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## A new imaginary



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# IT IS NECESSARY TO CRASH...

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## RESUMEN

Based on the approach of the new imaginary introduced in the Seminar XXIII by Lacan, this essay hopes to demonstrate some differences with respect to the first Lacanian imaginary in order to shed light on the rules of this record in the present school. From there, I propose a hypothesis on how writing has influenced Alejandra Pizarnik's life, taking into account the paradigmatic example of James Joyce's invention with his work of art.

## PALABRAS CLAVES

Imaginary | Sinthome | Body | Writing

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the body of the poem with my own, rescuing every phrase with  
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the letters of its every word into the offering in this ceremony of living.  
Alejandra Pizarnik, *A Musical Hell*

## INTRODUCTION

The present work aims at detecting the changes that take place and/or continuities that are maintained in terms of the conceptualization of the new imaginary, which is the selected topic for this new edition of *Lapso*.

The idea of a “new imaginary” presupposes the idea that something has been left behind. It is necessary to return to the first Lacanian imaginary in order to shed light on the rules of this record in a new school that does not contradict itself with the previous one but that challenges the Lacanian premise that explains most of his teachings, referring to the symbolic as the fundamental record that assigns meaning.

Some questions arise which take us to evaluate the outcomes of the mirror stage since, this starting point, will guide our reading about the last Lacan's reflections on it, in which the imaginary takes a special place.

Based on these concepts that frame my work, I will propose a hypothesis concerning the purpose of writing of the Argentine poet Alejandra Pizarnik, focusing on the special place that writing had in the life of James Joyce; an attempt at poetry regarding the approach to this new imaginary which Lacan invites us to think together with Joyce and his explanations about the *sinthome*.

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## FROM THE BODY AS AN IMAGE TO A NEW IMAGINARY

In his book *Ecrits 1*, Lacan (2010 [1949]) proposes that in the mirror stage, the *enfant* recognizes his external image when he looks himself at a mirror, which allows him to integrate his body sensations into the imago. This image is perceived joyfully by the *enfant* since it gives rise to a perception of selfhood, to a unified image. In other words, it is an image that provides stability to a reality lived by the subject as chaotic. However, it does not exist a sudden relation between the body and his image. It is necessary that something comes to join what at the beginning is presented as loose.

Laurent (2002) claims that the subject feels joy when he sees himself at a mirror but, mysteriously, he cannot recognize himself until he looks at his father or the person who is holding him and it is from that look that he recognizes this image as his own. In other words, there is an external point, a point that does not belong to the order of the image to determine the imaginary relation. This is why the mirror stage is a device that makes the wording of the primary narcissism possible, by joining it with the Other.

I believe that this key text reveals the first idea of a subject whose body is recognized through an imaginary identification coming from the symbolic. This is so because it is someone else who gives a body; the subject is not alone.

According to Miller (2012), it is from this first idea that the subject has an imaginary which, for Lacan, is basically scopic because the body is the shape of the body, not the enjoyable substance. This concept is introduced later with the *parlêtre*. In other words, what can be seen is the image; the subject experiences a change in mood when he recognizes his own image but he will never know anything about what goes on inside his body. This will remain a mystery.

Therefore, if we keep on reading about Lacan's last reflections on this topic, we will find some differences in his teachings. He will start thinking about the subject in relation to his body: a body changed by language in the first place. What J-A-Miller calls speaking body. Laurent (May, 2016) suggests that the speaking body is the center of attention in Lacan's last teaching suggestions because he wants to find something that goes beyond the unconscious. He introduces us to a body that enjoys, a body that is marked by passions and strong affection: an instinct-driven body. The importance here is not his image nor his shape as in the first teaching, but the pleasure he feels because of the language he speaks.

We can notice here a change in the imaginary order. According to Bassols (2017), even though the subject gets his first pleasurable effect in the body through the image, that effect will only be experienced once he finds himself immersed in the language. The language is a key factor in this body modification process understood as an enjoyable substance. The image will be, from now on, an enigma to decipher in each body.

To paraphrase Bassols (2015), what is real about the language is what gives body to the image. However, this will never take place if the body is not touched first by the language, which allows the three structures (real, symbolic and imaginary) to knot.

The consequences on this change of perspective in Lacan's teachings let us elucidate that the image alone is not enough to achieve stability. This stability will be based on the relation between the *parlêtre* and his body which is, according to Miller (2013), imaginary.

However, what does this relation between the *parlêtre* and his body mean? And, why is this stability imaginary?

As stated by Lacan (1975/76 [2008]), affection is the only relation that the *parlêtre* has with his body and this relation implies self-love:

Self-love is the principle of imagination. The *parlêtre* adores his body because he believes he owns it. In fact, he does not, but his body is his only consistency- mental consistency of course, because his body runs away at every instant (Lacan, 1975/76 [2008] p.64)

It is in this belief about having a body to adore that Lacan finds the root of the imaginary.

Apart from that, the imaginary consistency holds it together and it is for this reason that it is symbolized as the surface. It has the capacity of forming the knot, but it is not the knot itself. The knot exists to the rope. In other words, a *sine qua non* condition of this consistency is that there has to exist a previous tie.

Regarding the body, Miller (2013) states that it is the only consistency of the *parlêtre*. If there is to be a body, a knot has to e-xist because this is the basis of the body's imaginary consistency. "It Is Necessary to Crash...", the title of this research paper, makes reference to the new imaginary that Lacan (1975/76 [2008]) discusses in his *Seminar XXIII. A compass to guide us to the rules of the imaginary in the new conceptualization of the parlêtre*:

It is necessary to crash, if I can say it in this way, into a new imaginary that establishes the sense (...) the sense as it is; the one that I defined, not long ago, in terms of the union between the language, since I place the unconscious there, and our own body. (Lacan, 1975/76, [2008] p. 120).

Here I believe that Lacan argues about a necessary clash between language and body. This clash will leave a mark on the body, joyful experiences. The new imaginary comes to establish the sense, providing consistency for those marks. According to Miller (2013), Lacan refers to the *sinthome* as the consistency of those signs; this is why the *sinthome* is defined as a body event.

Having these statements in mind, we can spot the relation between the new imaginary and the *sinthome* regarding not only consistency but also self-love. This is so since the consistency is based on the relation that the *parlêtre* has with his body. This relation or this sense of belonging with the body relies on the belief of having it in order to adore it.

## JOYCE, PIZARNIK AND WRITING...

Writing interests me, since I think that, historically, it is by little pieces of writing that we have entered into the real.  
Lacan. *Seminar XXIII*

I would like to start with a question: what does the writing of the ego in Joyce have to do with the new imaginary?

According to Lacan (1975/76 [2008]), Joyce did a good job as a writer and writing is essential to his ego; the ego comes to fix something: he calls it mistake, lack, lapse. He fixes that lack of relation with his body; the relation we were talking about, one whose function is to provide imaginary consistency to a body.

Lacan considers that it is possible to notice in Joyce's writings this particular relation or lack of it with his body. For example, there is a scene in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in which one of the characters, Stephen, is attacked by some of his mates; and he affirms, without any doubts, that it is not Stephen the one who is beaten up but Joyce himself. Lacan is interested in this descriptive passage when Joyce abandons his body: "there is something in Joyce that is begging to leave, to be removed like a peel" (Lacan, 1975/76, [2008] p. 147)

This metaphor of something being removed like a peel refers to the relation that Joyce has with

his own body. What is surprising is that Joyce does not feel anything when his mates hit him, he does not even try to defend himself. He says that it was quickly forgotten: the image fades away, it disappears.

This leads us to our first conclusion, Joyce's relation with his body is not a relation that has to do with the image:

If the ego is said to be narcissistic, it is indeed because there is something at a certain level that supports the body as an image. However, in Joyce's case the image is not concerned here; so, doesn't this show that the ego has a very particular function on him? (Lacan, 1975/76, [2008] p.147).

Laurent (2002) will state that this relation does not have to do with the image as in the mirror stage where it is linked to affection and from there the psychic is imagined. Joyce's relation with the hole is a narcissistic one, that is, his relation with the lack of image and with that that makes a hole in the body. This is so, following what I was saying, the real of the language.

That relation which allows the *parlêtre* to take possession of his own body is one that Joyce achieves because of the construction of that ego turning to writing. Based on Joyce's writings, Lacan postulates a new school, the school of the *sinthome*; a school that will aim at the creation of each individual in the first place.

The creation in Joyce, his knowledge of creating a body through writing, is what allows him to fix the lack of the Name of the Father. It allows him to have a fourth knot or component which Lacan calls *sinthome*, whose function is to tie the three structures (Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real). Moreover, regarding the new imaginary, it allows him to show consistency to that sense of belonging to a body, which gives rise to self-love.

Let me start with this paradigmatic example, the one of Joyce and his writing, in order to question the place that writing had in the life of the Argentinian poet, Alejandra Pizarnik. She was fond of psychoanalysis and she had James Joyce's writings among her favorite ones on her night table. Over a period of time, Pizarnik was seeing the psychoanalyst León Ostrov to whom she dedicates one of her books, "*La última Inocencia*", and to whom she sent letters when she was living in Paris. Her constant search through writing allows us to suggest that it exists, in each of her poems, the desire to calm her feeling of death, a feeling that penetrates into her prose. However, she leaved us not only her collection of poems, but also her *Diaries* (2010) where she expresses her everyday experiences in a harsh way:

Sometimes, I would like to capture myself in writing with my body and soul; account for my breath, my cough, my fatigue, but in such a perfectly exact way that you will hear me breathing, coughing, crying, if only I could cry... (Pizarnik 2010, p.63)

In this book, the following topics come up: the complexes about her body, her difficulties in the sexual field, her yearning for writing a novel (something that she could never fulfilled), her thirst for knowledge, her loneliness and her existential angst that runs through each of her pages: "they don't know what it is to cry in front of a blank piece of paper and, patiently, fill it with signs created by myself" (Pizarnik, *Diaries*, 2010, p. 57)

I ask myself what Alejandra was searching for; in comparison with Joyce, it looks like there is not a narcissist relation with writing in Pizarnik. Joyce writes about making holes in the body, about the real of the language. This assures him a relation with pleasure.

According to Laurent (2002), melancholy is the accentuation of sadness. There, we will find the death of the chain of the signifier, of a direct relation not with the body but with the chain of the signifier alone, "the signifier does not have any relation with the forms of pleasure and the living, while Joyce's identification allows him to continue laughing when he writes" (Laurent, 2002, p.83).

Joyce shows us that it is possible to move from a lack to a *sinthome* through his writing. This “continue laughing” that allows Joyce to experience pleasure when he finds himself plunged into writing means the link between the chain of the signifier and the real of the body; this does not occur in the melancholy where the Name of the Father, which is a guarantee of pleasure, is foreclosed.

“A desire to write like James Joyce drunk” (Pizarnik, 2016, p.40) reads some of her lines in her writing books. We can see her frustrated longing to write a novel when she speaks of Joyce’s novel as “a kind of portrait of the young artist, novel that should reflect myself and my circumstances” (Pizarnik, *Diaries*, 2016, p.94).

I will take a risk and say, as a kind of hypothesis, that one of her quests through writing was “crashing” into the hole that emerges from the crash between the real of the language and an emotionally-driven body, crashing to leave a mark on that body that has passions and to possess it:

If only I could live in a continual state of ecstasy, shaping the body of the poem with my own, rescuing every phrase with my days and weeks, imbuing the poem with my breath while feeding the letters of its every word into the offering in this ceremony of living. (Pizarnik, 1971, p. 73).

“It is Necessary to Crash”, as I said, with the new imaginary that gives consistency to the body; Joyce did it, his know-how was that; maybe Pizarnik’s know-how did not carry the name of *sinthome*, if we understand it as a body event connected to narcissism and self-love; but without doubts with her writing she has exorcize more than one of her evils and also, with Joyce, it remains as an enigma that does not stop to question ourselves.

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