

6-1-2006

Texts of Light and Shadow: Dickens and Lautréamont in Alejandra Pizarnik's Sombra Poems

Beth Zeiss
De Paul University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://newprairiepress.org/sttcl>



Part of the [Latin American Literature Commons](#), and the [Modern Literature Commons](#)



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 4.0 License](#).

Recommended Citation

Zeiss, Beth (2006) "Texts of Light and Shadow: Dickens and Lautréamont in Alejandra Pizarnik's Sombra Poems," *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature*: Vol. 30: Iss. 2, Article 9. <https://doi.org/10.4148/2334-4415.1639>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by New Prairie Press. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Studies in 20th & 21st Century Literature* by an authorized administrator of New Prairie Press. For more information, please contact cads@k-state.edu.

Texts of Light and Shadow: Dickens and Lautréamont in Alejandra Pizarnik's Sombra Poems

Abstract

In her poetry, the Argentinean Alejandra Pizarnik (1936-72) persistently explores the transformations that the poetic subject undergoes in language. She articulates a cycle wherein the subject's desire to (re)create herself as a presence in language is followed by the desire for death, the absence of the self, when her desire becomes frustrated by language's inadequacies. As yet, the importance of the theme of the fluctuating self in language as developed by Pizarnik in a series of poems protagonized by Sombra, has not been analyzed. The character Sombra appears in six fragment-like poems published posthumously in *Textos de Sombra* (1982) and written during the last two years of her life. Pizarnik shows the nature of Sombra's being and non-being in language by implementing two techniques—the palimpsestic technique and the psychological structure of the phantasm. The palimpsestic text is the product of a mode of writing in which a "hypertext," is created through the imitation and/or transformation of an original text, a "hypotext," following the terminology of Gérard Genette. Pizarnik uses short passages from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) as hypotexts for the hypertexts of her Sombra poems. She also employs a scene from *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1866), by the Count of Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse), as an additional hypotext to the Sombra poems. The dynamic of the present and absent self plays a central role in both the palimpsestic technique and the structure of the phantasm. For this reason the two techniques serve Pizarnik to develop the character of Sombra as a representation of the fluctuating subject in language.

Keywords

poetry, Argentinean poetry, Alejandra Pizarnik, poetic subject, language, identity, self, Textos de Sombra, hypotext, Dickens, A Christmas Carol, Les Chants de Maldoror, Count of Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse)

Texts of Light and Shadow: Dickens and Lautréamont in Alejandra Pizarnik's *Sombra* Poems

Beth Zeiss
DePaul University

In her poetry, the Argentinean Alejandra Pizarnik (1936-72) persistently explores the transformations that the poetic subject undergoes in language. She articulates a cycle wherein the subject's desire to (re)create herself as a presence in language is followed by the desire for death, the absence of the self, when her desire becomes frustrated by language's inadequacies. As yet, the importance of the theme of the fluctuating self in language as developed by Pizarnik in a series of poems protagonized by *Sombra*, has not been analyzed. The character *Sombra* appears in six fragment-like poems published posthumously in *Textos de Sombra* (1982) and written during the last two years of her life. Pizarnik shows the nature of *Sombra*'s being and non-being in language by implementing two techniques—the palimpsestic technique and the psychological structure of the phantasm. The palimpsestic text is the product of a mode of writing in which a “hypertext,” is created through the imitation and/or transformation of an original text, a “hypotext,” following the terminology of Gérard Genette. Pizarnik uses short passages from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) as hypotexts for the hypertexts of her *Sombra* poems. She also employs a scene from *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1866), by the Count of Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse), as an additional hypotext to the *Sombra* poems. The dynamic of the present and absent self plays a central role in both the palimpsestic technique and the structure of the phantasm. For this reason the two techniques serve Pizarnik to develop the character of *Sombra* as a representation of the fluctuating subject

in language (14).

Critics have looked at the ways Pizarnik explores language's inadequacies. Francisco Lasarte terms this search, "the quest for the exact word" (871). He discusses how many of her poems spanning her poetic enterprise demonstrate this questioning of language. Of these poems analyzed by Lasarte, we will look at three. The first is a poem from 1956, "Sólo un nombre," "Only a name."

alejandra alejandra
debajo estoy yo
alejandra

alejandra alejandra
I am below
alejandra (31, my trans.)

Lasarte points out the meaning of the title—the failure of words to create a reality (869). He also sees the fragmentation of the poetic subject, spread over three names and the pronoun "yo" (869). He observes that Pizarnik wants the reader to believe that the last "alejandra" is more real than the first two, and that the line "debajo estoy yo" generates an infinite series of "alejandras," with the real one always being "below" the previous one (869). By creating this game in which the poet and the reader believe one sign to be more real than the others, Lasarte believes that Pizarnik has fallen into the "trap of language," because "... the third alejandra—in its condition as a word—is as false as the others" (689) (my trans.). Nonetheless, the technique of locating the last "alejandra" beneath the others does to some extent lend the sought after physicality to the word because it highlights the only physicality that written words have, which is their existence on the page. Pizarnik's later implementation of the palimpsestic technique, in which one text is superimposed onto another, is a more elaborate and concentrated extension of this initial attempt to find the "body" of words, to force language into physicality, and through it to make herself exist materially in the sign.

One of the clearest examples of Pizarnik's poetic subject's desire for words to have body, and also of her despair at ever achieving that goal is "En esta noche en este mundo" (239-240) and the lines:

si digo agua ¿beberé?

si digo pan ¿comeré?

if I say water, will I drink?

if I say bread, will I eat? (my trans.)

Lasarte analyzes these lines, stating that the words “water” and “bread” are only textual presences that “do not produce a reality” (871). He goes on to say that “the poetic word produces an emptiness and forms an impenetrable barrier between the being and the name” (my trans. 871). Suggesting that Pizarnik could have written, “Si digo Alejandra, seré?” “If I say Alejandra, will I be?” he connects the danger of finding oneself absent in language with death—“. . . to be “only a name” in poetry—to exist in it *sous rature* and not as a real presence—is equivalent to a poetic death” (my trans. 871). While Pizarnik does repeatedly experiment with the possibility that the self can be materially present in the sign, she also explores the ways in which the self can be both present and absent in language. In doing so, Pizarnik arrives at the figure of the shadow, transformed into a character, *Sombra*, in the *Sombra* poems.

The concept at the center of the shadow is similar to the one behind the earlier “Sólo un nombre” – the shifting and fluctuating location of the self in language. If the real “alejandra” is not to be found in the first, second or third “alejandra,” maybe she exists in the path traced by the infinite series of “alejandras” generated by the words “debajo estoy yo.” In 1971, contemporaneous with the *Sombra* poems, Pizarnik also composes a separate poem in which the shadow plays a prominent part. This poem appears as part III of a grouping entitled, “Los pequeños cantos,” published in December of 1971 (Pizarnik 234).

el centro

de un poema

es otro poema

el centro del centro

es la ausencia

en el centro de la ausencia

mi sombra es el centro
del centro del poema

the center
of a poem
is another poem
the center of the center
is absence

in the center of absence
my shadow is the center
of the center of the poem (my trans.)

Lasarte comments:

it is a poem in constant movement, a text that writes itself. The dance of its distinct parts, incessant and hypnotic, suggests many correspondences: my shadow is the absence of the poem, my shadow is the center of the poem, my shadow is the absence of another poem (my trans.) (877)

The metaphor of the shadow suggests the shifting nature of the self in language. In this poem Pizarnik accepts that that word “yo” does not equal herself exactly, and attempts instead to capture and reveal the shifting and fragmented nature of the self in language through the metaphor of the shadow, and through poetry. Where Lasarte sees this poem as Pizarnik’s acceptance of being unable to “meld being and word” I see it as another, more sophisticated attempt to express the nature of her being in, by and through words and poetry. The metaphor for that mode of being is the shadow—here called “mi sombra” and later named *Sombra*. The idea presented in this poem, that the center of a poem is another poem, is transformed into a physical reality by Pizarnik in the *Sombra* poems by means of the palimpsestic technique.

These shadow poems or shadow texts are introduced through the creation of a palimpsestic text. While previous studies have identified and analyzed many of the intertextual games that Pizarnik plays, the two important hypotexts underlying the *Sombra* poems have remained unknown, leaving the complete picture of her in-

tertextual practices still in the shadows.² More importantly, the two reasons for the technique—to force language into materiality and to show the experience of fragmentation of the subject, have not been examined. The act of constructing and shifting meaning through the palimpsestic method is a *concrete* and *physical* textual representation of the conception of subjectivity explored and portrayed in Pizarnik's poetry.

Pizarnik chooses short passages from Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843) as hypotexts for her Sombra poems.³ To add another layer to the palimpsest, she also employs a scene from *Les Chants de Maldoror* (1866), a text written by the Count of Lautréamont (Isidore Ducasse).⁴ The two hypotexts and the hypertext relate to each other in that they all enact a scene in which the protagonist, Scrooge, Maldoror, or Sombra, engages in an imaginary dialogue with an imaginary "shadow."

This repeated scene in which a subject speaks to an imagined other portrays the psychological and textual structure that Freud discusses and terms *Phantasie*. In turn, Kristeva has developed this concept and I rely on both her reelaboration for my reflections here, and also on Jean LaPlanche and J-B Pontalis's reworking of Freud's original theory of *Phantasie* in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, as well as in their article, "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality." For the purposes of this article the term "the phantasm" will be employed to refer to this psychological and textual realm, while each critics' chosen term for this general concept will be employed in quotations when analyzing his or her definition of the phantasm (LaPlanche and Pontalis—fantasy, Kristeva—*le fantasme*, Freud—*Phantasie*).

In *Language* LaPlanche and Pontalis define fantasy as an:

Imaginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfilment of a wish (in the last analysis, an unconscious wish) in a manner that is distorted to a greater or lesser extent by defensive processes. (314)

Additionally, La Planche and Pontalis characterize fantasy as "an inner world, where satisfaction is obtained through illusion" (*Fantasy* 2). These key aspects of fantasy, that it is an "imaginary scene" daydreamed by the subject in order to fulfill his or her desires or to obtain satisfaction, are true of Pizarnik's Sombra poems, as well as

her two chosen hypotexts. The three parallel scenes from each text all possess these elements.

In Freud's early formulation of *Phantasie*, where he speaks about "original fantasies," "*Urphantasien*," Freud lists seduction, castration, and the primal scene as belonging to that category (*Fantasy* 17). La Planche and Pontalis highlight a key aspect of Freud's concept of "original fantasy":

... the original fantasy, ... , is characterized by the absence of subjectivization, and the subject is present in the scene: the child, for instance, is one character amongst many in the fantasy "a child is beaten." ... "A father seduces his daughter" might perhaps be the summarized version of the seduction fantasy. ... the peculiar character of the structure, in that it is a scenario with multiple entries, in which nothing shows whether the subject will be immediately located as daughter; it can as well be fixed as *father*, or even in the term *seduces*. (*Fantasy* 13-14)

This characterization of the phantasm as a grammatical sentence, whose different elements the subject may inhabit, is central to understanding fragmentation of the Pizarnik's poetic subject in the phantasm. This is so because the subject fragments herself as she comes to occupy different elements of phantasmic scene.

LaPlanche and Pontalis continue explaining the grammatical aspects of Freud's "original fantasy":

In fantasy the subject does not pursue the object or its sign: he appears caught up himself in the sequences of images. He forms no representation of the desired object, but is himself represented as participating in the scene although, in the earliest forms of fantasy, he cannot be assigned any fixed place in it ... As a result, the subject, although always present in the fantasy, may be so in a desubjectivized form, that is to say, *in the very syntax of the sequence* in question. (my emphasis, *Fantasy* 17)

The phantasm can manifest itself as a scene in which various possible positions for the subject exist, "the phantasm is not so much a 'fantasy' that one *has*, as a structure wherein one is *placed*" (David Musselwhite 58). LaPlanche and Pontalis emphasize this linguistic element of "fantasy" with their use of words such as "syntax" and "sequence." In the phantasm, the subject becomes fragmented and

“desubjected,” occupying many elements of the sentence at once.

Kristeva writes about the de-centering of the subject in the structure of “*le fantasme*,” developing her ideas about it in the (still untranslated to English) portion of *La révolution du langage poétique* (1974). Also in *Révolution* she applies the theory about “*le fantasme*” to *Les Chants*, the same book that serves as a hypotext for the palimpsestic poems in Pizarnik’s *Sombra* series. Kristeva explores the nuances of “*le fantasme*” at the linguistic level of the pronoun-system, seeing it as active in a mode of discourse she names “fiction,” which produces:

. . . une permutation incessante des shifters. C’est dire que le procès signifiant est exploré selon toutes ses possibilités de se structurer en tant qu’acte d’énonciation (allocution), et qu’en conséquence le “je” qui normalement transcende cet acte, à force de shifterisation et de permutation, cesse d’être une point fixe localisable mais devient multipliable selon les situations de discours. (*Révolution* 317-318)

. . . an incessant permutation of shifters. That is to say that the signifying process is explored within all its possibilities of structuring as an act of enunciation (allocution), and that as a consequence, the “I” that normally transcends that act, because of shifterization and permutation, ceases to be a localizable fixed point and becomes multiplied within the situations of discourse. (my trans.)

In Kristeva’s “fiction”—in which “*le fantasme*” is active—the subject begins to slide or “shift” between the possible positions offered by discourse. Among those, the subject is able to occupy the position of the interlocutor (*l’autre*) as well as those of the different pronouns, which Kristeva sees as “. . . punctuated places within a process, stases in a flux, momentary presences within the normative use of language” (my trans. 315).⁵ Therefore, in “fiction,” Kristeva conceives of the pronominal positions as nothing more than places in which the subject, caught up in the fluid process of enunciation, poses momentarily. This fragmentation, in which the subject shifts out of the position of the “yo,” and even out of the “tú,” marks the latter part of Pizarnik’s poetry where she creates characters, such as *Sombra*, as positions into which the subject may shift.

Kristeva distinguishes another mode of discourse in which “*le fantasme*” is also active, a mode that she names the modern text, (*le*

texte moderne). In the modern text, the signifying practice is activated and becomes transparent by explicitly presenting “. . . conflit dans l’instance du sujet de l’énonciation” ‘. . . the conflict within the instance of the subject of enunciation’ (my trans. 318). In other words, Kristeva considers any text that exposes the fluctuating and unstable nature of the speaking subject to be a *texte moderne*. In that sense, all of Pizarnik’s writing may be characterized that way, especially the palimpsestic texts where the shifting nature of the subject is most intensely explored.

Kristeva’s reading of *Les Chants* clarifies her ideas about the fragmented subject in the modern text and “*le fantasme*.” Kristeva characterizes the poetic subject of *Les Chants*, Maldoror—a rebellious and evil character—as a divided poetic subject (319). She believes that Mervyn, Maldoror’s young victim, is a point in the signifying process, sometimes a pronoun, which Maldoror, the poetic subject, occupies. This shifting on Maldoror’s part leads to the multiplication of his being, and thus threatens his unity as a subject (320). As a subject, Maldoror incorporates the other (l’autre) within himself, becomes pluralized and pulverized, and is no longer a fixed instance, but rather a process (320): “‘je’ est un mouvement rythmique, une dynamique ondulatoire” “‘I’ is a rhythmic movement, an undulating dynamic” (my trans. 320). It is this slipping out of the typical positions of locution that causes Kristeva to characterize Maldoror using the metaphor of the whirlwind:

Le héros du texte moderne est un sujet (une instance) en procès: une multiplication tourbillonnante de “ils” sortis de la division et de la condensation de l’instance énonciatrice. (*Révolution* 334-35)

The hero of the modern text is a subject (an instance) in process: a whirlwind-like multiplication of “hes” coming out of the division and the condensation of the instance of enunciation. (my trans.)

In Kristeva’s view, the various characters in *Les Chants* are nothing more than products of the instance of enunciation exposed as a process that takes the subject out of its fixed position, or “center.” Kristeva finds it interesting “Il est intéressant de tracer la trajectoire de ce processus de dé-centrement du sujet dans le texte moderne” “to trace the trajectory of these processes of “ex-centriment” of the sub-

ject of the modern text' (*Révolution* 334-35) (my trans.). Likewise, since, like Maldoror, Pizarnik's *Sombra* is the heroine of the modern text, it will be interesting to trace the trajectory of *Sombra*'s "processes of ex-centriment" not only as she moves amongst the positions offered by one text, but amongst those supplied by three texts, and the many characters ("he's") that each one provides.

Pizarnik's fascination with Maldoror and his creator manifests itself at various points in her literary career. In 1964 Maldoror and his dog appear as characters in "A tiempo y no"; in 1971 his dog symbolizes death in "En esta noche en este mundo," and the Count of Lautréamont is invoked in the last poem Pizarnik ever wrote.⁶ In 1966 she writes an article examining the key scene of the phantasm where Maldoror speaks with what he thinks is a shadowy figure on the wall, but later turns out to be his own image in the mirror. This dialogue with the shadow serves as the central image denoting entry into the phantasm in the *Sombra* series, and is a textual enactment of the "ex-centriment" of the poetic subject. Pizarnik describes the dialogue with the shadow from *Les Chants*:

(Maldoror destina a la intrusa su violencia inadjetivable. Esto no lo exime de tener que reconocer en ella la más alta perfección en materia de perversidad. Nadie sino la sombra merece el máximo galardón: "la palma del mal". Maldoror manifiesta su deseo ambiguo de besar los pies de la vencedora; mas si se prosternara estrecharía vapor transparente. Muy pronto comprueba que es el otro (o la sombra) quien es el irónico, y no él.

En la busca—verdadera cacería—del cuerpo de sombra, el otro simula colaborar con el poeta para mejor traicionarlo. Apenas éste le exige, mediante una señal, no moverse, la sombra imita el ademán. De ese modo descubre el secreto de la sombra y la consecuente necesidad de romper el espejo de su bohardilla. Concluye que no es la primera vez que "me sucede encontrarme frente al desconocimiento de mi propia imagen". (Pizarnik 406)

Maldoror directs his unadjetivable violence at the intruder. This does not free him from having to recognize in it the highest perfection in the matter of perversity. Nobody but the shadow deserves the maximum reward: "the palm of evil." Maldoror manifests his ambiguous desire to kiss the feet of the victor; but if he were to prostrate himself he would embrace transparent vapor. Very soon he verifies that it is

the other (or the shadow) who is the ironic one, and not he. In the search – a true hunt- for the body of the shadow, the other simulates collaboration with the poet in order to more easily betray him. No sooner than the latter demands of it, by means of a signal, not to move, the shadow imitates the gesture. In this way, he discovers the secret of the shadow and the consequent necessity to break the mirror of his garret. He concludes that it is not the first time that “it happens that I find myself facing the ignorance of my own image.” (Pizarnik, 406)

Even though the shadow is really an absence, in the dialogue it occupies the place that the “you” normally would occupy. At the same time, the subject, Maldoror, slides between his own position as the “I” into the position of the “you,” or the “other,” imagining and creating it. Desire plays a key role in Pizarnik’s summary of the scene. She points out Maldoror’s “ambiguous desire” to kiss the shadow’s feet, and also his “hunt” for the object of desire, the “shadow’s body.” The desire to find oneself present in language, to have language create a reality, the “shadow’s body,” is what leads to fragmentation of the subject, who enters the position of the other through the mechanism of the phantasm in order to fulfill that desire. However, as in Pizarnik’s interpretation of this scene, when the illusion of the other’s existence is broken, the desire is frustrated, the possibility of the instance of the “you” disappears, and the ephemeral nature of the phantasm reveals itself.

To enter into the phantasm means seeing the world through the eyes of another person—the one that the subject imagines—which literally occurs in Maldoror’s garret. The shadow/reflection has eyes that are not Maldoror’s given that he has torn the eyes out of a woman and placed them over his own eyes. The reader learns of this crime when Maldoror accuses the shadow of it. The original Lautréamont text reads:

Qui que tu sois, défends-toi; car, je vai diriger vers toi la fronde d’une terrible accusation: ces yeux ne t’appartiennent pas . . . où les astu pris? Un jour, je vis passer devant moi une femme blonde; elle les avait pareils aux tiens: tu les lui as arrachés. (221)

Who are you, defend yourself, because I am going to aim the sling-shot of a terrible accusation at you: those eyes do not belong to you . . . from where have you taken them? One day, I saw pass before me a blonde

woman, she had the same eyes that you have: you have torn them from her. (my trans.)

Maldoror accuses the shadow of the crime, however in reality he is accusing himself of it, since the shadow is not real. In this manner he projects himself into the shadow's position. By ripping out the woman's eyes, putting them where his own should be, looking in the mirror and accusing his reflection of a crime as if it were an "other," and not himself, Maldoror enters the structure of the phantasm; he creates an imaginary scene in which the self splits into two parts that enter into dialogue. This entry into the phantasm allows him to fulfill his desire of meriting the maximum prize of being the most evil.

However, in Pizarnik's reading of this scene, she pinpoints another desire, the quest to find "the shadow's body." This observation reflects Pizarnik's own desire for the "shadow's body." That desire as well as its frustration, is found in the aforementioned poem "En esta noche en este mundo," in which the poetic voice asks, "si digo agua ¿beberé? / si digo pan ¿comeré?" (Pizarnik 239). In the same way that she would like a shadow to be a real person (with a body), she wishes that the word "water" would have the physical presence of water. In Maldoror's garret the staging of the phantasm allows language, by means of an imaginary dialogue, to create the illusion of the body of the other. Nonetheless, reality always intrudes, the mirror breaks and the shadow's body turns out to be nothing, just as saying the word "bread" will not allow that substance to materialize.

Pizarnik returns to this scene again in the poem "Presencia," one of the *Sombra* poems, in which Pizarnik constructs her own "querella simétrica" 'symmetrical accusation' to that of Maldoror towards his shadow.⁷ "Presencia," begins with the lines,

Alguien habla. Alguien me dice.

Extraordinario silencio el de esta noche.

Alguien proyecta su sombra en la pared de mi cuarto. Alguien me mira con mis ojos que no son los míos (Pizarnik 232)

Somebody speaks. Somebody tells me.

Extraordinary silence—tonight's.

Somebody projects his shadow on the wall of my room. Somebody looks at me with my eyes that are not mine (my trans.)

This poem references the scene in *Les Chants* between Maldoror and his shadow. In particular, the line “somebody looks at me with my eyes that are not mine,” echoes Maldoror’s accusation, “Ces yeux ne t’appartiennent pas . . . où les as-tu pris? . . .”, ‘Those eyes do not belong to you . . . from where have you taken them? . . .’ (218). Just as the dialogue with the shadow in *Les Chants* is a staging of the phantasm, so is this poem. Sombra imagines an other speaking, projecting a shadow, and looking at her with stolen eyes. But what desire is fulfilled by this entry into the phantasm?—the same desire for “the shadow’s body,” for the “other” in the dialogue, created in the phantasm to have a physical presence capable of casting a shadow and of having real eyes. The subsequent despair at discovering the immateriality of the other is carefully articulated in the Sombra poems by a series of paradoxes and contradictions. The paradoxes reiterate the paradoxical nature of Pizarnik’s desire to find herself present in language, only to fail in that endeavor due to the inherent quality of absence of the sign.

These paradoxes become evident when the reader attempts to determine the symmetry between the scene from “Presencia” and that of Maldoror speaking with his shadow. The play between the two texts forces the subject to take a shifting path amongst the positions of characters from each. The ever-shifting trajectory that the subject traces reveals it to be the whirlwind-like subject of Kristeva’s modern text. Upon reading the first line of “Presencia,” “Somebody speaks. Somebody tells me” “Alguien habla. Alguien me dice” one could assume that:

Somebody (from “Presencia”) // (is parallel to) *Maldoror* (from *Les Chants*)

and

me (from “Presencia”) // *Sombra* (from “Presencia”) // *the shadow* (from *Les Chants*)

These parallels hold true into the next line, “Somebody projects his

or her shadow onto the wall of my room.” In *Les Chants*, we know that Maldoror projects his shadow onto the wall of his garrett, and so, the parallels:

somebody (from “Presencia”) // Maldoror (from *Les Chants*)

and

Sombra (from “Presencia”) // Maldoror’s shadow (from *Les Chants*)

still make sense. These equivalencies are turned topsy-turvy, however, when one considers that the speaking subject refers to “my room.” Here one must conclude that the owner of the room must be parallel to Maldoror in *Les Chants*, and so, the equivalency,

my//speaking subject//Maldoror

contradicts the previous one,

me//speaking subject//Maldoror’s shadow

With this twist, Pizarnik has implemented the first shift of the speaking subject’s position, creating parallels between the speaking subject, Maldoror, and Maldoror’s shadow, all at the same time.

More contradictions, and corresponding shiftings, arise when comparing “Somebody looks at me with my eyes that are not mine” from “Presencia” and Maldoror’s accusation in *Les Chants*, “Those eyes do not belong to you . . . from where have you taken them? . . .” Maldoror, as the speaker of the accusation, (“those eyes do not belong to you . . .”) would be a symmetrical character to the speaking subject, the “me,” in the line “somebody looks at me with my eyes that are not mine.” Therefore:

me//my eyes//speaking subject// Maldoror

However, the contradictory statement, “my eyes that are not mine,” does not allow the speaking subject’s location to be fixed so easily.

my eyes//that are not mine

The eyes demarcate several positions, that of Maldoror, that of Sombra, that of the dead woman, that of “somebody,” etc. Furthermore, the speaking subject is both present and absent in the positions that the eyes demarcate, creating another shift where the subject traces a never-ending trajectory amongst the positions. The number of such positions multiplies because of the palimpsestic relation of the two texts. Like a whirlwind, the speaking subject must pass through every position demarcated in the texts.

The table below summarizes and clarifies the above discussion.

Table 1 A Line by Line Analysis of the Shifting Subject between Texts

Line from “Presencia”	Parallel characters between “Presencia” and Les Chants
Somebody speaks. Alguien habla.	Somebody // Maldoror
Somebody tells me. Alguien me dice.	Somebody // Maldoror me // Maldoror’s shadow
Somebody projects his or her shadow on the wall of my room. Alguien proyecta su sombra en la pared de mi cuarto.	Somebody//Maldoror my //Maldoror “His or her shadow”//Maldoror’s shadow
Somebody looks at me with my eyes that are not mine	Somebody//Maldoror’s shadow or Maldoror me//Maldoror or Maldoror’s shadow or the dead woman or Sombra or Sombra’s shadow Eyes//the dead woman’s or Maldoror’s or Sombra’s or Sombra’s shadow’s or Maldoror’s shadow’s

Through the construction of a poem that in reality has only a shifting symmetry with its underlying text, Pizarnik creates an extremely complex enactment of the subject’s tendency to shift positions within the structure of the phantasm. Not only does the subject shift between the possible positions in one text, but amongst those offered by both the hypotext, *Les Chants*, and the hypertext, “Presencia” Pizarnik has taken the idea of desiring to find herself

in language a step further—instead of the materiality of language, Pizarnik traces the path of the subject in language, propelled by desire. She accepts the fact that saying “bread” will not allow her to eat, that saying “I” will not make her present in the sign, and simply observes the movement of the subject in the phantasm. The idea of the subject as a fixed location in language, (“I”) is replaced by the idea of Kristeva’s hero of the modern text—a whirlwindlike subject tracing a path through language, in the phantasm, driven forward by desire.

And yet, this tracing and shifting, intensified by the palimpsestic technique, adds “body” to her poem in the following ways. First, two texts exist, and the imposition of one onto the other calls to the reader’s mind this separate, physical existence, that is now being merged together. In reality, the only physical aspect of the work at the time of reading is the reader who is reading it and the physical text itself. These two precious instances of physicality are multiplied by a palimpsest, because the reader is reading Pizarnik’s text, and recalling having read Lautréamont’s (another act of imagination). In a sense the reader enters into the phantasm, imagining the “other,” in this case a text. Pizarnik in that way reaches out to one of the physical bodies present at the time of reading, the reader, and subjects him or her to a certain type of decentering also. For these very reasons, in her late prose poem, *La bucanera de Pernambuco o Hilda la polígrafa*, the role of the reader achieves great importance.

The palimpsestic technique reproduces the dynamic of presence and absence that are fundamental to the subject’s relationship to language. In the Sombra series Pizarnik leads the reader to conceive of the palimpsestic texts, and of writing itself, in the context of light and shadow. She explicitly uses the trope of light and shadow to represent the writing process: “Ella escribe como una lámpara que se apaga, ella escribe como una lámpara que se enciende” (Pizarnik 232). If one follows her cues and imagines the act of writing as light, the hypotext as being an object, and the hypertext as the wall upon which the shadow is cast, then one can see how the hypotext (object text) casts its shadow on the hypertext (shadow text). The shadow cast from the object text distorts the shadow text, but there are also places where the shadow coincides with what is already written. This conception of writing also implies the physicality of the

texts. The texts are physical objects that cast shadows, and because of those words, those physical objects, the shadowy subject comes into being—not as a material presence, but as an absence caused by one. Words will not create the self as a real, physical object, but here Pizarnik explores what they do create—the shadow self, both a presence and an absence, produced by words.

The name Shadow expresses the essence of her being since a shadow is the result of the interaction between light and an object. While it appears to be a presence, it is actually an absence—of light—caused by a presence—the object blocking the source of light. The physicality of words works in a similar way—the word is physical, but what it signifies does not come into being materially by it being spoken or written. However, at least linguistically, the absence caused by the blocking of light becomes a presence, denoted by the word “shadow.” And so, through the process of signification, the subject does exist in some way, because the subject exists as a shadow of the word “I,” which is different from darkness, i.e. the subject’s nonexistence outside of language. In a similar way, silence is a distinct indication of language’s futility in comparison to a poem about language’s futility. The presence/absence of *Sombra*’s subjectivity in the signifying process is analogous.

We return to the line, “Ella escribe como una lámpara que se apaga, ella escribe como una lámpara que se enciende” ‘She writes like a lamp that turns off, she writes like a lamp that turns on’ (Pizarnik 232). When the lamp is on, objects cast shadows, and therefore *Sombra* is present, if only as a shadow. When the light is turned off, the process of signification is not enacted, then no shadows, or *Sombra*, exist, and therefore she is truly absent. This fluctuation between a certain sort of shadowy absence/presence acts as a metaphor for *Sombra*’s subjectivity as an “undulating dynamic” in the process of signification. Indeed, the brevity and number of the *sombra* poems appear like the fragments of one’s surroundings alternately visible and invisible when someone turns a light on and off.

In some poems *Sombra* is the denoted object, that which is written (“Escrito cuando *Sombra*”y “El entendimiento”), while in others she is the subject, she who writes (the two “Textos de *Sombra*”), and in others she crosses the divide within the same poem

("Presencia de Sombra" and "Untitled") (Pizarnik 230). Whether subject or object, or both, she is also in some way both absent and present in the two positions: "Indeciblemente caigo en esto que en mí encuentro más o menos presente cuando alguien formula mi nombre" 'Unspeakably I fall into that which in myself I find more or less present when somebody formulates my name' ("Texto de Sombra") (Pizarnik 233). When she appears as the denoted object in the process of signification, she does not find herself completely present in the signifier, her name. She is only "more or less" present when "someone formulates [her] name." Sombra's desire vacillates between wanting to find herself present in language and wishing to die when the task of being present in language turns out to be impossible. This tension between two opposing desires appears repeatedly in Pizarnik's poetry.

The interplay between presence and absence, key to Sombra's vacillating subjectivity, is also expressed by the oscillation between the use of the past, present, and future in the Sombra texts. Disjunction between time and space, as well as an air of being atemporal, are characteristics of the phantasm. Musselwhite discusses these qualities of the phantasm:

For what the phantasme structure sets in play with its doubles and duplications, its repetitions and its lacunae, is a kind of vertiginous pendular movement whereby the dissolved self 'is' and 'is not' all the positions it occupies, and the repertoires it traverses *at the same time*. (Musselwhite 66)

This simultaneity that Musselwhite talks about is expressed in the Sombra poems by means of jumps amongst the verb tenses. For example, in "Escrito cuando Sombra" (232) two narrators in the third person talk about the previous death of Sombra, but at the same time participate in a dialogue with her in the present tense. In a similar way, in the first sentence of "Untitled" (230) Sombra speaks in the first person present tense. This sentence is immediately followed by one in which a narrator speaks about Sombra in the third person past tense. The confusion continues into the last paragraph, where the narrator switches between the present tense, "Sombra está desconcertada" and the preterite, "... pensó Sombra asombrada" (230). These shifts in tenses also create presences and absences

because they imply the existence of missing texts, one completely in the present tense, and the other written in the past.

The changes in verb tense, the trope of the interplay between light and shadow and the underling text of *Les Chants*—all these elements combine in Pizarnik's series of *Sombra* poems to characterize the speaking subject, *Sombra*, as a fluctuating subject caught up in the structure of the phantasm, desiring to find herself present in language, but ironically creating just another scenario in which she is absent.

In an important article, Thorpe Running points to absence as being "the central core word of Pizarnik's entire published work" (46). He analyzes several poems from her earlier poetry, the book *Árbol de Diana* (1962), in which the relationship between presence, absence, and a duplicated self appears. Running argues that the absent facet of the self is represented by the childhood self or by death, in contrast to the present facet of the self (49). Here the topic of the past, present, and future once again arises in relationship to presence and absence—the past self is absent, and the future self (presumably the dead self), is also absent, yet the three coexist in the present tense self that is ironically not entirely present. Running concludes that:

The essential semiotic connections within these texts show that the key elements of Pizarnik's poems—death, birth, childhood, a second self—all share the "seme" (or characteristic), indeed the "archiseme" of absence. (51)

Present in the very beginning of her poetry, this "archiseme" of absence intrigues Pizarnik until the end.

If one accepts Running's idea that "childhood, death and night together form the region of absence, of non-existence," then the subtleties behind Pizarnik's choice of using Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* as a hypotext (object text) for her *Sombra* poems become more apparent. In *Christmas*, Marley, the dead business partner of the protagonist, Ebenezer Scrooge, returns from the tomb, tied by chains and condemned to walk the earth because of his greed, and haunts Scrooge. Three more ghosts visit Scrooge: the ghosts of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Future. They show Scrooge his past, childhood

which people talk badly about him; and his future, deceased, self, all in the space of one night. In this way *Christmas* incorporates the signifiers for absence—childhood, death, night, that Running notes as central to Pizarnik's poetry.

The structure of the phantasm pervades *Christmas*, seeing as almost the entire novella is based on his conversations with ghosts. Also, the scenes that the ghosts take Scrooge to see are also imaginary. For example, Scrooge says, "You are about to show me shadows of the things that have not happened, but will happen in the time before us," before the Ghost of Christmas Future shows him his own death (Dickens 122). Also, the Ghost of Christmas Past says, "These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the Ghost. "They have no consciousness of us," while showing Scrooge his lonely childhood self (Dickens 48). Moreover, some specific passages of *Christmas* allude to the fragmentary nature of the subject. For example,

[Scrooge] turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him with a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of all the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it. (Dickens 72)

and, at the end, where Scrooge accepts the lessons the Ghosts have taught him, "I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me." (Dickens 151)

And yet, the most important aspect of the phantasm that Pizarnik plays with in the Dickens passages is that of desire. The plot of *Christmas* revolves around Scrooge's desire to reintegrate himself into the bosom of humanity. In contrast, Pizarnik's rewriting of certain key scenes twist the passages from *Christmas* in order to emphasize Sombra's desire for death. Also, Pizarnik ignores the plot of *Christmas* almost completely, and focuses instead on the flickering nature of the subject in the phantasm and the imagery of light and shadow, which she uses to represent the complex relationship between the fragmentation of the self due to presence and absence. For example, she selects a passage that underscores the sameness between Scrooge and Marley, and thus the fragmentation of the self:

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years

afterwards, above the warehouse door: Scrooge and Marley. Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him. (Dickens 3)

Pizarnik zeroes in on this sentence, especially Scrooge's apathy towards language. She intensifies and plays with the concept that the names "Scrooge" and "Marley" are "all the same" in her poem "El entendimiento":

Sombra no borró el nombre de Sombra. La casa de comercio se conocía bajo la razón social "Sombra y Sombra". Algunas veces los clientes nuevos llamaban Sombra a Sombra; pero Sombra atendía por ambos nombres, como si ella, Sombra, fuese en efecto Sombra, quien había muerto. "El entendimiento" (231)

Sombra never erased Sombra's name. The business was known by the trade name "Sombra and Sombra." Sometimes the new clients called Sombra Sombra; but Sombra answered to both names, as if she, Sombra, were in effect Sombra, who had died. "El entendimiento" (231)

The renaming of both Scrooge and Marley with the same name, Sombra, in her text, has the effect of intensifying the belief that language is useless, found in the Dickens passage. By turning both Scrooge and Marley into Sombra, she whittles away at the illusion that a name is capable of identifying someone, or of distinguishing one person from another.

Also in this passage Pizarnik brings us back to the idea that the wish in the Sombra series is for death. As the first line of the poem she rewrites the first line of Dickens' novella, "Marley was dead to begin with," to "Empecemos por decir que Sombra había muerto" 'Let's begin by saying that Sombra had died' (131). Pizarnik emphasizes the fact that one of the Sombras is dead by changing Dickens' last sentence, "It was all the same to him," to "as if she, Sombra, were in effect Sombra, *who had died*" (231 my trans. and emphasis). The subject's desire to die is underscored by Pizarnik by giving the living character (Scrooge) the same name as the dead one. Earlier in this same poem, Pizarnik enacts another change that reveals the subject's death wish. She takes the passage from *Christmas* that deals

And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnised it with an undoubted bargain. (Dickens 2)

and substitutes only a few key words, "Sombra no estaba tan terriblemente afligida por el triste suceso y el día del entierro lo solemnizó con un banquete" "El entendimiento" (231). Pizarnik eliminates the reference to Scrooge being a businessman, and replaces the word "bargain" with "banquet." The effect is to rewrite the meaning of the scene, changing Scrooge's callous attitude towards his partner's death into an outright celebration of it.

Another poem, "Escrito cuando Sombra," intensifies and capitalizes on the theme of death present in the *Christmas* hypertext. Once again, the first line of Christmas is alluded to "-Empecemos por decir que Sombra había muerto" (232). The contradictory and paradoxical nature of Sombra's subjectivity in the phantasm, her simultaneous presence and absence, is stressed in the following line, "-Despareció tras su propia desaparición" 'She disappeared behind her own disappearance' (232). The next lines are based on a patchwork of scenes from the Christmas hypotext. The first is a scene in which Scrooge is sitting in his counting house, listening to the people outside helping each other in the fog and darkness. This scene shows Scrooge's isolation and absence from the rest of humanity. Pizarnik works very few changes on the lines she lifts from this scene. However, she does change the next lines she takes from Dickens:

Meanwhile fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links, proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, . . . (Dickens 15)

"-Entretanto, la bruma y la oscuridad hicieronse tan densas que Sombra caminaba por su gabinete alumbrándose con fósforos.
SOMBRA: -¿Qué hora es?
-La que acaba de pasar. La última.
"Escrito cuando Sombra" (232)

“Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so that Sombra walked through her study illuminating herself with matches.”

SOMBRA: “What time is it?”

“The one that just went by. The last one.” (232)

Pizarnik converts the “links,” used by the people outside in Scrooge’s world, into matches that Sombra lights to ward off the fog. Like Scrooge, Sombra is alone, a fact stressed by the reflexive verb “alum-brándose” ‘illuminating herself.’ The image of short bursts of light followed by darkness reminds one of the metaphor of illumination employed previously to convey Sombra’s flickering subjectivity in the structure of the phantasm. Pizarnik picks up on the subtler implementation in Dickens’ text of time as an ominous presence, with the bell tower that tolls the time “peeping slyly down at Scrooge,” and conveys it as much more sinister and representative of death. Sombra asks what the hour is, and a voice replies, “The one that just went by. The last one.” clearly shows Sombra’s wish that death be upon her. The unaccounted for voice can be read as the imagined “tú” with which the subject dialogues in the phantasm. In these ways Pizarnik’s text intensifies the presence of death in *Christmas* and transforms it into a desire for death in the Sombra series. She also picks up on the theme of absence and isolation present in *Christmas*, and sharpens it by having Sombra enter the phantasm, a structure in which she enacts an imaginary scene where she talks to herself about her desire, imminent death.

The idea of the fragmentation of the self caused by absence – an absent past self and an absent future (dead) self is explored in two places where Pizarnik rewrites Scrooge’s visitation of his childhood self at Christmas time with the Ghost of Christmas Past. The citations below show the passages from Dickens and the related passages from two poems in the Sombra series.

“The school is not quite deserted,” said the Ghost. “A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still.”

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed. (Dickens 49)

It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desk. At one of these

a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he had used to be. (Dickens 50)

La flor azul se abrió en su mente. Vio palabras como pequeñas piedras diseminadas en el espacio negro de la noche. Luego, pasó un cisne con rueditas con un gran moño rojo en el interrogativo cuello. Una niñita que se le parecía montaba el cisne.

-Esa niñita fui yo—dijo Sombra.

Sombra está desconcertada. Se dice que, en verdad, trabaja demasiado desde que murió Sombra. Todo es pretexto para ser un pretexto, pensó Sombra asombrada. "Untitled" (230)

"I wish," Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: "but it's too late now."

"What is the matter?" asked the Spirit.

"Nothing," said Scrooge. "Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all." (Dickens 52)

SOMBRA: -Hay en la escalera un niño. Es verdad que hace tiempo maltraté a un niño. A ése precisamente.

Sombra conocía al niño abandonado en la escalera. Entonces sollozó. "Escrito cuando Sombra" (232)

The poem cited above, untitled and written May 1, 1972, is about Sombra's regret at not being able to adequately employ language and is the first poem in the Sombra series.

Era como hablar o escribir. Después de hablar o de escribir siempre tenía que explicar:

-No, no es eso lo que yo quería decir.

It was like talking or writing. After talking or writing she always had to explain:

"No, that is not what I wanted to say." (My trans.) (230)

After these lines, where Sombra is thinking about her artistic failure, a blue flower opens in her mind, and she sees "words like small stones disseminated in the black space of the night" (my trans.)

(230). This vision is one of the efficacy of words. The blue flower represents the modernist idea of creating a language that can express the ideal. At this point the apparition of a girl similar to herself riding a swan appears and Sombra says, "I was that little girl," (my trans.) (230), echoing Scrooge's recognition of his childhood self, "Scrooge said he knew it." This little girl represents Sombra's past self, the self that still believed in the possibility of language, shown her dominance of the swan, a modernist symbol of beauty and perfection. But the present Sombra is the Sombra who is fragmented, who sees that past, exists in the present, and also longs to be dead. For this reason Pizarnik closes the poem with another rewrite of Dickens, quoted above.

Sombra is disconcerted. It is said, truly, that she works too much since Sombra died. Everything is a pretext to be a pretext, thought Sombra astonished (my trans.) (230).

These last lines establish the new conception of subjectivity that Pizarnik explores in the rest of the Sombra poems. The idea of the subject as a modernist poet whose words produce the ideal is abandoned. The new subject is a true shadow. Sombra's actions occur in her own poem, but also are shadows of what happens in the Dickens' text. As she looks at her childhood self she experiences the regret of artistic failure, but also acts out Scrooge's actions of looking at his childhood self. After the vision of the little girl concludes, Sombra becomes the present day Scrooge and also his dead partner, Marley. All the while, the lines are full of wordplay that the English translation cannot fully convey. For example, "pensó Sombra asombrada" means "thought Sombra astonished," but reads, "thought Shadow shadowed." Also, the allusion to a pretext behind a pretext points to the palimpsestic technique that Pizarnik employs to formulate this new shadowy subject. The wordplay indicates some hope of creating an alternative to the modernists' dreams for using language to create the Ideal.

In contrast, the fourth poem in the series, "Escrito cuando Sombra," partially analyzed above, leaves behind any hope and embraces the desire for death. After the disembodied voice declares that the last hour has past, the scene from *Christmas* where Scrooge looks at his childhood self is inserted

SOMBRA: -Hay en la escalera un niño. Es verdad que hace tiempo maltraté a un niño. A ése precisamente.

Sombra conocía al niño abandonado en la escalera. Entonces sollozó. "Escrito cuando Sombra" (232)

While in the previous poem the fact of Scrooge weeping is ignored, here Sombra sobs, acknowledging the despair of ever finding a way for language to act as she wants, and showing her longing for death.

In so many ways Pizarnik poses and examines the problem of the self in language in her Sombra poems. She shows that meaning, like the self in language, is not static, but rather, like light and shadow, constantly flickering. The palimpsestic technique allows her to represent this idea textually, having multiple texts' words and themes cast a shadow onto her text. She chooses texts in which the protagonist engages in the world of the phantasm, just as Sombra does. The palimpsestic (or what I would consider to be a "shadow casting") technique serves to augment and intensify the shifting of the subject not just between pronominal positions, but between texts. Pizarnik multiplies the possibilities of the phantasm with intertextuality, referencing and building upon both Dickens' and Lautréamonts' previous explorations of the subject caught up in the phantasm. Moreover, desire, a fundamental ingredient of the structure of the phantasm, appears in Pizarnik's Sombra poems as two desires: the desire for death, which comes on the heels of an always frustrated desire to find herself materially present in language. Without being aware of Pizarnik's implementations of the palimpsestic (or shadow casting) technique, one's understanding of her many explorations of the intricacies of the desiring subject in language in the structure of the phantasm would be greatly diminished.

Notes

1 *Sombra* appears in six short texts, 3 dated 1972, one dated 1971, and the rest undated. These texts are "Untitled," (1972) (230); "Texto de Sombra," undated (231); "El entendimiento," undated (231); "Escrito cuando Sombra," undated (232); "Presencia de Sombra," undated (231); and "Texto de Sombra," undated (233). Sombra also surfaces in: "Untitled," undated

(230); "Untitled," 1971 (247); "Untitled," 1972 (248); and "Untitled," 1972 (249). Despite the fact that some texts lack of dates, I believe all of them to have been written in 1971-72, the same years as the dated poems, because of their thematic and formal unity.

2 Pizarnik used *Endgame* (1958) by Samuel Beckett as a hypotext for her *Los poseídos entre lilas* (1969). See María Negroni, "El testigo lúcido: estudio sobre los textos en prosa de Alejandra Pizarnik." Columbia UP, 1994. Several of her other poems are "written over" passages from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). See Isabel Camara "Literatura o la política del juego en Alejandra Pizarnik." *Revista Iberoamericana* 51.132-3 (1985 July-Dec): 581-89 for a reading of "El hombre del antifaz azul," for which Pizarnik uses the passage of Alice falling down the rabbit hole as a hypotext.

3 I list here the textual "coincidences," between *A Christmas Carol* and Pizarnik's *Sombra* poems:

Marley was dead to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that.
(Dickens 1)

Empecemos por decir que Sombra había muerto. "El entendimiento" (231)

-Empecemos por decir que Sombra había muerto. "Escrito cuando Sombra" (232)

Scrooge knew he was dead? Of course he did. How could it be otherwise? Scrooge and he were partners for I don't know how many years. Scrooge was his sole executor, his sole administrator, his sole assign, his sole residuary legatee, his sole friend, his sole mourner. And even Scrooge was not so dreadfully cut up by the sad event, but that he was an excellent man of business on the very day of the funeral, and solemnised it with an undoubted bargain. (Dickens 2)

¿Sabía Sombra que Sombra había muerto? Indudablemente. Sombra y ella fueron consocias durante años. Sombra fue su única albacea, su única amiga y la única que visitó luto por Sombra. Sombra no estaba tan terriblemente afligida por el triste suceso y el día del entierro lo solemnizó con un banquete. "El entendimiento" (231)

Scrooge never painted out Old Marley's name. There it stood, years after his death, in the little square window above his door: Scrooge and Marley. Some-

times people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him. (Dickens 3)

Sombra no borró el nombre de Sombra. La casa de comercio se conocía bajo la razón social "Sombra y Sombra". Algunas veces los clientes nuevos llamaban Sombra a Sombra; pero Sombra atendía por ambos nombres, como si ella, Sombra, fuese en efecto Sombra, quien había muerto. "El entendimiento" (231)

Once upon a time—of all the good days in the year, on Christmas Eve—old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house. It was cold, bleak, biting weather: foggy withal: and he could hear the people in the court outside go wheezing up and down, beating their hands upon their breasts, and stamping their feet upon the pave-ment-stones to warm them. (Dickens 5)

-Estaba trabajando en su despacho. Sin desearlo, escuchaba a la gente que pasaba golpeándose el pecho con las manos y las piedras del pavimento con los pies para entrar en calor. "Escrito cuando Sombra" (232)

Meanwhile fog and darkness thickened so, that people ran about with flaring links, proffering their services to go before horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The ancient tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping slyly down at Scrooge out of a gothic window in the wall, became invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, . . . (Dickens 15)

-Entretanto, la bruma y la oscuridad hicieron tan densas que Sombra caminaba por su gabinete alumbrándose con fósforos. SOMBRA: -¿Qué hora es? "Escrito cuando Sombra" (232)

"The school is not quite deserted," said the Ghost. "A solitary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still." Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed. (Dickens 49)

It opened before them, and disclosed a long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of plain deal forms and desk. At one of these a lonely boy was reading near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and wept to see his poor forgotten self as he had used to be. (Dickens 50)

"I wish," Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, and looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: "but it's too late now."

"What is the matter?" asked the Spirit. "Nothing," said Scrooge. "Nothing. There was a boy singing a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to have given him something: that's all." (Dickens 52)

SOMBRA: -Hay en la escalera un niño. Es verdad que hace tiempo maltraté a un niño. A ése precisamente. Sombra conocía al niño abandonado en la escalera. Entonces sollozó. "Escrito cuando Sombra" (232)

4 There is also another hypotext for the Sombra poems, Julio Cortázar's short story "El otro cielo." I do not discuss this hypotext here as the consideration of Carroll's and Lautréaumont's in itself is very complicated. See Musselwhite for a discussion of the realm of the phantasm in Cortázar's writing and the palimpsestic relationship between "Otro" and *Les Chants*.

5 Kristeva sees these subjective instances within fiction as being equal to Roman Jakobson's *shifters*, which are "une classe de mots dont le sense varie avec la situation" 'a class of words where the meaning varies with the situation' (317). Kristeva refers to Roman Jakobson on shifters, especially to his essay dedicated to words (such as "here," "there," "this," and "that") whose meanings derive from context. R. Jakobson, "Shifters, verbal categories and the Russian verb," in *Selected Writings*, 2, The Hague: Mouton, 1971.

6 The first poem I refer to, "A tiempo y no," is another palimpsestic poem, whose hypotexts are the mad tea party from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and a passage from *Les Chants* in which Maldoror and his bulldog rape and kill a young girl. In "A tiempo," four characters, La reina loca, La niña, La muerte, and La muñeca are drinking tea, waiting for Maldoror to come by with his new dog—an ominous statement given the outcome of the scene from *Les Chants*. In "En este mundo" the mention of Maldoror's dog, an instrument of death, coincides with the poetic voice's tone of despair. One of the last poem Pizarnik wrote before committing suicide, found written on a blackboard, contains the line, "oh vida / oh lenguaje / oh Isidoro" (255).

7 In her essay entitled, "Nota sobre un cuento de Julio Cortázar: 'El otro cielo,'" Pizarnik writes about the resonances between Julio Cortázar's short story "El otro cielo" and the scene from *Les Chants* where Maldoror dia-

logues with his shadow. She concludes that, "En *El otro cielo*, Julio Cortázar ha configurado, deliberada y fatalmente, una querella simétrica a la que sostiene Maldoror con su propia sombra" (410).

Works Cited

- Dickens, Charles. *A Christmas Carol. In Prose. Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*. (1843) London: Chapman and Hall, no date.
- Gavier, María Elisa Zurita y Mónica Sanchez. "Un encuentro . . . Julio Cortázar y Alejandra Pizarnik." *Un tal Julio: Cortázar, otras lecturas*. Ed. María Elena Legaz. Córdoba, Argentina: Alcion, 1998. 115-37.
- Genette, Gérard. *Palimpsestos: la literatura en segundo grado* (1962). Trans. Celia Fernández Prieto. Madrid: Taurus, 1989.
- Jacobson, Roman. "Shifters, verbal categories and the Russian verb." *Selected Writings*, 2. The Hague: Mouton, 1971.
- Kristeva, Julia. *La Révolution du Langage Poétique: L'Avant-Garde a la Fin du XIXe Siècle: Lautréamont et Mallarme*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1974.
- LaPlanche, Jean and J-B. Pontalis. *The Language of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith. NYC: W.W. Norton, 1973.
- . "Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality." *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*. 49.1 (1968): 1-18.
- Lasaarte, Francisco. "Más allá del Surrealismo: La poesía de Alejandra Pizarnik." *Revista Iberoamericana*. 49.125 (1983): 867-77.
- Lautréamont, El conde de. *Les Chants de Maldoror*. Paris: Le livre de poche, 1963.
- Musselwhite, David. "Death and Phantasm; A Reading of Julio Cortázar's 'Babas del diablo.'" *Romance Studies; a Journal of the University of Wales* 18.1 (2000): 57-68.
- Pizarnik, Alejandra. *Alejandra Pizarnik: Obras completas, poesía completa y prosa selecta*. ed. Cristina Piña. Buenos Aires: Corregidor, 1998.

Pizarnik, Alejandra. *El deseo de la palabra*. Spain: OCNOS, Barral, 1975.

Thorpe, Running. "The Poetry of Alejandra Pizarnik." *Chasqui: Revista de literatura latinoamericana*. 14.(2-3) Feb.-May. (1985): 45-55.