

Est.
1841

YORK
ST JOHN
UNIVERSITY

Carpenter, Victoria (2011) Temporal Permutations in Octavio Paz's 'Piedra de sol'. In: Carpenter, Victoria, (ed.) A World in Words, A Life in Texts: Revisiting Latin American Cultural Heritage. Peter Lang, pp. 137-160

Downloaded from: <http://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

speed of light is constant, when space and time are observed and measured they 'adjust themselves in an exactly compensating manner so that observations of light's speed yield the same result, regardless of the observer's velocity.'⁴⁴ Space and time are relative to the observer's position. In fact, space and time are united in the form of spacetime – the eleventh dimension in which both string theory and M-theory function. Some scientists suggest that spacetime is composed of interwoven strings, like a piece of cloth; the existence of spacetime and strings is interdependent – without strings there would be no spacetime, and vice versa: 'We picture strings as vibrating in space and through time, but without the spacetime fabric that the strings are themselves imagined to yield through their orderly union, *there is no space or time*.'⁴⁵ This opens up an interesting possibility for the analysis of temporal developments in a text. Textbranes compose textual spacetime (or its spatial and temporal nature – the 'flow' of the text, if you wish), which is now a conglomerate of interlinked textbranes. But textual spacetime creates and hosts textbranes, imbuing them with their temporal and spatial characteristics. So in order to understand spatial and temporal developments of the text we have to tease out textbranes comprising them and examine these as separate textual elements and as a textual spacetime conglomerate. In the case of 'Piedra de sol', this approach will translate into the consideration of timeplanes as unified by, and embedded into, an external textual spacetime. This means that both timeplanes and textual spacetime should be interdependent in temporal and spatial aspects. They should share imagery pertaining to these aspects and exhibit similar temporal and spatial progression. Instead of a single temporality in the poem, there are temporal variations that depend on the narrator's position within, or movement through, each timeplane.⁴⁶

44 Greene, 47.

45 Greene, 487 (emphasis in the original text).

46 These timeplanes were previously evaluated for the potential to satisfy the male narrator's sexual and cognitive needs (see Carpenter 2001).

An obvious interpretation of the unity of timeplanes is the symbolism of the 'binding of the reeds'. However, this approach only partially explains the complexity of temporal developments in the poem. The Aztec calendar perspective alone does not help interpret the sections '¿hacia planes para el verano?' – 'cuartos, lugares, calles, nombres, cuartos' (301),⁴⁷ 'Madrid 1937' (302), and 'no pasa nada, callas, parpadeas' – '¿no pasa nada cuando pasa el tiempo?' (306–7).⁴⁸ Another unexplained aspect of the poem is the repetitions of certain words and phrases, and the way these repetitions appear to unite the text. Since most timeplanes contain independent scenes and at the same time are joined by a single force, I would suggest that they should be treated as textbranes, and the repetitions as strings joining these independent branes.

Previously, I have concluded that the male narrator moves out of a timeplane once he 'has made a discovery about himself, imagined achieving sexual satisfaction, or recognised that a time plane cannot satisfy either his sexual instinct or desire for self-discovery.'⁴⁹ It is possible that the narrator is the unifying force; however, that would mean that the narrator should remain unchanged throughout the poem – and this is not the case. The narrator develops new cognitive and emotional traits, deeper understanding of the world around him, and more complex perception of time as the poem progresses.⁵⁰ Also, there is no first person narrator in some timeplanes (TP1, TP9, TP11, TP12, TP19), which suggests that the narrator is a partial unifying force. But is there a fully unifying force?

Going back to the initial consideration of nineteen and one timeplanes, I propose that the twentieth timeplane is the unifying force. The theme of falling asleep and waking up is recurrent in the poem, so this interpretation is quite plausible. However, there is no evidence in the poem that this

47 'Was I making plans for the summer?' – 'rooms, places, streets, names, rooms'. Page references for 'Piedra de sol' are from Paz 1960 and will be included in the body of the text. All translations, unless stated otherwise, are mine – V.C.

48 'Nothing happens, you stop talking, you blink' – 'does not anything go on when time passes?'

49 Carpenter 2001: 499.

50 Carpenter, 509.