

Carpenter, Victoria ORCID logoORCID:
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3880-6555> (2010) When Was
Tomorrow? Manipulation of Time and Memory in the Works of
Mexican Onda. In: Carpenter, Victoria ORCID logoORCID:
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3880-6555>, (ed.) (Re)Collecting the
Past: History and Collective Memory in Latin American Literature.
Oxford, Peter Lang, pp. 37-57

Downloaded from: <https://ray.yorks.ac.uk/id/eprint/1446/>

The version presented here may differ from the published version or version of record. If
you intend to cite from the work you are advised to consult the publisher's version:
http://www.peterlang.com/download/datasheet/52828/datasheet_11928.pdf

Research at York St John (RaY) is an institutional repository. It supports the principles of
open access by making the research outputs of the University available in digital form.
Copyright of the items stored in RaY reside with the authors and/or other copyright
owners. Users may access full text items free of charge, and may download a copy for
private study or non-commercial research. For further reuse terms, see licence terms
governing individual outputs. [Institutional Repository Policy Statement](#)

RaY

Research at the University of York St John

For more information please contact RaY at ray@yorks.ac.uk

in reference to Terencio is indicative of the editor's control of the text. A similar denigrating approach to the narrator – or the reader, if 'idiota' is taken to be directed outwards at the audience – appears in other Onda works, such as 'La Tumba'.⁴²

Considering Sainz's own view of the novel, I will base my analysis on the premise that Terencio the protagonist is a textual construct rather than a human being. In fact, I would treat all the characters in the novel as textual constructs because of the self-editing nature of the Onda texts. The analysis of the circularity of the narrative examines the process of (dis) integration of the protagonist in the multiplicity of narrative lines. Since there are many instances of multiple storylines and timelines in the novel (the title itself is very clear about the frustratingly non-linear nature of the text), I will focus on recurring narrative lines.

Paul Ricoeur explains the nature of language from the hermeneutical perspective as follows: 'Words are not at all the names of ideas present to the mind; they are not constituted by any fixed association with data, whatever that data might be. All they do is refer back to the missing parts of the context. Consequently, constancy of meaning is never anything but the constancy of contexts.'⁴³ Contextualisation, favoured by postmodernists, is practiced to perfection in *Obsesivos días circulares*, where multiple layers of meaning are created in a self-referencing text. The closed nature of these intratextual codes is reminiscent of what Tzvetan Todorov terms 'opaque discourse'.⁴⁴ In this case, *Obsesivos días circulares* can be defined as an opaque discourse, a text for the text's sake – or can it? The novel contains several examples of missing parts of earlier narrative lines reappearing by the end of the book, but not necessarily in the same context. The most telling example is the repetition of a series of questions forming a dialogue between Terencio and Donaji⁴⁵ – an apparently innocuous

⁴² See Carpenter 2007 and 2009 for the analysis of the editor's role in the creation and destruction of characters in the Onda works.

⁴³ Ricoeur 2003: 89.

⁴⁴ Todorov 1967: 102.

⁴⁵ Sainz 1969: 177 and 231.

conversation early in Chapter 3 becomes a life-changing decision by the end of the chapter.

The two times the questions appear in the novel the text is presented in block capitals. Text fragments in capital letters are found throughout the text and tend to be newspaper headlines⁴⁶ or announcements.⁴⁷ The fact that both sets of questions are in block capitals suggests that they are now treated either as a separate text – similar to the news headlines, which rarely relate to the surrounding narrative – or as important announcements. The first time the questions refer to a rather mundane event: Terencio is writing a letter to Joby while Donaji and Lalka are organizing a night out. The three are pretending to form a conspiracy; Lalka keeps asking '¿de veras?'⁴⁸ thus reinforcing the artificiality of the scene. The questions, which are later repeated in different circumstances, are Donaji's '¿CUÁNTO TIEMPO LE LLEVARÍA DESCUBRIRNOS?' and '¿DE QUÉ VIVIRÍAMOS SIN EL SUELDO DE LA ESCUELA?'⁴⁹ The use of the conditional 'llevaría' and 'viviríamos' adds to the unreal nature of the scene. Other questions in this scene are in the future tense with the exception of '¿SE IRÍA YIN CON NOSOTROS?' and '¿CONSEGUIRÍA OTRO TRABAJO?'⁵⁰ The four more somber questions stand apart from the playful future tense questions; this division becomes clear when the questions appear at the end of chapter in a different context. This time the threat to Terencio and Donaji's quiet life is real. Terencio is talking with Papá la Oca on the phone, receiving instructions to kill someone. He is writing down Papá's instructions, and Donaji is packing to leave the country. The two questions that Donaji asks earlier are now Terencio's internal monologue as he wanders around the apartment.⁵¹ There is a distinct similarity in the context in which the

⁴⁶ 'ANCIANA OCTOGENARIA GOLPEA A GENERAL REVOLUCIONARIO' – 'An eighty-year-old lady beats up a revolutionary general' (Sainz, 15).

⁴⁷ 'CINE LAS AMÉRICAS – 'Americas Cinema' (Sainz, 204).

⁴⁸ 'really?' (Sainz, 176, 177).

⁴⁹ 'How long would it take him to find us?', 'What are we going to live on without the school salary?' (Sainz, 177).

⁵⁰ 'Would Yin come with us?', 'Would I find another job?' (Sainz, 177).

⁵¹ Sainz, 231.