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Mirrors of the Day and of the Night:

*Duality and Parallelism in the
Aztec Worldview*

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Honors Thesis
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Go to the region of the wild maguey,
that you may erect a house of cactus and maguey,
and that you may lay down mats of cactus and maguey.

You shall go to the place whence the light emerges,
and there throw your arrows:
yellow eagle, yellow tiger, yellow serpent,
yellow rabbit, and yellow deer.

You shall go whence death comes.
You must hurl arrows in the land of the rock-rose too:
blue eagle, blue tiger, blue serpent,
blue rabbit, and blue deer.

Then you shall go to the region of the holy seedgrounds.
You must hurl arrows in the flower-land too.
white eagle, white tiger, white serpent,
white rabbit, and white deer.

And then you shall go to the region of thorns.
You must hurl arrows in the thorn-land too.
red eagle, red tiger, red serpent,
red rabbit, and red deer.

And so as you fling the arrows and attain the gods,
the yellow and the blue, the white and red:
eagle, tiger, serpent, rabbit, and deer —
then in the hand of the God of Time, the Old God,
you shall place the 3 that must look after him:
Mixcóatl, Tozpan, Ihuitl

Introduction

The Aztecs ruled from Tenochtitlan from about 1300 to 1521 when the Spanish defeated them. While the empire lasted, there was a rich tradition of oral literature in the Aztec's language of Nahuatl. The Aztecs as a people do not exist today, but their language is still spoken, and the Aztec's oral tradition have been preserved at least in part. Much of this preservation was due to the efforts of early Spaniards such as Sahagún, Durán, and de Olmes (Nicholson 1959, 7). They transcribed the memorized oral works into Nahuatl so that today we are still able to read about the thoughts and concerns of the ancient Aztecs.

The goal of this paper is to show how the Aztec language, as expressed through poetry, is intimately connected to their worldview. Duality and parallelism in the poems mirrors the duality in the Aztec pantheon, and also in other Aztec cultural realms.

Most of the poems used here are from works by Miguel León-Portilla. A few were taken from translations by Irene Nicholson. Some of the poems were translated directly from Nahuatl to English, other from Nahuatl to Spanish, and then into English. These processes of translation create a potential for problems in analyzing the poetry, but this issue will be dealt with in the conclusion. An article by Roman Jakobson (1966) provided the basis for my interpretations of parallelism that are applied throughout this paper. The poetry in the main paper is sometimes only cited in part, but Appendix A

contains the poems in their entirety (unless otherwise stated) along with the source.

The number next to the poems in the paper refer to their order in Appendix A.

Forms of Duality

Duality is not strictly an Aztec concept. The dual male/female third gender, known as berdache, reflects duality in North American tribes. A strong sense of duality pervades the literature of the Mayan cultures of Mesoamerica. The Popol Vuh K'ich'e' Maya account is a story about twins, and representations of duality in shamanism and midwifery rituals are part of current practice in Maya ritual. Even the South American cultures from the Chavin to the Moche demonstrate aspects of duality. The term *tinku* in Quechua, the official Inca language, means "the joining of two to form one" (Moseley 2001, 66). This definition is similar to the concept embodied by Ometéotl – the Aztec Creator god, the Supreme Being, the god of Duality.

The Aztec sense of dualism reveals itself especially powerfully in poetry. The concepts of parallelism and the construction of "difrasismos," which involve combining two words or phrases to indicate a third idea, are pathways for the poetic expression of duality. Duality as a theme in Aztec myth and culture is manifested in many ways. It is shown not only through the separate identification and ultimate unification of male and female, but also through mirror imagery, with an emphasis on twins or pairs (either male or female), and expressed through human/divine and life/death duality.

Male and female duality is present throughout many different cultures and is especially important to the Aztecs. The over-reaching Aztec deity Ometéotl represents

this form of duality by being one god, but at the same time both male and female. Through the unification of gender opposites, he/she is able to transcend categories. He/She has powers that others cannot have because he/she can access both the feminine and the masculine.

Ometéotl the Creator is also a symbol of both day and night. The sun is traditionally male in Mesoamerica and very powerful, while the moon and night represent the powers of feminine mystery. Another interesting idea that comes out of this male/day – female/night duality, is that in combination with the duality of the colors red and black (day and night), together they constitute a symbol of wisdom in Aztec mythology. Because Ometéotl is all of these things, he/she is the Supreme God/Goddess above all else; all powerful and all knowing.

Duality is also invoked through the close relationship between the kings and their gods. The relationship between the god Quetzalcoatl and individual royalty shows this sort of duality powerfully. Any priest serving a particular god who had achieved a heightened supernatural relationship with that god was given the god's own name (Nicholson 1967, 79). Thus, religious officials who had gained transcendental wisdom were no longer simply human, but dual creatures; part human, part deity. In particular, various stories about Quetzalcoatl state that he was not only a god, but also a historical figure, identified with Topiltzin a king of the Toltecs (Nicholson 1967, 11).

A reoccurring theme in Aztec culture is the interconnection of life and death as phases, which are inextricably linked to one another. This motif is present in the

manifestations of many Aztec gods and goddesses. Foremost, Ometéotl signifies life as the Creator of the world and of humans. However, he/she is also a destroyer.

Ometéotl as the Supreme Being is ultimately responsible for all that happens on the earth, including death and disease. The Aztecs were very much aware of Ometéotl's dual role "...indeed you wrath, your anger, already take glory, enjoy, take pleasure, delight in the castigation," they said in reference to him/her (Léon-Portilla, and Shorris 2001, 218). At the same time, the God of Duality is also the mother and the father of the gods; he/she can create life, but can also create death.

A second deity who portrays life and death duality is the goddess Coatlicue. She is also known as Tonantzin "Our Mother" an aspect of the female side of Ometéotl. But in addition, "...she is the insatiable deity who feeds on the corpses of men," (Caso 1958, 53). The goddess Coatlicue who, in her aspect as a mothering earth deity, is a creator of men and of life is, at the same time, a destroyer of what she has formed and is a source of death in the same way that Ometéotl is both the bringer of life and of death.

Parallel to the life/death duality runs the balance between order and chaos. When order exists in the world, life thrives. To the Aztecs, however, maintenance of order could only be continued through sacrifice. Without death in the form of human sacrifice, chaos would rule.

A different sort of duality is represented by the high occurrence of twins or pairs of gods (See Appendix B). Gods and goddesses who worked together constituted pairs that imitated Ometéotl's male/female duality. Pairs also consisted of deities who were

either opposites or who were in opposition to one another. Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca exhibit such duality. In fact, most of the Aztec pantheon was divided up into such sets of either pairs or twins (Quetzalcoatl and Xólotl).

Yet another form of duality is manifest in the mirror imagery that is a central theme throughout Aztec literature. Ometéotl is described as the mirror which illumines things:

The god of duality is at work,
Creator of men,
mirror which illumines things. (8)

He/she is also the mirror of the day, whereas Tezcatlipoca is the mirror of the night or "Lord of the Smoking Mirror." A mirror inherently possesses duality because there is the object and then its reflection. If one understands Ometéotl as a mirror, then it makes sense that the other gods are aspects of him/her, and that they contain similar types of duality. The diversity of the Aztec pantheon is made up of many different reflections of the mirror that is within the God of Duality.

In the same way that the gods are reflections of Ometéotl, duality in Aztec poetry is a reflection of Ometéotl and duality in the Aztec cosmology. Hopkins says that "the artificial part of poetry...reduces itself to the principle of parallelism" (1959, 84).

Although neither parallelism nor duality is unique to Nahuatl culture, the Aztecs took a dual way of thinking and applied it to other areas of their lives besides poetry and their deities. Ancient Aztecs divided their calendar into 4 parts - 2 sets of 2. Just as the gods

were often paired, so were the temples constructed in their honor. In the center of Tenochtitlan, the Aztec capital city, stood a 2-part temple dedicated to two gods; Huitzilopochtli the god of war, and Tlaloc, a fertility deity (Coe 2001, 165). In this way even the architecture of their cities incorporated duality into its makeup.

Social roles also reflected the principle of duality. High Aztec officials had two functions; that of priest and of military leader (Caso 1958, 81). In this worldview, one office combined two opposing ideas - political and religious, war and peace. At the pinnacle of the Aztec's political cosmology, the highest office represented the same dual nature as did the highest deity. There were also two kings - one associated with male ideas, the other with female ones (Ingham 1971, 617). The leaders of the Aztec society, as discussed, were organized around the principle of duality.

There is an overwhelming emphasis on duality in both poetry and in society that illustrates the connection between the Aztec language and their culture - constituting a nexus. While at first their array of gods seems to be incomprehensibly numerous, in reality, many can be paired as twins, or actually represent different aspects of a single ruling God of Duality. Nahuatl poetry reflects these attributes, in that many lines of poetic expression can be reduced to one meaning that is repeatedly explained in a different manner each time. Repetition, parallelism, and "difrasismos" in Nahuatl poetic language reflect the duality inherent in Aztec culture and mythology.

Duality in the Aztec Pantheon

Ometéotl

Although at first the Aztecs seem to possess an impressive number of deities, it is

possible to narrow them down somewhat by realizing that many are simply different aspects of the same supreme god. Ometéotl is the Aztec god/goddess of Duality.

He/She is the Creator - present in all areas of the universe:

You live in heaven;
 you uphold the mountain,
 Anáhuac is in your hands.
 Awaited, you are always everywhere;
 you are invoked, you are prayed to.
 Your glory, your fame is sought.
 You live in heaven;
 Anáhuac is in your hands. (4)

Humanity is at the mercy of His/Her will, which is all powerful:

Our Lord, Lord of the Ring,
 Self-engendered, self-willing, self-enjoying;
 even as He wills, so shall He desire that it shall be.
 In the center of the palm of His hand He has placed us,
 He is moving us according to His pleasure.
 We are moving and turning like children's marbles, tossed
 without direction

To him we are an object of diversion: He laughs at us. (1)

This particular poem gives the impression that as Ometéotl, the Aztec's Creator is rather indifferent to his people. Perhaps then, this is one reason why there are so many other titles and other aspects to this deity. Multiple aspects offer a way to get closer to him/her, but at the same time still represent a supreme god/goddess that is greater than everything else.

Lord, our master:
 she of the jade skirt,
 he who shines like a sun of jade.
 A male has been born,
 sent here by our mother, our father,
 Lord of duality, Lady of duality,
 he who dwells in the nine heavens,
 he who dwells in the place of duality. (3)

"Our mother, our father" - Tonantzin-Totahtzin - implies a much closer relationship between human and deity than being "an object of diversion" does. Also, in this poem, there is emphasis on Ometéotl's male/female aspects. It shows the male/female duality discussed above: "*She* of the jade skirt", "*he* who shines", *Lord* and at the same time *Lady* of duality, which in Nahuatl is Ometecuhtli-Omecíhuatl. (León-Portilla 1963, 84). The pairing of names extends to other titles given to this deity such as Tonacatecuhtli-Tonacacíhuatl, which translates as "Lord and Lady of our flesh" (Graulich 1983, 576). Another example of this paired naming system is Citlallatónac "the star that illumines things" and Citlalínicue "lady of the skirt of stars," (Nicholson 1959, 88; León-Portilla 1963, 86 & 88). Each appellation further emphasizes Ometéotl as a dual god/goddess.

In many instances, other deities that have their own aspect and domain can be traced back to Ometéotl as "descriptions of his attributes, personifications of his manifold talents, or fragments of his corporeal form," (Nicholson 1959, 64). That is, these other gods/goddesses represent different ways to explain or to honor Ometéotl on a more accessible level.

One god more than any others is indisputably linked with Ometéotl. He is

known as Tezcatlipoca, and is sometimes identified as the offspring of Ometéotl. In several instances, their relationship is so close that he is referred to by titles that are associated normally with his “father/mother” or given the same sort of reverence that Ometéotl receives. In “Invocation to Tezcatlipoca”, he is called upon by saying “O master, O our Lord, O lord of the near, of the night, O night, O wind.” (León-Portilla and Shorris 2001, 217). When used together, the words “night” and “wind” combine to convey a single idea “the invisible god” (Nicholson 1959, 143). This title belongs to Ometéotl as Yohualli-ehécatl “he who is invisible and intangible,” but there are also instances where Yohualli-ehécatl is translated as being a reference to Tezcatlipoca, again blurring the distinction between the two (León-Portilla 1963, 91-92). Furthermore, Tezcatlipoca is part of a pair as Tezcatlinextia-Tezcatlipoca, which means “mirror of the day and night” (León-Portilla 1963, 90). The elaborate connections between these two gods are rife with duality; that of light and dark, day and night, and since both are mirrors, they become reflections of each other. The mutual reflections between Ometéotl and Tezcatlipoca make it easy to understand how the latter is an aspect of the former. He is a conduit through which the Creator can act.

The situation is still more complicated, because there is not only one Tezcatlipoca, but four. Each one has a designated name, direction, domain, and color. In addition, they each also have other names connected with them, just like Ometéotl does. To the east is Red Tezcatlipoca - god of fire/fertility; to the north is Black Tezcatlipoca - god of earth and flint; Blue Tezcatlipoca is one of the gods of water who resides in the south; the western god of wind is the White Tezcatlipoca (Nicholson 1959, 64).

Since Ometéotl and the Tezcatlipocas are so closely linked, Ometéotl's scope extends beyond being the god/goddess of Duality, through his/her sons, to being god/goddess of all the earthly elements too. As stated earlier, each Tezcatlipoca carries associated deities that represent other aspects, or different names. Xipe Totec "our lord the flayed one," the god of spring is the red eastern Tezcatlipoca who is also known as Camaxtle (Caso 1958, 7). Xipe Totec is another god who exhibits life/death duality. He is the god of spring, which represents new life and rebirth. On the other hand, his name implies death, and the priests who worshipped him were required to wear the flayed skin of captives (Coe 2001, 179). Within Xipe Totec exists a cycle of deaths and rebirths. Like Coatlicue and Ometéotl, one side of the Red Tezcatlipoca is nurturing, while the other represents death. The blue Tezcatlipoca is called Huitzilopochtli. He is frequently associated with Cintéotl god/goddess of maize (another dual deity) and Tonatiuh the sun god (Vaillant 1966, 189). "Cintéotl (later Huitzilopochtli) is also in effect the same god as Xipe Totec," (Nicholson 1959, 84). Although Xipe Totec and Huitzilopochtli are two distinct and opposing forms of Tezcatlipoca, Cintéotl constitutes a mixture of them both. Quetzalcoatl is known as Ehécatl- "the Wind." Ehécatl is also a patron of merchants (O'Mack 1991, 2, 11). The name Quetzalcoatl carries within it dual meaning. Quetzal means both "jewel" and "feather," while coatl means both "serpent" and "twin." Finally, the Black Tezcatlipoca is the "smoking mirror - the mirror of night paired with Ometéotl as the mirror of the day which illumines things (León-Portilla, and Shorris 2001, 17). He also has another aspect as a merchant god, similar to Ehécatl, called Yacateuctli (O'Mack 1991, 2). The Tezcatlipocas

are paired across direction so that they form two pairs of two, but the pairings are also more general such as the opposition between Quetzalcoatl and the Black Tezcatlipoca.

Duality Among the Other Gods

Although there is not direct evidence in the literature that a particular deity is a manifestation of Ometéotl, this relationship can be inferred through the organization of the pantheon as a whole. "One very important trait of the Mesoamerican pantheon is that most, if not all, of its members exist and act in pairs, reflecting the ultimate nature of the supreme dual God" (León-Portilla, and Shorris 2001, 16). Through their duality these paired gods are connected to the higher form that is Ometéotl. For example, Nextepecia/Micapetlacalli is a pair of Aztec deities that are not as frequently mentioned as are Quetzalcoatl or Huitzilopochtli. Despite the infrequent references to them in the literature, as a pair, they represent an extension of the duality of the Supreme Being.

All the major members of the pantheon are connected in some way to duality like the blending of male and female within Ometéotl or Cintéotl, a male and a female are paired together like Tlaloc and Chalchuihtlicue, or two are simply associated with one another as are Quetzalcoatl and Xólotl.

By listing these gods and their relationships to Ometéotl, I have sought to demonstrate the importance of the many names the Aztecs employed to describe a single god, as well as the inherent duality in this system. Both paired names and duality are fundamental to Nahuatl poetry. Through analyzing the religious pantheon in association with examining the structure of Nahuatl poetry, I illustrate the underlying patterns in the Nahuatl use of language to the Aztec culture and beliefs.

Parallelism and other Devices in Aztec Poetry

Aztec poetry is constructed around several types of parallelism, different forms of repetition, and a construct known as “difrasismos.” Parallelism and repetition are integral to poetry of formal discourse in many traditions (Jakobson 1966). However, combined with the distinctly Mesoamerican “difrasismo,” together these forms of repetition demonstrate a unique style of poetry that directly relates back to the way the Aztecs viewed their gods/goddesses.

Parallelism

There are two basic types of parallelism to be found in Nahuatl literature. First, synonymous parallelism can be defined as the use of language where lines or words within a poem express the same fundamental idea, but are worded in different ways. A brief example here will illustrate this concept:

In vain was I born,
in vain have I come forth
to earth from the house of the Lord,
I am sorely lacking!
Would that I had not come forth,
truly better I had not come to earth. (12)

The author is expressing basically the same sentiment in the first three lines, and then again in the last two, but the exact appearance of that one thought changes from line to line.

This type of parallelism also occurs where only part of adjacent lines express a similar thought. In a set of two, the other non synonymous parts of each line are similar in construction.

Indeed, I shall never *die*
 Indeed, I shall never *disappear*.
 There where there is not death,
 There where *death is overcome*, (14) italics added

Each set shows synonymous parallelism at the end, and there is also an overall sense of the same idea being repeated - in the example above, an end to death and achievement of immortality. This idea is in essence life/death duality.

The second form of parallelism does not involve similarities, but rather oppositions. Antithetic parallelism also appears within the poetry in several different forms. The first involves saying something that is positive, and then opposing it in a negative way.

The Giver of life:
 is this true?
 Perhaps as they say, *it is not true?*...
 All that is *real*,
 All that is *rooted*,
 they say it is *not real*,
 it is *not rooted*. (14) italics added

Another type of antithetic parallelism that is manifest in the poetry, is the opposition of ideas; for example, pretty vs. ugly. It is the meanings of the words that are set against one another.

And it was ordained about us,
 it was arranged in the land of the dead,
 in the heavens,
 that we have been forsaken. (16)

Here there is the opposition between the underworld as the land of the dead and the upper world that is the land of the gods. Many associations are implicit in these

two concepts such as dark/light and evil/good. They are antithetic on numerous different levels.

Repetition

Whereas parallelism is a more subtle device used in this literature, simple straightforward repetition also occurs. Synonymous parallelism is a type of repetition because ideas are repeated, but there is also reiteration of exact words that are given over and over throughout the poem. In fact, whole lines are repeated as are clusters of lines. While the specific word may be used many times over, the lines are usually only repeated twice. The reader gets a very definite sense of an underlying theme and idea that is revealed when the reoccurrence of words or lines is combined with synonymous parallelism. "the basic shape of the poetry remains one of statement and refrain, thesis and antithesis, or of approaching one central thought from a number of different angles," (Nicholson 1959, 139). Repetition can also be seen as a method for unifying different parts of a poem like the beginning and the end or a way to establish a sort of rhythm since the poetry was originally orally presented.

In ic conitotehuac in Tochiuitzin,
In ic conitotehuac in Coyolchiuhqui:

Zan tocochitlehuaco,
zan tontemiquico,
ah nelli, ah nelli
tinemico in tlalticpac.
Xoxopan xihuitl ipan
tochihuaca.
Hualcecelia, hualitzmolini in toyollo,
Xochitl in tonacayo.
Cequi cueponi,
on cuetlahuia.

In conitotehuac in Tochiuitzin;
In ic conitotehuac Coyolchiuhqui. (11)

Thus spoke Tochiuitzin,
Thus spoke Coyolchiuhqui:

We only rise from sleep,
we come only to dream,
it is not true, it is not true,
that we come on earth to live.
As an herb in springtime,
so is our nature.
Our hearts give birth make sprout,
the flowers of our flesh.
Some open their corollas,
then they become dry.

Thus spoke Tochiuitzin
thus spoke Coyolchiuhqui.

On paper the repetition of words or lines throughout the poem give it a definite form, but orally that form would also be present in the rhythm as it was performed out loud.

"Difrasismos"

Parallelism and repetition are useful in getting a particular theme or point noticed and remembered by the reader, but there is nothing about these two devices that is inherently Nahuatl. They can be found in nearly any type of poetry. There is however one manner of wording that makes Aztec poetry unique. "Difrasismos" involves two words that are combined to represent an essential idea. "So strongly inclined to conceive in terms of duality were the minds of the [Aztecs] that when they wanted to endow an idea with maximum clarity they isolated two of its qualities..." (León-Portilla 1963, 102). For example, *in atl*, means water and *in tepetl* means hill. However, when joined together in a "difrasismo" - *in atl, in tepetl* - the combined pair comes to mean town or city (Coe 2001, 195). In other words, two specifics are conjoined to indicate a broader concept. Another example is *Yohualli, ehécatl* - night and wind (León-Portilla 1963, 103). These two words represent concepts that obviously exist, but are intangible. When put together they signify Ometéotl who is everywhere at once, but still beyond direct mortal experience.

Analysis of Poetry

Now that the modes of analysis have been defined and examples given, they must be applied to intact poems and not simply dissociated lines. It is important to see how parallelism, repetition, and "difrasismos" combine in a particular poem in order to

understand the full interrelation of these devices. Although they have been separated into distinct categories, one does not exclude the other. As said before, synonymous parallelism is a type of repetition and when translated into English “difrasismos” are sometimes hard to separate from it.

1. In vain was I born,
2. In vain have I come forth
3. to earth from the house of the Lord,
4. I am sorely lacking.
5. Would that I had not come forth,
6. truly better I had not come to earth.
7. I cannot express it, but... (12)

The author expresses his dissatisfaction with being alive through synonymous parallelism in lines 1 and 2. He does this by saying it would have been better that he had not been born, had not come forth (from the womb). This sentiment is reiterated in lines 5 and 6. All four of these lines say nearly the same thing, but the poet is able to truly highlight his point by using different variations each time.

1. I am intoxicated, I weep, I grieve,
2. I think, I speak,
3. within myself I discover this:
4. indeed, I shall never die
5. indeed, I shall never disappear.
6. There where there is no death,
7. there where death is overcome,
8. let me go there,
9. Indeed I shall never disappear. (13)

In line 1, “weep” and “grieve” both express the author’s sadness. These two words are synonymous, but also constitute a “difrasismo.” They are two characteristics of

unhappiness that, when conjoined, express deep sorrow. Line 2 could also be seen as an example of "difrasismo" because by saying "I think, I speak" he is asserting that he is indeed alive sort of in the manner of Descartes' "I think therefore I am." There is synonymous parallelism at the ends of lines 4-7. These lines were stated as an example earlier. "Disappear" is used as a synonym for "die" in saying that he does not think he will die - he is immortal. "No death" and "death is overcome" also refer to unending life. Then line 5 is repeated a second time in line 9. There is a strong sense of duality in this particular poem that contributes to its cohesion and its power in conveying feelings of sadness.

The next poem is by Nezahualcoyotl a ruler of Tezcoco.

1. Are You real, are You rooted?
2. Is it only as to come inebriated?
3. The Giver of Life:
4. is this true?
5. Perhaps, as they say, it is not true?
6. May our hearts be not tormented!
7. All that is real,
8. all that is rooted,
9. they say that it is not real,
10. it is not rooted.
11. The Giver of Life
12. only appears absolute.

13. May our hearts
14. be not tormented,
15. because He is the Giver of Life. (14)

This poem is interesting because "real" is used here synonymously in two different ways. In line 1, there is parallelism between "real" and "rooted." These two give the sense of something that is physically present rather than fictional or

insubstantial. This theme continues in the repetition of “real” in line 7 and line 9, and the repetitions of “rooted” in line 8 and line 10. Then in lines 5 and 9, which have similar structures, “real’ and “true” go together to question the veracity of belief.

Lines 4 through 10 present an interwoven set of antithetic parallels. Lines 4 and 5 are antithetic in the same way that line 7 is antithetic to line 9 and as line 8 is antithetic to line 10. The author presents one side then negates it – is it true, it is not true; all that is real or not real. Line 6 is repeated again in lines 13 and 14, as an expression of the wish to be comforted after asking tormenting questions. There is no reason, the author says, to be worried about the conflict between what exists and what does not, because Ometéotl (the Giver of Life) by virtue of being made of opposition, thus transcends it.

We Are Mortal

1. I comprehend the secret, the hidden:
2. O my lords!
3. Thus we are,
4. we are mortal,
5. humans through and through,
6. we all will have to go away,
7. we all will have to die on earth...
8. Like a painting
9. we will be erased.
10. Like a flower,
11. we will dry up
12. here on earth.
13. Like plumed vestments of the precious bird,
14. that precious bird with the agile neck,
15. we will come to an end...
16. think on this, o lords
17. eagles and tigers,
18. though you be of jade,
19. though you be of gold,

20. you also will go there,
21. to the place of the fleshless.
22. We will have to disappear,
23. no one can remain. (6)

In the poem "We are Mortal," lines 4 and 5 show synonymous parallelism in the words "mortal" and "humans." The next two lines are also concerned with mortality expressed in the title and by "go away" in line 6. " Next, there are three different metaphors used to death. Lines 8 and 9 relate death to a painting. When it is erased, nothing remains to indicate it ever existed at all; when one dies one is forgotten. In lines 10-12, the metaphor is botanical; flowers are seasonal – they only live a short while then die. Line 15 explains it more bluntly; "we will come to an end..." just as birds do. Everyone dies on earth and goes away. Throughout the entire poem, with the use of synonymous parallelism, there is an overall repetition of the idea that life is ephemeral. The repetition is escalating from the image of a painting, which is inanimate, to living flowers, to animals, to precious warriors – the eagles and jaguars. Lines 20-23 provide the most direct focus on this motif.

The interesting thing about the next poem is that the beginning is wholly centered on antithetic parallelism.

Song of Orphanhood

1. It begins:
2. The *flowers* are lifted up,
3. they stand tall in the place of the drums,
4. and I am *happy*.
5. I have come to hurl myself -
6. the *flowers* are engaged.

7. I alone give *happiness* to our friends,
8. in the house of jades,
9. on the mat of *flowers*,
10. where the *laughing singer* speaks.

11. If for naught you shall give us *happiness*,
12. if for naught you shall sing to us,
13. perhaps our *flowers*, our *songs* should not be glad now,
14. perhaps our *flowers*, our *songs* should not be grateful
now...
15. Will Ilhuicamina still make us *happy*?
16. I do not know if it is twice
17. or only once that *we depart*. Italics added (15)

In the first three stanzas, there is a repetition of the ideas of happiness or joy, and of beauty – there is an overall sense of optimism. In lines 1-10, this optimism becomes toned down. Lines 11/12 and 13/14 both show synonymous parallelism and the latter two also employ a “difrasismo”; flower-song equates to poetry. This stanza is antithetic to the first two. Lines 13/14 indicate that the songs “should *not* be glad now” and “should *not* be grateful now.” There is a negation of joy, but not yet an explicit sense of sadness.

18. I come only to *weep*,
19. I come only to be *sad*.
20. The chief, Lord Ayocuan, reprimands us.

21. You are only glorified,
22. esteemed here,
23. close and near to the people;
24. it is not your time, yet -
25. my mother, my father do not know it,
26. for which I *weep*,
27. because they are also *in the place of the fleshless*.

28. I *weep*, I am *saddened*,
29. I remember only that we have left
30. the beautiful *flowers*,

31. the beautiful *songs*;
32. *still we enjoy ourselves*,
33. *still we sing*,
34. *we go completely*,
35. *we perish*. (15) italics added

The next three stanzas carry a feeling of despair and focus more on death. Lines 18/19 are synonymous "weep/sad." In line 27, "the place of the fleshless" refers to Mictlan - land of the dead. Lines 32/33 and 34/35 show antithetic parallelism. "We enjoy ourselves/we sing," but at the same time "we go completely/we perish." There is still happiness, but not as optimistic as the first half of the poem. Here the joy is tainted by sadness and knowledge of death. In their underlying ideas, lines 1-10 and 18-27 are antithetic to one another. The first focuses on flowers/songs/happiness, while the second set involves sadness and death.

This next poem uses a lot of repetition in words, lines and sets of lines. It takes the form of a dialogue between Tlaloc the god of Rain, and Quetzalcoatl. Dialogue is a way to mirror expression, each response creates a pair with the preceding sequence.

Tlaloc:

1. I am come, I am come
2. I am come from yonder in the midst of the sea
3. where the water is stained
4. with the red tints of sunrise.
5. I too am a singer,
6. flower is my heart:
7. I offer songs!
8. Only in the season of rains I come,
9. come to delight the god
10. I too am a singer,
11. flower is my heart:
12. I offer songs.

Quetzalcoatl:

13. Lord of the water and the rain,
14. is there really, is there really one so great
15. as thou, O God of the Sea?
16. How manifold are Thy flowers,
17. How manifold are Thy songs:
18. With which Thou givest men pleasure
19. in the season of the rains!
20. All was given me here:
21. my fan, my precious spray,
22. my crooked staff, my paper flower,
23. wherein is the house of books,
24. wherein is the house of light
25. How manifold are Thy flowers,
26. How manifold are Thy songs:
27. With which Thou givest men pleasure
28. in the season of the rains!

Tlaloc:

29. I have arrived here, behold me,
30. I am a singer
31. I come to give pleasure, I come to give laughter
32. I am a singer.
33. I have made myself a necklace of cocoa flowers
34. of flowers of many colors.
35. I dance, I rejoice.

Quetzalcoatl:

36. Yellow flowers with green leaves,
37. my crooked staff, my fan I come to give.
38. I come to give laughter, I come to give pleasure
39. I am a singer.

Tlaloc:

40. I have arrived at a sterile place
41. where there are no rains.
42. I have come to give very great pleasure

Quetzalcoatl:

43. To dissipate my sadness, beautifully I sing:

Tlaloc:

44. I make pliant the courtyard of the Eagles,
45. I ventilate the courtyard of the flowers. (5)

In Tlaloc's first stanza, line 1 shows repetition within itself. Lines 5-7 are repeated again in lines 10-12. This stanza is structured on duality. The first two lines go together as a declaration that Tlaloc has arrived. Then lines 3/4 are paired descriptions of his realm. Between the repeated sets of lines 8/9 are a reiteration that the rain god has come and why.

Next, Quetzalcoatl speaks. Like Tlaloc's first line, line 14 shows repetition within itself: water, rain. There is synonymous parallelism between 13 and 15 in that Quetzalcoatl uses different titles to refer to Tlaloc. More repetition occurs as lines 16-19 are repeated at the end of Quetzalcoatl's section in lines 25-23.

Throughout the entire poem there is an emphasis on the two gods as singers. It occurs in lines 5, 7 (10, 12), 17 (26), 30, 32, 39, and 43. There is also a repetition of the idea that songs give pleasure and thus the singing gods do too; lines 9, 18 (27), 31, 38, and 42.

All the poems presented give a good idea of how parallelism, repetition, and "difrasismo" work within Aztec literature. These devices also manifest in the Aztec pantheon. "It is interesting to observe that this mode of thought concerning the duality of Ometéotl paralleled a dual quality within the Nahuatl language itself." (León-Portilla 1963, 102). The concept of Ometéotl as the Lord and Lady of Duality, and the use of parallelism, "difrasismo," and repetition where words, phrases or whole lines are repeated in pairs in poetry represent different ways of expressing the same underlying focus on a dual system of thought.

Parallelism, Duality, and Ometéotl

Synonymous parallelism is used in the poetry of the Aztecs to repeat an idea or a theme without having to use the same words over and over again. It gives the author a way to cloak ideas in new forms, and to hold the ideas together throughout the poem. The concept of Ometéotl as a unifying multifaceted deity works in a similar way. He is assigned many different names with each revealing a different aspect of the Supreme god.

1. Mother of the gods, father of the gods, the old god
2. spread out on the navel of the earth,
3. within the circle of turquoise.
4. He who dwells in the waters the color of the bluebird,
5. he who dwells in the clouds.
6. The old god, he who inhabits the shadow of the
7. land of the dead,
8. the Lord of fire and of time. (9)

Almost every line in this poem reveals another name for Ometéotl. In line 1, "the old god" refers to Huehuetéotl, but Xiuhtecuhtli is the god of time and fire who lives in the center of the earth (lines 2 and 8) (León-Portilla 1963, 33; Nicholson 1959, 58). Mictlantecuhtli and his consort Mictlancihuatl are Lord and Lady of Mictlan - the land of the dead, but in this poem they are presented as other names for Ometéotl (line 6).

"There was...among uneducated classes, a tendency to exaggerate polytheism by conceiving of as gods, also, what, to the priests, were only manifestations or attributes of one god" (Caso, 1958, p 7). Regardless of whether it was only the lower classes that partitioned the one god/goddess thus, the multiplicity made the deity easier to understand. Just like an idea in poetry is more easily comprehended if approached

from several different angles, so too a deity, who in one monotheistic form is known as invisible and intangible, is more readily understood if divided into multiple aspects which are more concrete.

Within this next poem about Ometéotl, it is possible to see the interrelation of the Creator's parallelism and that of the poem; specifically antithetic parallelism.

1. And it is told, it is said
2. that Quetzalcoatl would invoke, deifying something in the innermost of heaven:
3. she of the starry skirt, eh whose radiance envelops things;
4. Lady of our flesh, Lord of our Flesh;
5. she who is clothed in black, he who is clothed in red;
6. she who endows the earth with solidity, he who covers the earth with cotton.
7. And thus it was known, that towards the heavens his pleas was directed,
8. toward the place of duality, above the nine levels of Heaven.(10)

Lines 4 through 8 are various names for Ometéotl. Each name has a male and female counterpart showing the "unity of opposites, as personified in the great bisexual creator deity Ometéotl or 'Dual Divinity'" (Coe 2001, 178). Thus because Ometéotl is both male and female he is in and of himself antithetic. The colors black and red in line 5 are references to night day that have been seen before in connection with Ometéotl in his title as Tezcatlinextia. In the poem above, "she who is clothed in black" is antithetic to the other half of the line that is male and day. Male/female and night/day duality exist within line 5 just like they do within Ometéotl. Also within this line is the "difrasismo" of black/red that combines to mean wisdom. Thus the Creator is also the highest form of wisdom because as both male/female, day/night, red/black, he a seamless blend of contradictions. He is not one particular idea, but a synthesis of them,

and thus he transcends categories.

All the titles for Ometéotl here describe the god in a concrete tangible form. The titles that refer singularly to him as the supreme Dual Lord are more abstract. For example, "Giver of Life" and Yohualli-ehécatl, "he who is invisible and intangible" are not as tangible as say the stars, flesh, and earth (lines 4,5,7, and 8) are which can be touched as seen (León-Portilla 1963, 91).

Poem 17 reveals the unattainability of Ometéotl.

1. In no place can be the house of He Who invents Himself.
2. But in all places He is invoked,
3. in all places He is venerated,
4. His glory, His fame are sought on the earth.

5. It is He Who invents everything.
6. He is Who invents himself: God.
7. In all places He is invoked,
8. in all places He is venerated,
9. His glory, His fame are sought on the earth.

10. No one here is able,
11. no one is able to be intimate
12. with the Giver of life;
13. only He is invoked,
14. at His side
15. near to Him,
16. one can live on the earth.

17. He who finds Him,
18. knows only one thing: He is invoked,
19. at His side, near to Him,
20. one can live on the earth.
21. In truth no one is intimate with You,
22. O Giver of Life!

23. Only as among the flowers,
24. we might seek someone,
25. thus we seek You,

26. we who live on the earth,
 27. while we are at Your side.
 28. Our hearts will be trouble,
 29. only for a short time,
 30. we will be near You and at Your side.

31. The Giver of Life enrages us,
 32. He intoxicates us here.
 33. No one can be perhaps at His side,
 34. be famous, rule on the earth.

35. Only You can change things,
 36. as our hearts know it:
 37. No one can be perhaps at His side,
 38. be famous, rule on the earth. (17)

The first line exposes a sort of paradox - "In no place can be the house of He who invents himself." He is nowhere, but at the same time he is everywhere - "awaited, you are always everywhere." (poem 9). The deity cannot be confined in any particular area such as an idol or a shrine; thus he/she is harder to approach, harder to make earthly. Also in line 1, Ometéotl is "He who invents Himself"; he is self-created. This concept is repeated in lines 5/6, which shows synonymous parallelism with the first one. Lines 10/11 are further elaboration on the idea that he is unattainable (also line 21).

In contrast, "Now in truth I come to appear before you, to reach you. Before you I come jumping over ridges, I come sidling up," (poem 16). These lines are from "Invocation of Tezcatlipoca." Even though in the poem he is referred to with the same titles as Ometéotl ("Lord of the near, of the night, O night, O wind") Tezcatlipoca is more accessible than his Creator father.

Poem 17 additionally displays and divulges the Creator's nature through antithetic parallelism. Just as the Dual God is a unification of opposites the poem

combines two seemingly contradictory statements. In lines 14-16, 19/20, 26/27, and 30, the author states that it is possible to be at his Lord's side, to be near to the deity. On the other hand, lines 33 and 37 are a reversal of that statement. So which is it? As an earth god it is possible to be close to him, but as Yohualli-ehécatl it is not.

Repetition and duality are connected to Ometéotl in the next poem.

1. In the place of sovereignty, in the place of sovereignty
2. we rule;
3. my supreme Lord so commands.
4. Mirror which illumines things.
5. Now they will join us, how they are prepared.
6. Drink, Drink!
7. The god of duality is at work,
8. Creator of men,
9. mirror which illumines things. (8)

"In the place of sovereignty" repeated twice in the first line. Line 4 occurs a second time in line 9. "Mirror which illumines things" is a name for Ometéotl that is antithetic to Tezcatlipoca as the Smoking Mirror. Each line or word (line 6) that is repeated is a part of a pair in a similar way to the high occurrence of paired male/female deities, twins, or the various pair of gods that stand in opposition to one another in the Aztec cosmology.

Conclusion: Problems in Translation

The evidence of parallelism, repetition, and duality is taken, in this paper, from either English translations of Nahuatl texts, or Spanish translations that were then finally written in English. This process leaves a lot open to variation. Any translation

form one language to another will necessarily change the original meaning of the poem. Depending on the way a particular author renders a word, it may make it easier or harder to find synonymous and antithetic parallelism within that particular poem. With “difrasismos,” the problem is more pronounced because the associations between the words are distinctly cultural, and they are dependant on specific words, which might be lost in the translation.

To illustrate how parallelism may be a factor of the translator’s choice of words, here are three different translations of the same poem to compare:

Version 1

1. Truly do we live on earth?
2. Not forever on earth; only a little while here.
3. Although it be jade, it will be broken,
4. Although it be gold, it is crushed,
5. Although it be quetzal feather, it is torn asunder.
6. Not forever on earth; only a little while here. (7a)

Line 1 is repeated exactly in line 6, and lines 3-5 show synonymous parallelism at the end of each phrase, but the beginning of the lines all start out with the same structure “Although it be...”

Version 2

1. I, Nezahualcoyotl, ask this:
2. Do we truly live on earth?
3. Not forever here,
4. only a little while.
5. Even jade breaks,
6. golden things fall apart,
7. precious feathers fade;
8. not forever on earth,
9. only a moment here. (7b)

The first line that introduces the name of the author is completely missing from the previous version. Lines 3 and 9 in Version 2 do not completely match up as did lines 2 and 6 in Version 1, so the sense of repetition that united Version 1, is lost here, but lines 4 and 9 of Version 2 still show synonymous parallelism. Lines 5 through 7, in Version 2 do not have the beginning "Although it be..." that united the structure in Version 1. The author's point still comes across showing that earthly things do not last forever – they break, fall apart, or fade away. Version 3 combines qualities of the translations of Versions 1 and 2.

Version 3

1. I, Nezahualcoyotl, ask this:
2. Is it true one really lives on earth?
3. Not forever on earth,
4. only a little while here.
5. Though it be jade it falls apart,
6. though it be gold it wears away,
7. though it be quetzal plumage it is torn asunder.
8. Not forever on earth,
9. only a little while here. (7c)

Version 3 does let the reader know who is speaking, like Version 2 and unlike in Version 1. In lines 5-7, "though it be..." mirrors the "Although it be..." of Version 1, and lines 3/4 are repeated exactly in the last two lines. An interesting thing to note between all three poems is that the words describing the destruction of jade, gold, and feathers are different. Jade is either broken, breaks, or falls apart. Gold becomes crushed; it falls apart, or wears away. Finally none of the authors agree on the correct term for the third example - quetzal feather, precious feathers, or quetzal plumage,

which then either fade or are torn asunder. Of course one can say that anthropologist and linguists are constantly learning new things about the Nahuatl languages and Aztec culture. Through time their knowledge of how to translate a certain phrase or word does change. The next set of translations for one poem show more differences.

1. Our Creator and Ruler
2. with the petticoat of jade
3. and the sunlit brilliance of jade.
4. Man appeared,
5. sent by Our Mother and Our Father
6. who is Dual Lord and Lady
7. and who lives in the Nine Heaves,
8. in the Place of Duality. (2)

1. Lord our master:
2. she of the jade skirt,
3. he who shines like a sun of jade.
4. A male has been born,
5. Sent here by our mother, our father,
6. Lord of duality, Lady of duality,
7. he who dwells in the nine heavens,
8. he who dwells in the place of duality. (3)

In the second poem, more emphasis is placed on Ometéotl's dual gender in lines 2 and 3; "*she* of the jade skirt" and "*he* who shines like a sun of jade." The corresponding lines in the first poem only hint at gender; "with the petticoat of jade" and "and the sunlit brilliance of jade." The fourth line has a completely different meaning from one poem to the next. In poem 3, "a male has been born, sent here by our mother, our father" just indicates that one child was created by Ometéotl. It does not give him the sense of Creator of the universe like poem 2 does. "Man appeared, sent by Our Mother and Our Father" demonstrates that men exist because Ometéotl sent them

to earth. Both poems though connect Tonahtzin/Totahtzin (our mother, our father) to Ometecuhtli/Omecihuatl (Dual Lord and Lady or Lord of Duality and Lady of Duality).

A further considerations when dealing with these poems is that the poetic form we see as nicely separated lines that are aesthetically pleasing is not how these poems were originally written down. Rather, each distinct poem is really part of a continuous set of poems that appear in a paragraph-like style (Bierhorst 1985). The place at which a translator decides to start the poem is nearly arbitrary, resulting in some of the differences discussed above. For example, there is another version of poem 11 in *Cantares Mexicanos* (Bierhorst 1985, 174). In that form of the poem, the last line “In ic conitotehuac Coyolchiuhqui” is not present. In translation and in poetic form the poem would seem incomplete or unbalanced if the final line was not there (see page 15).

One can make valid conclusions about the Aztec’s culture through their poetry, even if the only sources are English translations. It is simply necessary to remember that these translations are biased according to whoever made them. Not every translator is the same, thus not every translation will be the same either. The best way to get a real feel for what the Aztecs meant and how they thought is to read their literature in its native form.

Appendix A

#1

Our Lord, Lord of the Ring,
 self-engendered, self-willing, self-enjoying;
 even as He wills, so shall He desire that it shall be.
 In the centre of the palm of His hand He has placed us,
 He is moving us according to His pleasure.
 We are moving and turning like children's marbles, tossed without direction.
 To him we are an object of diversion: He laughs at us.

(Nicholson 1959, 61)

#2

Our Creator and Ruler
 with the petticoat of jade
 and the sunlit brilliance of jade.
 Man appeared,
 sent by Our Mother and Our Father
 who is Dual Lord and Lady
 and who lives in the Nine Heavens,
 in the Place of Duality.

(Nicholson 1959, 62)

#3

Lord, our master:
 she of the jade skirt,
 he who shines like a sun of jade.
 A male has been born,
 sent here by our mother, our father,
 Lord of duality, Lady of duality,
 he who dwells in the nine heavens,
 he who dwells in the place of duality.

(León-Portilla 1963, 88)

#4

You live in heaven;
 you uphold the mountain,
 Anáhuac is in your hands.
 Awaited, you are always everywhere;
 you are invoked, you are prayed to.
 Your glory, your fame is sought.
 You live in heave;
 Anáhuac is in your hands.

(León-Portilla 1963, 81)

#5 Tláloc:

I am come, I am come!
 I am come from yonder in the midst of the sea
 where the water is stained
 with the red tints of sunrise.
 I too am a singer,
 flower is my heart:
 I offer songs!
 Only in the season of rains I come,
 come to delight the god.
 I too am a singer,
 flower is my heart:
 I offer songs!

Quetzalcóatl:

Lord of the water and the rain,
 is there really, is there really one so great
 as Thou, O God of the Sea?
 How manifold are Thy flowers,
 how manifold are Thy songs:
 with which Thou givest men pleasure
 in the season of the rains!
 All was given me here:
 my fan, my precious spray,
 my crooked staff, my paper flower,
 wherein is the house of books,
 wherein is the house of light.
 How manifold are Thy flowers,
 how manifold are Thy songs:
 with which Thou givest men pleasure
 in the season of the rains!

Tláloc:

I have arrived here, behold me,
 I am a singer:
 I come to give pleasure, I come to give laughter
 I am a singer
 I have made myself a necklace of cocoa flowers,
 of flowers of many colors.
 I dance, I rejoice

Quetzalcóatl:

Yellow flowers with green leaves,
 my crooked staff, my fan I come to give.
 I come to give laughter, I come to give pleasure.
 I am a singer.

Tláloc:

I have arrived at a sterile place
 where there are no rains.
 I have come to give very great pleasure.

Quetzalcóatl:

To dissipate my sadness, beautifully I sing:

Tláloc:

I make pliant the courtyard of the Eagles,
 I ventilate the courtyard of the flowers.

(Nicholson 1959, 73)

#6

We Are Mortal

I comprehend the secret, the hidden:
O my lords!
Thus we are,
we are mortal,
humans through and through,
we all will have to go away,
we all will have to die on earth...
Like a painting
we will be erased.
Like a flower,
we will dry up
here on earth.
Like plumed vestments of the precious bird,
that precious bird with the agile neck,
we will come to an end...
think on this, O lords,
eagles and tigers,
though you be jade,
though you be of gold,
you also will go there,
to the place of the fleshless.
We will have to disappear,
no one can remain.

(León-Portilla 1992, 80)

#7

(a)

Truly do we live on earth?
 Not forever on earth; only a little while here.
 Although it be jade, it will be broken,
 Although it be gold, it is crushed,
 Although it be quetzal feather, it is torn asunder.
 Not forever on earth; only a little while here.

(León-Portilla 1963, 7)

(b)

I, Nezahualcoyotl, ask this:
 Do we truly live on earth?
 Not forever here,
 only a little while.
 Even jade breaks,
 golden things fall apart,
 precious feathers fade;
 not forever on earth,
 only a moment here.

(León-Portilla and Shorris 2001, 146)

(c)

I, Nezahualcoyotl, ask this:
 Is it true one really lives on earth?
 Not forever here.
 Though it be jade it falls apart,
 though it be gold it wears away,
 though it be quetzal plumage it is torn asunder
 Not forever on earth,
 only a little while here.

(León-Portilla 1992, 80)

#8

In the place of sovereignty, in the place of sovereignty,
 we rule;
 my supreme Lord so commands.
 Mirror which illumines things.
 Now they will join us, now they are prepared.
 Drink, Drink!
 The god of duality is at work,
 Creator of men,
 mirror which illumines things.

(León-Portilla 1963, 85)

#9

Mother of the gods, father of the gods, the old god
 spread out on the navel of the earth,
 within the circle of turquoise.
 He who dwells in the waters the color of the bluebird,
 he who dwells in the clouds.
 The old god, he who inhabits the shadow of the land of the dead,
 the Lord of fire and of time.

(León-Portilla 1963, 32)

#10

And it is told, it is said
 that Quetzalcóatl would invoke, deifying something in the innermost of heaven:
 she of the starry skirt, he whose radiance envelops things;
 Lady of our flesh, Lord of our flesh;
 she who is clothed in black, he who is clothed in red;
 she who endows the earth with solidity, he who covers the earth with cotton.
 And thus it was known, that toward the heavens was his plea directed,
 toward the place of duality, above the nine levels of Heaven.

(León-Portilla 1963, 29)

#11

In ic conitotehuac in Tochiuhuitzin,
 In ic conitotehuac in Coyolchiuhqui:

Zan tocochitlehuaco,
 zan tontemiquico,
 ah nelli, ah nelli
 tinemico in Haltipac.
 Xoxopan xihuitl ipan
 tochiuaca.
 Hualcecelia, hualitzmolini in toyollo,
 Xochitl in tonacayo.
 Cequi cueponi,
 on cuetlahuia.

In conitotehuac in Tochiuhuitzin,
 In ic conitotehuac Coyolchiuhqui.

Thus spoke Tochiuhuitzin,
 Thus spoke Coyolchiuhqui.

We only rise from sleep,
 We come only to dream,
 it is not true, it is not true,
 that we come on earth to live.
 As an herb in springtime,
 so is our nature.
 Our hearts give birth, make sprout,
 the flowers of our flesh.
 Some open their corollas,
 then they become dry.

Thus spoke Tochiuhuitzin
 Thus spoke Coyolchiuhqui.

#12

In vain was I born,
 in vain have I come forth
 to earth from the house of the Lord,
 I am sorely lacking!
 Would that I had not come forth,
 truly better I had not come to earth.
 I cannot express it, but...
 What must I do?
 O princes who have come here!
 Must I live in the sight of the people?
 How will it be?
 Reflect on it!...

(first stanza)

(León-Portilla 1992, 90)

#13

I am intoxicated, I weep, I grieve,
 I think, I speak,
 within myself I discover this:
 indeed, I shall never die
 indeed, I shall never disappear.
 There where thee is no death,
 there where death is overcome,
 let me go there,
 Indeed I shall never disappear.

(León-Portilla 1992, 81)

#14

Are You real, are You rooted?
 Is it only as to come inebriated?
 The Giver of Life:
 is this true?
 Perhaps, as they say, it is not true?
 May our hearts be not tormented!
 All that is real,
 all that is rooted,
 they say that it is not real,
 it is not rooted.
 The Giver of Life
 only appears absolute.

May our hearts
 be not tormented,
 because He is the Giver of Life.

(León-Portilla 1992, 84)

#15

It begins:
 The flowers are lifted up,
 they stand tall in the place of the drums,
 and I am happy.
 I have come to hurl myself –
 the flowers are engaged.

I alone give happiness to our friends,
 in the house of fades,
 on the mat of flowers,
 where the laughing singer speaks.

If for naught you shall give us happiness,
 if for naught you shall sing to us,
 perhaps our flowers, our songs should not be glad now,
 perhaps our flowers, our songs should not be grateful now.
 Perhaps the Eagle prince, Cacamatl
 will come again?
 Perhaps Ayocuan will come again?
 Will Ilhuicamina still make us happy?
 I do not know if it is twice
 or only once that we depart.

I come only to weep,
 I come only to be sad.
 The chief, Lord Ayocuan, reprimands us.

You are only glorified,
 esteemed here,
 close and near to the people;
 it is not your time, yet –
 my mother, my father do not know it,
 for which I weep,
 because they are also in the place of the fleshless.

I weep, I am saddened,
 I remember only that we have left
 the beautiful flowers,
 the beautiful songs;
 still we enjoy ourselves,
 still we sing,
 we go completely,
 we perish...

(excerpt from the "Song of Orphanhood")

(León-Portilla and Shorris 2001, 173-174)

#16

Invocation of Tezcatlipoca

O master, O our lord,
 O lord of the near, of the nigh,
 O night, O wind
 now in truth I come to appear before you,
 to reach you.
 Before you I come jumping over ridges,
 I come sidling up,
 I who am a commoner, unrighteous, evil.
 Let me not meet your annoyance, your wrath.

And do you dispose as you will...
 In truth now you incline your heart,
 you dispose.
 And it was ordained above us,
 it was arranged in the land of the dead,
 in the heavens,
 that we have been forsaken.
 In truth now your annoyance, your anger,
 descends, it gather;
 you who are the lord of the near, of the nigh.
 Castigation, pestilence grow; they increase.
 For the plague is reaching the earth...

(excerpt from the "Invocation to Tezcatlipoca")
 (León-Portilla and Shorris 2001, 217)

#17

In no place can be the house of He Who invents Himself.
But in all places He is invoked,
in all places He is venerated,
His glory, His fame are sought on the earth.

It is He Who invents everything.
He is Who invents Himself; God.
In all places He is invoked,
in all places He is venerated,
His glory, His fame are sought on the earth.

No one here is able,
no one is able to be intimate
with the Giver of life;
only He is invoked,
at His side
near to Him,
one can live on the earth.

He who finds Him,
knows only one thing: He is invoked,
at His side, near to Him,
one can live on the earth.
In truth no one is intimate with You,
O Giver of Life!

Only as among the flowers,
we might seek someone,
thus we seek You,
we who live on the earth,
while we are at Your side.

Our hearts will be troubled,
only for a short time,
we will be near You and at Your side.

The Giver of Life enrages us,
He intoxicates us here.
No one can be perhaps at His side,
be famous, rule on the earth.

Only You can change things,
as our hearts know it:
No one can be perhaps at His side,
be famous, rule on the earth.

(León-Portilla 1992, 85)

Appendix B

Aspects of Ometéotl (synonymous parallelism)

Huehuetéotl – the old god

Xiuhotecutli – god of fire

Ometecutli/Omecihuatl – Divine Pair

Lord and Lady of Duality

“Giver of Life”

“Mother of the gods, father of the gods”

see Coatlicue

Tonacatecuhtli/Tonacacihuatl

Lord and Lady of our Maintenance

“Mirror which illumines things”

Citlallatónac/Citlalinicue

“Star that illumines things”

“Lady of the skirt of stars”

Yohualli-ehécatl – “he who is invisible and intangible”

Also Tezcatlipoca

Tonantzin/Totahtzin – Our Mother, Our Father

see Coatlicue

Tloque in Nahuatl

Tezcatlipocas

Blue – Huitzilopochtli

Cintéotl – Corn God

Tonatiuh – Sun God

White – Quetzalcoatl

Ehécatl – Wind God

Cintéotl

Red – Xipe Totec

Camaxtle

Cintéotl

Black – Tezcatlipoca

“Lord of the Smoking Mirror”

Tepeyolohtli

Itztli

Coatlicue – Lady of the Skirt of Serpents

Teteoinnan – “Mother of the Gods”

See Ometéotl

Tonantzin – Our Mother

See Ometéotl

Chihuacóatl – the serpent woman

Toci – Our Grandmother

Tlazoltéotl

Ixcuina – Four Faces

Xochiquetzal

Ixnexthli

Quiloztli

Pairs (Duality in the Pantheon)

Tezcatlipocas

Tezcatlipoca – Tezcatlinextia

Red Tez. – Black Tez.

Black Tez. – Quetzalcoatl

Black Tez. – Blue Tez.

representing north and south

night sky vs. day sky

Other Dieties

Tlaloc – Chalchuihtlicue

Mictlantecuhtli – Mictlancihuatl

Tlaltecuhthli – god/goddess of earth

Cintéotl – god/goddess of Maize

also only male

Xochipilli - Xochiquetzal

Ixpuzteque – Nesoxochi

Nextepecia – Micapetlacalli

Tzontimoc – Chalmecacíhuatl

Quetzalcoatl – Xólotl

Quetzalcoat – Cihuacóatl

See Ometéotl

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