
When Margaret Persin sent out the initial call for contributions to this collection of essays, she expressed a preference for new approaches to readings of Gloria Fuertes’s poetry. The star-studded field of eventual contributors has fulfilled that request in superlative fashion. Given the essays in this collection, we can appreciate even more than previously the tremendous richness, variety, depth, and scope of Fuertes’s poetry.

The thirteen essays that compose the volume are divided into two sections. Five of them address the question of identity, whereas the remaining eight deal with the poet’s use of language and different thematic concerns. What all of these essays bring forward is the multiplicity and multifarious facets of this poetry. A prime example of this multiplicity arises in the opening essay, Catherine Bellver’s discussion of “Portraits of the Poet in the Poetry of Gloria Fuertes.” Bellver asserts that Fuertes calls into question “the generic figure of the poet” by positing myriad definitions of herself as poet. The critic points to portraits of the poet as a lone wanderer, a martyr, a laborer-tradesperson, various types of service workers, a performer, a socially responsible person, an agent for change, and a doer. The result is the paradoxical identity of the poet as a non-poet, “a complex figure who counts herself one of the common folk while at the same time standing out from among them as a self-assured and forceful voice” (34). The self-portrait that emerges from Fuertes’s poetry is certainly, as Bellver expresses it, a “composite.” The remaining essays in this section on “Identity” expand on this multiplicity in various ways. Brenda Capuccio highlights the contradictory and equivocal autobiographical aspects, whereas Jasmina Arsova investigates the paradoxical figure of the “fertile spinster” or “solterona,” providing a feminist revision of spinsterhood as a conscious, deliberate choice of a woman writing within the specific context of the Franco regime “to defy many unjust social norms of her times, such as inflexible gender roles, class divisions, exclusiveness of the literary canon, and rigid socio-political ideologies” (58). Several of these themes re-emerge in subsequent articles in the collection, lending great coherence to diverse approaches to this poetry. Elena Castro, for example, takes a slightly different tack in her discussion of the poet’s lesbian identity and the subversiveness of this subject position during the Franco era. John Wilcox presents yet another fascinating aspect of Fuertes’s poetry in his discussion of the gerontological poetics in the posthumous *Es difícil ser feliz una tarde*. Wilcox’s article encourages us to read the “late” works of other poets with this focus in mind.

It is difficult and perhaps unjust to privilege some of these articles over others, but for this critic some stand out for one reason or another. The contributions by Reyes Vila-Belda, “Poetic Forms and Ideology in the
Poetry of Gloria Fuertes,” and Martha LaFollette Miller, “Gloria Fuertes’s Counterhegemonic Dialogism: A Response to El Nacionalicatolicismo,” are particularly valuable for the revelation of the socio-political context underlying the poet’s work. The richness of historical information in these articles evinces careful research and grounds the poetry in its era while illuminating its subtlety and profundity. Mary Makris’s “Transcending Boundaries: Gloria Fuertes’s Poetry for Children and/or Adults” includes seven color plates that accompany the poems. As a result, Makris provides a visual and linguistic reading of the texts. Another intriguing juxtaposition of articles entails Sharon Keefe Ugalde’s focus on orality in “Community and the Privileging of Sound in the Poetry of Gloria Fuertes” and Salvador J. Fajardo’s dense yet profound philosophical reading, “Reflections on Gloria Fuertes: Ethics and Community.” Whereas both contributions deal with the concept of community, the former examines the phonic and oral quality of the poetry, and the latter delves into the underlying ethical and philosophical dimensions calling on Plato, Kant, and Gadamer. In addition to the articles already mentioned, Douglas Benson and Margaret Persin, two inveterate readers and admirers of the poet, make solid, nuanced contributions to the collection, and Mark Bajus chimes in with a fresh voice to reveal references to the Vietnam War in two of Fuertes’s poems.

Persin has also opened the collection with a brief but appropriate introduction, and following the essays, she has included an extensive bibliography of Fuertes’s poetry, translations of the poetry into English, and interviews, as well as websites, secondary sources, and works cited. Although some of the articles could have been shorter, all make significant points about the importance of this poet and the variety of her expression. All in all, this collection opens many new avenues for the study of Fuertes’s poetry and will be an essential source for scholars in the future.

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