

Chronotopic Juxtaposition in “Añejo cinco siglos”

Dr. Ericka H. Parra

Associate Professor

Valdosta State University

ehparra@valdosta.edu

ABSTRACT

*Time and space interconnect in the short story “Añejo cinco siglos” from the collection *Apenas murmullos* (2004). María Elena Llana (1936), the Cuban journalist and writer, using a chronotopic juxtaposition brings together two female characters from different epochs. One is the Galician Doña Isabel de Bobadilla (from the past time) and the other is the Mulata Chabela (from the present time). Both female characters have a dialogue that interconnects two different times and space. They create geographical, political and personal intersections, specifically because their men have left La Habana under different circumstances but with the same goal to settle in Florida. Don Hernando de Soto continues the Spanish Expedition to America leaving Isabel heartbroken while Lazarito has left in a balsa promising Chabela that he would come back. Thus, the purpose of this essay is to demonstrate that the everyday personal interconnections are chronotopes to reconfigure the conditions of crossing geographical and historical frontiers. Nonetheless, in these personal circumstances both women reconfigure narratives about political power and erotic.*

Key words: *balseros, chronotope, women, erotics.*

Yuxtaposición cronotópica en “Añejo cinco siglos”

RESUMEN

*El tiempo y el espacio se interconectan en el cuento “Añejo cinco siglos” de la colección *Apenas murmullos* (2004). María Elena Llana (1936), la periodista y escritora cubana, utiliza una yuxtaposición a través del crono. La escritora trae al presente dos personajes femeninos de diferentes épocas. Una es la gallega Doña Isabel de Bobadilla (del tiempo pasado) y otra es la mulata Chabela (del tiempo presente). Ambos personajes femeninos tienen un diálogo que interconecta dos tiempos y espacios diferentes. Ellas crean intersecciones geográficas, políticas y personales, específicamente porque sus hombres han dejado la Habana bajo diferentes circunstancias pero con el mismo objetivo de establecerse en Florida. Don Hernando de Soto continúa la expedición española hacia tierra firme dejando a Isabel con el corazón roto mientras Lazarito ha salido en una balsa prometiéndole a Chabela que regresaría. Así, el propósito de este ensayo es demostrar que las diarias interconexiones personales son cronotopos que reconfiguran las condiciones ilegales de cruzar las fronteras geográficas e históricas. No obstante, en estas circunstancias personales ambas mujeres reconfiguran las narrativas del poder político y erótico.*

Palabras clave: *balseros, cronotopo, mujeres, erótica.*

Introduction

Time and space interconnect in the short story “Añejo cinco siglos” from the collection *Apenas murmullos* (2004). María Elena Llana¹ (1936), the Cuban journalist and writer, using a chronotopic juxtaposition brings together two female characters from different times. In Llana’s short story, a character travels to the past to connect with a historical character from the past. This literary strategy is a chronotope, “literally time and space.” Bakhtin defines it as an: “intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature” (2002, p. 84). In this short story, the encounter between Isabel de Bobadilla, from the XVI century, and Chabela la Ronca, from the present, becomes a chronotope when these women interconnect through their personal worries because their men, Hernando de Soto and Lazarito, are leaving the Island. This essay discusses how both women reconfigure narratives and expand the discussion on women’s political power and erotic.

¹ María Elena Llana has published among other works *La reja* (1965) [The Gate]; *Casas de Vedado* (1983) [Houses of Vedado] and *Castillo de naipes* (1999) [Castle of Cards]. As a journalist she was collaborating with the newspapers *Revolución*, *La Calle*, and *La Tarde* issues. She did interviews for *Pueblo y Cultura*, *Cuba*, and news for *Radio Reloj* and CMQ-TV. She was member of the Latino News Press Agency. She also has collaborations in Magazines *Granma*, and *P’alante*. Today, she works as writer for the Cuban Institute of Broadcasting.

The title of this particular short story “Añejo cinco siglos” in Llana’s collection is a metaphor to underline the theme of the Spanish expansionism in the Americas. Except – this time – the encounter of two cultures happens between the governess of Cuba Isabel de Bobadilla, and a time traveler to the past Chabela la Ronca. The conversation takes place in a dark ambiance to represent the past. The protagonist, Chabela, knows it is a power cut since the contemporary city suddenly is obscure due to the crisis of energy. She soon finds herself in a city from the past that does not have public light and the streets are small and unpaved.

The beginning of the story is Lazarito’s departure to Florida in a *balsa*, creating a specific socio-historical context. Lazarito’s travel is unexpected: and, Chabela wants to go with him but he pushes her back and leaves her all confused. The narrator sets this situation as an everyday event. According to the historians Carlos and Manuel Márquez Starling the phenomenon of *balseros* is caused since 1963. Lyndon Johnson and Fidel Castro declare in common agreement that Cubans could leave the country in the *Vuelos de la Libertad*. At that moment, more than half million Cubans leave from Varadero to Miami (1975, p. 296). Later, Richard Nixon ceases this agreement when in 1974 the Organization of American States proposes to lift the *embargo*. As result of these discussions, one year later OAS declares that only those Latin American countries that are

willing to do negotiations with Cuba may renew diplomatic and economic relations (Márquez Starling, 1975, p. 302). United States, Paraguay, and Chile decide to close their boundaries to Cuba. During the eighties the exodus of Mariel provokes the Diaspora of writers, for example, Reinaldo Arenas y Carlos Victoria (Fornet, 2002, p. 20) among other writers. Today, the *balseros* mass departure continues.

María Elena Llana interconnects the *balseros* exodus with the expeditions from the XVI century. In her fictional narrative, she overlaps the *balseros* theme with the history of the Spanish explorers to recount the desire of Lazarito and Hernando De Soto to explore new lands, ironically, inspired in the marvelous tales (2004, p. 130). These causes are similar in the sense that for both men migration has to do with “marvelous tales” told about other places. Both men do believe the stories of greatness from those who have taken a chance to migrate. While Lazarito accepts those stories as truth, Chabela makes clear that Lazarito’s living situation was not bad. Lazarito did not have financial problems because he was able to make ends meet. Indeed, this statement is open to the reader whether Lazarito has been attracted or not by the ideal of freedom in comparison to Hernando de Soto whose desire was to explore new lands.

In the literary chronotope, in the historical time and space, Cuba has been connected geopolitically and historically

with Florida. Malcom Waters in his text *Globalization* (1995) points out that: “the globalization we are currently experiencing began in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries” known as “the early modern” time (p. 7). In the context of this discussion, the Cuban writer recovers the story of a governess in the sixteenth century and creates a space where a few women were as well protagonists in the history of discovery, conquest and colonization.

Frederick Nunn in *Collision with History* discusses that in fiction: “Redefinition of the past in such way exceeds the boundaries of revisionism, surely. If the history of discovery and conquest can be revised in a common sense way, as it is in fictional history, then other cannot redefine portions of the Latin American past for baser purposes?” (2001, p. 39). In other words, rethinking history is one way to move on beyond myths. Literature offers the space to rethink history in a fictional way. It opens a way to open to a dialogue. For example, based on the image of *Giraldilla*, and revisit the origin of her myth the writer takes the reader to travel to the past and, to review the participation of Isabel de Bobadilla who was the first governess in Cuba. Thus, the fantasy in the short story “Añejo cinco siglos” becomes a strategy to allow women’s visibility in politics and erotic.

Traveling to the past

Can travelers from the present go beyond the spatial and time boundaries? Chabela

la Ronca an ordinary woman does travel to the past in an unconscious stage. She is a drunken protagonist who makes her experience a fantasy. Tzevan Todorov, in his work “Definition of Fantastic” adds that the fantastic requires “unexpected coincidences” (1973, p. 28). José Alvarez in *Contemporary Cuban Short Story* take account of other connotations, such as: “mystery,” “the unexplained,” and “the inadmissible,” as they are introduced into “real life,” in the “real world,” or yet in the “inalterable daily legality” (2002, p. 60). For instance, Todorov argues that the fantastic text, “must oblige the reader to consider the world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural and supernatural explanation of the events described” (1973, p. 33). Therefore, the fantastic elements must go beyond reality to cause doubt among readers, and to discern about the events that occurred in the story. To this discussion, Llana denotes this technique as a syllogism, allowing readers to make their own conclusions. The readers’ role becomes a compromise with revisiting various topics.

Catherine Davis adds that Llana’s technique brings fantasy, dreams, and uncanny themes to her narratives. The themes in the stories include also magical realism, science fiction, and Revolution (1997, p. 131). Davis adds that Llana’s narrative incorporates a postmodernist structure, for example, fragmentation, intertextuality, and doubling (1997, p. 132). Using fantastic themes, the contemporary representations of María Elena Llana and

women writers, i.e., Ana María Simón, Rosa Illeana Boudet, Omega Aguero, Olga Fernández, and Mirta Yáñez have unveiled themes from the everyday life of women in Cuba. Although, these writers do not focus on the national canon of realism and revolution, their production has a place in fantastic literature (Fornet, 2002, p. 27). The plots in Llana’s short stories underline women’s behaviors. For example, the themes of the short stories collection *Apenas murmullos* are about women who struggle with the patriarchal image of women as a social construct. They move back and forward from the real thing to the fantastic world; and from the present time to the past one. For example, in the short story “Añejo cinco siglos” the character Chabela is a drunken woman. The writer creates an ambiance that allows Chabela to rethink her personal life and continue silently moving forward after her struggle. Chabela, an ordinary Mulatto woman, and, Isabel de Bobadilla, in their own context, move from invisibility to visibility within their own concrete time in history.

Llana’s representation of these women introduces the technique of chronotopic juxtaposition to allow the characters to travel back and forward from the past to the present and vice-versa. As other writers of the Latin American Literary *Boom*, Llana incorporates literary techniques used by the Latin American Literary *Boom* writers: “Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986), Julio Cortázar, Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes (n1928), Gabriel García

Márquez, and Mario Vargas Llosa (b. 1936)" (Alvarez, 2002, p. 27). Actually, Llana combines the fantastic fiction techniques and the personal life stories of her women characters to insert the text in the fantastic narratives taking into account not only a social but a political theme.²

In the short story "Añejo cinco siglos", Chabela connects to the past due to the power cut – a problem in the contemporary Cuba. She is crying when she finds herself on the corner of Consulado Street, looking Lazarito's silhouette each time far away. Lazarito is leaving his country in a *balsa* which is overcrowded not leaving space for her. Chabela had supplicated him not to go, but he does not listen to her. She is resentful and goes back to her room to look for a bottle of rum. The small room where Chabela and Lazarito used to live becomes the space that now feels to her as if she were in prison. The small space reminds her of a thumb. The space asphyxiates her; and, that is why she decides to go out (2004, p. 128).

Chabela discovers she had five dollars that Lazarito had placed in her breast. Her emotions are a combination of pain and tenderness. She tries to escape the depression and buys a real bottle of rum that has the stamp of *Giraldilla*. The narrator describes the image as: "esa mujercita recortada que parece desafiar al viento" (2004, p. 129) [as a little woman in a paper

that seems to defeat the wind]. Llana recurs to the myth of *Giraldilla*. Olympia González and Mario Martí agree that in the Cuban popular culture, the image of *Giraldilla* represents the eternal waiting and the fidelity of Isabel de Bobadilla to Hernando de Soto. This image stands in the Castillo de la Real Fuerza (1558) in Cuba. This statue symbolizes any woman waiting for the return of her husband, to guide him to the Island. Chabela, however, is now hoping to leave the country when Lazarito lands in Florida and reclaims her. Thus, the drunken stage of Chabela focuses on the image of *Giraldilla* in the bottle of rum.

Llana's representation of the encounter between these two women happens in an open space, such as a street. Chabela unconsciousness transports her to a darker place where she feels lost. She has the sensation that it is the first time she sees the place but she also feels she has been there in the past. She runs from one side to the other trying to find out where she is at. Isabel, the *Giraldilla*, approaches her and asks if everything is fine. The Spanish accent of the governess upsets Chabela; therefore, she is uncomfortable to talk to a Gallegan tourist (in Llana, 2004, p. 129). Representing this attitude, the writer takes a position that reflects the criticism of Cubans to the economic reforms. At that moment, Gonzalez Edward confirms that during the nineties the government of Cuba focuses on "foreign investment and tourism" than internal problems (2004, p. 10). After the collapse

of the Soviet Union, and the *embargo* policies; the negation of Cubans to travel in the country and outside the country continues.

According to Bakhtin, encounters occur "on the road", in salons or parlors; places where a dialogues could happen (2002, p. 246). Indeed, the dialogue between Chabela and Isabel is a space where both women listen to each other. Chabela opens up to dialogue and reveals her pain caused due to her husband's departure. At the same time, the dialogue intertwines Chabela's voice with the narrator's and Isabel's voices as shown in the following quote:

¡Lo único que le faltaba, una turista gallega! ¿Qué va a pasarme? ¡Ná!, le responde agresiva, pero la mujer parece conmovida por su gimoteo. Vamos, vamos, que no será para tanto. ¿Qué no y se fue pal norte? (2004, p. 130)

[The only think I needed! What is going to happen to me? N'thing, she responds aggressive, but the woman seems to be moved because her moaning. Come on, come on, it is not a big deal. No? and he left to the North? (2004, p. 130) (My translation)].

The boundaries established in the dialogue format are de-emphasized. The grammatical subjects from the two women reproduce a dialogue in which the narrator also participates. The suffering that causes the departure of their men

² Using a similar technique appears the collection *Cuentos fantásticos cubanos* by Rogelio Llopis (1979).

allows the reader to reconstruct the meaning of the subtext in the conversation. This dialogical space allows interaction among different voices, creating different meanings from various points of view.

The first connection they make is to talk about the departure of their men to the North. In Llana's short story, Hernando de Soto's expedition leaves for Florida the following morning and Isabel expresses it: "¡El norte los deslumbra! Mañana, a primas horas, marcha mi esposo" (2004, p. 130). [The North attracts them! Tomorrow, first time in the morning, my husband will be leaving.] Chabela's fantasy of having a conversation with a woman, who really understands her feelings about Lazarito's departure, transports her to break her silence about reality. She discusses the importance of having a passport to cross the geographic borders. Isabel, in this case, has more privileges because she has the freedom to go back and forth to Cuba at any time. Even she has the privilege to travel from the past to the present. This official document symbolizes the legal migration that overlaps present with past. Chabela becomes upset trying to make Isabel understand that Cubans do not have the same civil liberties. The subtext is also to underline Isabel has not the same rights in her own society where they do not accept her as governess. Chabela keeps talking to make herself understand that Cubans definitely do not have the same legal rights and she cries: "¡No es lo mismo, coño! Ustedes van y vienen sin problemas, en aviones, pero..." (in Llana, 2004, p. 130)

[It is not the same, fucking thing. You go back and forth without problems, in planes, but...]. She does not finish her phrase to continue drinking a sip of rum. After a silence, she tells Isabel that her unique desire in reality is that Lazarito lands safe. The unconcluded phrase symbolizes the asymmetrical dialogues going on between past and present.

The narrator in the short story describes how the woman from the present continues her story without understanding why a Gallegan had to go to the Island. Finally, after she claims in a frustrated tone that Cubans are the ones who cannot go anywhere, she doesn't understand why Isabel's husband needs to go to Havana and why Hernando de Soto has to continue from there to Miami (in Llana, 2004, p. 132). The technique of repetition used by the traveler becomes a narrative strategy to denounce a problem that avoids individuals to move beyond the geographical boundaries because they feel trapped in a space - similar to a small room. Chabela's "unexplained" and "inadmissible encounter with Isabel is connected with the pain of a woman who has traveled to the past. The two women have a conversation to unfold events from the present to the past and talk about the trans-historical representations of women.

The political un/power of the governess Isabel de Bobadilla

One of the unknown representations of women in history is the role of Isabel de

Bobadilla as governess. History has not given her a space in the colonial texts. For example, the historians Márquez Sterling in *Historia de la Isla de Cuba* (1975) mention that she was a governess because Hernando de Soto did not want to stay in Cuba. To this regard, Luisa Campuzano revisits the history told in the *Chronics of the Conquest and Colonization* and finds out that women were part of the expansionist project to the Americas. According to her research, women in history were classified on three categories: those who were the wives, the family members and the ones who transgressed the men's images. In the colonial documents, they are not protagonists, and in some cases their names are invisible. Their roles as active contributors to the Expeditions are not mentioned. Among them one finds Inés Suárez, Catalina Suárez, María de Cuéllar, wives of Valdivia, Hernán Cortés, and Diego de Velázquez; and those women who came as servants (2004, p. 175).

In comparison, the research by Juan Francisco Maura agrees that Spanish chronicists from the Conquest do not mention any women as protagonists in history (2005, p. 25). Maura continues that social status, in most cases, is a privilege the law gives to women to keep the same status as men, i.e. Isabel de Bobadilla (1505?- 1546) is named to replace Hernando de Soto. She is described as a woman of kindness and discretion, known as well as a religious woman. In other words, her ability as politician is not documented. However,

in a recent study Juan F. Maura's article "En busca de la verdad" (1993) demonstrates that in the colonial texts written by Bartolomé de las Casas and El Inca Garcilazo de la Vega other women came with the Spanish and became in power; for instance, Beatriz de la Cueva (1498–1541) who was the first governess of the New World in Guatemala.

However, Llana using a chronotope brings to the present the image of the governess Isabel de Bobadilla. Frederick M. Nunn in his work *Collision with History* demonstrates that fiction and history have a collision in the *Boom* literary movement. Nunn defines the *Boom* more "as the collective effort of an intellectual generation responsive to historical and contemporary stimuli" (2001, p. 6). In the sixties and seventies, according to Nunn, writers apply the techniques of the *Boom* to promote: "awareness of the hemispheric as well as worldwide economic and ideological issues" (2001, p. 7). Amir Valle, in his "Prologue" to his book: *El ojo de la noche* (1999), argues that María Elena Llana narrates from a historical optic, and not to show that it is a woman who narrates the story. In other words, characters narrate the essence of history. However, Llana in "Añejo cinco siglos" overlaps an objective and subjective point of view where women's experiences are present to underline women's political participation and presence. Llana takes to her short stories awareness on how women need to reconfigure the narrative of the first encounter between two different cultures.

Thus, even so Isabel de Bobadilla is better known because she married Hernando de Soto in 1537. De Soto is named governor of Santiago de Cuba and *Adelantado de Florida*; as a result, he leaves Cuba in the expedition to Florida from 1539 to 1543. In this period of time, she becomes the only female governor of Cuba; and, Juan de Rojas is named her lieutenant in Havana. In the short story, Isabel tells Chabela that she is the governess. Although Chabela is drunk and confused, she suspects something is not accurate in the governess's story. It seems ironic that Hernando de Soto has given her the power to lead Cuba. María Elena Llana uses the internal monologue technique in the character of Chabela who compares Hernando and Lazarito. In their own ways, these men have convinced both women to stay in the Island: they are not different from each other. Chabela finds out that all men are the same. Ironically, Soto has promised Isabel to be governess, while Lazarito has left her only five dollars.

Isabel inquires Chabela to talk about herself while Chabela questions the veracity of Isabel's role as first governess of Cuba, since she does not believe Isabel's political role in Cuba. The Spaniard's ignorance about current events intrigues the traveler. Chabela tries to understand why Isabel does not know what is going on in the latest events in Cuba. Nevertheless, Isabel has the same attitude of surprise when she realizes that Chabela talks about rare things.

In this sense, Agustín Marjorie uses the metaphor of imagination as a "complementary form" to have the freedom to speak all those things that were not permitted (1986, p. 15). In this case, Chabela avoids talking about politics and redirects the conversation to the importance of having a passport (in Llana, 2004, p. 134). She insists over and over on how important it is to have a legal document. The paradox is that she keeps away from talking about politics underling the idea of a legal symbol that creates nation's borders.

Isabel continues her story about Hernando de Soto's expeditions in Peru and in Nicaragua. Based on the historian's research Wright, Hernando de Soto receives a sum "that the king Atahualpa gave to him: Atahualpa was fond of de Soto because he was the first Spaniard he met and talked with" (1970, p. 165). In contrast, the explorer invests in his expedition to follow the enterprise of Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca to Florida. The character Isabel in Llana's short story states: "El misterio de Cabeza de Vaca en torno a lo visto en la Florida decidió su suerte" (2004, p.130) [The mystery of Cabeza de Vaca and what he saw in Florida decided his destiny]. In this case, she is referring to Hernando de Soto. Chabela interrupts Isabel's thoughts to laugh at the name Cabeza de Vaca. Ironically, she even mentions that Cabeza de Vaca must be involved in the illegal selling of meat. Isabel continues her story and she acknowledges that Hernando de

Soto does not like Cuba because he has other interests. At this point, her version is in accord with the historians Márquez Sterling. Isabel, in the short story, stresses: coming to Cuba was only an excuse to continue his real enterprise to Florida.

The fact that Hernando de Soto leaves Cuba is the connection to Lazarito's story too. This experience allows Chabela to listen to Isabel saying she is taking his place: "yo quedo en su lugar, como Gobernadora de la Isla" (In Llana, 2004, p. 134). Chabela's answer is a sarcastic smile. She realizes, however, she needs to support her, and tells Isabel: "- tú gobierna todo lo que puedas y un día de estos él se aparece y borrón y cuenta nueva, ¿verdá?" (in Llana, 2004, p. 134). Chabela understands Isabel needs to govern since one day Hernando de Soto would come back. On the contrary, she believes Lazarito will look for her and she will leave Cuba.

Women's presence in history and in power has been censored since there is nothing written to prove it. The historian Wright argues that Isabel does not die of a broken heart after Hernando de Soto's death: "unpoetic documents prove that she lived for many years longer to prosecute in Spain certain curious law suits against Hernán Ponce with whom Soto had a life hold "universal" partnership in all things" (1970, p. 172). In the time she governs, there are revolts and disagreement among Cubans for being the base of operations in Florida. Isabel

keeps sending men and provisions to support the enterprise. During that time, Cubans reclaim a governor to the Crown. When de Soto's death is confirmed in 1543, Juanes de Avila is appointed to be governor of Cuba and Isabel de Bobadilla disappears from history to become an icon of hope represented in the *Giraldilla*.

In the short story, Soto approves the power and knowledge of Isabel and names Isabel as governess (in Llana, 2004, p. 137). Nevertheless, Isabel de Bobadilla holds power; she still represents the Spanish political power and the expansionism of colonial settlements. Isabel is not allowed to empower herself. Hellen Scott in *Caribbean Women Writers Globalization* illustrates the point when she defines the ideology of that moment, thus: "The eurocentrism is endemic to criticism that artificially homogenizes competing ideologies and cultures while accepting that the world could be broken down into 'West' and 'East,' although the so-called 'western tradition' is itself a historically recent construct, one that is only sustainable by ruthlessly making nonwestern roots of classical thought and obscuring the cultural cross-pollination that is central to human history" (2006, p. 11).

Paradoxically, Isabel de Bobadilla in Llana's short story does not only represent her role in history, but inquires Chabela to talk about current issues in contemporary Cuba. Alvarez argues that using the juxtaposition technique

of women experiences allow readers: "to question the consciousness of the characters" (2002, p. 26). In general, even though these protagonists have doubts about each other, they listen to each one's story, moving beyond the conflict of race and class. Hence, the chronotope becomes a bridge in which they create the dissolution of a colonial way of thinking.

Moving toward a narrative of the erotic

The second collision between time and space is when the lights of El Morro are on. Chabela gets up and remembers Lazarito has left her. She wonders where she is while Isabel vanishes to her eyes. She returns to her present time. Now in this twofold story Isabel narrates her perspective of the stories told by men. The broken bottle with the image of *Giraldilla* has produced a strident sound that could be heard five centuries back, making references to the time Spanish explorers came to America. The fact that Chabela throws the bottle to the floor is a metaphor that represents the city of La Habana breaking itself in small pieces of crystals. However, even though the sound represents the rupture of the city that holds resistance to opening frontiers, the sound is the bridge between past and present. The fracture of the city shows that the past is still there. Spanish tourists have more privileges than Cubans. The narrator knows it and there is nothing to do but to use fantasy to talk about it. This topic echoes

the Cuban history period, known as the “Special Period in Times of Peace”. Reiss discusses that: “The official signifying of the Nation, therefore, deems the national Cuban/Revolutionary subject as the unique in the defense of the Revolution, at the same time calling for the performance of the “special,” through massive rallies and revolutionary *caballerosidad* in welcoming foreign tourists” (2008, p. 90). In this case, the paradox that Isabel represents is the freedom to travel anytime.

When Isabel comes back to her present—the past time, she takes the lead on making decisions. She is the one to order building *Giraldilla* as a way to direct or guide the naves traveling back to the island. She moves from talking about politics to narrate about erotic. At that moment of reflection, Isabel has come back to her palace, walking alone at night through the unpaved and small street of the 1539 city. Meanwhile, de Soto wakes up and goes to his mansion made of wood and shingles in the coast of Cuba.

Isabel recommends Soto that when he lands in Florida if he could help people navigating in high sea. She is the one who predicts the existence of a new world:

- Si en la Florida hallaréis algo más que esto, digamos un mundo ya nacido, tal vez dentro de un año o dos me podrías reclamar – y agrega entre ilusionada y desafiante: También remozaría la color con las aguas de la eterna juventud. (2004, p. 136)

- [When in Florida if you could find more than this, let’s say a new world already borne, maybe you could reclaim me in one or two years – and she adds between delusional and defeated: I would also revitalize my color with the spring of the eternal youth.]

Isabel inquires Soto with the problems that transcend the historic time. Facts from the XVI Century interconnect with the future, which becomes the present time of Chabela. Events overlap, and Isabel asks Hernando to reclaim her after one or two years, after his arrival to Florida; hence, she can as well enjoy the benefits of being eternally young. For Chabela, it will mean to reclaim her from the United States, after Lazarito could obtain his legal residency.

Hernando gets confused since Isabel was the one complaining about how Cuba was, and on how disappointed she was. Isabel appropriates the discourse of using Cuba as a base to continue the expeditions to other lands. She also makes a prediction that echoes five centuries to reach the present of Chabela. Isabel tells Hernando that nobody has remained on the Island because some had gone to Mexico or to other lands. Paradoxically, she points out that gold is the reason why Soto abandons the Island. In fact, historians, i.e. Nunn, argue that: “Columbus soon knew there was no gold in the Caribbean, no spices to trade with Oriental potentates and

their merchants, certainly not in Cuba, the largest of all the Indies” (2001, p. 22). Isabel’s point, then, is not a new one; however, she appropriates the discourse of the marvelous tales.

Isabel questions about the purposes of coming to these new worlds. The plural worlds create confusion in Soto who seems surprised at her questions. In other words, women were not allowed to speak their mind. Nevertheless, the explorer makes an exception that night; chooses to listen to her, and continues thinking that, a woman never has talked to him like that: “Nunca una mujer ha osado hablarle así” (in Llana, 2004, p. 137). But, the narrator underlines that Hernando de Soto could not take it her seriously, specially before his departure.

The governess seduces him after she finishes predicting the results of the expedition. Isabel’s room becomes a space of erotic in contrast to Chabela’s room that became her thumb. In this case, erotic means the affective and aesthetic manifestations. It is the liberation of the libido in which beauty, harmony, balance and passion are integrated (Hierro, p. 317). However, the governess seduces Soto for the first time when she offers him her breasts. It is after two years of marriage that Isabel contemplates her husband’s naked body. That night, she becomes the explorer of each part of his body. She makes allusions to each part of his body and compares the erection with the mast of the ship. The narrator des-

cribes the possession she makes of him. Isabel provokes pleasure that represents with active verbs and takes the subject position in the erotic moment until she has an orgasm. The sword, flags, battles, fights, and attacks become symbols to reconfigure the possession of bodies in a sexual act. Isabel appropriates the language that has symbolized the phallogentric power for the explorer. This sexual act becomes mutual pleasure in which both are defeaters and defeated. The narrator points out that the female governor had moved from her submission to an active role. Isabel's room is the space where the couple shares their narrative of erotic before his departure. Consequently, Isabel de Bobadilla is allowed to become visible herself within the power of erotic in her own room.

Creating connections

The general characteristic of these intersections is that a chronotope is *dialogical*. However, the dialogue between Chabela and Isabel is outside of the world represented in their time. For this reason, the proposal to create a bridge using the chronotope is to cross spatial boundaries where dialogue is the interconnectedness between the past and the present time. There are historical similitudes and differences that crash themselves like a power cut or the sound of crystals. Spatial and timeless representations of Isabel de Bobadilla and Chabela la Ronca go beyond geographical space and history to identify strategies for mobilizing women to create

a society, as Crang and Thrift would state: a society "without borders and spatial boundaries" (2002, p. 5).

How to create dialogical bridges when we have historical asymmetries? Using the literary technique chronotopic juxtaposition, María Elena Llana connects time and space to represent contemporary and past ambiances. The representation of the traveler to the past becomes a strategy to encounter two cultures from another stand point of view. In this case, Crang and Thrift refer to space functions as: "a representational strategy" (2002, p. 1). This strategy reveals that women were part of the Expeditions to the Americas. The encounter between these two women allows readers to rethink history and to make connections to the fact that Isabel de Bobadilla was governess of Cuba, while Hernando de Soto continues the Expedition to Florida.

Women in the narratives of discovery and colonization have been silent since five hundred years ago. María Elena Llana frames this event in "Añejo cinco siglos" and sets the plot in a place where they are allowed to tell their own version of history. María Elena Llana is a twofold story between Chabela and Isabel. It mirrors the story of Isabel de Bobadilla to talk about her roles in a system of power where she has been unknown. At the same time, Chabela, a Mulatto woman, goes to the past to shift registers, and she has a dialogue with the governess. In the past, they could have been equal.

Thus, Isabel and Chabela enunciate a discourse creating a "duality" allowing to each other to become emotional, talk about erotic, and reconnect with the narratives of silent women from different communities in this globalized world where women in power have not been recognized.

The dialectical personalities of Isabel and Chabela are in a one space setting. On one hand, Isabel de Bobadilla has a full name, but also Chabela la Ronca uses a nickname, - as a last name -, to underline her strength under any circumstance. Chabela, as the nickname unfolds Isabel as the name that represents the past and the power. Even though it may look like the white Spanish woman has more privileges than a Mulatto woman, both women are free to talk, and to listen to each other. They are equal in the new space created by the writer in spite of their social class and color. The boundaries of social differences disappear.

Although, each one of them thinks the other one does not comprehend politics or is not aware of what is happening, they allow to each other to tell her story and to have tolerance for each other's pain. Instead of focusing on whose story has more veracity, they focus on what they have to say. Isabel learns to wait for her turn to tell her story and to listen to Chabela. Both protagonists create a space to have a friendly dialogue and to support each other in their own loneliness. This kind of talk inserts the metaphor

of imagination, proposed by Marjorie, where the myth becomes the chronotope (1986, p. 15). As a result, *Giraldilla* in the myth waits for his loved one, while Isabel waits in an active way; since she is the governess. Chabela goes back to the past to talk about herself and to inquire about the white Spanish female governor. The traveler comes back to the present and continues her present life as if nothing would had happened.

The protagonists represent different experiences within the same circumstances of migration. Chabela la Ronca is a Mulato woman with a strong determination living in the XXI Century. She represents the collective voice of those women who stay on the Island waiting for their *balseros* men to be called, hoping that they land alive. Isabel, as well as Chabela, cannot impede men to leave Cuba. They tell their own stories and find a connection in the masculine characters known as don Hernando de Soto (from the past time) and Lazarito (from the present time) who had trespassed the geographic frontiers. The men have no different purposes than to make real the marvelous tells. The experiences from different epochs interconnect in one story while physical spaces become an allegory of the Island as a geographical area.

Catherine Davies's research in *A Place in the Sun* (1997) argues that Llana's work avoids the representations of the contemporary women's lives even though she represents women (1997, p. 132). Despite

this idea, Chabela's traveling to the past engages her with Isabel's story that has been invisible as well. Paradoxically, Isabel's future is Chabela's present. María Elena Llana creates a fantastic world where this possibility can become real. She responds to the issues of time and spatial boundaries as a counter discourse to go back to the past; and reflect on the way narratives reconfigure protagonists like Chabela, who goes back to her present. Going beyond the timeless and spatial boundaries, her suffering is like a murmur that is ignored when no one listens. The following day, Chabela la Ronca continues her everyday life and prepares herself a coffee. At this moment, she goes back to reality: to her silent present.

María Elena Llana's short story responds to the global world by the recreation of the governess' narrative to rethink the colonial expansionism. Robertson in Waters gives a new meaning to globalization: "as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (1994, p. 4). Consciousness is the way to revisit this ideology. The idea is to move on from the central powers that control politics and cultural forms. An example of consciousness and tolerance is the dialogue between Isabel and Chabela; albeit their ideas have seemed ironic, different, or strange in other time. The unfolding personalities from the characters Isabel-Chabela break through time and space to have this dialogue. Davies proposes

the term dialectical or dual personality (1997, pp.132-33) to the spiral shaped in this process of transformation. Alvarez calls this phenomenon a chronotopic juxtaposition. In "Añejo cinco siglos," both concepts are related to making possible the encounter between two protagonists from different times to have a dialogical tolerance.

The idea to move away from the present historical moment through other space is a strategy on how the writer represents the "real world" events. The proposal to go beyond boundaries is to cross spatial frontiers where the past and the present interconnect through Chabela's unconsciousness. There are historical similitudes and differences that crash themselves like the sound of crystals. Chabela has more freedom to talk due to being drunk. She tells about a current event in which the suffering and confusion denounce tourists' privileges to have a passport and the choice to travel. In contrast, Lazarito has to exodus himself to Miami, in a *balsa*.

To conclude, the use of the chronotope to analyze "Añejo cinco siglos" becomes a technique to create a historical bridge. It is the place where the "knots of narrative are tied and untied" (Bakhtin, p. 250). The event that female protagonists communicate was that in the past Isabel de Bobadilla was more than a myth. She experienced the power of politics and erotic, going beyond the cultural boundaries to provoke a cultural collision; Chabela,

on the other hand, came back to her own time in history diverging from the past to continue real life. These everyday personal interconnections reconfigure

the conditions of crossing geographical and historical frontiers. Thus, María Elena Llana represents trans-historical themes in her narratives where women

hold power to voice events in history and expand the discussion on women's political power and erotic.

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