

OCCULT COUCHES IN THE PAMPA

Reviewing Three Recent Books on Twentieth-Century Argentina

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ARGENTINA ON THE COUCH: PSYCHIATRY, STATE, AND SOCIETY, 1880 TO THE PRESENT. Edited by Mariano Plotkin. (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2003. Pp. 287.)

EVIL, MADNESS, AND THE OCCULT IN ARGENTINE POETRY. By Melanie Nicholson. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2002. Pp. xxi+201.)

FREUD IN THE PAMPAS: THE EMERGENCE AND DEVELOPMENT OF A PSYCHOANALYTIC CULTURE IN ARGENTINA. By Mariano Plotkin. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001. Pp. 314. \$60.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)

Mariano Plotkin's 2001 study, *Freud in the Pampas: The Emergence and Development of a Psychoanalytic Culture in Argentina* is an important and necessary book that continues in greater depth and with more systematic rigor the work begun by Jorge Balán (*Cuéntame tu vida. Una biografía colectiva del psicoanálisis argentino*, 1991). Its starting point is the need to explain the historical causes of the "enormous presence of psychoanalysis" in urban Argentinean culture, which has meant that, as Plotkin facetiously points out, "anyone who questions the existence of the unconscious or of the Oedipus complex at a social gathering in any large Argentine city is made to feel as if he or she were denying the virginity of Mary before a synod of Catholic bishops" (1). The use of the metaphor of Mary's virginity to explain the importance of psychoanalysis in Argentina is surely no accident in this introductory remark, since it allows Plotkin to set himself up as the heretic who will rightfully question the (supposedly) dogmatic belief system of Argentinean culture. Plotkin then proceeds seriously to explain how his project fills a scholarly gap. He argues that only a historical approach to the subject will be up to the task of answering the question of why Buenos Aires is the

world capital of (particularly Lacanian) psychoanalysis today. He defines as historical an approach that, unlike a sociological one, studies the subject in its transmutations through time and understands the phenomenon as “a unique combination of social, cultural, economic, intellectual, and political factors” (6).

Essentially, Plotkin shows that in Argentina, not unlike in France, psychoanalysis was initially (roughly in the first three decades of the twentieth century) not taken seriously as a theory (and much less as a method) because of the overwhelming dominance of positivist thinking that cast psychoanalysis as empirically weak. He convincingly shows (alongside scholars like Hugo Vezzetti or Jorge Balán) that the heyday of Freud’s ideas began after the military coup against Perón’s government in 1955 (the so-called “*Libertadora*”). Interestingly, he speculates that the psychoanalytic practice generated sophisticated private environments that could serve as a non-repressive and “modern” response to the increasingly militarized and violent political sphere. I must admit that, from the perspective of someone who is not a historian, the truly exciting moments of the book are those where Plotkin speculates. And he often does so with keen intuition.

The section that most directly addresses the reception of psychoanalysis by the (intellectually dominant) political Left in the 1960s is titled “When Marx Meets Freud.” This section starts with a brief sketch of the historical aftermath of the *Revolución Libertadora*, which had created a short-lived alliance between Communists, Liberals and Conservatives that quickly broke down to reveal the truly repressive character of the military regime that had removed Perón from power. One of the puzzling features of Peronism that the Left was never quite able to figure out was why the working class remained Peronist after 1955 or, if anything, became even more Peronist, instead of assuming its historical revolutionary mission, which would have afforded the leftist intellectuals the role of revolutionary avant garde. The failure of the Marxist intellectuals to direct or influence the working class in Argentina led to a wholesale self-interrogation of the basic tenets of orthodox Marxist political theory. Relying on Sartre’s argument that the Marxist left was in need of a theory of subjectivity and should look to psychoanalysis to find it, Argentinean Marxist intellectuals began doing just that. Plotkin analyzes the thinking of three key figures in Argentinean intellectual life: José Blejer, León Rozitchner, and Oscar Masotta. Here Plotkin explicitly constructs an intellectual (rather than an institutional, economic, or sociological) history of the transculturation of psychoanalysis in Argentina. In so doing, Plotkin puts into practice his claim regarding the need for writing on the history of ideas in the Latin American context. According to the author, the history of ideas is a facet all too easily ignored by mainstream Latin American historians who have, by and

large, not deemed Latin America important as a region in which ideas are produced.

With respect to Blejer and Rozitchner, Plotkin demonstrates the two Marxists' uneasy struggle with making psychoanalytical theory compatible with Marxism. He argues that Blejer attempts to sort out a "good" Freud from a "bad" Freud, locating the former in the Viennese doctor's early work (especially *The Interpretation of Dreams*) from which he tries to vindicate technique and discard theory. Rozitchner, on the other hand, focuses on Freud's later, more anthropological and speculative work (primarily *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*), but is unable to see that Freud's concept of the "Id" (and I would add, its entrenched relation with the Superego) is hardly compatible with Marxist notions of revolutionary politics. What would improve this section, in my view, is a more sustained engagement with Freud's theory. For example, the chapters would be more comprehensible if Plotkin had given even a short definition of, for example, Freud's first and second topographies, so that concepts like "drive theory" and "Superego-Ego-Id" could have taken a clearer shape for a reader not completely familiar with the Freudian edifice. In the section on Oscar Masotta—the intellectual who founded the first Lacanian institute (the *Escuela freudiana de Buenos Aires*) and was probably the foremost representative of Lacanian thought in the Spanish-speaking world—the need for more conceptual engagement is even stronger. Plotkin, for example, argues that Masotta corrected Rozitchner's failed attempt to integrate psychoanalysis with dialectic materialism, pointing to Lacan (as opposed to Freud) for the link, but the supposed connection between the individual and the social and historical structure in Lacan is never really explained. The fact that in the following chapter, called "Politics, Lacanianism, and the Intellectual Left," Althusser's writings are mentioned as a key text concerning the integration of Marxism and psychoanalysis does not produce much more conceptual clarity. In this sense, then, the chapters on the engagement of Marxist intellectuals with psychoanalysis end up contributing once again more to institutional and cultural, than to intellectual, history in Argentina.

Mariano Plotkin is also the editor of an important volume of essays titled *Argentina on the Couch: Psychiatry, State, and Society, 1880 to the Present*. The stated purpose of this volume is twofold: first, the authors wish to "introduce the historical dimension into the problem of a psychoanalytical culture in Argentina" (3); second, they treat the diffusion of psychoanalysis (and the psychiatric system of the country in general) as a "window through which other more general topics, such as the development of the Argentine state . . . , are discussed and analyzed (3). For the sake of brevity, I cannot engage all the essays collected in this volume. Pieces like the beautifully written chapter by Kristin Ruggiero would

deserve more detailed attention than I can give them here. Her essay unravels its analysis of late-nineteenth-century criminology and politics by retelling the novelesque destiny of the murderer Luis Castruccio. The greater part of the chapter reads like a novel, ending in a chilling speculation about the genocidal implications of positivist medical thought. Ruggiero reminds us at the end of her essay that it was José Ingenieros—the Argentinean pioneer of positivist medicine in the service of criminology—who called for the “immediate and *sweet* destruction of incurables and degenerates” (84), which was to serve the betterment of the “species.” Ruggiero’s open ending seems to invite the reader to continue her speculation. Is it so abstruse, then, to think here of the role that some of the medical establishment was eager to take up during the years of José López Rega (1974–76), Peron’s fascist minister of public health, and later during the terror regime of the generals who ruled from 1976–83? After all, they put to use medical science to help the military “cure” the country of the “cancer” the generals saw in contestatory politics, operating on the body of the nation “without anesthetics.”

Hugo Vezzetti’s and Julia Rodríguez’s chapters struck me as relevant and/or problematic with respect especially to the second purpose mentioned by Plotkin in the introduction, the general historical, political and theoretical topics on which the authors wish to shed light through the “window” of psychoanalysis. Hugo Vezzetti’s essay (“From the Psychiatric Hospital to the Street”) is a good example of the kind of intellectual historiography that historiography on Latin America, according to Plotkin, has by and large ignored, notably the “history of ideas,” since Latin America has been regarded as an “importer” rather than an active “producer” of ideas (see p. 8). Vezzetti’s essay demonstrates not only the “importation” and implementation of psychoanalysis as a psychiatric and, later on, as a cultural tool from the middle of the twentieth century on, but also shows the ways in which psychoanalysis is received differently, i.e., creatively transformed (Fernando Ortiz would say “transcultured”) in Argentina.

Focusing on Enrique Pichon Rivière, an important figure in Argentinean psychoanalysis, Vezzetti traces the idiosyncrasy of a man who combined the analytically and individually oriented methodology of the Kleinian school with the Gestalt line of thought that focused on the present and on group-oriented goals, inventing, in Pichon’s own words, a social, rather than an individual, therapy. In the form of an “operative social psychology,” Pichon thus forged the “science of interrelation” (165). This clearly constituted a break with Freudian orthodoxy and achieved, in Vezzetti’s view, a “democratization of psychoanalysis” (159). Illustrating the originality of Pichon’s theory and praxis formation, Vezzetti gives a number of examples of the scope of Pichon’s involvement in social and political matters during the 1960s. I

would like to highlight one of these “anecdotal” examples because it not only illustrates the political scope of Pichon’s work, but also crystallizes a few problematic historical issues.

Vezzetti recounts the involvement of Pichon in a small town in the province of Buenos Aires, a town where the inhabitants refused to accept the installation of a public water system. Pichon interpreted this behavior as a “resistance to change” that needed to be worked through and overcome for the sake of progress, and Vezzetti seems to agree with him throughout the two-page-long summary of the events. Pichon manages to locate the center of the resistance in an old wise woman who happened to be both the “principal abortionist in town” (166) and the local Peronist leader (remember that Peronism was an illegal, underground movement ever since the fall of Perón’s government in 1955 until his return in 1973). Without dwelling on the history of Peronism (a topic with which most English-speaking audiences may well not be too familiar and may require some help), Vezzetti suggests that “through an intensive intervention requiring a couple of days of full-time work, Pichon’s group had succeeded in transforming attitudes and motivations” (167). The small town was able to enter into modernity: almost all the residents “had gotten rid of their old water pumps” and backward “attitudes and motivations” (167).

What is troubling about this anecdote, or at least about Vezzetti’s summary of it, is a certain uncritical triumphalism about Pichon’s political intervention against the supposedly irrational recalcitrance of a provincial Peronist. It is troubling because of the hindsight one would expect of a historian who has lived through the worst neoliberal devastation of the country in Argentina’s history—a historian who analyzes a moment in the late 1960s, the years of Onganía’s dictatorship, when Argentina, thanks to the prostration of its generals to international enterprise, acquired its first significant foreign debt (a debt whose beginning is too often imprecisely attributed exclusively to the dictatorship of 1976–83). With most Latin American water supplies in the hands of transnational corporations and after the violent water riots in Bolivia of the last few years, the refusal to “get connected” to public water systems appears, indeed, less irrational, recalcitrant, and foolish than Vezzetti would have us believe. In addition, Argentina’s most successful resistance movement during the last, and most systematic, dictatorship, even well beyond the official end of the general’s rule in 1983, was carried out by a group of individuals who refused, in a most recalcitrant and irrational way, to accept reality, that is, the murder of their family members, friends, and lovers. In a country where melancholia, or aggressive recalcitrance, has thus more than once been successful in challenging the illegitimate powers that be, it seems problematic to celebrate the overcoming of such recalcitrance.

While Vezzetti rightly points out that the “Pichonian group movement had its greatest influence not so much among the poor or the marginal neighborhoods as within the urban middle-class in Buenos Aires and other large cities” (168), it remains questionable whether “democracy” is the correct term to evoke when talking about the “shift” (Vezzetti talks about a “democratic shift”) that Pichon’s work produced in psychoanalysis, which then, as a democratized institution, took root in contemporary Argentinean society as in no other Latin American country (see 174). The anecdote of the backward small town that was “converted,” whose attitudes and motivations “transformed,” points to some of the more questionable aspects of both Pichon’s praxis and Vezzetti’s analysis.

Julia Rodríguez’s article on “The Argentine Hysteric” is a clear and interesting example of the kind of scholarship that Plotkin promises in the introduction, since it explores both the history of psychiatry and psychoanalysis in Argentina (here particularly through a portrayal of the work of the well-known medical doctor José Ingenieros). The article extrapolates from this analysis in order to arrive at an original interpretation of the particularity of Argentinean institutions and society in general. Although many of the specific cultural phenomena related to the study and treatment of hysteria mentioned by Rodríguez are applicable to cultural spheres in Europe, especially in Paris and Vienna (the “capitals” of hysteria at the turn of the twentieth century), Rodríguez comes to a peculiarly interesting analysis concerning the reception of hysteria studies in Buenos Aires. Hysteria functioned as a kind of thermometer of Argentina’s entry into modernity to the extent that its occurrence was understood as an effect of modern urban stress on women, and would therefore only occur in environments that were “modern” enough to produce such stress.

In the second part of her essay, Rodríguez argues that although the hysterical symptoms of women were increasingly understood (under the influence of a nascent interest in psychoanalysis) in their psychic dimensions, Argentinean psychiatrists (including Ingenieros) ultimately continued to apply the positivist framework of degeneration, reifying the hysterical symptoms in the biology of women. This is particularly striking in comparison with the same psychiatrists’ work on male patients, where they showed much greater creativity in diagnosing and treating psychological disorders. This paradigm reinscribes the cultural stereotype whereby men transcend the body, whilst women remain ensnared in it. In a sense, this final conclusion, while interesting in its factual contrast based on case studies, simultaneously represents the weakest moment in Rodríguez’s otherwise excellent exploration and in her rhetoric. I would suggest that it might have been more fruitful to pursue an inquiry along the lines of Misha Kavka’s work on male

hysteria (1994). Kavka argues that the turn-of-the-twentieth-century obsession with female hysterics in Europe actually constituted a form of male hysteria. Such an approach would allow Rodríguez to pry open and mobilize the reified gender assumptions that she finds in the psychiatric institutions of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Buenos Aires, rather than simply turning against the “progressives” and “self-proclaimed advocates of progress for women” (47). Especially from a feminist political point of view, it would have been more innovative to turn tables and diagnose the male doctors’ obsession with female hysterics and their need to squelch the women’s somatic rebellion against the all too rigid gender and sexual norms, rather than to simply accuse these men of “support[ing] with medical evidence the rigid sexual distinctions of the day” (47).

Plotkin’s epilogue is a fascinating closure, not only for this volume, but in a sense he comes full circle here with respect to his *Freud in the Pampas*. What I mean is that the author enters into a rich speculative elaboration of the role of psychoanalysis after the economic, political, and institutional crisis represented by the fall of the Alianza government in December 2001. Plotkin’s arguable thesis is the following: on the one hand, as a psychiatric practice, psychoanalysis is clearly on the decline and being displaced by the influence of the powerful world of psychopharmacology, and of short-term, result-oriented forms of therapy. The psychological crisis provoked by the political breakdown in 2001 has only exacerbated this tendency, as more and more Argentines are looking for quick solutions to their mental anguish. On the other hand, however, discursively the Argentinean public sphere has never been more saturated with psychoanalytic language. Plotkin argues that this saturation may well represent psychoanalysis’s definitive decline, as it produces precisely the kind of trivialization of Freudian thought that already represented for Freud himself a dangerous downside of popularity. The closing of a circle, opened with *Freud in the Pampas*, is suggested here because Plotkin intimates that the epoch of psychoanalytic dominance that started in the late 1950s after the fall of the Perón government seems to be coming to a close with these latest trends where psychoanalysis is only discursively strong (and simultaneously theoretically diluted or trivialized), but has already lost its material and institutional hold. While admitting that the increasing use of psychopharmacological drugs in Argentina indicates a significant alteration in its cultural climate, one may want to object that Plotkin’s examples of the banalization of psychoanalysis stem almost exclusively from television culture. Admittedly television probably has never had a greater grip on consumer culture than now, but is there any intellectual, cultural or political praxis that is not trivialized by it?

Melanie Nicholson's book *Evil, Madness, and the Occult in Argentine Poetry* treats the work of three major Argentinean poets of the twentieth century: Olga Orozco (to whom the category of "the occult" refers), Alejandra Pizarnik (representing "evil"), and Jacobo Fijman (the obvious representative of "madness"), with a short excursion on Vicente Zito Lema's collaborative book with/on Fijman. The originality of Nicholson's essay lies in the historical connection she establishes between the three notions of evil, madness, and the occult. She grounds them in the tradition of the French *poètes maudits* and the subsequent surrealist movement, and in a more extended sense, in the traditions of alchemy, hermeticism, gnosticism, and Western occultism from the Roman Empire through the Middle Ages down to the nineteenth century (a tour de force at times too sweeping to convince).

At the same time as she puts the poetry of these three Argentinean poets in relation to what she argues is a coherent Western cultural undercurrent (the "occult"), Nicholson also insists on not "narrowly" historicizing their oeuvre. She argues that historicizing them is to run the risk of "misreading them entirely" (xix). She aims to resist what she sees as "a particular tendency, especially in the North American critical response, to Latin American literature, to look for narrowly political contexts and responses" (xix). On the one hand, I fully agree with the author's worry about narrowly politicizing and/or historicizing Latin American texts, as if this literature could only produce political allegory and never universal philosophical or metaphysical reflection. Clearly the highly formal poetry of Pizarnik, to use the most striking example, cannot be comprehended on the basis of a flat reading of Peronism. On the other hand, I would still insist on understanding precisely as a form of historicizing the question that Nicholson finally poses herself as a guideline for her own anti-historicizing move: "Why did there arise in Argentina a significant strain of poetry that was metaphysical and esoteric in nature, at the opposite end of the spectrum from Jean-Paul Sartre's ideal of engaged literature?" (xx). The historicization that Nicholson rightfully rejects would need to be elaborated in order to produce a sustained and theoretically informed critique of North American tendencies to allegorize Latin American texts. Nicholson would find a model for such a critique in certain postcolonial scholars who have reinterpreted and remobilized other "southern" texts that had been "congealed" into historical allegory by Eurocentric criticism.

The most successful discussion in the book is, in my view, the section on Jacobo Fijman. Departing from the established notion of Fijman as the avant-garde author of *Molino rojo*, a volume he published in 1926 at the age of twenty-eight, Nicholson considers all of his subsequent poetry, written almost exclusively in insane asylums. She thus criticizes the tradition that has ignored the poet's later oeuvre, and convincingly

argues not only that the later texts ought to be included in an evaluation of his oeuvre, but also that his own (avant-garde) writing on madness foreshadows many of the topics that concretize in his later work and his life. The most commendable aspect of Nicholson's readings of Fijman is her intricate and sophisticated interweaving of texts and biography. In her discussion of madness, she connects the question of (the lack of) agency in language (a question that arises from avant-garde theories of language; see my discussion below) with the agency of the patient Fijman, as well as with his use of poetic language to recapture this agency. She thus employs the notion of madness as "a type of discourse the poet chooses to adopt" (104) at times strategically, a notion that is central also in her discussion of the collaboration between Fijman and the contemporary poet Zito Lema.

The main purpose of the two chapters on Olga Orozco is to insert this poet's oeuvre into the history of the esoteric tradition in general, and more specifically of gnosticism. Nicholson spends a good deal of the section defining a number of key terms and then finding these terms in Orozco's texts. Relying on popular scholars of the occult such as Mircea Eliade, Nicholson establishes terms such as "pneuma", "primordial ignorance," "fallenness," etc., terms that apparently circulated in esoteric environments from ancient Egypt all the way to the French surrealists. Nicholson draws up long "lists" of occult vocabulary, and, in order to connect these excursions with the work of Orozco, ends many a paragraph with programmatic affirmations such as "a condition acknowledged repeatedly in Orozco's work" (23) or "at the heart of all Orozco's work we discover the conviction that truth or reality always resides *elsewhere*" (20). One may want to object that, for dealing with a poet whose writing is dominated, as Nicholson herself states, by a "fascination with the power of language itself" (59), there is, overall, surprisingly little engagement with the more formal aspects of Orozco's aesthetics. However, Nicholson ends her second chapter on Orozco with an excellent formal study of the poem "Para destruir a la enemiga" where she leaves behind all the less convincing programmatic affirmations and engages with Orozco's language at the level where its most unique interest lies while nonetheless drawing on the conceptual *correspondence* with what she sees as a coherent "occult" line in Orozco's work.

The section on the poetry of Alejandra Pizarnik is primarily informed by Bataille's notion of evil in literature. The central point of Nicholson's Bataillean reading of Pizarnik turns around the notion of transgression and the necessary encounter of the transgressive subject with an absolute limit. Like the texts of the writers that interested Bataille, Pizarnik's work, in Nicholson's reading, "is unrelentingly dark, death-focused, violent, and, in some cases, obscene" (75). In this vein, Pizarnik would participate in "Bataille's own call to revolution, in which the bourgeois

sense of beauty and morality is overturned" (76) through the production of abnormal or perverse "states of consciousness—and with the language that strives to correspond to such states" (75). There may be a tendency in Nicholson's use of Bataille to make this French philosopher of the "dark" tradition more acceptable to American audiences by disarming or domesticating his notion of "evil" too quickly either as a form of mere "textuality," or as a benign dissolvent of the "'crippled existence' of modern bourgeois life" (78). This tendency is not unlike so many sympathetic readings of Nietzsche in the American context.

Although Nicholson admits that, unlike Orozco's texts, Pizarnik's "highly subjective" poetry does not contain overt references to hermeticism or gnosticism, she insists on finding "fundamental tenets of esoterism" in her texts (72). In a reading of the first poem of *Extracción de la piedra de locura*, "Cantora nocturna," Nicholson traces a few tendencies of the poem (such as its use of violently juxtaposed images, the breakdown of the integral subject, the disillusionment of childhood as an adaptation of the breakdown of the esoteric principle of a primordial golden age, etc.) as echoes of Orozco's own esoteric world. Later on in the book, examples of such esoteric tendencies would be that, in Nicholson's view, Pizarnik's struggle with limits of language read like a "modern, alienated version of the ancient theme of possession by the oracle" (156).

Interestingly, all of Nicholson's readings of Pizarnik seem to be haunted by psychoanalysis. In fact, all that which figures in Nicholson's reading as a vague "evidence for an esoteric theory of language" (vague because of the problematically imprecise notion of the esoteric, the occult, the hermetic, the Gnostic, etc. in this study), as a "modern, alienated version of the ancient theme of possession by the oracle" (156), points, in all the terms that the scholar demonstrates, toward Lacanian notions of the subject of language. Nicholson speaks of the struggle of the poet with language as "a powerful force sometimes beyond the control of the human agent," of the struggle against the "impotence of language" (163) when with Lacan she might have understood this impotence not as the impotence of language but rather as the subject's symbolic "castration," which is his (or her) very condition for entering into language and thus constituting himself or herself as a subject. Quoting a poem by Pizarnik that contains the highly psychoanalytical lines "'para sustituir los jardines del edén sobre las piedras del vocablo,'" Nicholson affirms that "language may belong to a realm that excludes the subjective voice entirely" (165). She thus alludes to the fallacy of the Western subject and the decentering action of language, explored systematically by Lacan. With Lacan, Nicholson might have developed a more systematic redefinition of subjectivity as the opposite of individuality, explaining thus that (Pizarnik's poetic) language works the question of the subject, not its demise. Thus, citing the famous lines from *Extracción de la piedra de locura*, "'Cuando a la casa del lenguaje

se le vuela el tejado y las palabras no guarecen, yo hablo," Nicholson comes to the misguided conclusion that "the poetic word for Pizarnik is the very roof under which she dwells . . . When this house/homeland fails to provide a protective space for her, the response is unforgiving . . ." (166). Informed by Lacanian theory, Nicholson could have taken Pizarnik's word literally without taking the detour of an interpretative figuration ("unforgiving"). After all, it is at the moment when the speaker realizes that the signifying chain keeps slipping ("no guarece") that she speaks: "yo hablo." In other words, the lyrical voice does not speak *despite* the "flying roof" but *because* of it. An engagement with Lacan's theories would have afforded Nicholson a more fine-tuned and systematic reading of the central paradox in the poets' language, the search for an "ultimate object of desire, a state beyond language" to be reached through the poetic medium. Lacan clearly defines this "limit" (this "other side") not as a limit "beyond" or "outside" of language (as Nicholson seems to posit "silence" beyond and outside of language), but within, that is, as language's internal limit or "silence," as the presence of the Real inside the symbolic order. Thus, instead of coming to the conclusion that the poets ended up disillusioned because of their failure, Nicholson might have systematized their "failure" as their ultimate success, but of course not necessarily on the level of the individual and his or her own perception.

My plea for a Lacanian reading of Pizarnik in Nicholson's essay does not presuppose the Lacanian discourse as the ultimate and trans-historical master theory for any and all matters pertaining to human subjectivity, but rather sees in Lacan one of the most systematic and, at the same time, sophisticated articulations of the paradoxes laid out by the French *poètes maudits* and subsequently by surrealism, both of which are traditions in which Nicholson grounds her readings. In addition, establishing the link with psychoanalysis (especially Lacanian psychoanalysis) would also have been a big step in the direction of a complex historization of contemporary Argentinean culture. It could have enabled a form of historization beyond the oversimplifications of the allegorical readings that Nicholson rightfully rejects, given the extraordinary density and dissemination of psychoanalysis in Argentina already at the moment of the poets' productive periods.

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