Nicanor Parra is one of the most widely acclaimed contemporary poets of Latin America. On December 1, 2011, in a culmination of a long list of accolades, he was awarded the Cervantes Prize, an honor that once again highlighted his significance in the history of recent Latin American poetry. Niall Binns, one of the editors of the first volume of Parra’s complete works, *Obras completas & algo †* (2006), categorically affirmed Parra’s preeminence, calling him “la figura más importante en la historia de la poesía hispanoamericana contemporánea.” Other critics have stressed Parra’s pervasive influence. As Binns affirms, within the Spanish-speaking world only Spain, “aislada bajo Franco,” remained “inmune a las propuestas antipoéticas” of the Chilean, whose works Binns considers a watershed in the history of poetry in Spanish (xxix).

Direct connections between Latin American poets and their counterparts in Spain did indeed hit a low point during the Franco regime. That nadir contrasted with the greater contact during preceding years, including the *fin de siècle*, the avant-garde 1910s and 1920s, the early 1930s and the civil war years themselves. During the first postwar decades, in a shell-shocked nation that had lost many if not most of its established poets to exile or death, those writers who matured in the forties and fifties were left to find their way in an impoverished cultural environment, in many senses a relative vacuum, where valuable mentors, such as Vicente Aleixandre, were few and far between.

Yet the question of direct impact aside, Binns’s characterization of Peninsular poetry’s immunity to Parra’s influence does not take into account an equally important question: that of the commonalities between the Chilean’s anti-poetry and poetic practice among a number of Spanish poets of a similar age. Edith Grossman in 1975 describes antipoetry, which she considers to have originated with Parra, as “a kind of verbalized found art that uses ordinary objects and commonplace language, colors them with a sometimes mordant, often comic irony and views them in a decidedly unexpected way” (v). This description could as easily apply to such poets...
as Ángel González and Gloria Fuertes, both fairly close in age to Parra, who independently developed irreverent, anti-aesthetic, and lúdico approaches similar to that found in the Chilean’s work. All three poets, moreover, could be said to have common poetic roots. As Linda Maier has correctly declared, Parra’s antipoetry (as brilliantly creative as it is) still forms part of a general current in Spanish and Spanish American literature: that of “impure” poetry, which Maier traces, rightly or wrongly, to 1935 and to Pablo Neruda. Maier characterizes that poetry as anti-intellectual, colloquial in its use of language, and concerned, in her words, with “matters of real life, such as sociopolitical issues.”

Examining Parra alongside González and Fuertes raises the issue of artistic originality versus a vision of a shared, Barthesian web of discourse. Although as recently as December 2011, *El País*, announcing Parra’s receipt of the Cervantes Prize, billed him as the “creador de la corriente llamada ‘antipoesía’” (Rodríguez Marcos; emphasis mine), the oft-repeated notion that his “antipoetry” represents a distinctive and new poetic invention not only relies on an outmoded concept of originality but also demonstrates the power of labels to reify. Such a perspective, moreover, fails to take into account Parra’s own recent repudiation, with respect to his poetry, of the model of authorship as originality: “Pienso que nunca fui el autor de nada porque siempre he pescado cosas que andaban en el aire” (Guerriero).

The view of Parra as the founding father of a movement likewise ignores some of his other, sometimes self-contradictory, pronouncements about his work, which suggest that the term “antipoemas” is a playful reflection of his intuitive poetic praxis rather than of a systematic poetics. In 1969 he responded as follows to a question Mario Benedetti posed about the politics of his poetry: “Desgraciadamente yo no soy un poeta político; no soy un poeta que trabaja con Ideas ni con sentimientos. Yo no sé con qué demonios trabajo.” At that time he described poetry as an art of inclusion:

> Poesía es vida en palabras. Me pareció que ésa era la única definición de poesía que podía abarcar todas las formas posibles de poesía. [...] Crear vida en palabras: realmente eso es lo que me pareció que tenía que ser la poesía. Una vez que se acepta este punto de partida, caben muchas cosas en la poesía: no tan sólo las voces impostadas, sino también las voces naturales; no tan sólo los sentimientos nobles, sino también los otros; no tan sólo el llanto, sino también la risa; no tan sólo la belleza, sino también la fealdad.

What may seem like a definition so broad as to be almost meaningless gains in precision when we examine his statement, and his poetry, within the transatlantic perspective that the Cervantes Prize invites, that is, in the context of the rejection of elitism and aestheticist ideals. Such a repudiation
surged in the late twenties as a response, in part, to the revolutionary ideals inspired by the emergence of the Soviet Union on the international stage.

To pick up the thread of Maier’s previously cited observations on the genealogy of antipoetry, it is clear that both Parra’s “invention” and the post-Civil War Spanish poetry that most resembles it have roots in the 1920s and 1930s in such poets as Neruda (born 1904) and Alberti (born 1901). Regarding Chile, Federico Schopf, in “Del vanguardismo a la antipoesía,” identifies Neruda’s use of “palabras no poéticas” in the 1930s as an antecedent to Parra’s practices, but he notes in Parra’s “antipoesía” a complete absence of the “solemnidad” that Neruda for him exhibited. Schopf also credits Parra with innovating in his use of colloquial, conversational language, graffiti, and non-literary discourse. On the Peninsular side, Leopoldo de Luis points to Rafael Alberti’s purposeful use of “elementos tradicionalmente antipoéticos” as early as the 1920s and to the similar influence these elements had on younger Spanish poets who reacted against “pure poetry” (25). Alberti, he states, inaugurated the era of social poetry with his “Elegía cívica” (written in 1930 and published in 1934), which, as Luis points out, includes “imprecaciones escatológicas,” references to social ills, and flagrant ruptures of “el hipócrita ‘buen tono’” (25-27). Clearly, neither the antipoetry of Parra nor the poetry of Spanish counterparts like González and Fuertes emerged from a vacuum, nor, as an examination of their poetry makes clear, were the Spaniards bound by rules of propriety and “buen tono” any more than was the Chilean poet. The Spanish poets have even occasionally applied the terminology widely associated with Parra to their own works. As Sylvia Sherno points out, Fuertes at times called herself an “antipoet” (88), much as her compatriot González referred to his poetry as “una especie de ‘antipoesía’” (Poemas 22). It is not surprising, therefore, that in her book on Fuertes, Sherno succinctly and cogently addresses how the poetry of Gloria Fuertes fits into the anti-poetic vein, using as a point of departure Parra’s own conception of antipoetry (89-110). Looking more closely at affinities among the three poets, while at the same time attempting to understand their antipoetic gestures within each one’s specific historical, political, and social context, can provide some understanding of which frames of reference and cultural circumstances they shared and which they did not. Although to expect such an exercise to provide answers to the enigma of an individual’s poetic development would be illusory, the endeavor nevertheless permits us to see elements of context not obvious otherwise and thus to see each poet in new light.

Parra’s work and that of the two Spanish poets exhibit some striking similarities, along with inevitable differences due to diverse circumstances and temperaments. Though Parra, born in 1914, was three years older than Fuertes and eleven years older than González, he launched the poetic style he is known for in the 1950s, when the two Spaniards also established
themselves as poets. All three writers explicitly contested notions of the lyric poem as a primarily aesthetic and self-contained construction. In some ways their evolution in this direction can be explained as a reaction to a shared context that included modernista poetic forebears such as Dario, Valle-Inclán, and Jiménez, avant-garde movements that culminated in the 1920s in the acclaimed poets of 1927 and their cohorts in Spanish America, and the eventual turn toward social poetry in the 1930s, exhaustively studied by Cano Ballesta. Though Parra traces his use of the term “antipoesía” to a chance discovery of the title of a book, *Apoèmes* (1947), by French author Henri Pichette (*OC* 914), the word may also respond dialogically to a stated goal of some of the poets of 1927—that of eliminating from the poem all elements that were not “poetic” (Guillén 189). The commonalities among Parra and the two Spanish poets are not surprising, then, given their shared aesthetic and historical context.

Much as Parra declared that poetry should include not only beauty but ugliness as well, González and Fuertes explicitly rejected poetic “purity.” González, in a text from the book “unpoetically” titled *Muestra, corregida y aumentada, de algunos procedimientos narrativos y de las actitudes sentimentales que habitualmente comportan*, originally published in 2007, compares a certain kind of esoteric, “pure” poetry to a sterile masturbatory practice:

**ORDEN. (POÉTICA a la que otros se aplican).**

Los poetas prudentes,
como las vírgenes —cuando las había—,
no deben separar los ojos
del firmamento,
¡Oh, tú, extranjero osado
que miras a los hombres:
contempla las estrellas!
(El Tiempo, no la Historia.)

Evita
la claridad obscena.

*(Cave canem.)*

Y edifica el misterio.

Sé puro:

no nombres; no ilumines.

Que tu palabra oscura se derrame en la noche
sombria y sin sentido
lo mismo que el momento de tu vida. (316)
He follows this ironic condemnation with a poem that expresses his own more inclusive—and at the same time disruptive—*ars poetica*:

**CONTRA-ORDEN. (POÉTICA por la que me pronuncio ciertos días.)**

Esto es un poema.
Aquí está permitido
fijar carteles,
tirar escombros, hacer aguas
y escribir frases como:

*Marica el que lo lea*
*Amo a Irma*
*Muera el... (silencio),*
*Arena gratis*
*Asesinos,*
*etcétera.*

Esto es un poema.
Mantén sucia la estrofa,
Escupe dentro.

Responsable la tarde que no acaba
el tedio de este día,
la indeformable estolidez del tiempo. (317)

Fuertes, for her part, amusingly incorporates the oral discourse of sports culture to mock notions of a type of purified poetry. In “¡Gol!,” from her 1973 volume *Sola en la sala,* she declares that poets who chase after essences are guilty of egocentric self-indulgence:

Si consiguíramos el gol
de eliminar
lo feo por lo esencial,
surgiría un luminoso
narcisismo espiritual. (*OI* 350)

All three poets clearly rejected the idea of the poet as an aesthete who wrote for an elite minority. In *Todo asusta* (1958), Fuertes characterizes the poet as an ambulatory craftperson who hawks her wares as if through a street cry and identifies with other artisans: “Hago versos, señores, hago versos, / pero no me gusta que me llamen poetisa, me gusta el vino como a los albañiles” (*OI* 137). Similarly, in 1963, Parra stated in the poem “Manifiesto” that “Los
poetas bajaron del Olimpo.” Portraying the poet as a laborer, “un albañil que construye su muro,” he railed against the types of poets he deemed irrelevant, including bourgeois writers who adopted Communist poses, surrealists who “grouped ‘palabras al azar,’” and elitists who wrote a “Poesía de círculo vicioso / Para media docena de elegidos.” Instead of “la poesía de salón,” he advocated “La poesía de la plaza pública / La poesía de protesta social” (OC 143-46). Fuertes, in the 1980 volume Historia de Gloria, continues to emphasize poetry as communication, stating that she sometimes writes badly, “para que os llegue bien” (HG 65).

Not only did these poets make their philosophies of poetry explicit in statements about their work and in their poems, they ruptured traditional poetic boundaries in other ways, some of which I have mentioned already. Rejecting the notion of intrinsically poetic language, Parra declared off-limits for his poetry words that he wouldn’t use in ordinary conversation (OC 691). All three poets incorporated various types of oral discourse, such as street vendors’ cries, slang, and “non-poetic” written forms into their poems. Parra has referred to his “artefactos” as “una aproximación al grafitti” [sic] (“Nicanor Parra,” Biblioteca Virtual Cervantes) and the Spanish poets also use the concept of “pintadas” as poetry, as in Gonzalez’s aforementioned “CONTRAORDEN” and Fuertes’s “Pintada” (HG 350). In addition, the three writers experimented with other forms of practical communication, such as epitaphs, letters, and want ads. In “Lecciones de buen amor” (1967) González’s scathing portrait of a bourgeois couple in Franco’s Spain—“gente bien” whose marriage is a hollow shell that is cloaked in hypocritical respectability but rotten inside—even incorporates a footnote, thus violating the unity that is one of the hallmarks of conventional poetic purity, also flouted in this poem through an “antipoetic” reference to halitosis (199).

Besides eschewing the goal of perfect poetic expression, Parra, González, and Fuertes rejected the closure implied in the well-structured book (epitomized by Jorge Guillén’s Cántico), and their titles reflect this fact. Parra’s title Obras completas & algo † can be read as a self-contradictory label that undermines the notion of completeness, of the work as sufficient in itself. The ampersand and dagger themselves challenge poetic convention by replacing with typographical symbols the letters and words that conventionally comprise poetic titles. The dagger, in particular, represents expansiveness. The symbol has multiple meanings; it can be the sign of a supplement, such as a footnote, a figure used in math and physics, and—in its resemblance to the plus sign—a visual representation of supplementarity.10 Parra’s “artefactos,” originally a box of postcards combining words and images, opens up the conventional text as well. Because of their status as independent objects, these creations can’t really be contained in the Obras completas, though partial copies (one side only, text only, etc.) do appear in the volume, again challenging the
notion that the book contains “complete” works. Additionally, Parra expands the notion of authorship by including visual elements drawn or photographed by someone else.

González, besides rupturing lyric convention by calling one book a “tratado” and another *Procedimientos narrativos*, titles a 1983 book *Prosemas o menos*, perhaps suggesting that his work is not only a type of approximation but also a hybrid between prose and poetry. Fuertes, for her part, titles her collected works *Obras incompletas*, challenging the notion of the book of poetry as an exquisite object complete in itself and emphasizing her poetry’s existence as parallel to her own life, which at that point was also “incompleta.” Fuertes frequently makes the connection between her life and her work in other ways. She titles a number of poems “Autobio,” for example, and calls one of her collections *Historia de Gloria*.

Some of the most striking similarities between Parra and his Peninsular counterparts appear in the ludic realm, as apparent from the above examples. Self-parody, verbal play, humorous manipulation of spheres of discourse, scatological, sexual, and black humor, and the ludic use of absurd and illogical elements permeate their works. Their humor is often directed at repressive institutions and social ills but also frequently reveals their skepticism regarding institutions and ideologies. Both Parra and González express their deeply anticlerical perspective with biting irreverence, and Fuertes somewhat more subtly criticizes such precepts of *nacionalcatolicismo* as austerity, purity, and maternity as the measure of womanhood.

Despite the transatlantic divide, Parra, Fuertes, and González clearly respond to a historical tension between the certain Catholic ideologies and liberal thought in their respective societies. González’s educator father, an avowed atheist, was part of the progressive educational reform movement associated with the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*. Parra, in Chile, was born into a society with a history of conflict between conservative supporters of the church and liberal anticlericalists. The Catholic heritage that is part of their shared culture looms large in the work of all three poets, though with different shadings. Parra goes beyond the anticlerical humor of such poems as “Había una vez un monje,” which details the sexual peccadillos of a monk (*OC* 287-89) to satirize and desacralize the most hallowed beliefs of Christianity. The cross, he says, has become for him just an airplane, or “una mujer con las piernas abiertas” (*OC* 202). In the following “artefacto” (*OC* 472), he indulges in unabashed play with Christ’s crucifixion:
Crucifiquemos este gato / y veamos qué pasa

For his part, González satirizes the practitioners of the faith in “Invitación de Cristo” by citing one of Christ’s biblical injunctions:

Dijo:
Comed, éste es mi cuerpo.
Bebed, ésta es mi sangre.

Y se llenó su entorno por millares
de hienas,
de vampiros. (375)

Fuertes, who affirms that “nunca vi claro lo del clero” (OI 61) and portrays one of her speakers as a novice nun who “colg[ó] los hábitos” when they tried to teach her that “sentirse bien a gusto / era pecado” (ED 86), in a poem first published in 1958 satirized the Church’s prudish disapproval of the body by suggesting that even God would be indecent in the eyes of some:

No puedo dejaros así
dejaros de la mano tan a oscuras,
por aquí,
seguid a mis palabras, un momento [...]

Los que echáis un borrón de tinta sobre la
estampa de una muchacha
con los senos al aire;
mis religiosos murmuradores,
dejad de tener vuestro ganchillo de censuras.

Oh mis venenosas y dulces viejecitas beatas,
ya tenéis edad para comprender,
Qué fácil es verle cuando no se hace daño,
Resulta, que Dios está desnudo
el que no quiera verle que no mire. (OI 137)
Similarly, Parra’s “Ultimátum” that “O Dios está en todas partes o no está absolutamente en ninguna” (OC 479) aligns with a Fuertes poem, less pithy than Parra’s to be sure, that begins “Que estás en la tierra Padre nuestro” (OI 47).

The earthy quality that these poets share leads often to sexual and scatological humor. Parra, referring in one of his “artefactos” to a park in central Santiago, states that “No será poesía pero es cierto: que la cumbre del cerro Santa Lucía sirve de cagadero municipal” (OC 324). In another he declares, “Y ahora que se me puso la diuca [colloquial Chilean term for penis] como fierro pero solo dispongo de la mano” (OC 409). González, using sex as a metaphor for writing poetry in “A veces” (1969), misappropriates a quote from César Vallejo to his own purposes:

Escribir un poema se parece a un orgasmo:
mancha la tinta tanto como el semen,
empreña más, en ocasiones.
Tardes, hay, sin embargo,
en las que manoseo las palabras,
muerdo sus senos y sus piernas ágiles,
les levanto las faldas con mis dedos,
[...]
y, pese a todo, ved:
no pasa nada.
Lo expresaba muy bien César Vallejo:
“Lo digo, y no me corro”.

Pero él disimulaba. (259)

The foregoing poem, which might appear somewhat crude at first glance, is actually a complex piece of metapoetry. Vallejo, the speaker suggests, was a master poet who nevertheless claimed that he struggled with the word. In reality, the poem implies, he was only falsely modest. Through this suggestion of duplicity, the speaker calls into question his own self-effacing self-portrait by raising the possibility that he too is only falsely modest about his own instances of failure to “seduce the word.”

Fuertes, for her part, engages in sexually suggestive wordplay in such poems as “Penitis tengo doctora” and “Camp,” both of which might be said to contain veiled allusions to her own lesbian sexual orientation, explored by such critics as Castro and Acereda:

Penitis tengo, doctora
–pena inflamada–, amar y no ser amada (HG 312)
Camp

“Aquel tapado de armiño
todo forrado de lamé”
Tango que yo cantaba en mi niñez;
Ni sabía lo que era “tapado”
Ni lo que era “armiño”
Y menos eso de “lamé”. (OI 361)

In addition to sexual and scatological humor, absurdist humor abounds in the three poets. Parra, in an “artefacto” that imitates graffiti, proclaims (in English) that “DEATH HAS NO FUTURE” (OC 433). In another, he creates a political absurdity out of the rhetoric of political demonstrations:

For his part, González, in “Menos mal que aún conservo el esqueleto,” reduces the Christian concept of the resurrection of the body to a similar level of absurdity through his speaker’s musings about lost body parts:

¿Dónde estarán las muelas y los dientes que me arrancó el dentista cuando niño? 
Dada su naturaleza no sé si calcárea,
seguro que no las han comido los gusanos.
Temo mucho que estén ilusionadas
aguardando en cualquier estercolero
la hora de la resurrección de la carne
para al fin reintegrarse a mis encías
[...]

And in a reductio ad absurdum, Fuertes takes a poetic staple—longing—to a ridiculous extreme:

La tristeza del átomo solo
La tristeza del átomo solo
sin su molécula. (Sola en la sala, 1973, OI 355)

In addition to the use of absurd humor, all three poets undermine social hierarchies though incorporating outsider or marginalized figures into their
poems, often with a strong dose of criticism for the powerful “haves.” According to a 1979 newspaper article, Parra’s Cristo de Elqui is a friend of “los enfermos, [de] los débiles, [de] los pobres de espíritu, los ancianos, los niños, las madres solteras, los pescadores, los condenados a cadena perpetua, los araucanos, los panaderos, los sepultureros, los soñadores y los idealistas” (“Don Nicanor y el Cristo de Elqui”). González, in the 1961 “Estío en Bidonville” (146) and the 1967 poem “Los sábados, las prostitutas madrugan mucho para estar dispuestas” (210), portrays the plight of marginalized characters, slum dwellers and prostitutes, that were demonized by the Franco regime. As might be expected from the most socially marginalized of the three poets (as a homosexual female of working class origins), Fuertes is especially sensitive to those relegated to the fringes of society: transvestites, prostitutes, beggars, crazy people, and drunks. But all three create poetic alter egos who are themselves marginalized. González’s first-person speaker in “Mendigo” (106-07) from Sin esperanza, con convencimiento (1961) portrays not a beggar in the literal sense but someone without direction in life who is at the mercy of the kindness of strangers. The poet seems to be portraying the despair of inner exile, though without explicit social criticism, most likely due to censorship issues. Parra’s poem “Mendigo” (157) from Canciones rusas (1967), describing the occupations that society demands, implies that they either lead to harm or to sins of omission: soldiers kill, merchants cheat customers, and passive priests simply “pasean con un libro en la mano.” The poetic voice, like González’s speaker an alter ego of the poet, then turns to himself and describes his own “oficio”:

Cantar
Mirando las ventanas cerradas
Para ver si se abren
Y
me
dejan
cayar
una
moneda. (OC 157)

Though in such poems as “Pobre de nacimiento” (from her first book, Antología y poemas del suburbio, 1954) Fuertes portrays an actual beggar and those in society who look away from his suffering, she also frequently portrays herself as a lonely person who bucks society’s norms.

Hay quien dice que estoy como una cabra;
lo dicen, lo repiten, ya lo creo;
pero soy una cabra muy extraña
The poet from Chile and his two Spanish counterparts unquestionably share a similar aesthetic. Examining them side by side, instead of pigeon-holed within their own national literatures, opens windows to an understanding of stylistic and thematic similarities among them, many of which stemmed from the transatlantic geopolitical, social, and artistic context in which they worked. Yet it is also revealing to consider the vastly different historical realities that they experienced. Comparing the Spaniards to Parra makes clear to what extent not only disparate personal circumstances but also the Spanish Civil War and the repression of the Franco regime affected their cultural production, leading to some of the subtle and not so subtle features that differentiate them from the Chilean. Parra’s greater directness and free, unrestricted self-expression contrasts with a certain circumspection in Fuertes and González that may be attributable not only to direct censorship but also to the repressive, inhospitable context in which they wrote under Franco, exacerbated, in González’s case, by lingering effects of the devastation wrought on his family by the civil war. In comparison to Parra, both Spanish poets frequently veil their most openly dissident poetry. González also tempers any disillusionment he might have felt with, for example, revolutionary communist ideals. Parra’s less cautious approach, on the other hand, results in his garnering criticism at various times from both the right and the left. The two poems titled “Mendigo” illustrate the contrast between their respective authors. In his poem, Parra explicitly indicts pillars of the oligarchy, such as the Church and the army, whereas González’s poem is more ambiguous. It is hard to tell if González’s beggar simply represents a person who views all effort as futile (“llegué hasta esta orilla / de mi vida / en donde / —después de tanto esfuerzo— / me he sentado / a recibir / lo que los transeúntes quieran darme. [...] “); or if the poet is suggesting, in a veiled manner, that the speaker’s plight derives from the uncertainty of life under the dictatorship:

Es difícil andar
si se ignoran
las vueltas del camino,
si se duda
la firmeza del suelo que pisamos,
si se teme
que la vereda verdadera
Examining Parra, Fuertes, and González from a transatlantic perspective thus invites not only comparison of their poetry but also of their formative experiences. To begin with the factors that led them in a literary direction, Parra grew up in a family with rural roots, headed by his talented but erratic schoolteacher father, where artistic culture was cultivated, though primarily of an oral and musical folk culture variety. As a young man in Santiago, he felt the influence of the Spanish poetry of 1927, which inspired his Lorcaesque first book, _Cancionero sin nombre_ (Benedetti). Though trained as a physicist and mathematician, he acquired a broad literary frame of reference as well. Among his primordial influences, he cites not only Cervantes but also “[e]n materia poética estricta, poetas como el Arcipreste y el Romancero y el Poema del Cid.” “De ahí,” he continues, “salto a Quevedo, y luego a un autor menor, pero sumamente importante: Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer” (Benedetti).

In Spain, González’s family background, like Parra’s in Chile, included rural _campesinos_ and educators. His upwardly mobile father, from a poor rural family, pursued a teaching career due to an injury that incapacitated him for farm work. He eventually became a professor at the normal school in Oviedo and married the daughter of its director. Though his father died when Ángel was under two years of age, his childhood home was filled with books, including the poetry of Bécquer and Darío. His determinative exposure to contemporary poetry, especially Juan Ramón Jiménez and the poets of 1927, came during an enforced rest cure in the mountains after he developed tuberculosis in his first year of college (Somovilla 110). Fuertes, in contrast, was of distinctly urban working class origins, with a father who was a beadle and a mother who was a servant and seamstress, and she attended a vocational school for women instead of a university (“Gloria Fuertes,” Biblioteca Cervantes Virtual). Some of her early poetic influences came from her engagement in the literary activities of the _postista_ group in Madrid, experimental poets of the 1940s with surrealistic leanings. Thus it appears that Parra, Fuertes, and González were all nourished to an extent by a common cultural soup. The currency of such movements as surrealism and such poets as Jiménez, Lorca, and Neruda was certainly transatlantic, but class may have been more of a barrier to the acquisition of a varied literary background than geography. Nevertheless, as the three moved forward in their poetry in the 1950s and 1960s, all joined fellow intellectuals in pursuing poetry intended as an impetus for social and political change. Again, however, Fuertes stands apart from González and Parra. Whereas the males aligned themselves with specific political forces (González was a “fellow traveler” of the PCE, while Parra spent time in the Soviet Union and translated Soviet poetry), Fuertes’s affiliations are less overt, her challenges to reigning political powers more
Although Fuertes shares much of Parra’s iconoclasm (studies by Miller and Vila-Belda focus on how her poetry responds dialogically to nacionalcatolicismo), it is through a comparison between Parra and González that some of the historical forces, including geopolitical ones, that were in play at the time the poets emerged becomes clear. First of all, their early years offer marked contrasts. Parra, after leaving home in 1932 at 18 with no financial support from his family to count on, made his way to Santiago, where he found intellectual stimulation and opportunities, in literature as well as math and physics, and enjoyed a measure of freedom of movement and good fortune in finding educational opportunities. González, on the other hand, was deeply marked by the politics and violence of Spain at the time, as a recent account by Luis García Montero, based on extensive interviews with the poet, makes clear. The long-standing connections of Gonzalez’s family with progressive, secular education, a focal point in the culture wars of the day, made them targets for persecution. His entire immediate family suffered not only deprivation and violence during the war but repercussions in its aftermath. His punishing childhood experiences, his subsequent bout with tuberculosis, and the uninspiring career possibilities in a country plagued by censorship were profoundly demoralizing. Drawn to journalism, he discarded that field as a vocational avenue after being censured on a piece that he had already “self-censored” considerably (Somovilla 114). Instead, he perfunctorily attended law school.

As early as the 1940s, Parra became one of the Latin Americans that the US courted for political reasons through the Institute for International Education, receiving a fellowship to study at Brown University. In 1949 the British Council sponsored his studies in physics in Oxford University, where he also explored poetry in English. His travels in the 1950s and 1960s—particularly to the US, the USSR, China, and Cuba—are telling, as a product of the Cold-War era competition for influence in Latin America. In 1963 he visited the USSR for the second time (the first was in 1958), spending six months there and organizing an anthology of poetry from Soviet-era Russia. According to Margarita Aguirre and Juan Agustín Palanzuelas, he returned to Chile hailed as a “héroe positivo” (OC 952). His poem “Manifiesto” (OC 141-46), published in that year (immediately following a visit to mainland China), was intended as “una especie de canto del cisne del capitalismo agonizante” and planned as the opening poem of a book of revolutionary poetry that he ultimately never wrote (Benedetti). González, in post-war Spain, did not have similar opportunities to broaden his perspective through firsthand acquaintance with the major Cold War powers, although he was able to visit London and Italy through the offices of the “Comunidad Europea de Escritores,” an organization that “cumplía una función de penetración liberal
en los regímenes totalitarios” by sponsoring dissidents’ travel (Somovilla 120). But unlike Parra, who had opportunities to travel more broadly, González, in part perhaps due to the PCE’s encouragement of poetry as an opposition tool (Mangini 85), kept his primary focus on Spain. Nevertheless, like Parra, he published anti-imperialist poetry; his “Perla de las Antillas” came out in 1962, a year before “Manifiesto” appeared. Thus like many writers at the time, both Parra and González were attracted to the orbit of the Soviet Union and world communism and both wrote explicitly anti-capitalistic poems. When Parra, as part of a Library of Congress-sponsored International Writers’ Conference, attended a White House tea hosted by Pat Nixon, he was strongly rebuked by Castro’s Cuba by removal from a Casa de Américas jury to which he had been appointed. Thus he came into contact with Soviet bloc heavy handedness and control (see his “artefacto” on this event). Comments by González, for his part, in postwar Spain, suggest that for years he viewed his poetry as a contribution to the cause of political change. He allied himself with the Communist Party and sympathized with Marxist Cuba, where, like Parra, he was named to a Casa de las Américas jury. If Parra never wrote the revolutionary book he envisioned, González likewise admitted losing faith in the power of words to effect change. He attributed his disillusionment to the failure of the opposition to topple Franco, but he shared with his fellow Leftist intellectuals a disenchantment that extended, in Mangini’s words, to “el PC y la política en general”.13 Both poets, eventually disillusioned with geopolitics, turned away from poetic activism to cultivate the ludic strands that had always been significant in their work.

Parra, Fuertes, and González have each authored a unique body of work that deserves to be studied individually and in depth. Nevertheless, they undeniably all participate in what might be called transatlantic antipoetry. Fuertes stands apart in terms of her social class, educational path, and gender, and due to those factors struggled more than the two men with marginalization and lack of recognition. Nevertheless, in some ways she is more similar to Parra than is González, who despite his sociopolitical commitments never abandoned completely the aestheticism of his poetic forebears and who sometimes cultivated a neo-romantic strand. Fuertes comes closer than does González to sharing Parra’s status as a “francotirador,” as he has been called more than once. Her engagement with the contemporary world and irrepressible need to communicate her thoughts about the human predicament confirm her kinship with her Chilean counterpart, as does the constant evolution that eventually led to both Fuertes and Parra being recognized as eco-poets (Persin, “Ecofeminist Dialogics”; Sierra). A consideration of the three poets together undeniably adds new dimensions to the concept of “antipoetry” and calls into question Parra’s invention and ownership of that poetic tendency.”
WORKS CITED


NOTES

1 Federico Schopf, in his prologue to Parra’s *Obras completas & algo †*, likewise states that “antipoesía” was “poco advertida” in Peninsular poetry (LXXVII).

2 Browne’s book, *El amor por lo (par)odiado*, in fact is predicated on the similarities between Fuertes and González.

3 Roland Barthes famously posited the “death of the author” in his essay by the same name.


5 See also his “Test,” which is in the form of two multiple choice questions. The first, “Què es un antipoeta” [sic], has 17 possible answers; the second, “Què es la antipoesía” [sic], has 10 possible responses, ranging from “Un temporal en una taza de té” to “Un espejo que dice la verdad” (*Obras completas & algo †* 196-97). Henceforth, quotations from this work will be indicated in the text by OC plus page number(s).

6 Sherno notes as well the work of Álvaro Salvador, who in an article that places anti-poetry into an international context alludes to Fuertes in passing as a poet with affinities to Parra, along with Hans-Magnus Enzensberger and Jacques Prévert.

7 Parra published his first book in 1927 but viewed it as a work of juvenilia that was an imitation of Lorca.

8 Page numbers for González’s poetry refer to *Palabra sobre palabra*.

9 Fuertes (1918-1998) is more widely known in Spain as an author for children than as a poet for adults. On the Biblioteca Virtual Cervantes web page dedicated to her, she is referred to as “una de las voces más importantes y populares de la literatura infantil española,” with her poetry for adults referred to only secondarily. Nevertheless, her 18 volumes of poetry, published over a span of 58 years (1950-2008), have attracted increasing attention, especially among U.S. critics who have published numerous penetrating studies of her work. For a recent bibliography on the
poet, see Persin. The source of poems quoted in the text is indicated by the abbreviations AP (Antología poética 1950-1969); OI (Obras incompletas); HG (Historia de Gloria); and ED (Es difícil ser feliz una tarde).

10 The dagger is sometimes used interchangeably with the plus sign in chess notation.

11 The following description of church-state relations in the period under consideration is revealing: “In 1925 President Arturo Alessandri Palma (1920-24, 1925, 1932-38) pressed for and obtained a separation of church and state. This resolved most sources of church-state friction, but more than a century of conflicts had already created subcultures in Chilean society that continued to leave their mark on twentieth-century educational institutions, intellectual life, social organizations, and politics. The segments most distant from and even opposed to the Catholic Church were receptive to positivism [...] and, especially after the 1930s, to Marxism. In this sense, the nineteenth-century fault line contributed indirectly to the eventual appeal among educated Chileans of the nation’s communist and socialist parties” (Hudson).

12 See Niall Binns’s introduction for an account of Parra’s political evolution. As he declares, “las reservas principales ante la antipoesía comenzaron a provenir de la izquierda ortodoxa. Políticamente, Parra se había acercado al comunismo, pero su espíritu de francotirador, esa división que estableció frente al poeta soldado encarnado por Neruda, delataba una vena anarquista que jamás se ha dejado plegar por la ortodoxia” (LIV).

13 González, for his part, 1) experienced awareness of Stalin’s brutality (see Mangini); and 2) was probably aware of the undependable nature of Soviet interest in the situation and welfare of Spanish dissidents in Spain.