

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

TCLC 271

Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,
from the First Published Critical
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**

Kathy D. Darrow
Project Editor



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Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

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Preface

Since its inception *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC) has been purchased and used by some 10,000 school, public, and college or university libraries. TCLC has covered more than 1000 authors, representing over 60 nationalities and nearly 50,000 titles. No other reference source has surveyed the critical response to twentieth-century authors and literature as thoroughly as TCLC. In the words of one reviewer, “there is nothing comparable available.” TCLC “is a gold mine of information—dates, pseudonyms, biographical information, and criticism from books and periodicals—which many librarians would have difficulty assembling on their own.”

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TCLC is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author's works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, TCLC helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in TCLC presents a comprehensive survey on an author's career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author, work, or topic that is the subject of the entry.
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Kuester, Martin. "Myth and Postmodernist Turn in Canadian Short Fiction: Sheila Watson, 'Antigone' (1959)." In *The Canadian Short Story: Interpretations*, edited by Reginald M. Nischik, pp. 163-74. Rochester, N.Y.: Camden House, 2007. Reprinted in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*. Vol. 206, edited by Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau, 227-32. Detroit: Gale, 2008. The examples below follow recommendations for preparing a works cited list set forth in the Modern Language Association of America's *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (New York: MLA, 2009. Print); the first example pertains to material drawn from periodicals, the second to material reprinted from books:

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Gloria Fuertes

1918-1998

Spanish poet and children's writer.

The following entry provides an overview of Fuertes's life and works.

INTRODUCTION

Fuertes is a well-known and well-regarded Spanish poet of the twentieth century. She became active in Spanish literary life during the 1950s and 1960s, achieving popularity and success writing for children, while gaining critical recognition for her numerous volumes of verse, such as *Aconsejo beber hilo* (1954), *Antología y poemas del suburbio* (1954), and *Poeta de guardia* (1968), which address the concerns and employ the language of Spain's working class. Throughout her career, the author addressed various social issues in her work, including injustice, war, and human suffering, but also explored universal themes related to love, art, and death. Known for her direct style and accessibility, Fuertes maintained an anti-elitist stance in her work and promoted the idea that poetry could serve as a powerful curative for the ills of society. Long admired by Spain's general readership, the author is increasingly respected among literary scholars for her unique and powerful voice and her original treatment of the relevant themes of her time. Writing in 1982, Margaret H. Persin asserted that in Fuertes's poetry "the reader finds the main concerns of the twentieth century: alienation, distancing, the devalorization of human existence, and the loss of a sense of community." Persin concluded that through her unique perspective, Fuertes sought "to stem the tide of indifference, spiritual nullity and existential anguish."

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Fuertes was born July 28, 1918, in Madrid, Spain, to working-class parents and spent her youth in the city's lower-class neighborhoods. As a child, she enjoyed sports but also developed a love for poetry, and she began writing verse in her adolescence. Eventually, she attended a trade school for women, where she studied cooking, embroidery, hygiene, child care, and sewing. During the 1930s, Fuertes suffered a series of personal losses, beginning with the death of her mother in 1934. She had also fallen in love with a young man, who dis-

appeared during the Spanish Civil War. While suffering these hardships, Fuertes composed poetry regularly, a discipline she maintained throughout her adult life. She held various office jobs during this time, and in 1939 was driven by economic necessity to submit a children's story for publication. Upon receiving the story, the publication house offered her an editorial position, and between 1940 and 1955 she contributed stories on a weekly basis to the children's magazines *Pelayo* and *Maravilla*. Fuertes continued to write poetry during this time, as well, producing her first volume of poems, *Isla ignorada*, in 1950, and she became affiliated with the poetry magazine *Arquero* between 1952 and 1955. In 1955, she began studying library science, and five years later found a position as a librarian. Fuertes established her original lyric voice during the 1950s, with the publication of three more volumes of poetry, *Antología y poemas del suburbio*, *Aconsejo beber hilo*, and *Todo asusta* (1958).

In 1961, Fuertes was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship and taught Spanish at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, where she remained until 1964. The demands of this new position briefly interfered with the author's rigorous writing schedule, but she was eventually able to publish another collection, *Ni tiro, ni veneno, ni navaja*, in 1966. Upon returning to Spain, she produced two additional volumes, *Poeta de guardia*, one of her most successful works, and *Cómo atar los bigotes al tigre* (1969). Fuertes served as a literary teacher to American students in Madrid until 1975, at which point she was able to live off of her royalties. During the 1970s, the author produced several works for children, as well as two volumes of poetry for adults. Fuertes engaged her audience through readings and television appearances, and increasingly traveled to more remote Spanish provinces to promote literacy and to read to communities that could not afford to buy books. She continued to write during the 1980s and 1990s, producing several works for children, as well as additional volumes of poetry for adult readers, including one of her best-known works, *Historia de Gloria* (1980). Fuertes died on November 27, 1998, in Madrid, at the age of eighty.

MAJOR WORKS

Fuertes achieved significant critical and popular attention for various volumes of poetry written throughout her career, which are typically characterized by their

humor and compassion, as well as by the forthright manner in which the poet describes the experiences of her life. While the author's debut work, *Isla ignorada*, lacks some of the distinctive qualities of her later verse, it nevertheless introduces themes that would recur in subsequent volumes. Fuertes's concern for social issues briefly emerges in the poem "Paz que es justicia," while the title poem of the collection, designated the poet's first autobiographical piece, draws from highly personal material and addresses her identity as a poet. Fuertes's formal inclinations, including her tendency to eschew rhyme and traditional meters, are evident in her debut collection, although the work lacks the humor that surfaced in later volumes. Her subsequent book, *Antología y poemas del suburbio*, more fully illustrates the formal qualities that signify the poet's oeuvre. In addition to using free verse in this collection, the author also deliberately avoided sophisticated language, relying instead on phonetically based wordplay, so that her poems would be more accessible for her readership. Human suffering is an important theme in the work, and several of the poems stress the redemptive power of poetry. In "No perdamos el tiempo," the author calls on poets to put aside literary games and use language to heal societal ills instead. Other social issues, including the hypocrisies of bourgeois society, are addressed in "Es inútil" and "Protectora de Animales," while poems such as "Un hombre pregunta" and "Poema" explore themes related to God and the relationship between humanity and the divine. Fuertes also treats more personal themes in the collection, although she employs a self-deprecatory tone, at times, as in the opening poem, "Nota biográfica," in which she mocks poetic pretense. Fuertes's next volume, *Aconsejo beber hilo*, for many scholars, signals a new level of maturity in the author's poetic development. As in other collections, she relies heavily on autobiographical material in this work and explores questions related to womanhood, art, death, and the nuances of human experience. In "Cuarto de soltera," for example, Fuertes discusses conflicting feelings regarding her status as a single woman, while other poems deal with the poet's unfulfilled maternal feelings. Throughout the collection, in poems such as "Letanía de los montes de la vida" and "La pobre," the author portrays insanity or illness as a metaphor for the human condition, while "Escrito," "Ahora . . .," and "No sabemos qué hacer" depict the poet as both a seer and a lunatic. Existential questions, particularly with regard to death, are also a prevalent thematic concern in the collection, as evidenced by such verses as "Dibujo," "Los muertos," and "Aviso." The formal style of *Aconsejo beber hilo* is consistent with Fuertes' other volumes, particularly in its reliance on parallel constructions, humor, and wordplay. In addition to employing these techniques, the poet also appropriated nonliterary forms, such as personal letters, grammar-book sentences, and advertising slogans.

Fuertes has also won praise for her later collections, such as *Poeta de guardia* and *Historia de Gloria*. The former treats recurring themes of the author's career, such as death, God, and love, but employs a lighter, more playful tone than some of her previous works. Poems in the volume employ colloquial language, as well as slang, and make references to current events, including the Vietnam War. The work is divided into eight parts, with poems grouped together according to theme. Poems collected in the introductory section, such as "Sale caro ser poeta," deal with art and the poetic vocation, while those in the following section offer meditations on life and death. Subsequent sections address questions related to love, God's relationship to humanity, and the persistent presence of death. The final section of the work is comprised of poems such as "Zambra celestial," "Cielo de tercera," and "Dios llama al fontanero," which portray sacred figures in everyday circumstances. Throughout the work, the author reiterates the idea that poetry is a restorative art. *Historia de Gloria*, one of Fuertes's last volumes, is comprised of over seven hundred poems and deals directly with autobiographical material, including the author's childhood and adult experiences, as well as her philosophy, her loves, and her disappointments. Many of the poems are written in first person, and the poet's frank treatment of her own experience is evidenced even in the poems' titles, such as "Autobio," "Autorretrato," "Autobiografía," and "Autoepitafio." Describing the volume in an interview, Fuertes asserted that *Historia de Gloria* "no es un libro, es una mujer" (isn't a book, but a woman). In various poems throughout the collection, the author expresses her determination to love and celebrate herself, others, and life through poetry, and reinforces her claim that poetry has the power to mitigate injustice, hate, and violence.

CRITICAL RECEPTION

Fuertes launched her literary career in the 1950s, with the publication of *Isla ignorada*, and achieved some measure of success as a children's author. But because her early volumes of verse were poorly distributed, she did not reach a wider audience or enjoy significant recognition from critics until the 1960s, following the publication of *Que estás en la tierra* and *Ni tiro, ni veneno, ni navaja*, the latter of which won the Guipúzcoa poetry prize in Spain. The poet also won the Premio Vizcaya in 1969 for the volume *Cómo atar los bigotes al tigre* and in 1968 published what many scholars regard as her most successful work, *Poeta de guardia*. Early critics praised the original style and formal characteristics of Fuertes's poems and emphasized the accessibility and warmth of her writing, as well as its forthright treatment of contemporary social concerns. Many also noted her unrestrained wit, humor, and playful style, which characterized even those works, such as *Poeta de*

guardia, that deal with serious themes, including death, God, and love. During the 1970s and 1980s, Fuertes's reputation continued to increase, as the author sought direct contact with her readership through television appearances and poetry readings in an effort to generate interest in literature and broaden the appeal of poetry. Throughout her career, she had determined to communicate with readers of all social spheres, rather than limiting her appeal to the literary elite. Nevertheless, during the last decades of her life, Fuertes was increasingly respected by scholars for her contribution to twentieth-century Spanish letters. Andrew P. Debicki, writing in 1982, maintained that "Gloria Fuertes has made original and artistic use of seemingly trivial materials, and opened new directions for contemporary Spanish poetry."

Recent scholars have continued to assess Fuertes's significance within Spanish poetry and examine the formal and thematic attributes of her work. Several studies have particularly focused on the author's linguistic strategies, use of humor, and treatment of feminist themes. In 1982, Margaret H. Persin probed the methods by which Fuertes manipulated language and point of view in her work in order to invite reader participation and win "her reader over [to] a feminist view of poetry." John C. Wilcox also assessed the connection between humor and feminist themes in Fuertes's poetry, arguing that the author used humor as a tool to help transform her marginalized status as a female poet "into a gynocritical poetics." In exploring other formal aspects of Fuertes's work, Debicki observed the complex pattern of "textual interruptions" in her verse, by which the author was able to modify reader expectation and "produce significant meanings in a novel way." With regard to the author's thematic concerns, Ada Long identified human indifference and loneliness as prevailing issues in Fuertes's work, while Sylvia Sherno stressed the theme of solitude in her verse and linked the poet to "the tradition of abandonment" in the history of Spanish poetry. Other commentators, such as Douglas K. Benson, have sought to understand Fuertes's writing within the context of particular literary trends in Spain, concluding that the author both adopted and eschewed the tenets of various movements, and thus created a unique body of work that defies categorization. As recent scholarship confirms, Fuertes is increasingly recognized as a significant figure of twentieth-century Spanish poetry, who is especially appreciated for her compassion, sincerity, and ceaseless commitment to the restorative power of poetic expression. In 2005, Benson remarked that Fuertes "blazed her own artistic path: comic and dead serious, sophisticated and accessible, inclusive rather than exclusive," concluding that "to the end, her unique vision of herself, of life and of the poetic enterprise provided her the means" to "map out a kaleidoscopic, wondrous world for her readers."

PRINCIPAL WORKS

- Isla ignorada* (poetry) 1950
Canciones para niños (juvenilia) 1952
Aconsejo beber hilo (poetry) 1954
Antología y poemas del suburbio (poetry) 1954
Todo asusta (poetry) 1958
Que estás en la tierra (poetry) 1962
Ni tiro, ni veneno, ni navaja (poetry) 1966
Cangura para todo (juvenilia) 1967
Poeta de guardia (poetry) 1968
Cómo atar los bigotes al tigre (poetry) 1969
Antología poética (1950-1969) (poetry) 1970
Aurora, Brígida y Carlos (juvenilia) 1971
Cuando amas aprendes geografía (poetry) 1973
Sola en la sala (poetry) 1973
Obras incompletas (poetry) 1975
Historia de Gloria (poetry) 1980
Coleta, la poeta (juvenilia) 1982
Coleta payasa ¿qué pasa? (juvenilia) 1983
Off the Map: Selected Poems of Gloria Fuertes (poetry) 1984
Mujer de verso en pecho (poetry) 1995
Pecábamos como ángeles (poetry) 1997
Glorierías (poetry) 2001
Se beben la luz (poetry) 2008

CRITICISM

Margaret H. Persin (essay date spring 1982)

SOURCE: Persin, Margaret H. "Gloria Fuertes and (Her) Feminist Reader." *Revista/Review Interamericana* 12, no. 1 (spring 1982): 125-32.

[In the following essay, Persin addresses some of Fuertes's poems to demonstrate the way in which the poet manipulates language, tone, and "point of view" to encourage the reader's active participation in the act of poetic creation, and to win "her reader over [to] a feminist view of poetry."]

Critics have just begun to recognize the value of the post-Civil War poets who became active in Spain in the late 1950s and 1960s.¹ Gloria Fuerte's poetry is linked to that of her contemporaries not so much by a given theme or style as a common attitude: all of these poets stress the value of poetry as cognition and communication of our modern reality. In keeping with their aim to present everyday reality, they generally utilize colloquial language, slang, humor, and scenes from daily existence.²

The work of these poets is also unified by the subtle effects that it produces in the reader.³ For example, Gloria Fuertes utilizes the language of common everyday experience but manipulates this language in order to achieve an artistic effect. The speaker in these poetic texts does not rely upon traditional literary devices and rhetoric, but rather invites the reader to collaborate in creating the poetic experience within the text. The reader constantly must reevaluate more traditionally held views on themes, language level, poetic personae, and artistic perspective. Fuertes requires that the reader accept a new and updated definition of poetic creation. Indeed, in this poetry, the reader's role is redefined: the reader is no longer a passive receptor of the text, but rather an active participant.

Gloria Fuertes also attempts in her poetic texts to convince her reader of the need to examine and perhaps reorder the priorities of twentieth-century life. She puts forward a more humane point of view on life, a view that is oftentimes labelled as feminine, or even more radical yet, feminist. It is obvious that this feminist view is many times at odds with the prevailing social mood. Moreover, her innovative use of language, which also reflects the feminine point of view, once again makes demands on the reader as a recipient of the poetic text. But because of her conciliatory rather than strident tone, Fuertes is able to win over her reader to her feminist stance, and her feminist use of language.

In the first text that I wish to consider, Fuertes uses linguistic word play in order to set the tone of the text:⁴

Yo,

remera de barcas

ramera de hombres

romera de almas
rimera de versos
Ramona,
 pa' servirles.

(["Yo"])

By stating her point of view from a feminine perspective, Fuertes affirms her belief that the female poet can indeed interpret the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the community as well as her male counterpart. By placing herself, the "rimer of verses", next to the other works in mundane tasks, Fuertes succeeds in removing some of the mystery from poetry. She brings it out onto the street. It is a commodity that is or should be available to all. The speaker describes herself with only a given name in the penultimate verse, and offers a standard statement connoting servitude, "pa'servirles," in its colloquial pronunciation. This mode of presentation, combined with the word play on the various female occupations or vocations allows Fuertes not only to set a

playful mood, but also to make a statement about her beliefs concerning the role of the female poet. She is a worker, a servant to those around her, it is her duty to sing the song of the community. Through the juxtaposition of the various female occupations, she invites the reader to see a second level of meaning which is more profound, i.e., that the female poet must be the bard of the cultured as well as the working class.⁵

This point of view is echoed in virtually all of Fuertes' poetry. Take for example the poem "**Soy sólo una mujer**":

Soy sólo una mujer y ya es bastante,
con tener una chiva, una tartana
un "bendito sea Dios" por la mañana
y un mico en el pescante.

Yo quisiera haber sido delineante,
o delirante Safo sensitiva
y heme,
aquí
que soy una perdida
entre tanto mangante.
Lo digo para todo el que me lea,
quise ser capitán, sin arma alguna,
depositar mis versos en la luna
y un astronauta me pisó la idea.

De PAZ por esos mundos quise ser traficante
—me detuvieron por la carretera—
soy sólo una mujer, de cuerda entera,
soy sólo una mujer, y ya es bastante.

(p. 256)

In the first stanza she signals characteristics of her existence, which serve to identify as well as define her role in life: to be the owner of possessions rather than the achiever of goals. In the second stanza she states what she would have been, had not others beat her to the punch. But this sense of frustration evolves into one of acceptance: "soy sólo una mujer, de cuerda entera,/ soy sólo una mujer y ya es bastante." It is not in this text but in others that the reader finds the clue to this sense of satisfaction. For Fuertes sees the female poet as one who fulfills not only an artistic role but also a nurturing and caring one. Fuertes is willing to seek out the poetic experience in any quarter, and asks that the reader follow her in her artistic search. In the poem "**Madrugada**" she asks that the reader accept the view that poetry is not strictly a bourgeois production and preoccupation:

Amiga de serenos y de ex-presos
—igual que un operario de la Renfe—
conozco los caminos de la noche,
los caminos del clown que ríe inútilmente,
y los torcidos pasos del que bebe derecho
—derecho tiene a su vida beberse—.
Conozco los retratos de los hijos de pobre prostituta
que con toda ternura sus madres tienen,

y los enseñan—igual que todo—
en un rincón del bar antes de recogerse.

(p. 250)

The speaker in this text implies that the more traditional poets, who speak of unrequited love, the beauty of the universe, and conventional feminine beauty, present the reader with a bourgeois and thus limited view of life. Fuertes, on the other hand, through her unprejudiced perspective, finds beauty and poetic inspiration in the common people of the workaday world, the down-and-out, and the love of prostitutes for their children. With the expression *igual que todo*, Fuertes asserts that human value is defined not by environment, social class or occupation, but rather by the universal qualities of love, devotion and friendship.

Fuertes also employs a feminist perspective in order to deal with such private topics as her relationship with God, the effects of war, and her own state of mind. By viewing the speaker's world in this light, it is impossible for the reader to be threatened by it. Fuertes uses the technique of a feminist perspective to emphasize the similarities between her world and that of her reader. In "Sola con esperanza" Fuertes first establishes the subject of her poetic inspiration by denouncing society's encumbrances:

Sola moro
moro sólo
sola moro.

Muchas veces se está solo
pero mejor con decoro
¡A la mierda el oro
y a la mierda el coro!
¡Sola!
Sola-solo.

(Fuertes' italics) (p. 186)

She denounces very strongly the shackles of a twentieth-century society gone awry—those values of proper behavior, money, matrimony, and being just like everyone else. These values are especially burdensome to the female half of the population, since women are the ones who are most often expected to keep up appearances, to not talk back, and to know their proper place in society, i.e., to be seen and not heard, to be a helpmate to male success.

She then introduces her particular "Soleá", pronounced in the Andalusian dialect, and surrounded with the ambience of that region's *cante jondo*:

Entonces la soleá
se puebla de luz y canto
y la niebla va y se va.

Fuertes' personified "aloneness" here takes a positive value rather than a negative one, and becomes identified with her poetic voice. The comings and goings of

poetic inspiration are ephemeral and fickle. Fuertes then, as the speaker, personifies her solitude in the body of a flashy street whore attired in a green dress, who beckons the speaker and the reader to join her:

Semivestida de verde
me excita la Soledad
esta noche va y me dice:
—me dice y luego se va—,
"que me merezco otra cosa"
—que vendrá— »

By embracing openly this tabooed poetic persona, that of the prostitute, Fuertes accomplishes two things. First, she thumbs her nose at the values of proper society, and second she underscores the idea that women are too often used as objects instead of accepted as equals to men. Women have long been the subjects of poetry, but not its creators. In this poetic text, Fuertes skillfully combines these two roles. As she says, "que me merezco otra cosa,—que vendrá".

In the final lines of verse, she accepts her pain, her solitude, and the rewards that they are able to bring to her:

¡Qué divina está esta noche
la zorra la Soledad!

Her solitude has given her life, and Fuertes has given life to her solitude. She has become the creator instead of the object of her poetry. The tabooed role of woman as the whore is now the personification of creative power. Thus, the speaker's private bout with loneliness has become a model for the feminist view of loneliness and its positive value in regard to poetic creation. The reader of the text is drawn into the poetic experience by the invitation of the speaker, whose presentation of solitude as a street walker catches the reader's attention and encourages a communal response to a private topic.

While in the poetic text of "Sola con esperanza" Fuertes reflects a very serious view on the female poetic voice, in "Enfermera de pulpos" she adopts a more playful tone. The pun on the word *tinta* facilitates a far-fetched comparison between the octopus and the poet:

Ellos viven en la mar
sin pecado terrenal
—sin mancharse con trilita—,
ellos viven como tú y como yo
de la tinta.
Los envidio por los brazos,
pues pueden al mismo tiempo
tres abrazos. Los pulpos
para el amor son siniestros
según un sabio de Harvard.
.....
Las pulpas,

tocan el arpa
por la tarde.

(p. 286)

The title of the text, “*Enfermera de pulpos*”, gives the impression that the speaker will focus on the role of the female as helper, soother, and recuperative muse in the life of the octopus/poet. But in the first stanza, the speaker’s focus is on the male. It should be noticed that the first word of the text is *ellos*, a masculine pronoun. This switch perhaps may cause the bemused reader to ponder the double standard in society: the men get so much of the glory, while the women do so much of the work.

In the text, Fuertes introduces a novel juxtaposition, based on the ink expended by both poet and octopus. She also draws the reader into the text in the expression *como tú y como yo*. Our use of ink may not be as lofty as that of the poet. But ironically, that which seems cold, calculating and farthest removed from the poetic sphere is the impersonality of the expression *según un sabio de Harvard*, which refers to the human and specifically masculine sector. The female aspect enters only in the final two lines of verse of the text. The poem ends with the image of the female octopus, harp and music, an image which remains with the reader as a lasting reminder of the romantic beauty and poetic quality of this animal. The female octopus has been turned into the true siren of the sea, beckoning the reader to join her and her music, just as Fuertes, the poet does with her verse. Thus, in spite of the fact that the female focus dominates in only two lines of verse, Fuertes succeeds in winning her reader over a feminist view of poetry. According to this view, poetry written by men has become too cold, too official, too removed from daily experience. On the other hand, the feminine voice remains true to the eternal poetic ideal.

The final poem to be considered here is “*El camello*”, which carries the subtitle of “*Auto de los Reyes Magos*”. This text casts a disparaging glance on bourgeois values, but in a refreshing way. Briefly, the poem tells the story of the arrival of the Magi at Bethlehem. The Three Kings complain bitterly that the camel is a lemon, they become lost on the way, and they argue among themselves about the best way to get to their destination. The speaker demonstrates obvious sympathy for the lowly camel, who along the way goes lame, is blamed for the tardiness of the arrival, and as an ultimate insult to his dignity, suffers an attack of hiccups. The speaker inserts very purposefully an anachronistic note by stating that Melchior, the resident mechanic, frets about their late arrival upon consulting his Longine watch. He complains that the camel has thrown them hopelessly off schedule. But finally the journey is complete, they have arrived at the manger, the prophecy has been fulfilled:

Y a las tantas ya del alba
—ya cantaban pajarillos—
los tres reyes se quedaron

boquiabiertos e indecisos,
oyendo hablar como a un Hombre
a un Niño recién nacido.
—No quiero oro ni incienso
ni esos tesoros tan fríos,
quiero al camello, le quiero.
Le quiero—repitió el Niño.
A pie vuelven los tres reyes
cabizbajos y afligidos.
Mientras el camello echado
le hace cosquillas al Niño.

(pag. 241)

The final vindication of the camel teaches a lesson of which the reader must become aware. Bourgeois existence has become too complacent and smug, too much a slave to the demands of the clock. There must be a balance between the traditional male view of commerce, punctuality, machines and chains of command, and the traditionally held feminine ones of love, tenderness, and familiar devotion. In this text, Fuertes campaigns for an examination of priorities on both a professional and personal level. There must be balance and harmony, if existence is to be worthwhile. We must respond to our own emotional needs and to those of our neighbor, even if schedules, social appearances and conventions may suffer. Perhaps the reader would reject this message if it were presented in a straightforward, didactic and pedantic manner. But through a feminist approach, in which the speaker emphasizes intimate rather than pragmatic values, Fuertes wins the attention and approval of the reader, and thus gains easy support for her more humane point of view on what our priorities ought to be. These priorities have become acceptable through this simple anecdote of the Christ Child and the camel. Now we can examine them in a new light and not be threatened or put off by the speaker’s point of view.

Although Gloria Fuertes has stated that she is a poet independent of any particular literary affiliation, her work in truth reflects both the social and psychological environment which produced it. In her poetry the reader finds the main concerns of the twentieth century: alienation, distancing, the devalorization of human existence, and the loss of a sense of community. But through the feminist stance that Fuertes adopts, and encourages the reader to adopt, this Twentieth-century bard of the working class attempts to stem the tide of indifference, spiritual nullity and existential anguish. But this feminist perspective serves more than a social end. Through it, Gloria Fuertes also encourages the reader to focus on the poetic process, the act of artistic creation. This focus also binds her to her contemporaries. In her poetic texts, the speaker demands the reader’s collaboration and participation in the creation of a poetic experience. This poetic experience is shown to be one that can include a more holistic and feminine view of modern reality and modern existence. Gloria Fuertes sings the song of the community, and through her verse, proves