to speak, his refusal to work within deadlines, and so on. He goes on lamenting: "Perhaps the truth is that it is enough to be out of the camps, out of all the camps at the same time. Perhaps that is enough of an achievement, for the time being. How many people are there left who are neither locked up nor standing guard at the gate? I have escaped the camps; perhaps, if I lie low, I will escape charity too" (ibid.: 249). Michael's final realization of the fact that there is no real escape from the camps and camp-like situations, suggests his acceptance of the multidimensionality of space, and his quest for discovering that "other" side of space which appeals to him and gives him the chance to breathe.

It is this outlook on space, and its heterotopic quality, that allows Michael to be able to find his rest and pleasure in ways less trodden and spaces less claimed. Dominic Head suggests that "as the novel is set at a time of violent social breakdown, the instruments of control appear to have become intensified, and yet not fully effective, creating the space for a [*sic*] Michael K to live in the gaps" (Head, 2009: 55). As the space slowly begins to change nature, there remain areas yet to be explored, areas that are not wholly claimed or controlled, and can be personalized.

The Visagie Garden is undoubtedly the most significant of these gaps. Since the garden is the most important signifier of Michael's identity, its absence throughout most of the novel denotes that "the space does not exist in which K's identity as a potential cultivator could be fully realized" (ibid.: 60-61). Cultivation, before anything, demands full control over the land. Other than that, the cultivator possesses a nurturing power like that of a mother. Michael's obsessive enthusiasm for the garden stems from the possibility it

grants him, to take hold of a place in a feminine way, and aimlessly, bestow its generosity upon the vicinity.

The garden is closely associated with the concept of motherhood in one more way. David Attwell suggests that the answer to the question of why gardening has been given such significance "has to do with the poles of symbolic possibility that negotiates throughout his journey, a binary opposition between the principles of Father and Mother" (Attwell, 1993: 94). Michael himself contemplates this binary in one instant: "My mother was the one whose ashes I brought back, he thought, and my father was Huis Norenius. My father was the list of rules on the door of the dormitory, [...] They were my father, and my mother is buried and not yet risen" (Coetzee 1983: 143-144). With Michael's biological father being unknown, he sees himself raised by rigid principles and the tough discipline of the camps. To him, camps and their related terminology – labor, punishment, march, rehabilitation, resettlement, curfew, and the like– are associated with the paternal realm, while the garden belongs to the maternal side, with attributes of fertility, flexibility, and nurture.

The idea of anywhere other than the garden belonging to the paternal realm is also supported by the novel's epilogue, an extract from *Cosmic Fragments* by Heraclitus, which attributes the war to the domain of Father:

War is the father of all and king of all.
Some he shows as gods, others as men.
Some he makes slaves, and others free.

Although very explicitly Michael declares his unwillingness to the paternal domain – "I have no desire to father" (ibid.: 143) – there is no absolute dividing line that distinguishes these two realms within the course of the novel, as each one of maternal or paternal attributes at times appears in the realm of the other. In Jakkalsdrif, for instance, by giving himself into the game of children, and by empathizing with the woman who has lost her child, Michael "situates himself in a 'protected' class of women and children" (Mitchell, 1998: 90). Or in the Visagie Garden, the shadow of fear casts itself upon Michael in his daily occupations with the plants, when he stands still even for days so as not to be exposed by the agents of the state.

Although the linear nature of Michael's journey demands any kind of experience in either paternal or maternal realms to remain at its most elementary and superficial level, there is an evident distinction between these two domains, which pertains to Michael's sense of time. On some occasions, his sense of time is adverted to the present, and on some others it is adverted to the past, depending directly on how much the place in which he dwells has been claimed by others, and how much liberty it bestows upon him.

In the maternal domain, as Erin Mitchell notes, "K's sense of time […] includes only the present tense; his hunger and hibernatory sleep, and the needs of his plants, keep him safe from human time, sheltered from history" (ibid.: 91). Living in the Visagie Garden appeals to his will and also to his body, and he transforms his habits for the improvement of his plants. Mitchell continues: "K responds to the needs of his plants by ignoring socially transmitted notions about time; he disdains daylight and becomes nocturnal. K's work under the moon, his night-time concern for his plants, not only aligns him with the feminine but also shows that he already inverts the usual human sense that the daylight is made for working, the night-time for sleeping" (ibid.: 90). In the garden, Michael lives only in the present, as if time is "poured out upon him in such an unending stream" (Coetzee, 1983: 139), imposing on him no sorts of tight deadlines that would pressurize his actions.

The paternal domain, on the other side of the road, contains within itself a state of "living in suspension" (216). As the country is dragged into the Civil War and the internal tensions reach their peak, the strictness of the state increases and the rules get tougher. The camps, of course, are no exception to this cross-country anarchy, and as the state leverages to impose its power, they also become rigidified. Michael describes his incarceration within the camps as "being devoured by time" (ibid.: 134); under the unending pressure of working eating and sleeping within tight deadlines, Michael is in a constant state of escaping the present time of the camps. He spends most of his time ruminating over the past, specifically his horrible years spent in Huis Norenius, the memory of his mother, and from a certain point onwards, his time gardening in the Visagie House.

Elicited from these, throughout his voyage, Michael is in a state of oscillation not only between different emplacements but also between different temporal experiences pertaining to each one of those emplacements. He lives in the time of war, the time of incarceration in camps and institutions, the time of gardening, the past time of his childhood years in Huis Norenius, and on and on. This persistent shuffling between different temporal experiences evokes several portrayals of Michael along the way. To put it in Bakhtin's words (in another context), "we are offered various sharply differing images of one and the same individual, images that are united in him as various epochs and stages in the course of his life. There is no evolution in the strict sense of the word; what we get, rather, is crisis and rebirth" (Bakhtin, 1981: 115). Michael is at once a gardener in the Visagie House, a son in his apartment, a prisoner of Jakkalsdrif, an escapee and arsonist in Kenilworth, and a citizen of Cape Town.

The simultaneity of these various images each pertaining to a particular place originates from Michael's dwelling in both the paternal domain of the Civil War in South Africa and incarceration in the camps, and the maternal domain of gardening in the Visagie House. He lives both in a world that dominates and imprisons him, and a world that liberates him. The outcome is a synergic space that embraces the co-existence of these paradoxical domains; a third, alternative space which is created by the interaction of the camp life and the gaps found between the camps, and it surpasses any of these two on their own, to create what Edward Soja has referred to as Thirdspace:

> Everything comes together in Thirdspace: subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure, and agency, mind and body, consciousness and unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history. Anything that fragments Thirdspace into separate specialized knowledge or exclusive domains – even on the pretext of handling its infinite complexity – destroys its meaning and openness. (Soja, 1996: 56-57)

Thirdspace acquires its specificity through reconciliation and coalescence; it is a space of co-existence and simultaneousness, of the interwovenness of things contradictory, and it gains its openness through blocking any sort of penetration into its wholeness; it is a compact assemblage of variances, of things that constantly change and become something else.

At one point after Michael's escape from Kenilworth, in his interior monologue addressed to Michael, the medical officer is convinced that spaces exist that are free of the authoritarianism of the camps, and he yields to them:

> Though this is a large country, so large that you would think there would be space for everyone, what I have learned of life tells me that it is hard to keep out of the camps. Yet I am convinced there are areas that lie between the camps and belong to no camp [...]. I am looking for such a place in order to settle there, perhaps only till things improve, perhaps forever. (Coetzee, 1983: 223)

The medical officer's quest for such spaces demonstrates his realization of the possibility of a Thirdspatial context, after his long years of working in the camp. Also at one point, he admires Michael for being an allegory of "how scandalously, how outrageously a meaning can take up residence in a system without becoming a term in it" (ibid.: 228). Becoming a term in the system would mean consent to the one-sidedness, rigidity, and fixity of space. But Michael creates an independent meaning of his own by searching for the different, liberating aspect of space; it is, indeed, discovering the "other" side of the despotic that saves both Michael and the medical officer.

This Thirdspatial atmosphere is gained by virtue of understanding and recognizing the boundaries and limitations, and then, challenging them as such. It is only through this route of searching for something other than what already exists that the promise of freedom reveals itself. Thirdspace embraces the co-existence of both the submissive and emancipatory sides of space. It does not highlight any of the two; it comes up with a system in which neither of them negates the other; rather, the two realms become meaningful in conjunction with and in relation to one another. Michael's stay in the camps and his dwelling in the Visagie Garden complement one another and create a whole that defines his being, as half institutionalized and half free.

As the nature of Michael's traveling is a horizontal one, everything is regulated around not letting him stay in the atmosphere of one place for a long time. In other words, his journey, from the onset to its end, is governed by the "chronotope of travel."[1]The multiplicity of places across Michael's journey engenders an inevitable set of paradoxes with itself: the camp and the garden, discipline and unruliness, incarceration and cultivation, the police and the mountain guerillas, construction and destruction, submissiveness and insubordination, strictness and flexibility, imprisonment and escape, rehabilitation and internment, institutionalization and freedom, and the like. Out of the heart of these paradoxes rises a quest for something different that goes beyond any of these dualities, and makes Michael yield to what has yet remained unexplored in space. During his journey, he observes both the vastness and enclosedness of space, and also the generosity and stinginess of time. The outcome is an amalgamation of all he has witnessed and weathered in different times and different spaces.

None of the places Michael travels to is supposed to turn into a perpetual abode for him. He realizes that it is not one single place – like the Visagie Garden – that solely defines his being and his identity, but the plurality of the places that he has been to. Time is also broken into several periods; on some occasions, it passes slowly, on others it passes like the wind, but his final realization that "there is time enough for everything" (ibid.: 249) denotes his discovery of a self-constructed time which is in the same rhythm with the space that allows him to live as he wishes.

1. Chronotope is the term Bakhtin adopts in his "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope" (1981) to refer to the "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (Bakhtin, 1981: 84). Bakhtin implies that throughout a novel, it is the inevitable interweaving and interconnectedness of the elements of time and space that builds the construction of the narrative and gives meaning to it.

The chronotope of travel in this novel is fabricated by the constant shifting of spatial and temporal indicators, in such a way as to stress the impermanency of the tenets related to each place and to look for something novel and untouched that defines itself. This chronotope overshadows the taken-for-granted assumptions of the one-sidedness of space, attributing to it instead a dynamicity and spiritedness which had hitherto been neglected. It provides Michael K with first a hope and then a possibility to pursue exploring a place he can take hold of, and acknowledge it as belonging to him alone.

4. Writing and the Paternal Space in *Gavkhuni*

For the most part, Jafar Modarres-Sadeqi's *Gavkhuni* has been an open field for psychoanalytic discussions and interpretations. Extending these interpretations, the present paper avails itself of studies that are more related to spatial concepts. In *Identity and Its Reflection in Contemporary Iranian Literature* (1386 [2007]), Behzad Barekat notes that *Gavkhuni* "provides us with a context to find a new logic to deal with patriarchy in a new perspective that avoids a romantic or an absolutely bitter outlook" (26). This assumption provides this paper with its basic argument: the unnamed narrator of this novella does not fight patriarchy; he is only in search of a way to escape the harsh impact of this fatherly burden.

Published in 1983, *Gavkhuni* delineates the nightmares of a 24-year-old unnamed narrator and his efforts to get rid of those nightmares by writing them down. All of these nightmares share a common motif: the river *Zayandehrud* in Isfahan, in which the narrator and his father are swimming, or on which they are boating. Each time, he wakes up with the terror of drowning in the river. For the time being, he lives in a small apartment in Tehran, with two roommates: Hamid and Khashayar, a poet who aspires to write a poem that contains in itself the "the mystery of Iran's grandeur" (Mirabedini, 1396 [2017]:1044).

The novella has twenty-four chapters, and the narrator starts to write his nightmares one week before the first anniversary of his father's death when the abundance of nightmares seems to be driving him insane. While writing, he ruminates over his years spent in Isfahan mostly beside *Zayandehrud*, his childhood, his parents (being obsessively preoccupied with the memory of his father), his marriage with and divorce from his cousin, and also the memory of one of his primary school teachers: Mr. Golchin whom he highly respects but is never remembered by him. At some point, the narrator realizes that Mr. Golchin, who used to be a swimming champion, had drowned in *Zayandehrud* two years ago.

Very early in the narrative, the narrator refers to the exasperating memory of his father as the real reason that forces him to write: "I just knew that I always saw my father in my nightmares. It had been a while since I wanted to write them down, but I always felt lazy so I didn't do it. I wanted to know what nightmares I had and why I couldn't get rid of his memory which had been bothering me so awfully" (Sadeqi, 1398 [2019]:12). In these dreams, the narrator always refuses to step into the water and instead prefers to stay ashore, watching his father swim. One night, after he has realized that people go sailing across the river, he dreams that he is on the boat with his father and Mr. Golchin, and they are all paddling towards *Gavkhuni*, the marsh where the water of *Zayandehrud* flows. Being aware that he is dreaming, the narrator has learned a few tricks that would wake him up: the coldness of the water, stepping on the ground, urinating and jumping into the river.

While framing these twenty-four chapters and outpouring his nightmares, little by little the very act of writing tends to captivate the narrator by itself and from one point onwards he starts to write an independent story. This tendency to write, which is mostly overlapped with a *necessity* to write, shapes the infrastructure of the whole narrative. Therefore, even though, as Taslimi states, *Gavkhuni* "utilizes the techniques of magical realism […] but [prioritizes] the dream over magic" (Taslimi 1383 [2004]:237), this paper argues that instead of dreams, it is writing which has the centrality, as it is through writing that the narrator gets rid of his nightmares. In other words, *Gavkhuni* is written because the narrator wants to write his nightmares. Therefore, one can say that the governing chronotope in *Gavkhuni* is that of the writing itself. This "chronotope of writing" is the narrator's search for a release from the father, the shadow of the father, and the long tradition of patriarchy: "Even in wakefulness, the narrator's living depends on writing and contemplating these nightmares. In all these nightmares, he sees his father with him on *Zayandehrud*, and in the end, the father disappears in one way or another, getting lost in the water. In a way, this means that the narrator has always wished for the death of his father" (Barekat, 1386 [2007]:45).

Time, in this chronotope, is the time of the present, nearly one year after the death of the father who died humiliatingly behind his sewing machine in his little shop. The place of the chronotope is the narrator's little apartment in Tehran, specifically the kitchen where he sits in the middle of the night to write down his nightmares. The little apartment in *Gavkhuni*, as Yeganeh and Arjmandi argue, is at once the hall, the dining room, the bedroom, the study, and the living room of the house, portraying the emerging state of accommodation after the 1979 Revolution, when the hierarchy of space within the house had vanished and the indoor space had become multi-functional (cf.

Yeganeh & Arjmandi, 1396 [2018]:169-170). As such, the little, multi-purpose apartment in Tehran does not provide the narrator with any space for daydreaming, thus making it inevitable for him to write down his nightmares.

In his narrative, the narrator mainly oscillates between the two cities of Tehran and Isfahan. At one point, he expresses his stance towards these two cities very clearly: "I wanted to go back to Tehran. Not that I didn't like Isfahan. [...] but Isfahan bothered me. I had nothing to do with Tehran. Neither did I like nor had anything to do with it. It was all the same to me. But it wasn't like that with Isfahan. [...] wherever I set my foot, there was something that bothered me" (Sadeqi, 1398 [2011]:49). It is evident that his relationship with Tehran itself is a neutral one, but even in Tehran, he is haunted by his memories of Isfahan, *Zayandehrud* and the father. He lives in a small apartment with the least facilities which, as explained above, do not give him much space for daydreaming; therefore, getting stuck in the past – which involved spaces as vast as a city and a river – becomes to some extent inevitable. He is even obliged to share this little space with two other people, but this is the only place where he feels at home and at least physically allows him to escape the "image of his father" – although in the end, this image intrudes this home as well. Even the bookstore where he works is a failed attempt to turn a place into a haven of his own, as he is expelled from there by the manager.

For the narrator, the most prominent place in Isfahan is unquestionably *Zayandehrud*. It appears in all of the nightmares. At once dreadful, mysterious, seductive, beautiful and deadly, it is the strongest memory associated with the father. In the final chapter of the novel, the narrator realizes that in his youth, the father had also traveled to Tehran to escape his pre-destined career as a tailor. He occasionally went to a café where a Polish woman who had fled to Iran during the Second World War sang songs mostly about the rivers of Poland. He states: "I still remember the name of one of those rivers: the river Vistula that passes through Warsaw" (Sadeqi, 1398 [2011]:107). Unlike *Zayandehrud*, Vistula is full of water, people go there sailing on ships and it flows to the sea, not a marsh. The father wished he could show her *Zayandehrud* and *Gavkhuni* but she returned to her homeland right away after the war ended. The father unavoidably returned to Isfahan, the city through which *Zayandehrud* passes.

The river, in Jungian psychoanalysis, is "the commonest symbol for the unconscious" (Mirabedini, 1396 [2017]:1046). Unlike Mr. Golchin, the father has no interest in discovering different spots of the river: he always swims in the same spot. For him, *Zayandehrud* is a concrete reminder of the city of the Polish singer and his indecisive affection for her. Through this perspective, the

mother's loathsome attitude towards the river makes sense, as the father has "taken his love from the mother and given it to the river" (Yazdkhasti & Moloudi, 1391 [2012]:177).

Unlike *Zayandehrud* which is associated with the father's adventures, the little shop in Isfahan is a concrete image of his failure in tailoring, and a reminder of the fact that he had lost the status of the "best tailor in the city" (Sadeqi, 1398 [2011]:16). This failure also marks the failure in his marriage, for his wife had married him only for the sake of this status. The narrator's relation to this place is one of love and hate, as it is physically bound with the memory of his father and this is also where his biggest wish is fulfilled – the death of his father. Even when after their marriage his wife reopens the shop as a haberdashery, he avoids going there as much as he can: "It had become a completely different store. Despite that, for me, it was always the same worn-out shop that belonged to my father. But his memory was everywhere, his smell was everywhere, both inside and outside the store" (ibid.: 46). After his divorce, the narrator lets go of the shop and sells it to his in-laws.

These three significant emplacements in the novella – *Zayandehrud*, the tailor's shop and the apartment in Tehran – are fundamentally different in terms of their physical features. They portray incongruities in terms of geographical region, architectural elements, square footage, location, and the like. Not unexpectedly, the juxtaposition of these three emplacements is prone to create a heterotopic atmosphere, but there is yet something transparently significant that negates this heterotopic effect: all these three emplacements have the same suffocating function as all of them are strongly infused with the image and the memory of the father. In this novella, "the 'father' dies; but in every sense of the word, he enters the life of the narrator after his death and begins to haunt his life" (Barekat 1386 [2007]:45). In this way, all spaces become 'the space of the father', which means that there is no escape from the burden of patriarchy, even by changing and transforming the physical space.

The absence of a heterotopic context, both for the narrator and the father in his youth, rules out any sort of escape from "patriarchy and the dominance of the shadows of the past over the present" (Mirabedini, 1396 [2017]:1046-47): Tehran is never detached from the memories of Isfahan, all the paths in Isfahan lead to *Zayandehrud*, *Zayandehrud* flows into *Gavkhuni,* and as the father says, *Gavkhuni* contains "all our lives. Everything we are, everything we have, flows into this marsh. All the waters that have washed our bodies have gone into this marsh" (Sadeqi, 1398 [2011]:64).

One night, the narrator decides to read everything he had written so far: "I realized that I had almost written whatever I wanted to write and I couldn't

think of anything else" (ibid.: 87). It is as if now the process of becoming a writer is complete. On that account, in the last chapters of the narrative, he utilizes the technique of the dream within the dream. He dreams that he is having a dream in which his father is in their apartment in Tehran, having a meal and a conversation with Hamid and Khashayar:

> I closed my eyes and kept them closed for a while, until my eyelids felt heavy and I began falling asleep and realized that if this was a dream, I had fallen asleep in this dream, and then when I would wake up from that second dream, I was still in this first dream and again I had to wake up from this dream and I realized I shouldn't let myself fall asleep and I opened my eyes and I saw that my father was there, bursting with health. (ibid.: 101)

Later, he goes strolling in the streets of Tehran with his father when all of a sudden, he realizes that they are standing in front of Mount Soffeh, which is a mountain in Isfahan. His father begins to recount his memories of Tehran when he was in search of a job other than tailoring. The narrator is constantly struggling with himself and tries to wake himself up from this dream several times, but none of his techniques works, proving that his father's presence is as real as the presence of Mount Soffeh in Tehran. They keep on strolling, until he finds himself In *Lalehzar* (one of the oldest neighborhoods in Tehran), standing on the shore of *Zayandehrud*: "I was there. With my father. In *Lalehzar* street. On the shore of *Zayandehrud*" (ibid.: 109). Here, the narrator is not hallucinating, nor is he bothered by the everlasting presence of the father. These images are constantly interchanging because he has summoned both his father and Isfahan with *Zayandehrud*, here in Tehran as this time he aims to confront the patriarchal image through writing. He writes *Gavkhuni* to escape from *Gavkhuni*.

This togetherness, this amalgamation of Tehran and Isfahan, this interfusion of the past and the present and of reality and dreams, clearly invokes Soja's Thirdspace once again, as "[e]verything comes together in Thirdspace" (Soja, 1996: 56). This new hybrid space which is created through writing sets the narrator free from the burden of Isfahan, *Zayandehrud*, Gavkhuni and the father all at once.

In the last paragraph, the narrator keeps on struggling to awaken himself from the dream but he does not succeed as the borders of the dream and reality begin to fade away:

> I jumped up and down again. I started to run. I was jumping up and down and running at once. I went into the water. I went down and the water passed over my head and I went further and as I went further my feet did not reach the ground and as I went further and further and further, the water was getting warmer, and there at the bottom, the water was

> sufficiently warm – warm as my body – and when I reached the bottom, I just heard a woman singing – a strange singing voice in the distance. (Sadeqi, 1398 [2011]:110)

Some critics claim that here the narrator is drowning in Gavkhuni and witnesses his death in the dream. Some others believe that he "goes into a long coma" (Taslimi, 1383 [2004]:237). In both events, this is a liberating moment: having brought the father to his context, now the narrator enters the unconscious of the father through the method of dream within the dream. He hears the singing of the Polish woman in the depths of *Zayandehrud* where the coldness of the water does not bother him anymore. He has made his peace both with the water and with the father by accepting that the shadow of the father is ever-present even when he is recounting his death.

Gavkhuni, in one sense, "reminds us that the father never dies; that the memory of the father is more excruciating and more exhaustive than his reality. [...] In another sense, perhaps we cannot stand the absence of the father, that without the father, we remain orphans because we are always children" (Barekat, 1386[2004]:45-46). Yet, other than fighting the images and shadows of the father, he attempts to accept the reality of the father and create an oasis where the presence of the father is not as agonizing as it used to be.

5. Conclusion

Accepting the limitations that space imposes, brings with it the promise of freedom. An analysis based on spatial circumstances and an application of the notions and ideas developed by theorists like Foucault, Soja and Bakhtin to J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* has shown the multidimensionality of the space in which Michael K dwells, and also the amount of its capacity to let him claim and personalize it as much as possible. A heterotopic analysis demonstrates how space is represented in this novel: a dynamic space created as a result of the juxtaposition of incongruous places beside one another. The functionality of such a heterotopic analysis, then, has to do with the concepts of Thirdspace and chronotope, the integration of which, at times makes a place more rigid, and at times more flexible, in relation to the previous place(s).

Michael K's residence in Cape Town at the beginning and also at the end of the novel fabricates not a circular, but a linear journey: Michael returns to Cape Town a second time, with the realization that space can always transform itself. In other words, it never remains the same, nor does it stick to one single attribute. An analysis of space through the concepts of heterotopia, Thirdspace, and chronotope reveals it to be much deeper than its everyday assumption: it is many-sided and dynamic; it forms identities and shapes

narrative events. One final point to be mentioned, however, is that a study of space in a narrative is never limited to analyzing it as a heterogeneous assemblage comprising incongruous elements, resulting in a possibility of some gaps appearing along the way. The same novel, for instance, is also apt to be interpreted through another perspective about space, with a consideration of the absolute sovereignty of the state to homogenize all the places. In this respect, Michael K's voyage proves indeed to be a circular one, allowing no room for changes and transformations.

Michael K's eventual return to his first abode – the apartment in Cape Town – is not a retreat, but an informed decision. The emphasis on the linear nature of Michael's travels is an indicator of the fact that the Cape Town to which he returns is different from the Cape Town from which he had departed at the beginning of the novel: "K tossed restlessly on the cardboard. It excited him, he found, to say, recklessly, *the truth, the truth about me. 'I am a gardener,'* he said again, aloud. On the other hand, was it not strange for a gardener to be sleeping in a closet within the sound of the beating of the waves of the sea?" (Coetzee, 1983: 247-248; emphasis in the original). The paradox embedded in this statement arises from his final realization of the multidimensional quality of space. The city to which Michael K returns is not the single-sided, static place that it used to be; it is rather a place that allows him this time to retain his identity as a gardener even in the paternal realm of the war: "[T]he first siren went off announcing the curfew. Its wail was taken up by sirens and hooters across the city. The cacophony rose, then died away" (ibid.: 246). The polyphonic atmosphere created by the interaction of the cacophony and the silence followed by it, is, in point of fact, Michael K's reward from his voyage: an assumption of space as dynamic, multidimensional, and formative.

On the other hand, an exploration of the aforesaid concepts in Jafar Modarres Sadeqi's *Gavkhuni* has demonstrated that although space can physically undergo transformations of many kinds, it might have the same function over and over, and the incompatibilities, though expansive and indisputable, might not grow into creating a heterotopic effect. In this novella, Tehran, Isfahan, *Zayandehrud,* and the tailor's shop, other than preserving their own nature as distinct physical spaces, are all concrete guarantees of the ubiquitous shadow of the father. Since this effort to escape the patriarchal burden fails, the narrator takes shelter in writing down his nightmares so as to get rid of them. Thus, in the absence of a heterotopic effect, the "chronotope of writing," as the main chronotope of the narrative aims at disturbing the equalized state of all these places. When in the final chapters of *Gavkhuni* the narrator obtains the status of a writer, he manages to call for the patriarchal history as well as his own past all at once, by means of merging the two images

of Tehran and Isfahan. In fact, he reconciles with the presence of the father as well as the presence of Isfahan but gets past both by writing them. This moment of liberation is best explained by the concept of Thirdspace: Isfahan and Tehran are not distinct anymore, the two are amalgamated now.

In *Gavkhuni*, the space of the father is the dominant space throughout the whole narrative. Unlike Michael K who detests the father and has no interest in the paternal realm, this character detests the father and yearns for him at the same time: he wishes his father had died heroically while swimming in *Zayandehrud*, not ashamedly behind a sewing machine in his little shop as a failed, lonely tailor. He also identifies with the father and praises him for his yelling out in his nocturnal drunkenness and blames his mother for her lack of compromise, as he strongly believes that this is drunkenness as is it meant to be. This sense of attachment to the father and the absence of a motherly figure distinguish this character from Michael K, as in that novel, K's hideout is the maternal realm.

Like Michael K, the narrator of *Gavkhuni* also returns to his first place – Tehran – at last. Indeed, he manages to 'own' Tehran, not by making this place independent from the memory of his father, but by turning it into an abode that has the potential to house both his past and his future; the synergic space created in the final chapter – with the mingling of Tehran and Isfahan – sets the narrator free from the heavy burden of patriarchy while giving him space for his future career as a writer. The multi-capacity, subtlety and flexibility of space depicted in the last chapter, is the contribution of Sadeqi's *Gavkhuni* to the everyday, conventional conception of space.

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مقاله پژوهشی

از کیپ تاون تا گاوخونی: تحلیل فضامحور *زندگی و زمانه مایکل کی* جی. ام. کوتسی و *گاوخونی* جعفر مدرس صادقی

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چکیده

مقالهٔ حاضر از منظری فضامحور به بررسی رمان‌های زندگی و زمانهٔ مایکل کی اثر جی.ام. کوتسی (۱۹۸۳) و گاوخونی (۱۳۶۲) اثر جعفر مدرس صادقی می‌پردازد. بدین منظور، مجموعه‌ای از مفاهیم، از جمله «فضای سوم» ادوارد سوجا، «هتروتوپیا»ی میشل فوکو و «کرونوتوپ» میخائیل باختین جهت مطالعه به کار گرفته شده‌اند. با تحلیل این رمان‌ها بر مبنای مفاهیم مذکور درمی‌یابیم که فارغ از تفاوت‌های بنیادینی که از نظر ماهیت و شکل فضا در این دو اثر ظهور می‌کنند، فضای کلی در هر دو رمان تحت سلطهٔ پدر یا نظام پدرسالارانه است. در زندگی و زمانهٔ مایکل کی، مایکل سفری را در سرتاسر آفریقای جنوبی می‌آغازد تا از سلطهٔ پدر رهایی یابد، حال آنکه در رمان گاوخونی، راوی بی‌نام که موفق نشده بعد از منتقل‌شدن به تهران نیز خاطرهٔ اصفهان را از یاد برد، شروع به نوشتن می‌کند تا از شر خواب‌هایی که درباره پدر می‌بیند خلاص شود. در پایان هر دو رمان، قهرمان‌ها به مکان‌های آغازین خود - به ترتیب: کیپ تاون و تهران - بازمی‌گردند، گرچه این شهرها آن‌گونه که در ابتدا بوده‌اند، باقی نمی‌مانند: مایکل حتی در کیپ‌تاون هویت خود به عنوان یک باغبان را حفظ کرده و به آپارتمان قبلی‌اش بازمی‌گردد، و راوی گاوخونی، از طریق نوشتن به نوعی صلح با تصویر همیشه‌حاضر پدر و حضور زاینده‌رود در تهران دست می‌یابد.

واژگان کلیدی: هتروتوپیا، فضای سوم، کرونوتوپ، جی.ام. کوتسی، جعفر مدرس

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