

Carpenter, Victoria ORCID logoORCID:
<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3880-6555> (2011) Temporal
Permutations in Octavio Paz's 'Piedra de sol'. In: Carpenter, Victoria
ORCID logoORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3880-6555>, (ed.) A
World in Words, A Life in Texts: Revisiting Latin American Cultural
Heritage. Peter Lang, pp. 137-160

Downloaded from: <https://ray.yorks.ac.uk/id/eprint/1425/>

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/58957/datasheet_430273.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

A binary juxtaposition of subjective and objective realities was deemed 'rather simplistic given the variety of degrees of change within the male's [or the narrator's – VC] inner self.'³

I will re-evaluate my study of timeplanes in 'Piedra de sol' from this new theoretical standpoint. The present essay will determine whether a different theoretical framework reveals hitherto undetected aspects of the poem. In 2008, I followed Peter Beardsell's example and applied quantum theories to literary analysis; the first results of this application were presented at the Society for Latin American Studies 2009 and 2010 Conferences, and later published.⁴ Peter Beardsell's application of quantum theory to the analysis of Mexican historical plays appeared in the same volume.⁵ Once it became clear that the methodology is viable, its wider application was considered, and this essay is an example of such an approach.

This study concentrates upon finding a more convincing explanation of the subjective/objective division of the poem's narrative line. This division has been the subject of most analyses of 'Piedra de sol', and I would suggest that the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, between linear and non-linear time defines the poem. So far, however, there is no exhaustive explanation of the temporal confusion in the poem. I hope to rectify this by re-examining the poem's temporalities (or timeplanes) from a new theoretical standpoint that combines Aztec perception of the passage of time (to reflect the established perspective on the nature of 'Piedra de sol') and the treatment of spacetime in quantum physics (to represent a new methodology of text analysis).

It has been agreed by many historians that the Mesoamerican view of temporal systems is rather complex, with the 'ability to move historically forward while simultaneously doubling back.'⁶ In her study of the Aztec perception of time and lifecycles, Almere Read uses Paul Ricoeur's examination of time, and concludes that there is 'a problematic limitation with

³ Carpenter, 509.

⁴ Carpenter 2010a: 37–57.

⁵ Beardsell 2010.

⁶ López Austin 1985, cited in Almere Read 1998: 119.

conceptions that image time as only either linear or cyclic. This dialectical image overlooks the differences between an "instant", which has no duration, and the multidimensional "experience of nowness", which includes memories of the past and expectations of the future."⁷ One cannot help but notice a similarity with repeated references to 'instante' in 'Piedra de sol', when the narrator discusses historical events and the passage of linear time. According to López Austin, a potential conflict between linear and cyclic time 'was resolved by the multidimensionality of Mexica mythical time, for cosmic time was composed of many diverse moments.'⁸

The Aztec calendar system is 'a calendar within a calendar, that is to say two calendars running parallel with each other. The first was the Solar Calendar or "Farmers' Year", which was used to determine the dates of agricultural festivals, and each month was presided over by a particular deity to whom dances, prayers and sacrifices were made."⁹ This calendar ran concurrently with the Tonalpohualli, 'the Astrological calendar which consisted of 20 days that repeated themselves indefinitely. Each day had its own name and was presided over by a god whose influence made it either lucky, unlucky or indifferent.'¹⁰ This calendar cycle (Cipactli) completes itself in 260 days. The relationship between the two is such that 'the Tonalpohualli ran alongside the 365 day Solar Calendar, but as 260 from 365 leaves a total of 105, then it will take 52 years before individual dates within the two calendars coincide again.'¹¹ To resolve the conflict between two calendars, the Aztec inserted 'twenty-five days into every 104 years. As the Mexican cycle comprised fifty-two years, these twenty-five days had to be fitted into two cycles in some manner; so they cut the Gordian knot by adding thirteen days to the first cycle, twelve days to the second cycle, thirteen to the third, twelve to the fourth, and so on, giving an even number of days to an even-numbered cycle and an odd number of days to the odd cycle.'¹²

⁷ Almere Read 1998: 98.

⁸ Almere Read, 119.

⁹ Tunnicliffe 1979: 10.

¹⁰ Tunnicliffe, 17.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Blake 1906: 10.