

## **Connections, Dislocations and Displacements: Personal and Societal Relationships in Nilo Cruz's *Anna in the Tropics* and Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*.**

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### **Abstract**

Using Bakhtin's chronotope lens, this paper examines the connection between personal and societal relationships to be found at the confluence of Nilo Cruz's play *Anna in the Tropics* and Leo Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina*. The paper takes a brief look at what Bakhtin meant by the chronotope and then tries to establish just how effective that concept is for analyzing the relationship between the two works of art—in terms of characters, setting, time period, and events. The paper concludes that, while the chronotope concept seems adept at uncovering the personal relationships within the space-time continuum of the two works, it is not as effective at bringing out the social or spatial relations. In other words, the chronotope representing the personal relationships among the various characters of the play overwhelms that representing the social relations, despite the fact the Bakhtinian analysis would want to argue that personal relations are a convenient fiction and would have little existence without some corresponding social field. The paper also concludes that *Anna Karenina* did a better job of representing social relations in its time period, 19<sup>th</sup>-century Russia, than *Anna in the Tropics* did representing those of its later time period, being the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The paper offers an explanation for this disparity in terms of the relative simplicity of the Tolstoy chronotope as it represents historical time and space, versus the more complex attempt by Cruz in terms of his transposition of *Anna Karenina* to another time-space continuum, and it represents the relativity of the post-modern vision of societal relationships.

### **Introduction**

This paper undertakes an examination of various space-time relationships (personal and societal) within and between Cuban-American playwright Nilo Cruz's 2003 Pulitzer Prize winning play *Anna in the Tropics* and Leo Tolstoy's classic 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian realist novel *Anna Karenina*. The paper employs a Bakhtian chronotope lens to examine the connections, dislocations and displacements in the space-time relationships between the two works of literature in order to determine how well the personal, social and spatial relations are brought out in each of the works—as well as the relationship between the two works of art (as made explicit by Cruz in his play.. This type of analysis includes such associations as:

1. The superimposition of the characters and situations from the novel onto the play, including an adulterous affair and a tragic death;

2. The time period differentials between the two works and the bridges used in an effort to connect them, for example the similarities and differences between 19<sup>th</sup> century conditions in Russia and early 20<sup>th</sup> century conditions in the United States;
3. The parallels between the themes in the novel (with special emphasis on the particular material from *Anna Karenina* reading during the play), and those in the play.
4. The relative emphasis on personal relationships versus societal constructs in the two works.

The paper also applies the space-time theories of such postmodern thinkers as Henri Lefebvre (rhythmanalysis and natural versus linear time), Doreen Massey (spatial patterns and gender relationships), Linda McDowell (domestic space and feminism), and David Harvey (culture and economics) to examine the relationships among space/spatiality, gender, production, capitalist consumerism and commodity in Cruz's play. It contributes to the literature on Bakhtinian chronotope analysis and its ability to mine key information from a work of art. The paper also shows that such an analysis can be used to distil the essential relationships that these two works attempt to celebrate and shows the relevance of those relationships in terms that go beyond the particular connections between and among characters. I believe that the ability to separate personal/individual existential themes from societal ones will result in a new way of looking at the two works of art, thus helping to build up the work's universal meaning (both within its own timeframe and for us).

#### ***Anna in the Tropics*: Brief Summary**

Cruz's play takes place in a Cuban cigar-making factory in Ybor City on the outskirts of Tampa Bay, Florida, in 1929. It is a time of great upheaval and change, not the least being the impending market crash. The main characters in the play include factory owner Santiago and his half-brother Cheché, who manages the factory, as well as three women who work there: Ofelia, Santiago's wife, and their two daughters, Conchita and Marela. Conchita is married to Palomo but the marriage is loveless and Palomo is having an affair with an unnamed person.

Traditionally, the tedium at the cigar-rolling factories was alleviated by visits from a lector, someone who would read to the employees from newspapers, magazines, and classic novels. While Cheché wants to get rid of the lector and bring in machinery to advance the factory toward the 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial ideal, the employees insist on retaining their lector and, as they are the ones paying for him, decide to bring in a new one.

The dynamic of the relationships in the factory is altered irrevocably with the introduction of Juan, the lector. Handsome and debonair, Juan has just arrived from Cuba with a stack of books. He has the undivided attention of the workers—especially the women—when he starts to read from *Anna Karenina*, a novel all about ideal love, its joys, pleasures, and ultimately painful results, ending with the horrible death of Anna in Tostoy's book.

In the play, similar events begin to unfold. Juan is seduced by Conchita, who is seeking revenge on her husband for his own affair. Meanwhile, younger sister Marela is also in love with Juan while Cheché, who already hates lectors because his wife ran off with one, is further angered because Juan has set his sights on Marela. As for Santiago, the readings allow him to re-discover his ambitious side and bring him closer to his wife Ofelia who had withdrawn because of Santiago's growing addiction to gambling and drinking.

In the end, it seems that the lector has managed to affect all the characters in a positive way, including Conchita and Palomo, the couple who most closely resemble Anna-Karenin in *Anna Karenina*. Unlike Anna and Karenin, however, they are brought closer together through Juan's "sexual surrogacy". But there is one character who has not changed—and that's Cheché. While he seeks to make numerous changes and improvements when it comes to the cigar factory, he does not seem willing to change in a positive way personally. He takes revenge on Juan, a revenge he had failed to take when a previous lector stole his wife from him. Becoming insane, he shoots and kills Juan.

### ***Anna Karenina*: Brief Summary**

Leo Tolstoy's masterpiece, *Anna Karenina*, is the classic tale of love and adultery set against the backdrop of high society in late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Russia. Anna is an elite young woman married to a powerful government minister. She has the misfortune of falling in love with the elegant and sophisticated Count Vronsky. When she finds herself pregnant by Vronsky, she decides to leave her husband and son to live with her lover. Unable to obtain a divorce, Anna lives isolated from the society that she once loved so much and that once valued her. As Vronsky's love for her fades and other women gravitate around him, Anna suffers raging fits of jealousy, to the point of madness. Finally, unable to bear it any longer, Anna kills herself by throwing herself on the tracks beneath an oncoming train. Meanwhile, another love story unfolds much more

happily. Levin, a considerate young man, proposes marriage to Princess Catherine, affectionately known as Kitty. At first she rejects Levin's proposal because she believes that Vronsky, having flirted with her before he met Anna, intends to marry her. Devastated, Levin withdraws to his country estate. But, in time, the two realize they are deeply in love and Kitty accepts Levin's second proposal. They marry, have a son, and live happily in the country.

### **Anna Versus Anna: A Chronotopic Analysis**

Before the paper gets down to an actual analysis of the distortions and similarities in the time-space relationships between *Anna in the Tropics* and *Anna Karenina*, a brief attempt to explain the various ambiguities of what Bakhtin means by his chronotope is in order.

*Bakhtin's Chronotope* Several definitions of what Mikhail Bakhtin meant by "chronotope" have been offered throughout his various works. In his "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," Bakhtin commented: "We will give the name chronotope (literally, 'time space') to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature. This term [time-space] is employed in mathematics, and was introduced as part of Einstein's Theory of Relativity" (1981, p. 84).

In this sense, chronotope seems to be understood as a way to unwrap the narrative through the spatiotemporal exfoliation: "The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them [chronotopes] belongs the meaning that shapes narrative" (1981, p. 150). What this particular set of definitions seems to be alluding to is how certain combinations of space and time have been depicted in narrative forms throughout history and how those reflect the space-time combinations found in the world outside literature. At the same time, Bakhtin meant for his chronotope to be not just a narrative device but also a way to connect the world outside with the world within a narrative: "Out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as a source of representation) emerge the reflected and created chronotopes of the world represented in the work" (p. 253).

A third definition of the term places it as a category of narrative: the combination of the story and plot within a narrative and the distinction between how some event unfolds through a basic chronology and how that event is then transcribed and ordered in the telling of it (with the chronology often altered, compressed, even reversed to

achieve a desired effect). Bakhtin also understood the chronotope as a way of coming to grips with experience, for understanding the very nature of events and actions within specific contexts. The contexts themselves are determined by the time-space continuum within which they exist and out of which they are formed. While this notion is basically a Kantian one, Bakhtin differs in that, by performing chronotopic analysis, one reveals time-space to be “not as ‘transcendental’ but as forms of the most immediate reality” (1981, p. 85).

In other words, time-space is not simply a mathematical or scientific concept that is permanently fixed but rather it is relative to the specific society within which it is conceptualized. It is just as Einstein could not conceive of a clock telling time on its own without an outside perspective through which the clock is viewed and which changes the actual telling of the time:

Suppose, Einstein reasoned, that you wanted to know what time a train arrived in a train station. Easy enough: you see where the hand of your watch is at the time the engine pulls up alongside you. But what if you wanted to know when a train was pulling into a *distant* station? How do you know whether an event here is simultaneous with an event there? Einstein insisted that we need a simultaneity - fixing procedure, a definite system of exchanging signals between the stations that would take into account the time it took for the signal to get from one station to another. By pursuing this insight, Einstein discovered that two events that were simultaneous in one frame of reference would not be simultaneous in another. Moreover, since a length measurement involves determining the position of the front and back of an object *at the same time*, the relativity of simultaneity meant that *length* was relative as well (Galison & Burnett, 2003, para 2).

In fact, Bakhtin argues that the chronotope, while not exactly equivalent to Einsteinian time-space (“we are borrowing it for literary criticism almost as a metaphor [almost, but not entirely]” (p. 84)—by which, although Bakhtin himself never elaborated, he seems to be implying that any relationship between the “chronotope” and “Einsteinian time-space is not as strong as identity but definitely stronger than a metaphor, analogy or simile—does have some strong similarities, including:

1. The intrinsic interconnectedness and wholeness of time and space rather than the traditional separation of the concepts into two spheres.

2. Numerous senses and types of time-space with various possibilities that they govern different “realities”: “The discovery of a second time-space must change our whole orientation; we can no longer look at time-space ‘naively.’ But must entertain the possibility, or consider the necessity, of choosing among available ones or discovering new ones” (Emerson & Morson, 1990, p. 368).

3. Different chronotopes operate in different orders of the universe: a biological organism’s chronotope is not the same as that of a star system. At the lowest (or highest) level, every organism’s chronotope is different. This is especially relevant for the purposes of the article in that: “Different social activities are also defined by various kinds of fused time and space: the rhythms and spatial organization of the assembly line, agricultural labour, sexual intercourse, and parlour conversation differ markedly” (Emerson & Morson, 1990, p. 367).

4. Chronotopes cannot only be altered through time and varying contexts but they can clash with each other (social versus personal; individual versus individual; life versus artistic rendering).

5. Like Einstein’s space-time continuum, the chronotope is in the background rather than visible or represented within the universe. Instead, it serves as “the ground essential for the ... representability of events” (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250).

Different genres represent different possibilities for the exploration of space-time through the chronotope. It is important to be able to understand the limitations and possibilities, as well as the differences, for example, between the 19th century realistic novel and the 20th century existentialist novel. Or the same 19<sup>th</sup> century realistic novel and an early 20<sup>th</sup> century impressionistic play. Bakhtin argues that time always has historical and biographical implications while space cannot help but be social. In the chronotope, “time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movement of time, plot and history” (p. 84).

No matter which definition of time-space and the chronotope is employed, the analysis of a text through the chronotopic lens can help reveal previously unseen or unnoticed themes, as well as unveiling differences in the readings of a particular text. Of particular importance is the ability of the chronotope to answer questions such as the dependence of actions on where or when they occur; the interchangeability of actions from one time-space to another; the plausibility of one set of actions from one social, historical or cultural context being recreated in another; the possibility of the order of actions or incidents to be reversed or repeated; the amount of choice humans have in the creation of actions; and the type of creativity possible. It is also clear that Bakhtin felt that the chronotope could offer “a key interpretive model of the fundamental historicity of the novel as form” (Hitchcock, 1991, p. 110) while at the same time outlining the basic universality of the chronotope concept itself. According to Holquist (2002):

In the chronotopic study of a particular text, attention will always be focused on simultaneity: a corollary of dialogism's emphasis on the dynamism of texts is that no single time/space can be definitive for any one of them. Instead of the text's being a "prisonhouse of language," it is seen as a three-ring (at least) circus of discourse. The tension between story and plot will have a meaning at the time of a text's first production that will be different from the one accruing to it in later readings. In addition (and thus unlike reader reception theories), dialogism stresses the role played by temporal and spatial frames of reference inherent in formal properties of the text, not in the psychology of the reader. (p. 120)

According to Bakhtin, a dialogic work of fiction is in constant dialogue with other literary works and writers. Bakhtin extended the term to apply to all language, suggesting that whatever is said can only be said in response to what others have said and what others might say in the future (Bakhtin, 1981). In terms of defining what an individual consists of, Bakhtin's chronotope lens sees such an entity—that is, the individual—as a construct that conducts a dialogue between the social and the self.

Such a construct—this particular individual—can only develop within the context of a particular set of time-space boundaries, consisting of social, economic, historical, political and environmental parameters—and is in a constantly dynamic relationship with the world around it (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 85). As Murphy (1991) describes the situation:

The "other" in its various manifestations ... including parole, culture, place, class, race, and gender, participates in the formation of self. The individual occurs as chronotope within the "story" of human interaction with the physical world, but that narrative is only a historical fiction organized by means of a limited perspective through which beginnings, middles, ends, and motivations are substituted for the nonhuman centered, contiguously structured universal story that allots us only episodes — the self in and as part of the other. (p. 45)

In other words, the implication here is that a chronotopic analysis allows us to create a more general and universal artistic experience, while at the same time being grounded in its own time and space. In this way, there is a dialogic tension between chronotopes as transhistorical structures and chronotopes as being unique as to a particular time and space. Bakhtin explained this apparent paradox by using specific examples from various times and spaces. As he explains, the so-called "adventure chronotope" is a specific feature defining how ancient Greek romance worked. However, at the same

time, the “adventure chronotope” could very easily be generalized to include the novels of Sir Walter Scott (in terms of the fact that events are contingent within the plot) (1981, p. 95).

### **Applying the Chronotope to the Two Annas**

When seen through a chronotopic lens, there are numerous distortions, translocations, and displacements in the time-space context between *Anna Karenina* and *Anna in the Tropics*. Among the obvious ones are:

1. Time periods: *Anna Karenina* is set in the Russia of the late 19th century, with its publication in 1877; Nilo Cruz’s play is set in the southern US of 1929, published in 2003.
2. Characters: *Anna Karenina* plays out among the Russian aristocratic classes, whose concerns do not include having to toil for a living or to worry about where the money is going to come from for the next meal; in *Anna in the Tropics*, all the characters are lower working class people (or what we would call proletariats in the skilled labour substratum), including the owner of the cigar making factory. The concerns go from the grand in the novel to mundane and everyday in the play. At the same time, there is a definite connection between the two sets of characters that seems to transcend the time-space in which they exist. This connection is made clear in the human reaction and emotions experienced by both sets of characters—the loves, jealousies, hatreds, etc. that both groups seem to experience.
3. Setting: Most of the action in *Anna Karenina* takes place in the spectacular mansions of the upper classes, in ballrooms, grand dining halls, and majestic bedrooms; Cruz’s play consists for the most part of the floor of the cigar-making factory.

On a deeper level, an argument can be made for a double displacement: that of the original chronotope where Tolstoy captured, organized, re-arranged and finally transformed the space-time continuum of the Russia of that period into a well-ordered imitation within his novel; and that of Cruz importing Tolstoy’s simulation of Russian aristocratic games, love-making, jealousies, betrayals and dreams into the world of his play, itself consisting of a simulation of the lower class games, love-making, jealousies, betrayals and dreams of the first part of the 20th century. Thus, we have a simulation of a simulation superimposed on Cruz’s re-ordering of a specific set of



time-space parameters of Cuban American characters in the early part of the 20th century as envisioned by a playwright who is writing at the end of that century.

In effect, what we are getting is an imbedding and iteration of chronotopes, one within the other, starting with late 19th century historical Russia through Tolstoy's vision of that history through the eyes of a contemporary writer, and then working its way out to Cruz's non-contemporary reconstruction of specific early 20th century conditions all wrapped up within *Anna in the Tropics*. Here, the various chronotopes, the various "narrative knots," are played out, tied and untied in their own fashion and within their own context.

As such, they are called upon to reflect not only their own time-space context but also all the others within them. Like a set of mirrored boxes that create an infinite set of reflective surfaces. The effect is a reverberation and adding on, a creation of a layered set of chronotopes which can be considered on its own as one that goes beyond the boundaries of linear time-space, one that echoes down through the ages (between late 19th century Russia and early 20th century United States). As well, in keeping with the idea of chronotopes as specific and individual, this particular chronotope will also be viewed differently depending on the circumstances of the person doing the viewing.

A fairly simplistic example of this would be the effect that the reading of *Anna Karenina* would have on someone who is unfamiliar with the novel versus someone who does know it intimately. In the play, only certain sections of the novel are read out by the lector (an example of the compression of space-time, given that the original novel is more than 1000 pages in length). These sections are specific. When the lector reads them out, the characters in the play try to adapt to the themes and circumstances of the sections to their own lives.

For example, in the Part 3, Chapter 13 *Anna Karenina* reading, here Karenin, Anna's cuckolded husband, is trying to decide what would be the best way to deal with the fact that his wife has slept with another man and declared her love for him:

In his youth Anna Karenina's husband had been intrigued by the idea of duelling because he was physically a coward and was well aware of this fact. In his youth this terror had often forced him to think about duelling and imagining himself in a situation in which it was necessary to endanger his life. This old ingrained feeling now reasserted itself. Let's suppose someone teaches me how to do it, he went on thinking. They put us in position, I squeeze the trigger, he said to himself, and it turns

out I've killed him. He shook his head to drive away such silly thoughts. What would be the sense of killing a man in order to define one's own relations with a woman? (Cruz, 2003, p. 81)

In the original novel, Karenin is spared having to put this sort of reaction into play because his wife "solves" the problem for him. She throws herself under the wheels of a train, whether tormented by what she has done or because Vronsky no longer loves her. In Cruz's play, the translocation turns into death for the lector but not at the hands of the cuckolded husband. In fact, Palomo, the cuckolded husband, has been encouraging Conchita, and he himself has been carrying on an adulterous affair. Rather, it is Cheché who shoots the lector in a murderous rage—and without even the benefit of a duel. The killing is itself a further translocation: it was the previous lector who had run away with Cheché's wife, thus giving Cheché no reason to shoot Juan in particular but every reason to despise lectors in general.

This also brings up the interpretation of the novel readings along gender lines, bringing up one more chronotope. According to Mandelker (2003):

The men of the factory, in a surfeit of machismo, assert that they hear a different novel than the women do, and in fact, most of the passages quoted refer to Karenin's suffering as a result of his wife's infidelity and his reflections about challenging her lover to a duel ... How to respond to the infidelity of a wife is debated noisily by the husbands in the play with the consensus being to shoot to kill ... the argument among the women in the factory circles around the question of whether Anna is ecstatically happy or in agony. (pp. 114-115)

At the same time, Doreen Massey (1994) warns against the use of simple dichotomies such as a masculine/feminine split in how time-space connections are viewed. Instead, she argues for the exploration of the interconnections and links—and how these can lead to patterns of gender inequality and perceptions that become antagonistic rather than promoting dialogue. For Massey, space is socially constructed rather than fixed—and that can actually be a savior under some circumstances.

For instance, it can be argued that the fact the women in *Anna in the Tropics* occupy a space where they work within the same structure as the men allows them to arrive at solutions to the differences in how they "read" *Anna Karenina*. This, in turn, allows them to come to acceptable compromises in terms of the male-female relationships in the play. Mandelker (2003) sums it up thus:

At first, the novel seems to drive a violent wedge between the husbands and the wives who are listening to it, as one husband rages, “This book will be the end of us!” But by the play’s conclusion, the words of the book become the only means by which husbands and wives can communicate with each other. (p. 115)

One other chronotope that is translocated from novel to play is the tradition-modernization argument. In the novel, Tolstoy juxtaposes the fast-paced, dirty, immoral and generally unethical urban life of the Russian upper classes with that of the slow-paced and traditional country life, described as much simpler and along the lines of “ah, those were the days”. We get two different time-space continuums within what most would think only has room for one. Here, the relativity principle as adopted by Bakhtin from Einstein comes into play.

In the play, this is transformed into the battle between traditional ways of producing cigars and Cheché’s desire to bring in modern equipment so that everything is mechanized, everything is speeded up in order to catch up to the more modern factories coming into existence at the time.

Again, we are faced with a double chronotope here: the time and place positioned discussion within the factory as to the pros and cons of the switch to mechanization against the knowledge of the writer writing from the late 20th century with the full awareness that (a) mechanization has been deemed inevitable; and (b) any argument against it has been relegated to history. In other words, rather than an open-ended, filled-with-possibility time-space continuum, it is a case of the future looking back at a past that has already been completed, leaving only the taste of nostalgia and what might have been. In a sense, there is a type of falseness here that doesn’t appear in Tolstoy.

In a way, what we are witnessing in the play is the characters being evicted from their “home”—in terms described by McDowell (1999). In a pre-industrial society, the home was often co-existent with the place of work, as it is with the cigar making factory workers, who are basically in a pre-industrial, cottage industry state in this play. According to Bachelard (1969):

All really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home. [Here] memory and imagination remain associated, each working for their mutual deepening. In order of values, they both constitute a community of memory and image. Thus the house is not experienced from day-to-day only, on the thread of a narrative, or in the telling of

our own story. Through dreams the dwelling places in our lives copenstrate and retain the treasures of former days. (p. 2)

The inability of the modern condition to experience “home” is brought out most clearly in Harvey’s seminal *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry Into The Origins Of Cultural Change* (1990). In it, he speaks of the space-time compression, the way humans experience space and time, as being the most significant cultural change from the Middle Ages to the present. As travel became faster, for example, the way humans experienced global space was altered—and that in turn changed the way they viewed time as well.

At the same time, Harvey goes on to argue that travel was not the only thing to experience space-time compression. Perhaps even more important was what took place in the financial areas with markets able to encompass the globe literally within seconds. This in turn did away with the primacy of the production of real commodities for the markets, marking a “radical shift in the manner in which value gets represented as money” (p. 296). Using Baudrillard’s notion of simulacra, Harvey goes on to state:

The interweaving of simulacra in daily life brings together different worlds of commodities in the same space and time. But it does so in such a way as to conceal almost perfectly any trace of origin, of the labour processes that produced them, or of the social relations implicated in their production. The simulacra can in turn become the reality. (p. 300)

In Cruz’s play, time-space compression is something that has not yet occurred (at least not within the space and time of the cigar factory). Or it has occurred but it simply hasn’t caught up to the cottage industry cigar factories. In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy has a running theme that singles out the dangers of modernization. In fact, it can be argued that symbolically it is modernization that has allowed Anna to kill herself—under the wheels of a speeding train. While the cigar factory workers argue with Cheché that bringing in machines will cost them their jobs, Juan the lector takes it one step further:

No, I’m warning you. This fast mode of living with machines and moving cars affects cigar consumption. And do you want to know why, Senor Chester? Because people prefer a quick smoke, the kind you get from a cigarette. The truth is that machines, cars, are keeping us from taking walks and sitting on park benches, smoking a cigar slowly and calmly. The way they should be smoked. So you see,

Chester, you want modernity, and modernity is actually destroying our very industry. The very act of smoking a cigar. (Cruz, 2003, p. 58)

Harvey argues that not all is lost in the ironic turn of the postmodern world, that some sort of resistance is possible against what is becoming an all-pervasive negation:

It becomes possible to launch a counterattack of narrative against the image, of ethics against aesthetics, of a project of Becoming rather than Being, and to search for unity within difference, albeit in a context where the power of the image and of aesthetics, the problems of time-space compression, and the significance of geopolitics and otherness are clearly understood. A renewal of historical-geographical materialism can indeed promote adherence to a new version of the Enlightenment project. (p. 359)

One of the thinkers who has tried to achieve this is Henri Lefebvre. Through his “rhythmanalysis,” he has worked to unify everyday life elements in space and time within the concept of rhythm. He notes most importantly the difference between repetition and rhythm, for example. For Cruz, rhythm is the work the cigar makers do at their factory, connected to natural cycles; repetition is what modernity will bring in the form of machines, assembly lines and the inability to hear the lector over the racket of the machinery.

In the tragic ending to *Anna Karenina*, there are translocated portents of one chronotope being replaced by another. The same occurs in Cruz’s play, doubled by the reading of the novel, which itself spells the virtual end of this type of activity for the factory workers. The end of the lectors is the end of a way of life. From within that particular chronotope, it all seems like some sort of accident, something that could be reversed. But from outside (from another chronotope or another relative time-space perspective, in other words), the shooting of the lector is an inevitability. Or rather he is dead already: his spirit has fled leaving only his body to be executed by the bringers of modernity. He died the moment he was no longer able to fulfil his function as a lector.

Again, from the inside, it seems that the death of the lector does not affect the time-space relationships of the various factory workers (except for Cheché). In fact, we are led to believe that these relationships have all grown closer, become more mature and equal. They have achieved a new level, one where there is a definite attempt at understanding. However, when we pull back, we are faced with a space-time where destruction is on the horizon and the movement is towards social collapse.

It is doubtful whether any newly-learned personal relationships will be able to survive this collapse.

### **Self and Social Construct**

As was stated earlier, Bakhtin sees all individuals as made up of chronotopic relationships that basically rely on a social construct of the self. This construct can only come alive, survive and develop in that type of climate—social, economic, political, etc. If that climate shrivels (faces metaphoric global warming, as it were), the individual relationships cannot survive for the simple reason that they did not exist at that level in the first place. Those individual relationships are merely the projections of the social ones, “historical fictions.” It is not that they don’t exist per se but that they cannot be defined or captured fully without the social context within which they are allowed to flourish. Thus, in Tolstoy, Anna’s individual relationships with her husband and her lover result in catastrophic events that blossom out into the social level. The only way it seems to set those social relationships right again is for Anna to sacrifice herself.

Interestingly enough, the emphasis on personal relationships is one that seems to be augmented each time the true relationships on the social level are in mortal danger. Whether this emphasis is an attempt to hide from the true chronotope or actual lack of knowledge of what that chronotope might be does not really make much difference in the long run.

The workers in Cruz’s cigar making factory naturally take one lesson from the lector’s readings: whether they agree or disagree with each other along gender lines or generational lines, the lesson they take is one of personal relationships and the potential for personal salvation.

The social lesson that Tolstoy tries to impart in the novel is not really carried across: that particular chronotope has been effectively shattered through the impressive attacks made against it by the forces of capitalism and modernity. The idea of working together to create a more reasonable space-time continuum for everyone rather than the application of greed to scramble to the top of the heap while everyone else is trod underfoot is lost in translation. To be truthful, it is lost in translation in Tolstoy’s time as well. His view of the chronotope was not the view moving forward in that society.

For the characters in Cruz's play, they are given a double opportunity to come to grips with this particular chronotope: through the readings and through their own predicament as they slide inevitably towards modernity and mechanization. But they too fail to grasp it. Perhaps it is ungraspable for human beings. Perhaps the primary and basic instincts that draw us towards procreation, a sense of individuality (false though it may be), and a drive to protect "our property" from that of others are just too strong to make room for such a socially constructed chronotope. Perhaps, we do not want relativity to intrude in our lives just as we do not seem to desire social mores to contradict our personal feelings.

In a sense, even Bakhtin himself had trouble getting across this notion. In defining the chronotope, he says:

Thus the chronotope, functioning as the primary means for materializing time in space, emerges as a centre for concretising representation, as a force giving body to the entire novel. All the novel's abstract elements--philosophical and social generalizations, ideas, analyses of cause and effect--gravitate toward the chronotope and through it take on flesh and blood, permitting the imaging power of art to do its work. Such is the representational significance of the chronotope. (1981, p. 250)

Granted then that artistic meaning arises and is created in a chronotopic sense through the use of specific images that uncover the effects of spatial time, it is still the specific images that take a dig at those meanings. Thus, it can be argued that the choice of the images becomes of key importance in the final determination of exactly what chronotope will represent the centre of the specific work of art. For Bakhtin, the chronotope represents a type of matrix:

From a narrative and compositional point of view, this is the place where encounters occur [... where] the webs of intrigue are spun, denouements occur and finally--this is where dialogues happen, something that acquires extraordinary importance in the novel, revealing the character, "ideas" and "passions" of the heroes (p. 246).

The question then becomes: where does that leave the concept of social space as outlined by Massey and McDowell? Massey (1994) argues that inequalities are linked to systems of social relations and that even the characteristics of places (political systems and local cultures) can best be seen as the outcomes of social relations. She also argues that looking at places through nostalgia or other static processes misses

the almost constant dynamic re-arranging and re-organization of those spaces and thus the social relations that define them.

In Cruz's play, there is a re-location in terms of time and space in critical areas already indicated (including the translation of the Tolstoy time-space continuum to the Cruz time-space continuum). That should lead to a surfacing of the social relations that truly determine how the chronotope is going to be played out, and what those relationships are going to be between the individual and society, and among individuals themselves. But it seems that that social relation element has been subsumed under personal relations. There is a feeling of helplessness in terms of being able to do anything to change or alter the social chronotope point of view. Thus, the characters retreat into strictly personal relationships and pretend that these are the only ones that count.

Similarly, while the characters in the play do line up at certain points according to a gender agenda, that is not played through. Instead, the characters fall back into a simple variation of their previous state, the chronotope of personal relationships. As McDowell points out, nothing much has changed from the days of Victorian England when a well-established "set of binary relational categories—sexual/frigid, impure/pure, dirty/clean, animal/human, loose/moral—was used to distinguish between women" (2002, p. 818).

Interestingly enough, while Cruz's play does not directly address the social relations involved in the gender clash, it does present another element to explain why women have traditionally been relegated to home and the private sphere—and that's the fear of their sexuality. Davidoff & Hall (1987) note that:

Sexuality, regarded as one of the most irrational forces, was relegated to the inner core of marriage and sexual play became the ultimate antithesis of rational work. Women, especially when pregnant and thus incontrovertibly sexual beings, were associated with animalistic nature, incompatible with the serious world of work. (p. 26)

In both *Anna Karenina* and *Anna in the Tropics*, the sexuality of the women stands front and centre. It is one chronotope that always seems to be played up when it comes to creating the "narrative knots" that Bakhtin speaks of—even if those "narrative knots" are most often of a personal relationship nature. That is not to say that the chronotope is identical in both situations.



In *Anna Karenina*, the heroine's guilt, shame, embarrassment, etc., stands front and centre. She bears the burden of a society that is hypocritical and employs an obvious double standard. When males commit adultery, it is seen as something almost unavoidable, and also something trivial, something that must not stand in the way of the really important social constructs—politics, economy, production. When a woman such as Anna is caught cheating on her husband, it becomes of the utmost importance and a matter of honour. The husband must, if he is a true man, take his revenge. And he must take that revenge for the sake of societal peace and calm. Otherwise, all the property rights will be dismantled and the connective chain links holding males and females together will fall apart. Or at least that is the hellish vision that societal arbiters would like to get across.

In Cruz's play, while the reaction to the "fictional" adultery committed by *Anna Karenina* results in a similar dichotomy in the attitudes of the males and the females, the reaction to the adultery of the characters within the play is not of the same order. In fact, it seems that for most of the characters such actions can be forgiven and can in fact create stronger bonds between the original couples. The one character who cannot accept this is also the one character who wants modernity—and he strikes at a representative of tradition rather than the person who actually did him wrong.

As for the connection between the chronotopes in *Anna Karenina* and the translocated ones in *Anna in the Tropics*, Mandelker (2003) concludes:

The re-reading of *Anna Karenina* in *Anna in the Tropics* is only slightly relevant to Tolstoy's novel, yet the drama succeeds in playing out the processes of interpretation and reading in a manner that is complex and intriguing, even if the quotations from the novel are contextually distorted to suit the playwright's needs. The postmodern technique of shaking loose a cultural icon from its standard setting and re-examining it according to a different cultural way of reading and understanding works well for Cruz and for viewers of *Anna in the Tropics*. (p. 116)

#### Conclusions

The use of Bakhtin's chronotope concepts as a lens for a critical examination of the connections, dislocations, and displacements in the personal and societal relationships within and between the two Annas has proved to be a fertile one. For one thing, it has allowed the paper to make some non-trivial observations on the nature of human relationships and their consistency through different time-space environments. This is particularly true of personal relationships, pointing out how

humans feel the essentiality of such relationships and such emotions no matter how relative the space-time continuum may prove to be. The key point here, however, is that the chronotopic analysis of such relationships actually points out their non-essentiality when it comes to the “bigger picture,” the societal picture.

It has also allowed for the separation of certain elements of those relationships so that the differences can be made clear and transparent—as transparent as human relationships can ever become. In this, Bakhtin’s chronotope lens has shown that the use of art to “unveil” these relationships is valid and also that “transformations in the chronotope, or in people’s basic conceptions of time and space, are to be explained by historic transformations in their mode of life” (Dentith, 1995, p. 53).

As well, the use of Bakhtin’s chronotopic analysis proved successful in revealing the other half of the relationship equation, that is, as “an optic for reading texts as x-rays of the forces at work in the culture system from which they spring” (1981, pp. 425-426). At least, this is true on one level—that of the objective outsider whose point of view is not the same as that of the characters within the works themselves. In other words, while the reader may come to realize the societal pressures weighing down on the characters, the characters themselves seem mostly oblivious to what is happening. They are simply concerned with getting on with their own lives. This dichotomy looms especially large in Cruz’s play and somewhat contradicts Bakhtin. Bakhtin argued that chronotopes within literary texts are not separate from the cultural environments from which they have arisen. But it may well turn out that the “reflected and created chronotopes ... represented in the work” (p. 253) may not be sufficient to unearth the “actual chronotopes of our world” (p. 253).

In any case, that seems to be the situation to a lesser or greater extent with both *Anna Karenina* and *Anna in the Tropics*. The chronotope representing personal human relationships has overpowered that representing broader societal concerns and relations. According to Emerson & Morson (1990), it comes down to a matter of choice:

At any given time, literature offers a multiplicity of chronotopes. Taken as a whole, literature is heterochronous. A great number of literary genres are available for conceptualizing the “image of a person,” the processes of history, and the dynamics of society. Familiarity with a variety of genres therefore offers a rich store of choices for understanding particular aspects of experience. In any given instance, some chronotopes may be more adequate than others. (p. 371)

Bakhtin was himself aware of this. He argued that some types of chronotopes were better than others at “assimilating real historical time and space” and “actual historical persons in such a time and space” (1981, p. 84). Under these terms and conditions, it would seem that the Anna Karenina chronotope did a better job of representing the social conditions of its time than Cruz’s play did of his, despite the importing of portions of the novel into the play. The personal relationships in Tolstoy, while very powerful, end up being subsumed to the societal conditions of the time—with the historical time and space of the characters being front and centre.

On the other hand, it might well be that Cruz, writing at the end of the 20th century about events at the beginning of the 20th century, did not have the luxury of representational art. The postmodern writer has come to understand that a representation of “real historical time and space” is not possible. A fragmentation is all there is. And that fragmentation means that societal time-space relationships are no longer governed by set in stone rules under which everyone is forced to live. The notion of cause and effect is no longer primary in a space-time where relativity can even dictate that some events can be visualized even before they actually take place.

In conclusion, the article has shown that using Bakhtin’s chronotopic analysis to examine the personal relationships and societal tensions is an effective method of literary scholarship. The analysis of the two works has shown that: (a) both place most emphasis on the personal relationships among the characters; (b) the transposition of the personal and societal relationships from Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* to Cruz’s *Anna in the Tropics* was only successful on the personal level; and (c) Tolstoy’s examination of societal influences was more effective than Cruz’s. A possible explanation for these differences is that the views of the time-space continuum in Tolstoy’s time, and his interpretation of that continuum, do not suffer from the ambiguity faced by Cruz. As well, the attempt to “transpose” one chronotope (the *Anna Karenina* readings) into another also creates more ambiguity—in terms of a self-referential mode that Tolstoy never considered. Thus, in a sense, Tolstoy’s chronotope is much more simple than Cruz’s—and Cruz’s “failure” to capture as successfully to societal elements of his chronotope can be put down to the impossibility of doing so in a post-modern world.

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