

— *Monografías* —

ÁRBOL DE
ALEJANDRA

PIZARNIK
REASSESSED

Edited by
Fiona J. Mackintosh
with Karl Posso



Colección Támesis

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ÁRBOL DE ALEJANDRA PIZARNIK REASSESSED

Thirty-five years after her death, this book reassesses Argentinian poet Alejandra Pizarnik (1936–72) in the light of recent publications of her ‘complete’ poetry and prose, diaries, and previously unavailable archive material.

The essays in this volume explore Pizarnik’s work from new angles: they examine her production as a literary critic, revealing her intense identificatory strategies as a reader, and the impact of such activities upon her own creative process. They also weigh up the influence of her ambiguous attitudes towards sexuality on her poetic personae, as well as the ways in which her concern with sex inspires her experimentation with humorous prose. New approaches are taken to key texts and themes: in the case of the much-studied work *La condesa sangrienta*, through a detailed philosophical reading involving comparisons with Kafka, and, in the case of the theme of the split subject, through the lens of translation.

By broadening the scope of Pizarnik studies, this book will act as a catalyst for further research into the work of this compelling poet.

FIONA J. MACKINTOSH lectures in Hispanic Studies at the University of Edinburgh and KARL POSSO lectures in Spanish American and Brazilian Studies at the University of Manchester.

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Fiona J. Mackintosh

ABBREVIATIONS

- Correspondencia* Ivonne Bordelois, *Correspondencia Pizarnik* (Buenos Aires: Seix Barral / Planeta, 1998)
- Diarios* Alejandra Pizarnik, *Diarios*, ed. Ana Becció (Barcelona: Lumen, 2003)
- Poesía* Alejandra Pizarnik, *Poesía completa (1955–1972)*, ed. Ana Becció (Barcelona: Lumen, 2000)
- Prosa* Alejandra Pizarnik, *Prosa completa*, ed. Ana Becció, prol. Ana Nuño (Barcelona: Lumen, 2002)

Editors' Note

Reference to material held by Princeton University Library Department of Rare Books and Special Collections in the Alejandra Pizarnik Papers (CO395) will be referred to in the following way:

Princeton, box #, folder #, p. # (p. # only in the case of notebooks where Pizarnik numbered the pages)

All material from the Alejandra Pizarnik Papers is published with the permission of Princeton University Library.

Introduction

Fiona J. Mackintosh and Karl Posso

O jardim era tão bonito que ela teve medo do Inferno.
Clarice Lispector¹

Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal.
T. S. Eliot²

Si quieres ser feliz como me dices/ No poetices.
Julio Cortázar³

In recent years Pizarnik has come to be widely acknowledged as a key figure within Argentinian literature. Born Flora Alejandra Pizarnik in 1936 in a Jewish immigrant district of Buenos Aires, Pizarnik rapidly evolved a distinctive poetic persona, the ‘personaje alejandrino’ (*Correspondencia*, p. 53). This poetic self fed off her intense and eclectic reading which spanned Golden Age Spanish poetry, *poètes maudits* such as Baudelaire and Rimbaud, surrealism, and the tortured worlds of Artaud and Kafka. The result was an accentuation of her latent feelings of estrangement, both from her immediate social environment and ultimately from language itself. In her short lifetime (ended by a fatal overdose in 1972) she published eight collections of poetry, as well as numerous uncollected poems and a significant number of reviews in literary magazines.

Her first poetry collection was the adolescent *La tierra más ajena* (1955), which parades self-consciously modern urban references, for example to ‘la ventanilla tranviaria’ (*Poesía*, p. 29) or to the ‘puerto de colores impresionistas’ (p. 32). The latter phrase calls to mind Benito Quinquela Martín’s popular paintings of the port area close to where Pizarnik grew up. More specific allusions to visual art would feature in later poetry, for example poems 24–6 of *Árbol de Diana* are prefaced by the phrases ‘un dibujo de Wols’, ‘exposición Goya’, and ‘un dibujo de Klee’ (*Poesía*, pp. 126–8), and there are references to Hieronymus Bosch, Marc Chagall, Odilon Redon and others. However, whilst her references to artists become more concrete, the poetic images associated with these artists become much less obvious. Pizarnik eventually disowned this early collection,

¹ Clarice Lispector, ‘Amor’, in *Laços de Família* (1960) (Rio de Janeiro: Rocco, 1998), pp. 19–29 (p. 25).

² T. S. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (1920) (London: Methuen, 1960), p. 125.

³ Julio Cortázar, *Rayuela* (1963) (Madrid: Cátedra, 1988), p. 609.

but some poems from it are worth considering, such as ‘Vagar en lo opaco’ (*Poesía*, p. 18), which focuses solipsistically on her eyes, or ‘Yo soy’ (p. 30), which attempts to define the self as a kind of seer. These examples anticipate the inward-looking direction that her poetry would subsequently take. Rather than simply looking at ships in the nearby port and dreaming of ‘irse, y no volver’ (*Poesía*, p. 32), as if wishing physically to leave Argentina’s shores (which she would in 1960, bound for Paris), her later poetry repeats that trope of leaving, but the destination gradually becomes a more metaphorical ‘otra orilla’, associated with death rather than any actual foreign shore.

This early collection was followed in 1956 by *La última inocencia*, and two years later by *Las aventuras perdidas*. In the former, the theme of leaving is reiterated, both in the poem ‘Cenizas’, which promises ‘Pronto nos iremos’ (*Poesía*, p. 55), and most prominently in the title poem, where the mesmerizing word ‘Partir’ is repeated in each short group of lines, culminating in the exasperated exhortation ‘Pero arremete, ¡viajera!’ (p. 61). After this desperate attempt to launch her poetic persona, the fledgling poetic self is eventually named, in what has become one of Pizarnik’s best known and most frequently quoted poems, ‘Sólo un nombre’ (*Poesía*, p. 65). The name in question is ‘alejandra’ with its exotic Russian ancestry, in preference to the homeliness of Flora. Also part of the process of fashioning this persona is defining the nocturnal realm she will inhabit. Both this collection and *Las aventuras perdidas* contain poems which focus on the night: ‘Noche’, ‘La noche’ and ‘La luz caída de la noche’.

The publication of her next and best known collection, *Árbol de Diana* (1962), marks something of a watershed in Pizarnik’s life. It dates from the most intense and formative period of her life, the time spent in Paris from 1960 to 1964. During these years her writing matured and she became friends with many writers, both French, such as André Pieyre de Mandiargues, and ex-patriate Latin Americans such as Julio Cortázar and Octavio Paz, who wrote the prologue for this collection. In *Árbol de Diana* her poems become much sparer; of the thirty-eight numbered (rather than titled) poems, many are only two or three lines in length. The concision of *Árbol de Diana* was followed by *Los trabajos y las noches* (1965), a collection in which she once again uses titles, and the presence of an implied second person gives many of the poems a greater sense of intimacy. The title poem of *Los trabajos y las noches* privileges thirst as the poet’s emblem. Other key themes are consolidated in this collection, including childhood, orphanhood, silence and the problematic nature of language, as indicated in the poem ‘Fronteras inútiles’, where the poet seems to doubt the substance of her words as they circle around an absence:

Hablo de
qué
hablo de lo que no es’ (*Poesía*, p. 185)

Such doubts regarding what and how language communicates are magnified in the collection *Extracción de la piedra de locura* (1968), though we also see here

a kind of feverish intensification of poetic activity, associated with the poet's realm, the night: 'Toda la noche hago la noche. Toda la noche escribo. Palabra por palabra yo escribo la noche' (*Poesía*, p. 215). The poem 'Fragmentos para dominar el silencio' perhaps best sums up the tensions experienced by the poet, through its use of paradoxical statements such as: 'He querido iluminarme a la luz de mi falta de luz' (*Poesía*, p. 223). This reminds us of the kinds of conceits common in Spanish Golden Age poetry, in which Pizarnik was well versed.⁴ The final two parts of this four-part collection diverge, one consisting of epigrammatic single-line poems which seem in their elliptical nature to be tending towards silence, and the other veering towards the excessive and obsessive language of madness. The move towards silence in the third part is evident in clipped sentences which lack a subject or a main verb, or which thematically cluster around silence: 'Ninguna cosa. Boca cosida. Párpados cosidos' (*Poesía*, p. 242); 'Pero el silencio es cierto. Por eso escribo' (*Poesía*, p. 243). By contrast, the fourth part, rather than paring language down, draws attention to its shortcomings through repetition:

alguien me vio llorando en el sueño y yo expliqué (dentro de lo posible), mediante palabras simples (dentro de lo posible), palabras buenas y seguras (dentro de lo posible). Me adueñé de mi persona, la arranqué del hermoso delirio. (*Poesía*, p. 252)

The ever-seductive presence of the night is now linked both to death and to music rather than to a frenzied act of writing: 'Toda la noche escucho el llamamiento de la muerte, toda la noche escucho el canto de la muerte junto al río, toda la noche escucho la voz de la muerte que me llama' (*Poesía*, p. 254).

This conjunction of music – or song – and death prefigures the final major collection published by Pizarnik in her lifetime, *El infierno musical* (1971). (*Nombres y figuras* [1969], her first collection to be published in Spain, had been published in the interim, but all except three of the poems included in it reappeared in *El infierno musical*.)⁵ The cornerstone of this important collection is the 'Piedra fundamental' (*Poesía*, pp. 264–6), in which all of Pizarnik's earlier themes and poetic dilemmas re-emerge. The self is irremediably split, language fails, even music fails, and as if she had never yet managed to leave the docks of her earliest poetry, the poet is still seeking 'un lugar desde el cual partir' (*Poesía*, p. 265). (This *idée fixe* is echoed in the diaries, where Pizarnik confesses to 'Intranquilidad nueva, como si el barco o el tren estuviera por partir y yo, con el billete en la mano, aún no he decidido si partir o quedarme' [*Diarios*, p. 404]).

⁴ Her notebooks show that she had read, for example, Góngora's 'Soledad segunda'; she paraphrases parts of it, commenting specifically on lines where 'la luz del sol' is alternately obscured then revealed (Princeton, box 4, folder 3). She had also read San Juan de la Cruz's poem 'Llama de amor viva' and his commentary on it (Princeton, box 4, folder 9), and many of Quevedo's sonnets (Princeton, box 4, folders 3 and 9 particularly).

⁵ See Cristina Piña's note to her edition of Pizarnik's *Obras completas: poesía completa y prosa selecta* (Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1993; repr. 1994), p. 8.

The final section of *El infierno musical* is entitled ‘Los poseídos entre lilas’; the dialogues and prose passages which make up this section are extracts from Pizarnik’s longer work, *Los perturbados entre lilas* (1969; published posthumously), her only theatrical piece.⁶ In its use of absurd and puerile humour this play is naturally paired by critics with the idiosyncratic collection of prose texts gathered under the whimsical title of *La bucanera de Pernambuco o Hilda la polígrafa* (1970–71; published posthumously). The emphasis in this latter text is on obscene word play. Some characters are sketchily developed – for example, Bosta Watson and Flor de Edipo Chú – but they are as much products of linguistic distortion and double entendres as characters with identifiable traits. Absurd situations which revolve obsessively around sex, lavatorial humour and psychoanalysis are mixed up with a bewildering array of clashing cultural references. The sheer linguistic excess of this text, which declares itself as ‘el espacio donde celebramos la fiesta de mis voces vivas’ (*Prosa*, p. 97), contrasts sharply with the notorious prose piece *La condesa sangrienta* (published for the first time in book form in 1971), which gained a different audience for Pizarnik from that primarily interested in her poetry. Its fascination lies not only in Pizarnik’s choice of subject – the notorious sixteenth-century Hungarian Countess Báthory who tortured and killed young women – but also in her seemingly detached treatment of that subject. A brief note Pizarnik made, while reading Valentine Penrose’s book on which *La condesa sangrienta* is based, links this text more directly to her own constant poetic preoccupations: ‘Entre Erzsébet y las cosas un espacio vacío’ (Princeton, box 4, folder 3). This empty space recalls one of Pizarnik’s most heartfelt and desperate poems (also published in 1971), which sums up the ultimately intractable problems with which she continually struggled as a poet; the poem ‘En esta noche, en este mundo’ asks simply ‘si digo agua ¿beberé?/ si digo pan ¿comeré?’ (*Poesía*, p. 399), and it is into this unbridgeable gap between language and the world that her poetry endlessly falls (*Poesía*, p. 446):

Alguien
cae
en
su
primera caída

In view of Pizarnik’s constant preoccupation with the treacherous nature of language, Thorpe Running places her firmly within a Latin American tradition of critical poetry.⁷ As Running concludes, the goal which Pizarnik shares with other poets in this tradition (including Octavio Paz) is that of ‘a language without

⁶ See Cristina Piña’s essay in this volume regarding why there are two titles in circulation for this piece, *Los poseídos entre lilas* and *Los perturbados entre lilas*.

⁷ Thorpe Running, ‘The Negative Poems of Alejandra Pizarnik’, in *The Critical Poem: Borges, Paz and Other Language-Centred Poets in Latin America* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1996), pp. 87–104.

limits' (p. 104). For Pizarnik, such a language was ultimately equated with silence or death.

Tradition and Voices

Pizarnik was acutely aware of tradition and of writing in the wake of others. We can see her as indebted to T. S. Eliot's notion that 'the most individual parts of [a poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets . . . assert their immortality most vigorously'.⁸ According to César Aira, Pizarnik 'vivió y leyó y escribió en la estela del surrealismo',⁹ as well as being a successor to the tradition of French *poètes maudits* and to Latin American poets such as Rubén Darío and Alfonsina Storni. Aside from direct intertextual reference, Pizarnik's acquaintance with Darío is obvious in her general penchant for Modernista imagery.¹⁰ The legacy of Storni, meanwhile, can be seen in frequent thematic echoes of her poem 'La loba', and of her resonantly-titled collection *Mundo de siete pozos* (1934); the idea that 'morir es partir' from Storni's *Diario de navegación* (1930) resurfaces in Pizarnik's early poem 'La última inocencia', discussed above, and informs her ongoing sense of leaving as dying. Pizarnik's attitude towards such precursors was experienced both as a richness and as a very real threat, an anxiety of influence. An early unpublished poem by Pizarnik entitled 'Destino de alfonsina' begins with a tribute: 'Junto a ti, hermana/ de las olas, dejé unas flores' (Princeton, box 4, folder 1). However, she later mocks such an idea of sorority, labelling one of the characters in *La bucanera de Pernambuco* 'No-Alfonsina' (*Prosa*, p. 160). Such ambivalence is symptomatic of the fact that Pizarnik knew that she could not 'form [her]self wholly on one or two private admirations' (Eliot, p. 81), but had somehow to find her own voice. She comments wryly in her diary 'Supongo que pertenezco al género de poeta lírico amenazado por lo inefable y lo incommunicable. Y no obstante, no lo deseo ser' (*Diarios*, p. 413).

The question of Pizarnik's poetic voice, or more aptly voices, is one which has occupied a prominent place in the substantial critical literature on her work.¹¹ Indeed it has become something of a critical commonplace to contrast the lyrical

⁸ T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919), repr. in *Twentieth Century Poetry: Critical Essays and Documents*, ed. Graham Martin and P. N. Furbank (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1975), pp. 79–85 (p. 80). Pizarnik published a critical essay 'Sobre T. S. Eliot' in *El corno emplumado*, 14 (1965), 89, and she refers to him in her diaries and notebooks.

⁹ César Aira, *Alejandra Pizarnik* (Rosario: Beatriz Viterbo, 1998), p. 11.

¹⁰ As charted by Alicia Borinsky in 'Alejandra Pizarnik: The Self and its Impossible Landscapes', in *A Dream of Light and Shadow: Portraits of Latin American Women Writers*, ed. Marjorie Agosín (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995), pp. 291–302.

¹¹ For example, Susan Bassnett's 'Speaking with Many Voices: The Poems of Alejandra Pizarnik', in her *Knives and Angels: Women Writers in Latin America* (London: Zed Books, 1990), pp. 36–51; Susana Haydu, 'Las dos voces de Alejandra Pizarnik', in *El puente de las palabras: homenaje a David Lagmanovich*, ed. Inés Azar (Washington: Organization of American States, 1994), pp. 245–56.

voice of her early poems with the biting, self-destructive and obscene voice of the later prose and theatrical work. Critics have tended to privilege the former voice, which Susana Chávez Silverman here aptly characterizes as the ‘overdeterminedly “Pizarnikian” voice’ in her essay ‘Gender, Sexuality and Silence(s) in the Writing of Alejandra Pizarnik’. But recent publications and the availability of manuscript collections allow for a broader and fuller assessment of the many voices of Pizarnik. The appearance of her *Poesía completa* in 2000, *Prosa completa* in 2002 (including substantial sections devoted to her critical articles, prologues and reviews) and the *Diarios* in 2003, together with the Pizarnik Collection housed in the Princeton Library (which first became accessible in 2002), give a more complex picture.¹² They also, as Cristina Piña explores here in her essay ‘The “Complete” Works of Alejandra Pizarnik? Editors and Editions’, raise timely theoretical and ethical questions about precisely what constitutes an oeuvre. Piña notes how some of Pizarnik’s letters can be seen as text in a Barthesian sense, and have indeed been productively read as such alongside the punning prose works. Whilst such generic ambiguity enriches the interpretative potential of both texts, it presents problems of categorization for the would-be editor of Pizarnik’s ‘complete work’. Piña highlights inconsistencies arising from problems of classification in the recent Lumen edition of Pizarnik’s poetry and prose, and also of her diaries, and outlines the issues for the scholar of Pizarnik in dealing with this newly available material.¹³

One of the main strands of this reassessment of Pizarnik deals with the crucial importance of her reading, as critic and poet, of other texts, and their subsequent incorporation or transmutation into her own, what Delfina Muschiatti describes elsewhere using the verb ‘fagocitar’.¹⁴ Octavio Paz, in his introduction to *Árbol de Diana*, speaks about a ‘cristalización verbal’ (*Poesía*, p. 101), and this notion is important to an understanding of Pizarnik’s poetic process. The ‘verbal crystallization’ of what can now be appreciated as a truly vast nexus of intertexts into something new and individual comes under scrutiny in those essays which here deal with Pizarnik as both reader and poet in parallel. Pizarnik the careful reader, already revealed to us in those of her review essays gathered in Piña’s 1993 edition of *Obras completas: poesía completa y prosa selecta*, takes on greater significance through the substantial section devoted to critical works in the *Prosa completa*, especially when read alongside her other critical essays which she published in diverse journals, but which have not as yet all been collected in a single volume. We can see through all these readings and through her

¹² A finding aid and description of the Princeton Alejandra Pizarnik Papers may be accessed from <http://libweb2.princeton.edu/rbsc2/aids/msslist/mainindex.htm>

¹³ Another edition of Pizarnik’s complete works, *Obra completa*, ed. Gustavo Zuluaga (Medellín: Árbol de Diana, 2000), was not widely distributed. Zuluaga also edited the following by Pizarnik: *Poemas* (Medellín: Endymion, 1986); *Prosa poética* (Medellín: Endymion, 1987); *Obras selectas* (Medellín: Holderlin, 1992; republ. as *Obras escogidas*).

¹⁴ Delfina Muschiatti, ‘Las tres caras de Alejandra Pizarnik’, review of Pizarnik’s *Poesía completa* (Barcelona: Lumen, 2001), in *Página/12* (Argentina, July 2001). Reproduced at http://www.lainsignia.org/2001/julio/cul_077.htm

unpublished notebooks the configuration of her personal library and ‘private admirations’ – Artaud, Baudelaire, Breton, Cortázar, Macedonio Fernández, Mallarmé, Michaux and Paz, amongst others. Obviously many of these preferences had already been apparent through intertextuality in the poetry, but others (such as Góngora and Quevedo, many of whose sonnets she copies into her notebooks) were a more latent presence. We also see confirmation of Ivonne Bordelois’s statement that ‘Alejandra conocía a los grandes marginales, nunca citados en las bibliografías académicas,’¹⁵ represented in an Argentinian context by such writers as Antonio Porchia, Georges Schehadé, or Georg Christoph Lichtenberg (to whose ‘waste books’ or ‘Sudelbuch’ we might compare her ‘palais du vocabulaire’ notebooks).¹⁶

The breadth of Pizarnik’s reading and reviewing, and the importance of her readerly and ‘critical’ voice, is therefore something which is only recently being investigated by scholars, and it is explored here by Florinda Goldberg’s essay ‘Alejandra Pizarnik, the Perceptive Reader’. Goldberg highlights in particular the importance to Pizarnik of her readings of Octavio Paz; she also evaluates the degree of empathy or distancing between reader and text in several of Pizarnik’s reviews. As Cristina Piña has noted, the degree of closeness to her subject lends some of her critical essays the character of ‘textos “dobles”’, telling us as much about her as about the text being reviewed.¹⁷ We could see this critical process as Pizarnik’s ‘invisible work’, to borrow Efraín Kristal’s term, which is now being made visible.¹⁸ Kristal sees the ‘invisible’ process of translation as more central to Borges’s literary process than the familiar images of labyrinths, mirrors, tigers or encyclopedias, and in the same way, Pizarnik’s ‘invisible’ activity as reader/critic could be seen to be as central to her poetic development and configuration as the much-discussed images of the night, death, childhood, the garden.

Jason Wilson’s essay ‘Alejandra Pizarnik, Surrealism and Reading’ also looks at Pizarnik’s activity as a reader, but focuses in particular on her complex and contradictory relationship to surrealism as an example of the dynamic between reading and creating in her life. Although Pizarnik’s ‘clarifying sojourn’ in Paris (to use Jason Weiss’s phrase) is another of the biographical details by which she could be seen simply to conform to an Argentine pattern,¹⁹ Wilson’s chapter looks more closely at this Parisian apprenticeship, pointing out that Pizarnik read not only the surrealists, but also criticism on the surrealists, and she therefore ‘found her voice as a critic of surrealism’ (Wilson). His examination of Pizarnik places her in a Borgesian readerly tradition, in the sense that the writer is first

¹⁵ Cited by Cristina Piña in *Alejandra Pizarnik: una biografía* (Buenos Aires: Planeta, 1991; 2nd edn Corregidor, 1999), p. 99.

¹⁶ Princeton, box 7, folder 42 contains a manuscript entitled ‘Sudelbuch’ [sic].

¹⁷ See introduction to *Alejandra Pizarnik, Obras completas*, ed. Cristina Piña, p. 9.

¹⁸ Efraín Kristal, *Invisible Work: Borges and Translation* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002).

¹⁹ Jason Weiss, *The Lights of Home: A Century of Latin American Writers in Paris* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 59.

and foremost a reader. However, in her case – as Wilson notes with respect to her re-reading of Breton's *Nadja* – the writer is a reader whose intensely identificatory reading strategies threatened to cause anxiety regarding her own creative voice.

The creative voice about which Pizarnik seems to have been most ambivalent is the obscene, absurd and humorous voice, mainly known to us through her later prose works and theatrical pieces. However, far from being a late and sporadic experiment, this kind of prose was worked at extensively by Pizarnik throughout her life; indeed, amongst her manuscripts and notebooks there are examples of other theatrical pieces, prose pieces and extended humorous prose works which show Pizarnik's concerted efforts to express herself in an anti-lyrical way. Carolina Depetris had already underlined the importance of the late prose, reading it as 'el indicio fundamental de una nueva dirección poética tendiente a resolver la tensión entre opciones disímiles en la que constantemente se debate su escritura'.²⁰ Evelyn Fishburn's essay in this volume, 'Different Aspects of Humour and Wordplay in the Work of Alejandra Pizarnik', gives Pizarnik's humorous prose voice its due attention, analysing in depth the linguistic and cultural mechanisms employed in the key texts, *Los perturbados entre lilas* and *La bucanera de Pernambuco o Hilda la polígrafa*. Fishburn draws our attention to one specific aspect of Pizarnik's wordplay which is notably and surprisingly underdeveloped by her, that is, the Jewish dimension. Critics have frequently invoked Pizarnik's own rootlessness and sense of non-belonging, and have linked this to her Jewish identity.²¹ As Fishburn notes, Pizarnik herself felt strongly her lack of roots: 'la tremenda soledad que implica no tener raíces en ningún lado' (*Diarios*, p. 373), whilst valuing the links she still had to Jewish culture. Fishburn examines how the poet's ambivalent attempts to return to her Jewish roots are surprisingly rarely filtered through specifically Jewish humour, despite her obvious ease on a domestic level with that socio-cultural milieu. What emerges far more prominently than issues of ethnic identity is issues of sexual identity. Sexuality is the predominant semantic field for Pizarnik's wordplay, and through it she gives reign to another ambiguous voice among her many voices.

Ambiguous sexuality is an aspect of Pizarnik's biography which has been the subject of much discussion, from Cristina Piña's biography onwards. Piña alluded to Pizarnik's lesbian relationships, but resisted reading her work in the light of these (Piña, *Alejandra Pizarnik*, pp. 12 and 190). This detached critical approach was countered by Chávez Silverman and Sylvia Molloy, who both

²⁰ Carolina Depetris, *Aporética de la muerte: estudio crítico sobre Alejandra Pizarnik* (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 2004), p. 176.

²¹ On this topic, see for example Leonardo Senkman, 'Alejandra Pizarnik: de la morada de las palabras a la intemperie de la muerte', in *La identidad judía en la literatura argentina* (Buenos Aires: Pardes, 1983), pp. 337–40; and Cristina Piña, *Poesía y experiencia del límite: leer a Alejandra Pizarnik* (Buenos Aires: Botella al Mar, 1999), pp. 79–85.