

## Drawing Up the Family Tree: Analyzing the Symbolic Incarnations of Alejandra Pizarnik's Lyrical I in *Árbol de Diana*

Madeleine Stratford

Université du Québec en Outaouais

The doppelgänger theme constantly surfaces in the poetry of Argentine writer Alejandra Pizarnik (1936-72). Unable to truly exist on paper, Pizarnik's speaking subject typically lacks unity and suffers from a serious personality disorder. From a semantic point of view, Pizarnik's lyrical I often looks at herself in a mirror, a recurrent symbol throughout her work (Ferrell 48; Fitts 55; Rubí 102). Also frequently present is the image of the shadow (Guibelalde 46-47; Zeiss 325-43), which is the main character of eight posthumously published prose poems.<sup>1</sup> From a stylistic point of view, the speaking subject is not only represented by the first person singular (*yo*), but also hides under the third (most often feminine, *ella*), or even the second person (*tú*).<sup>2</sup> In addition, the lyrical I tends to have multiple referents, most of them (but not all) feminine: human beings defined according to a main attribute, animals, or inanimate objects (Aira 17-18; Álvarez 23; Fitts 53; Genovese 66; Goldberg 70; Zeiss vi).<sup>3</sup> This fragmentation of the speaking subject is so omnipresent in Pizarnik's poetry that critics argue it is one of its characteristic traits (Aira 17; Guibelalde 45; Lopez Luaces; Monder 20; Running 92; Telaak 306).

In 1960, Pizarnik left her native Buenos Aires to go to Paris. In her tiny maid's room, she was very productive: besides writing poems, prose texts and a diary, she contributed to several literary journals and translated French authors into Spanish (Yves Bonnefoy, Antonin Artaud, Henri Michaux, Aimé Césaire). During this vibrant period, she wrote her fourth collection of poems, *Árbol de Diana*. Published by the prestigious publishing house Sur, headed by Victoria Ocampo, and prefaced by Octavio Paz, *Árbol de Diana* established Pizarnik as a poet in her own right, both in Argentina and abroad. The book is one of Pizarnik's best known collections, one of the most translated (Stratford "Alejandra Pizarnik"), and it is often cited as a typical example of her writing style (brief, repetitive, creative with space and the use/absence of punctuation) and favorite themes (desire to live within poems, quest for language/silence, obsession with death). Coincidentally, *Árbol de*

---

<sup>1</sup> The 1972 manuscripts were first published in 2000 (Barcelona: Lumen) by Ana Becció in *Poesía completa* (401-10).

<sup>2</sup> Among others, see Natalia Cancellieri (213) and Michal Heidi Gai (251).

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Anne Zeiss focuses on five Pizarnikian personae: "la melancólica," "la niña," "la polígrafa," "Sombra," and "Sacha."

*Diana* has also been deemed particularly representative of the typical dislocation of the poet's speaking subject. Ana María Rodríguez Francia, for instance, finds that "[e]l motivo del doble [...] aparece constantemente" throughout the cycle (250).

Most critics only distinguish two entities in the book's lyrical personae, generally described as polarized opposites gravitating around dual concepts such as love/violence, presence/absence, or word/silence. Thorpe Running describes the two manifestations as "the present searching one and the absent one from the realm of death" (95). Jill S. Kuhnheim also believes that the *Árbol de Diana's* lyrical I has two incarnations: "... one feeds off the other, one seems to speak at the cost of the other's silence" (69). According to Kuhnheim, *Árbol de Diana's* first person singular gradually fades as the cycle progresses, eventually absorbed by a mysterious third person, "ella" (68).<sup>4</sup> For Carolina Depetris the two halves of the subject try to reunite throughout the cycle, a principle which, she finds, is "la fórmula que estructura el libro" (37). Yet Alicia Borinsky introduces two important nuances when she declares that "there are *at least two* in the *individualistic* poetic persona" (295; my emphasis). On the one hand, Borinsky acknowledges that there are more than just two doubles in *Árbol de Diana*. On the other hand, she situates them within a speaker who, although multifaceted, can be termed "individualistic," and thus displays a certain kind of unity. This paper aims at mapping the symbolic unity in the outwardly fragmented network of personae assumed by Pizarnik's lyrical I in *Árbol de Diana*. By comparing the subject's actions and attributes with those of the cycle's other protagonists, it will be shown that the relationship between its multiple incarnations is not so much one of alterity, but rather one of identity.

### Me, Myself, and Other I's

*Árbol de Diana's* content can be divided into three parts. The first one, the longest, is a cycle of thirty-eight numbered poems also entitled "Árbol de Diana" (which is the focus of this article). The second one is a selection of poems from Pizarnik's two previous collections (*La última inocencia* and *Las aventuras perdidas*). The third and final one is a group of seven poems written in 1959. All thirty-eight poems are extremely short (the whole cycle totals a mere 863 words), lines are often truncated and grammatically ambiguous or incomplete, and there is only one text per page. This has led some critics to view the book as fragmented. However, Graciela de Sola argues that despite its fragmented nature, the poems of *Árbol de Diana* actually create a somewhat cohesive whole (547). In addition, for Gai (257), Kuhnheim (68), Cristián Basso Benelli and Mariana Di Ció (263), the thirty-eight poems could be read as fragments of a longer poem, which means that, taken together, they could make up one whole.

I propose that the poems, as they enter a kind of dialogue with one another, tell a story, even if they do not do so in a linear fashion. In a previously published article, in which I analyzed the distribution of the cycle's pronouns, I argued that the first person singular was present throughout *Árbol de Diana*, and constituted the core of the thirty-eight-poem cycle: "... la première personne du singulier ... compte plus de marques visibles que toutes les autres [50], répandues dans le plus grand nombre de poèmes [16]" ("Le sujet traduisant" 294). As I see it, the poems represent thirty-eight fugitive steps of the lyrical I's

---

<sup>4</sup> The word is in Spanish and placed between quotation marks in Kuhnheim.

introspective voyage through her own life story, told mostly in the present tense in a very graphic way, like a series of snapshots out of which the reader has to make his or her own photo album.<sup>5</sup> Like any photo album, it shows the speaking subject from various angles and recalls different stages of her life. Although these appear in a non-chronological (and sometimes seemingly illogical) order, they are held together by a clear beginning and end. Indeed, the first poem (*Árbol* 11) marks the birth of *Árbol de Diana*'s poetic voice ("He dado el salto de mí al alba. / He dejado mi cuerpo junto a la luz / y he cantado la tristeza de lo que nace") and the last poem (*Árbol* 48; poem 38) signals its death: "Este canto arrepentido, vigía detrás de mis poemas: / este canto me desmiente, me amordaza." The presence of a clear beginning and end indicates that all poems belong to the same story, stemming from a single poetic tree.

What is more, the various characters surfacing throughout *Árbol de Diana*—both female and male—can all be seen as potential referents, or concrete faces, for the ambiguous third person singular that surfaces throughout the cycle (eighteen times in a total of five poems). Cancellieri lists most metaphorical "máscaras" assumed by the speaking subject, dividing them into two groups: "... las metáforas utilizadas por Pizarnik al construir su propio personaje poético suelen remitir a dos campos semánticos distintos: el de la errancia, con el que siempre se representan estados transitorios, pasajeros ... [,] y el de la identidad negada, indefinida ..." (212). I agree with her that the various protagonists of *Árbol de Diana* do share many characteristics. However, I believe that the relationships between them are much more complex and go well beyond the typical *double split* of the lyrical I as described by most critics.

All in all, eight chains of characters can be identified in *Árbol de Diana*, and all of them seem to be semantically interrelated (see organogram in Annex I). The first group (group 1) that appears in *Árbol de Diana* is formed by "la silenciosa en el desierto," "la viajera con el vaso vacío," and "la sombra de su sombra" (13; poem 3). In this poem, the juxtaposition of the characters appears to offer a threefold definition of the lyrical I ("mí"). Indeed, the lyrical voice says "cuídate de mí" to a second person ("tú"), asking her at once to take care or beware of her and of the three characters, as if they represented different sides of her. Parallels can be easily drawn between the three. For example, the absence of water (in the desert and the empty glass) links the "silenciosa" to the "viajera." Also, the possessive adjective "su" implies that the "sombra de su sombra" is in fact the shadow of the "viajera." Those three protagonists could thus become only two, the "silenciosa" and the "viajera," who really make up one: the lyrical I ("mí").

Nonetheless, the multifaceted identity of *Árbol de Diana*'s lyrical I is much more complex, and goes far beyond this first group. A subgroup of "la silenciosa" emerges when she implicitly comes back in the masculine form "un mudo" (15; poem 5; group 2). Yet "la viajera" really appears to be the more dominant character in the cycle. A smaller, younger version of her resurfaces in *Árbol de Diana* ("la pequeña viajera" 44; poem 34). But she is not the only character to be given the epithet "pequeña." In fact, this adjective starts its own

---

<sup>5</sup> This interpretation seems consequent with Pizarnik's own conception of the reader's active role: "Cuando termino un poema, no lo he terminado. En verdad lo abandono, y el poema ya no es mío o, más exactamente, el poema existe apenas... Únicamente el lector puede terminar el poema inacabado, rescatar sus múltiples sentidos, agregarle otros nuevos" ("El poema y su lector" 68).

chain of characters (group 3), since the same child-like quality is attributed to “la pequeña olvidada” (14; poem 4), “la pequeña muerta” (32; poem 22), and, indirectly, to “una niña de seda” (22; poem 12), who, because she is a child, is probably also “pequeña.” Each of the four child protagonists starts its own subgroup. The “pequeña viajera,” with her “cuerpo caliente,” recalls “la que ama al viento” who dies with her “camisa en llamas” (17; poem 7; group 4). For her part, “la pequeña olvidada” seems to portray an image of the past, like “la que fui” (21; poem 11), or she could be a euphemism for “la pequeña muerta” who in turn, once she is in paradise, could become a kind of “ángel” (35; poem 25; group 5). Here, another subgroup materializes as the “pequeña muerta” is indirectly reflected in “la dormida,” a character who appears twice in the cycle (42, 46; poems 32, 36; group 6).

In fact, the three “pequeña[s]” and “la dormida” could very well constitute the “dulces metamorfosis” of the “niña de seda” (22; poem 12) or the “fornicación de nombres” of the “hermosa autómeta” (27; poem 17). For it cannot be forgotten that if the silken child is a sleep walker, she is asleep. That explicitly links her to female “la dormida” (42, 46; poems 32, 36) as well as to male “alguien en mí dormido” (24; poem 14; group 7), which are themselves connected by the action of eating. Also, the fact that the somnambulant child acts unwittingly, automatically, makes her akin to “[l]a hermosa autómeta” (group 8). But the automaton seems to belong to the third group as well, since her “espejo incendiado” (27; poem 17) evokes both the fire of the “camisa en llamas” of “la que ama al viento” (17; poem 7) and the “espejo de cenizas” of “la pequeña muerta” (32; poem 22). Moreover, the singing and storytelling of “[l]a hermosa autómeta” (“se canta, se encanta, se cuenta casos y cosas”) make her a double of “la pequeña viajera” who also tells a story: “moría explicando su muerte.” Lastly, if the automaton is “su elemento místico,” it could mean that she is, in fact, “un ángel,” since angels are often considered spiritual—or indeed mystical—beings (Chevalier and Gheerbrant 44).

In short, the chains that have been highlighted here all seem to stem from one common core: group 3. The main image presented in the cycle is that of an ever transforming little sleepwalker who travels through time and space, sometimes escaping her own body to take a better look at herself, and who narrates what she experiences during her different astral projections—temporary deaths—until she finally becomes silent and does die. And this little traveler, isn't it precisely *Árbol de Diana's* lyrical I?

### Unity in Plurality

Besides establishing links between characters, the recurrence of certain verbs and attributes seem to link these characters with the personal pronouns used in the cycle. Here, the semantic parallels often have to do with the first person singular, which emphasizes its importance (see table in Annex II). For instance, it has been seen earlier that the protagonists of *Árbol de Diana* (“la silenciosa,” “la viajera,” and “la sombra” [13; poem 3]) act as explicit representations of the lyrical I. Similarly, “la dormida” absorbs the lyrical I from within, impersonating the “alguien en mí dormido” (24; poem 14) who eats and drinks her from the inside (“me come y me bebe” [24; poem 14]), devouring “su corazón de medianoche” (42; poem 32). This recurring hunger and thirst could explain why the glass of “la viajera” is empty (13; poem 3). But the linguistic and symbolic associations between *Árbol de Diana's* lyrical I and its various incarnations do not stop there. In fact, several

chains of actions and attributes relate to the lyrical I, as well as to her other pronominal personae (“nosotras,” “tú,” and “ella”).

### *The Traveler*

The first chain centers on life and death and the constant comings and goings between two. This is not surprising, as almost all critics, whether or not they analyze Pizarnik's work from a biographical point of view, agree that her poetry is intrinsically related to life (Chávez Silverman 2; Cohen 44; Evangelista 42; Roggiano 51; Requeni 206) and that death plays a central role in her writing (Cohen 51; Fitts 42; Haydu 63-68; Nicholson 12; Rodríguez Francia 252-53; Telaak 304). In *Árbol de Diana* 1 (11), for instance, the “yo” has “dado el salto de [s]í al alba,” which functions as a type of birth. Six poems later, “la que ama al viento” also jumps (17; poem 7), this time to her death, the opposite of birth: “Muere de muerte lejana.” This opposition between birth and death in the form of a jump implicitly reappears in *Árbol de Diana* 35 (45), where the subject instructs her life to let itself fall (“déjate caer”), as if it had stayed suspended in mid-air after making the big jump, hesitating to embrace death completely. Also in *Árbol de Diana* 1 (11), the lyrical voice says she has “dejado [su] cuerpo,” as if she were having an out-of-body experience. This soul coming out of the speaker's body recalls what happens to the “ella” of *Árbol de Diana* 6, who “se desnuda en el paraíso / de su memoria” (16). A related chain has to do with movement, or more precisely with travelling (both forward and backward). It is made up of the walking lyrical I of *Árbol de Diana* 14 (24) and *Árbol de Diana* 17 (27), along with the one who “[s]e alej[a] de los nombres / que hilan el silencio de las cosas” (38; poem 28). Because they are on the move, the three could be perceived as manifestations of “la viajera” (13; poem 3) or “la pequeña viajera” (44; poem 34). All in all, it seems that this traveler serves to describe the lyrical I with regard to time and space: it shows readers how she recalls past and present versions of herself.

### *The Silent One*

The next character, the silent one, paradoxically says quite a lot about the lyrical I: it explains her relationship to her only medium, language. The silent one, again taking root in the first poem (11), starts her own chain, of characters through concepts relating to silence, song, and speech, also omnipresent themes in Pizarnik's work. According to Lidia Evangelista, Pizarnik was always searching for “la palabra mágica que pueda decir, a la vez, los sonidos y el silencio” (47). *Árbol de Diana* is no exception to the rule. In the first poem of the cycle, the speaker says “he cantado la tristeza de lo que nace” (11), but as the cycle progresses, it becomes clear that her own voice is what is being born (25, 31; poems 15, 21), which means that she is singing her own birth. This singing links her both to the “hermosa autómatas” who “se canta” in *Árbol de Diana* 17 (27), and to the “rostros” that will sing (“canten”) as soon as the first person plural makes the mirrors pulse (36; poem 26). Furthermore, even though the second person singular does not sing, she speaks “como un poema enterado / del silencio de las cosas” (28; poem 18), and poetry is often compared to a kind of song. To a certain extent, this act of communication leads back to the “autómata,” who “se cuenta casos y cosas” (27; poem 17). In *Árbol de Diana* 14, the lyrical I refers to a poem that “que no digo” (24). This absence of speech calls forth “la silenciosa” (13; poem 3), “un mudo” (15; poem 5), as well as “[la que] tiene miedo de no saber nombrar” (16;

poem 6). In *Árbol de Diana* 38 (48), the “canto arrepentido” that is contained “detrás” the poems becomes the lyrical I’s swan song: after it, the subject stops speaking, reaching its own end as predicted by the first person plural in *Árbol de Diana* 29, which lived “con una mano en la garganta” (39).

A third chain of semantic links with the lyrical I relates to the wind, a recurrent symbol in Pizarnik’s work, which often acts as a metaphor for silence. In her poetry, the wind represents a kind of absolute, “emblema de la totalidad en su doble carácter de punto de unión y centro de energía engendradora” (Piña 17-18). As stated in the title of the first poem of the anthological section of *La última inocencia*, the wind is “Origen” (“the origin”) and it needs to be taken care of: “Hay que salvar al viento” (51). Silence or whispered speech, *Árbol de Diana*’s wind has a positive and a negative side: it is a bringer of life (“flor que se abre al viento” [22; poem 12]) or a harbinger of pain (“[p]agará el viento” [14; poem 4] and “has golpeado al viento / con tus propios huesos” [26; poem 16]) or death (she who loves the wind is actually dying [20; poem 10]). Thus, “la que ama al viento” merges with the speaking subject of *Árbol de Diana* 10, who shapes into “objetos que amar” the “rostros doblados” filling the “viento” (20) along with the speaker of *Árbol de Diana* 16, who has “golpeado al viento / con [s]us propios huesos” (26). Another parallel can be established between these characters and “la dormida” (46; poem 36), who enters into a dialogue with a wind which brings her “la tenue respuesta de las hojas.” It would thus appear that wind is a symbol for silence and song is a symbol for the language of poetry. Both are intrinsically related in *Árbol de Diana*, as both are desired and feared by the lyrical I, as in most of Pizarnik’s poetry.

### *The Sleeper and the Shadow*

The silent one blends in with the figure of the shadow through “la dormida” and her sense of sight. Indeed, the eyes of this sleeper, who “mira sus ojos solos” (46; poem 36), are a reminder of the lyrical I of *Árbol de Diana* 11, who sits down “en el umbral de [su] mirada” together with another version of herself (21), and of the speaker in *Árbol de Diana* 19, who has eyes tattooed onto hers (29). The former version of the lyrical I called forth in *Árbol de Diana* 11 brings out a kind of nostalgia for the past (21) that is also palpable in *Árbol de Diana* 12’s “niña de seda” who has stopped metamorphosing (22), and in *Árbol de Diana* 15, where the speaking subject misses her “oficio de recién llegada” (25) which could be the moment of her birth (recapped, as was seen earlier, in *Árbol de Diana* 1 [11]). This childlike version of the lyrical I is stuck in time, forever dormant, like the automaton of *Árbol de Diana* 17 (27). They both sleepwalk: neither of them controls their own movements. The lyrical I feels a growing pain because of this: in *Árbol de Diana* 21, she declares having “doblemente sufrido” thinking of the divide between past (“allá”) and present (“aquí”) (31). In *Árbol de Diana* 31, the suffering becomes “en verdad demasiado grande” (41), until in *Árbol de Diana* 35, the lyrical I feels she has to welcome it instead of overcoming it: “déjate . . . doler,” she asks of her life (45).

Otherwise, the whole poetic tree created by Pizarnik has, according to Paz, a translucent quality, so much so that “debido a su extraordinaria transparencia, pocos pueden verlo” (8). In this respect, the “transparencia” of the first persons singular and plural (*Árbol* 27, 47; poems 17, 37) not only reinforces the identity already established between them, but makes them appear like shadows or ghosts, as if the lyrical I were the immaterial

wandering voice of a dead person. And death is indeed omnipresent in *Árbol de Diana*, as in Pizarnik's work in general. On the one hand, the lyrical I of *Árbol de Diana* 13 attempts to explain that a boat sailed away from her while simultaneously carrying her away with it (23). This explaining is akin to *Árbol de Diana* 34's little traveler who "moría explicando su muerte" (44). These seemingly paradoxical images in fact lead back to the out-of-body experience alluded to earlier: the "barco" "que partió de mí . . . llevándome" (23; poem 13) could then be construed as a symbol for death, carrying her soul (her inner self) away from her body (her outward self). Her soul, freed from her earthly form, is able to keep on talking, because the poet's voice, unlike her body, lives on. On the other hand, when the speaking subject "[s]e danz[a] y [s]e llor[a] en [sus] numerosos funerales" (*Árbol* 27; poem 17), it suggests that she indeed dies, but that she does so repeatedly, which again points to the astral projection interpretation. Besides the "autómata," two other protagonists actually die during the cycle, "la que ama al viento" (17; poem 7) and "la pequeña viajera" (44; poem 34), while a third one is already dead: "la pequeña muerta" (32; poem 22). This could indicate that each time a character dies, the lyrical I also dies, or that she dies each time she loses her voice, that is, at the end of each poem.

In light of these comments, it seems that the semantic links between *Árbol de Diana's* protagonists and pronouns are quite strong, particularly those relating to the first person singular, both on a quantitative and a qualitative level. Whether she is mentioned explicitly (by way of a pronoun or a verb ending) or implicitly through shared actions and attributes with other pronouns or characters, the lyrical I clearly leaves her mark—linguistic and symbolic—throughout the cycle. These marks are clearly linked and together, they contribute to making a complete portrait of the cycle's lyrical I. Indeed, the speaking subject, presumably female (but sometimes also male), seems to be at the core of the poetic tree germinated by Pizarnik. Like so many branches, the remaining pronouns and characters—named or anonymous—seem at once to stem and grow away from the lyrical I.

### **The I behind Diana**

No matter how multifaceted it may be, *Árbol de Diana's* lyrical I has a name. By way of paraphrasing Paz's words, it could be said that "colocado frente al sol, el árbol de Diana refleja sus rayos y los reúne en un foco central" (9) called "Diana." This mythological name, full of symbolic connotations could be a key to interpreting *Árbol de Diana's* lyrical I's complexity. Some critics have commented on Diana, but to my knowledge, none has focused thoroughly on the name's impact on the overall cycle, perhaps because it forms part of the title rather than of the poems themselves. Antonio Beneyto mentions Diana in passing, stating that she is "la diosa lunar" (25), a comment which Bernardo Ezequiel Koremblit reproduces almost word for word (35). Basso Benelli dedicates a couple of paragraphs in his M.A. thesis to the goddess Diana, saying that *Árbol de Diana's* lyrical I is a hunter like the deity but that unlike the goddess, she is not hunting monsters but herself, or "las fuerzas amenazantes de la integridad de su ser" (section 4.3). Basso Benelli goes on to say that "aquella afrenta se libra consigo mismo en los espacios que ya no son los bosques sino el inconsciente." As for Di Ció, she notes that the mythological reading of the title is at the center of Paz's preface, "irradiador de todas las otras acepciones" (261). However, even though Di Ció does discuss the importance of the myth of Diana, she does so with regard to

Paz's preface more than to the cycle itself. Yet it would seem that the figure of Diana acts as a kind of binder for the lyrical I's split selves, and as such, is worth more attention.

An Italic deity, Diana was initially one of the names for the Moon goddess ("Diane" 196; Zimmerman, "Diana" 85). At the very beginning of her cult, Diana was also the goddess of nocturnal light (Schiling 580), or indeed of light itself in general (Guirand and Schmidt, "Diane" 665). This link with light is not surprising, since etymologically, the Latin name *Diana* is rooted in *dius*, meaning *luminous* (Schiling 580; Monaghan, "Diana, Jana" 84). The fact that Diana is identified with the moon could have influenced Pizarnik's choice of the cycle's only named protagonist. Indeed, María Isabel Calle Romero remarks that the "dolorosa luna" is one of the "grandes personajes astrales" of Pizarnik's work (117), one that is able to reconcile opposites: "... la luna puede presentarse también como componente deseado de ese cosmos en el que los demás viven, junto al sol, felices" (117). Like the moon, which has three phases (waxing, full, waning), Diana also had three possible divine incarnations, each one bearing her own name: Diana on earth for the waxing moon, Luna in heaven for the full moon, and Hecate in hell for the waning moon ("Diana"; King 119; Monaghan, "Hecate, Hecate" 131-32; Zimmerman, "Hecate" 118). Because of these three manifestations, Diana earned the Latin nicknames "Triformis," "Tergemina" ("Diana"; King 119), and "Trivia" (Monaghan, "Diana, Jana" 84; Zimmerman, "Trivia" 278). Consequently, the primitive version of Diana was three goddesses in one.

In addition, these three lunar avatars were not the only masks worn by Diana. Indeed, she was the basis of two other triads: one with the nymph Egeria and with Virbius, god of the Aricia forest ("Egeria"; Monaghan, "Diana, Jana" 84); the other with Jana and Janus, who incidentally also has two incarnations (Cirlot 81; Guirand and Schmidt, "Janus" 733; Thibaud, "Diane" 101; Thibaud, "Janus" 186). In addition, Diana also has also been identified with the Greek goddess Artemis ("Diane" 196), who, interestingly enough, is also a complex, paradoxical divinity: "... she was the virgin who promoted promiscuity; she was the huntress who protected animals; she was a tree, a bear, the moon" (Monaghan, "Artemis" 27). These contradictory attributes, however, were not in conflict in the figure of Artemis. On the contrary, opposites merged within her to represent "the image of a woman moving through her life and assuming different roles at different times; she was a veritable compendium of feminine possibility," writes Patricia Monaghan ("Artemis" 27). As a Roman double of Artemis, Diana too can represent the female archetype in all of its complexity. In the end, it would seem that the goddess Diana is not of a dual or even triple nature, but holistically plural. Like in the Great Goddess of ancient times, right and wrong, night and day, man and woman coexist in Diana, if not always peacefully, at least side by side, a kind of balance between opposites that Paz identified in Pizarnik's *Árbol de Diana*: "El árbol de Diana es uno de los atributos masculinos de la deidad femenina. Algunos ven en esto una confirmación suplementaria del origen hermafrodita de la materia gris y, acaso, de todas las materias..." (8).

Because *Árbol de Diana*'s lyrical I bears the name of Diana, she too takes on the symbolic connotations of the Italic goddess and her various lunar incarnations, and of her Hellenic counterpart. As a consequence, the cycle's speaking subject could also be considered to be a female archetype, whose seemingly antinomic properties in fact complement one another. In such a context, it becomes easier to see why *Árbol de Diana*'s lyrical I keeps changing shapes or *metamorphosing* throughout the cycle, becoming



sometimes another personal pronoun, sometimes a character—human, animal, or otherwise. In the end, it only seems fitting that *Árbol de Diana*'s lyrical voice can only find unity in plurality, just like the goddess after whom she was named.

That being said, there is another potential meaning of the name “Diana” that is worth mentioning: alchemists used it to refer to silver, lunar metal which, in their view, was very close to gold (Jagnaux 383). Even if modern science no longer uses the name “Diana” as an avatar for silver, the metaphorical expression “arbor Dianae”—in Spanish “árbol de Diana” and in English “tree of Diana” (Ozanam and Montucla 372-74) or “Diana’s tree” (Gregory 223)—is still used to refer to the branching patterns created by mixing silver, mercury, and nitric acid (Duval and Duval 343; Boquillon 39; Brisson 120; Jagnaux 384).<sup>6</sup> Terminologist Henri Van Hoof explains that the expression is well established in specialized vocabularies (270).<sup>7</sup> Paz not only saw this potential interpretation of the title, but chose it as a starting point to his preface, creatively adapting the definition of the *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*:<sup>8</sup> “(Quím.): cristalización verbal por amalgama de insomnio pasional y lucidez meridiana en una disolución de realidad sometida a las más altas temperaturas” (7). Di Ció finds in Paz’s definition—centered on the concepts of crystallization, amalgam and dissolution—the key to solving *Árbol de Diana*’s puzzles: “Además de explicitar la metáfora química, la elaboración poética de Paz da cuenta, a través de estas designaciones, de la relativa contradicción y de las tensiones no resueltas que impregnan la obra de Pizarnik; el producto no es caótico sino que tiene un orden propio, aunque de difícil percepción” (261). Curiously, however, it seems that no critic has brought up this particular meaning of the title besides Paz and Di Ció. Yet in light of the chemical interpretation of the title, it could be argued that, when being closely read, the tree of Diana created by Pizarnik takes the shape of a luminous word deposit forming branching patterns: the object she created is very much alive and, thanks to some poetic magic or alchemy, it can reunite and reconcile the lyrical I’s split personalities.

## Conclusion

This analysis of the network of personae relating to *Árbol de Diana*’s lyrical I has shown that she does not suffer from a double personality, but from at least an eight-folded split revolving around the character of a sleepwalking/talking child. Within this network, the third poem of the cycle plays a pivotal role (13). Indeed, it is the first poem (chronologically) to establish an explicit link between the lyrical I and the three major symbolic personae (“la silenciosa,” “la viajera,” and “la sombra”), a link which pervades the cycle. All these characters, however, are delicately intertwined: rather than contributing to the dissolution of the speaking subject, they in fact consolidate her identity, one where opposites not only attract, but interact.

In his preface to *Árbol de Diana*, Paz suggested that Pizarnik’s tree did not have roots or a clear form and that it even required, to be seen, a special effort on the part of the reader.

---

<sup>6</sup> A picture is shown in Annex III.

<sup>7</sup> The expression “philosophical tree” has also been used to describe the same phenomenon (“Amalgam” 715).

<sup>8</sup> “Cristalización rameada que se obtiene añadiendo amalgama de plata a una disolución de plata y mercurio en ácido nítrico” (“Árbol de Diana,” *DRAE*).

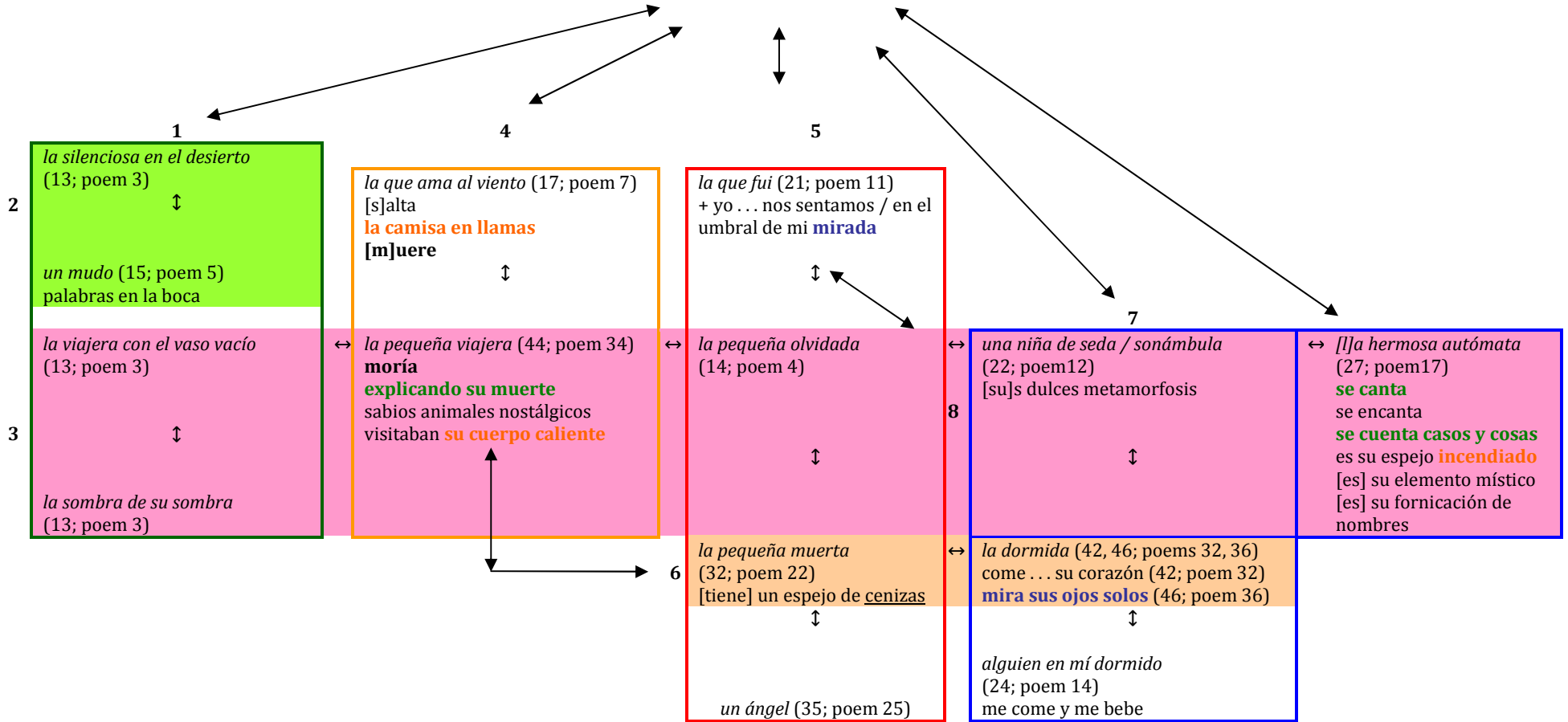
This analysis has shed light on the fact that although *Árbol de Diana* seems peopled by many—at first glance different and unrelated—characters, these do share strong bonds suggesting they are, in fact, incarnations of one and only one protagonist: the lyrical I. Like the goddess Diana after which she is named, she is one, yet has many faces. According to Fiona J. Mackintosh: “The continuity of expression between her [Pizarnik’s] poetry and her highly infantile drawings is remarkable . . .” (51). Interestingly enough, the family tree of Diana’s incarnations recalls another tree Pizarnik once drew for her friend Antonio Beneyto.<sup>9</sup> Like the *arbor Dianae*, it is small and frail. However, like the cycle of poems, it represents a somewhat cohesive tree whose branches carry tiny flowers as well as a few leaves with colorful faces that are both unique and visibly related.

---

<sup>9</sup> The drawing I am referring to was chosen as the illustration for the first complete English translation of the cycle by Frank Graziano and María Rosa Fort in *Alejandra Pizarnik: A Profile* (Durango: Logbridge-Rhodes, 1987 [31]).

**Annex I: Symbolic Incarnations of *Árbol de Diana's* lyrical I**  
(emphases are mine)

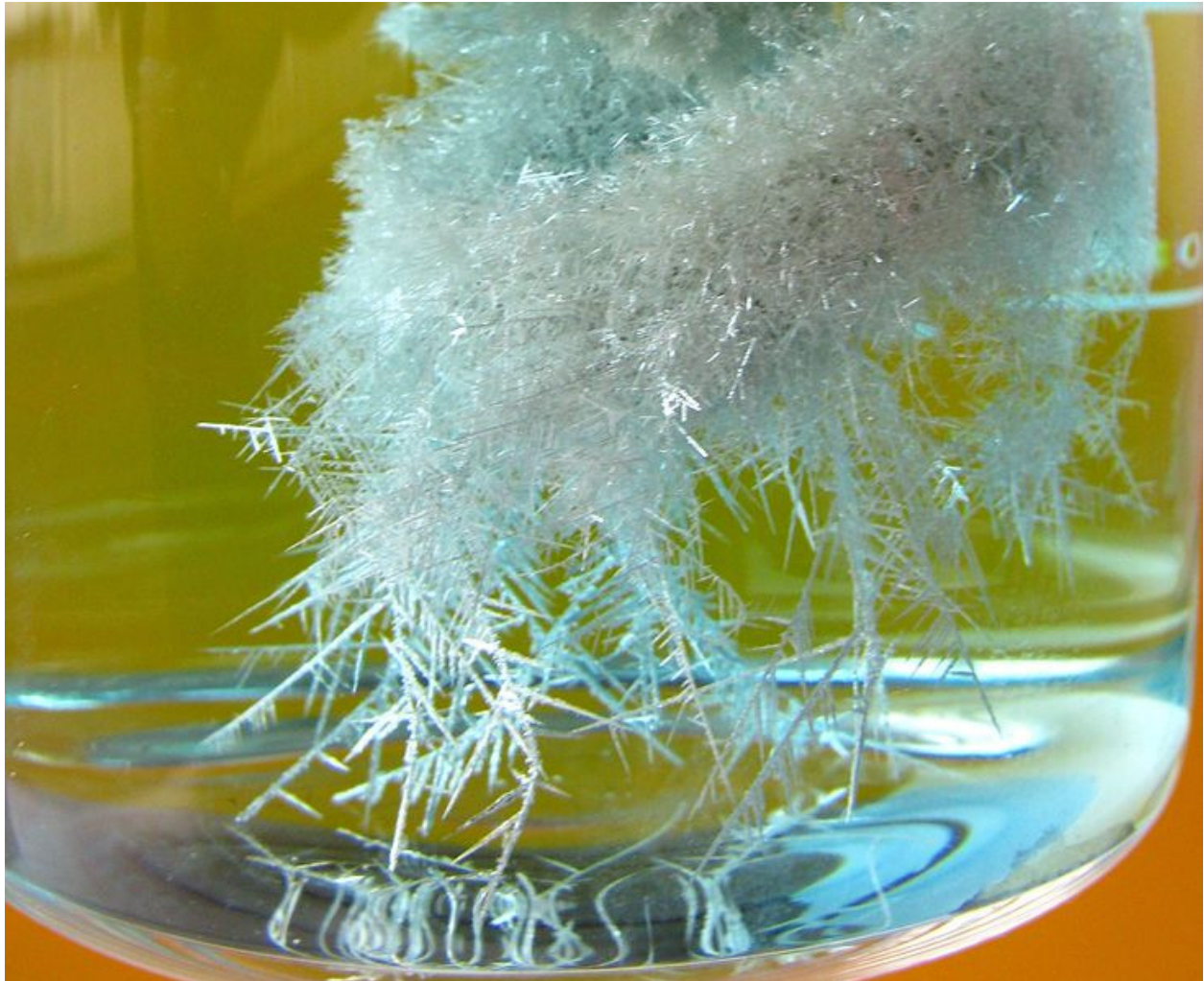
DIANA



**Annex II: Links between *Árbol de Diana's* Pronouns and Protagonists**

PERSONAE	Yo	NOSOTRAS	Tú	ELLA (without antecedent) FEMALE PROTAGONISTS
1. The traveller	[h]e dado el salto de mí al alba (11; poem 1) nací (25; poem 15) he nacido tanto (31; poem 21)		déjate caer (45; poem 35)	[s]alta . . . / la que ama al viento (17; poem 7)
	[h]e dejado mi cuerpo junto a la luz (11; poem 1)			se desnuda en el paraíso / de su memoria (16; poem 6)
	camino del espejo (24; poem 14) [v]oy por esos días (27; poem 17)		te alejas de los nombres / que hilan el silencio de las cosas (38; poem 28)	la viajera con el vaso vacío (13; poem 3) la pequeña viajera (44; poem 34)
2. The silent one	he cantado la tristeza de lo que nace (11; poem 1)	pulsaremos los espejos / hasta que nuestros rostros canten como ídolos (36; poem 26)	hablas para no verme (28; poem 18)	[l]a hermosa autómata se canta (27; poem 17)
	[e]l poema que no digo (24; poem 14)		déjate enlazar . . . de silencio ingenuo (45; poem 35)	tiene miedo de no saber nombrar / lo que no existe (16; poem 6) dice que no sabe (30; poem 20) la silenciosa en el desierto (13; poem 3) un mudo (15; poem 5)
	este canto me desmiente, me amordaza (48; poem 38)	vivimos con una mano en la garganta (39; poem 29)		
	recorto en forma de objetos que amar rostros doblados [en el viento] (20; poem 10)		has golpeado al viento / con tus propios huesos (26; poem 16)	la que ama al viento (17; poem 7)
3.1. The sleeper	tengo [ojos] en los míos tatuados (29; poem 19)	yo y la que fui nos sentamos / en el umbral de mi mirada (21; poem 11) con los ojos cerrados (41; poem 31)	hablas para no verme (28; poem 18)	desconoce el feroz destino / de sus visiones (16; poem 6) la dormida mira sus ojos solos (46; poem 36)
	he . . . doblemente sufrido (31; poem 21)	con . . . un sufrimiento en verdad demasiado grande (41; poem 31)	déjate doler (45; poem 35)	
3.2. The shadow	sonámbula y transparente (27; poem 17)	nuestra triste transparencia (47; poem 37)		una niña de seda / sonámbula (22; poem 12) la dormida (42, 46; poems 32, 36)
	[e]xtraño no ejercer más / oficio de recién llegada (25; poem 15)			la que fui (21; poem 11) una niña de seda (22; poem 12)
	me danzo y me lloro en mis numerosos funerales (27; poem 17) explicar con palabras de este mundo / que partió de mí un barco llevándome (23; poem 13)			[m]uere . . . / la que ama al viento (17; poem 7) la pequeña viajera / moría explicando su muerte (44; poem 34) la pequeña muerta (32; poem 22)

**Annex III: Picture of a “Tree of Diana” or “Diana’s Tree”**



Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Arbre\\_de\\_Diane\\_%28d%C3%A9tail\\_bas%29\\_23.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Arbre_de_Diane_%28d%C3%A9tail_bas%29_23.jpg).

GNU Free Documentation License. Web. 8 May 2013.

## Works Cited

- Aira, César. *Alejandra Pizarnik*. Rosario: Viterbo, 1998. Print.
- Álvarez, Enid. "A medida que la noche avanza." *Debate feminista* 8.15 (1997): 3-34. Print.
- "Amalgam." *The London Encyclopaedia, or Universal Dictionary of Science, Art, Literature, and Practical Mechanics*. Ed. Thomas Curtis. Vol. 1. London, 1829. 714-15. Print.
- "Árbol de Diana." *DRAE*. 22nd ed. Real Academia Española, [2001]. Web. 9 May 2013.
- Basso Benelli, Cristián. "Construcción identitaria del sujeto poético en *Árbol de Diana* y *El infierno musical* de Alejandra Pizarnik." M.A. thesis. Universidad de Chile, 2006. *Cybertesis*. Web. 6 June 2014.
- Beneyto, Antonio. "Alejandra Pizarnik: Ocultándose en el lenguaje." *Quimera* 34 (1983): 23-27. Print.
- Boquillon, N. "Arbre de Diane." *Dictionnaire des inventions et découvertes, depuis le commencement du monde jusqu'à nos jours*. Paris: Librairie de maison, 1843. 39. Print.
- Borinsky, Alicia. "Alejandra Pizarnik: The Self and Its Impossible Landscapes." *A Dream of Light and Shadow: Portraits of Latin American Women Writers*. Ed. Marjorie Agosín. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1995. 291-302. Print.
- Brisson, Mathurin Jacques. "Arbre de Diane." *Dictionnaire raisonné de physique*. Vol. 1. Paris, 1781. Print.
- Calle Romero, María Isabel. "La búsqueda de lo celeste en la poesía de Alejandra Pizarnik: Astros y aire." *Gramma* 21.47 (2010): 111-25. Print.
- Cancellieri, Natalia. "Fragmentación y descorporización del yo en la poesía de Alejandra Pizarnik." *Tintas* 1 (2011): 211-29. Print.
- Chávez Silverman, Suzanne. "The Ex-Centric Self: The Poetry of Alejandra Pizarnik." Diss. U of California, 1991. Print.
- Chevalier, Jean, and Alain Gheerbrant. "Ange." *Dictionnaire des symboles*. Paris: Laffont/Jupiter, 1982. 43-45. Print.
- Cirlot, Juan Eduardo. "Diana." *A Dictionary of Symbols*. Trans. Jack Sage. New York: Philosophical Library, 1972. 81. Print.
- Cohen, Sara. "Pasiones." *El silencio de los poetas: Pessoa, Pizarnik, Celan, Michaux*. Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2002. 43-60. Print.
- Depetris, Carolina. *Aporética de la muerte: Estudio crítico sobre Alejandra Pizarnik*. Madrid: UAM, 2004. Print.
- "Diana." *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008. Web. 14 May 2008.
- "Diane." *Encyclopédie des symboles*. Comp. Michel Cazenave. Paris: Librairie générale française, 1996. 196. Print.
- Di Ció, Mariana. "El prólogo de Octavio Paz: ¿Apertura de *Árbol de Diana* de Alejandra Pizarnik?" *Le texte et ses liens I/El texto y sus vínculos I*. Ed. Milagros Ezquerro. Paris: Indigo (2006). 259-66. Print.
- Duval, Clément, and Raymonde Duval. "Diane." *Dictionnaire de la chimie et de ses applications*. 3rd ed. Paris: Technique et documentation, 1978. 343. Print.
- "Egeria." *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online*. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2008. Web. 14 May 2008.
- Evangelista, Lidia. "La poética de Alejandra Pizarnik." *Atenea* 473 (1996): 41-51. Print.

- Ferrell, Tracy. "Sexual Dissidents/Textual Dissonance: Transgressive Sexuality in the Writing of Alejandra Pizarnik, Cristina Peri Rossi, Luisa Valenzuela and Sylvia Molloy." Diss. U of Colorado, 2001. Print.
- Fitts, Alexandra. "Reading the Body, Writing the Body: Constructions of the Female Body in the Work of Latin American Women Writers." Diss. Duke U, 1995. Print.
- Gai, Michal Heidi. "Alejandra Pizarnik: *Árbol de Diana*." *Romanic Review* 83.2 (1992): 245-60. Print.
- Genovese, Alicia. *La doble voz: Poetas argentinas contemporáneas*. Buenos Aires: Biblos, 1998. Print.
- Goldberg, Florinda F. *Alejandra Pizarnik: "Este espacio que somos"*. Gaithersburg: Hispamérica, 1994. Print.
- Gregory, George. *The Economy of Nature Explained and Illustrated on the Principles of Modern Philosophy*. Vol. 2. London: Johnson, 1798. Print.
- Guibelalde, Gabriel. *Aportes para la Extracción de la piedra de locura: Vida y obra de Alejandra Pizarnik*. Córdoba: Dimas, 1998. Print.
- Guirand, Félix, and Joël Schmidt. "Diane." *Mythes et mythologies*. Paris: Larousse, 2006. 664-65. Print.
- . "Janus." *Mythes et mythologies*. Paris: Larousse, 2006. 733. Print.
- Haydu, Susana H. *Alejandra Pizarnik: Evolución de su lenguaje poético*. Washington: Organization of American States, 1996. Print.
- Jagnaux, Raoul. *Histoire de la chimie*. Vol. 2. Paris: Baudry, 1891. Print.
- King, William. *An Historical Account of the Heathen Gods and Heroes Necessary for the Understanding of the Ancient Poets*. London: Centaur, 1965. Print.
- Korembli, Bernardo Ezequiel. *Todas las que ella era: Ensayo sobre Alejandra Pizarnik*. Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1991. Print.
- Kuhnheim, Jill S. *Gender, Politics, and Poetry in Twentieth-Century Argentina*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1996. Print.
- Lopez Luaces, Marta. "Los discursos poéticos en la obra de Alejandra Pizarnik." *Espéculo* 21 (2002): n. pag. Web. 15 June 2007.
- Mackintosh, Fiona J. *Childhood in the Works of Silvina Ocampo and Alejandra Pizarnik*. Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2003. Print.
- Monaghan, Patricia. "Artemis." *The Book of Goddesses and Heroines*. New York: Dutton, 1981. 27-28. Print.
- . "Diana, Jana." *The Book of Goddesses and Heroines*. New York: Dutton, 1981. 84. Print.
- . "Hecate, Hecate." *The Book of Goddesses and Heroines*. New York: Dutton, 1981. 131-32. Print.
- Monder, Samuel. "La última impureza: Una poética de lo pictórico en Alejandra Pizarnik." *Literatura y otras artes en América Latina: Actas del XXXIV Congreso del Instituto Internacional de Literatura Iberoamericana, Iowa City, 2 al 6 de julio de 2002*. Ed. Daniel Balderston, et al. Iowa City: U of Iowa, 2004. 17-22. Print.
- Nicholson, Melanie. "Alejandra Pizarnik, Georges Bataille, and the Literature of Evil." *Latin American Literary Review* 27.54 (1999): 5-22. Print.
- Ozanam, Jacques, and Jean Étienne Montucla. *Recreations in Mathematics and Natural Philosophy*. Vol. 4. London: Davison, 1814. Print.

- Paz, Octavio. "Árbol de Diana." Introduction. *Árbol de Diana*. By Alejandra Pizarnik. Buenos Aires: Sur, 1962. 7-9. Print.
- Piña, Cristina. *La palabra como destino: Un acercamiento a la poesía de Alejandra Pizarnik*. Buenos Aires: Botella al Mar, 1981. Print.
- Pizarnik, Alejandra. *Árbol de Diana*. Buenos Aires: Sur, 1962. Print.
- . "El poema y su lector." *Antología consultada de la joven poesía argentina*. Comp. Horacio Salas and Héctor Yánover. Buenos Aires: Fabril, 1968. 67-68. Print.
- Requeni, Antonio. "Recuerdo de Alejandra Pizarnik." *Alba de América* 4.6-7 (1986): 205-14. Print.
- Rodríguez Francia, Ana María. *La disolución en la obra de Alejandra Pizarnik: Ensombrecimiento de la existencia y ocultamiento del ser*. Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 2003. Print.
- Roggiano, Alfredo A. "Alejandra Pizarnik: Persona y poesía." *Letras de Buenos Aires* 1.2 (1981): 49-58. Print.
- Rubí, Martha Lorena. "Spanish American Feminist Literary Theory: An Approach through the Concept of Willing." Diss. City U of New York, 2002. Print.
- Running, Thorpe. *The Critical Poem: Borges, Paz, and Other Language-Centered Poets in Latin America*. London: Associated UP, 1996. Print.
- Schiling, Robert. "Diana." *Dictionnaire des mythologies et des religions des sociétés traditionnelles et du monde antique*. Comp. Yves Bonnefoy. Vol. 2. Paris: Flammarion, 1999. 580-81. Print.
- Sola, Graciela de. "Aproximaciones místicas en la nueva poesía argentina." *Cuadernos hispanoamericanos* 219 (1968): 545-53. Print.
- Stratford, Madeleine. "Alejandra Pizarnik en traduction française, anglaise et allemande : Le grand voyage d'une poésie du Cône Sud dans l'hémisphère Nord." *ReCIT* 2 (2011): 191-252. Print.
- . "Le sujet traduisant : Un autre double du je lyrique d'Alejandra Pizarnik?" *MonTI: Monografías de traducción e interpretación* 3 (2011): 289-333. Print.
- Telaak, Anastasia. *Körper, Sprache, Tradition: Jüdische Topographien im Werk zeitgenössischer Autorinnen und Autoren aus Argentinien*. Berlin: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Berlin, 2003. Print.
- Thibaud, Robert-Jacques. "Diane." *Dictionnaire de mythologie et de symbolique romaine*. Paris: Dervy, 1998. 101-02. Print.
- . "Janus." *Dictionnaire de mythologie et de symbolique romaine*. Paris: Dervy, 1998. 185-88. Print.
- Van Hoof, Henri. "Les prénoms dans la langue imagée." *Meta* 43.2 (1998): 262-311. Print.
- Zeiss, Elizabeth Anne. "The Subject between Texts in Alejandra Pizarnik's Poetry." Diss. UT Austin, 2001. Print.
- Zimmerman, J. E. "Diana." *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. New York: Harper, 1964. 85. Print.
- . "Hecate." *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. New York: Harper, 1964. 118. Print.
- . "Trivia." *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. New York: Harper, 1964. 278. Print.