

Self-Definition through Poetry in the Work of Gloria Fuertes and Pilar Paz Pasamar in the Period 1950-1970

by

Hilde ten Hacken

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Abstract

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Based on a comparative method of enquiry, this thesis analyses the process of self-definition expressed in the work of Gloria Fuertes (Madrid, 1917-1998) and Pilar Paz Pasamar (Jerez de la Frontera, 1933) as individual alternatives to the collective ethos and literary practices promoted within the patriarchal society of Franco's Spain. Recognizing the poets' cultural and socio-political context as determining factors in their experiences as women and poets, and therefore in their outlook and poetics, this context and how it is reflected in their poetry provides the starting point (Chapter 1). Both poets acknowledge that writing poetry can provide them with a metaphorical space of freedom that enables them to develop their identity and explore their preoccupations. Therefore, their thoughts about poetry provide an important theme that occurs in the poetry of both (Chapter 2). Closely related to this is the link they establish between poetic inspiration and the divine, which in the case of Pilar Paz Pasamar leads to the attempt to use the special qualities of poetic language to refer to a universal truth that she is aware of and which transcends the capabilities of language, while Gloria Fuertes regards poetry as a divine gift that can provide solace and is ultimately able to improve the world (Chapter 3). The fourth chapter focuses on specific elements of the two poets' work that reveal the distinctive mechanisms of self-construction they develop. The section on Fuertes considers humour as a survival strategy that enables the poet to reach out to her readership and emphasize her focus on the here and now, while the discussion on Paz's work looks at how the use of sea imagery allows her to convey abstract experiences based on introspection. Thus, it is argued that their poetry reflects the different strategies the two women develop – based on integration in the case of Fuertes and a more separate position in the case of Paz – to define themselves in relation to their world.

Declarations

I, Hilde ten Hacken, hereby declare that this thesis, which is approximately 80,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date: 4 July 2007

Signature of candidate:

I was admitted as a research student in September 2004 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in September 2005; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2004 and 2007.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolutions and Regulations appropriate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of St Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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I have been able to make three research trips to Spain for the purposes of this thesis:

1. To Madrid, in January 2005, to conduct research at the Biblioteca Nacional (partly funded by the School of Modern Languages of the University of St Andrews)
2. To Cádiz, in October 2005, to do research at local libraries and archives and interview Pilar Paz Pasamar. This trip was generously funded by the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland.
3. To Madrid, in May 2006, to do research at the Fundación Gloria Fuertes (partly funded by the School of Modern Languages of the University of St Andrews).

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Introduction

The initial decision to dedicate my PhD thesis to the study of women writing poetry during the Franco period was based on the fact that surprisingly little relevant poetry and criticism is available. While novels written by women could enter mainstream literary practice after Carmen Laforet won the Premio Nadal with *Nada* in 1944, there was no equivalent development in poetry in the post-war years, and many of the names and works of women poets writing during this period now seem to have virtually disappeared. Reading Carmen Conde's *Poesía femenina española* (1967) immediately convinced me that there were many women poets at the time, writing very interesting poetry. Two poets who seemed to have a particularly passionate, defiant voice were Gloria Fuertes and Pilar Paz Pasamar, and for that reason I determined to devote my project to them. The poetry they produced in the period 1950-1970 stands out from that of many of their contemporaries in how it seeks to convey personal perceptions of the self in the specific context of the Franco regime through the development of a poetics that enhances and elucidates such perceptions.

The overall purpose of this thesis is to analyse their poetry from the 1950s and 1960s as a means of self-definition, and therefore as individual alternatives to the collective ethos and literary practices promoted within the patriarchal society of Franco's Spain. I aim to achieve this by showing how both poets choose to ignore prevailing aesthetic ideas and instead base their work on individual preferences and priorities, which reflect their need to define themselves within their socio-cultural

context, to explore poetry as a genre and medium, and to formulate their personal beliefs as an alternative to Franco's national-Catholicism. The focus on self-definition through art, and in this case poetry, by women who have been allocated an objectified role by patriarchal society represents a common theme in feminist criticism. Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, who are among the writers that have formulated the theories that have become crucially important to the theme of female subjectification through art, provide the theoretical framework in this respect. It is the emphasis I have found in the work of Fuertes and Paz on self-definition through their poetry that provides the basis for the choice of poets and theme for this thesis. As I argue in Chapter 1, they differed in this respect from many other contemporary women poets who did not adopt a critical position towards themselves and their environment. A specific word that is relevant in this respect and which requires further clarification is "identity", because of the different theoretical contexts in which this can be used. Throughout this text, it refers to the process of subjectification, and therefore to the poets' development of their identity as individuals through their work; it is not used in terms of cultural or national identity.

The objective of drawing critical attention to the post-war poetry of Fuertes and Paz as alternative voices in the poetic landscape of Franco's Spain also links this thesis to the feminist enterprise of reclaiming women writers who have been sidelined by mainstream criticism because their work fails to meet certain criteria based on androcentric standards.¹ As such, I seek to demonstrate that a study of the work of

¹ Wilcox says in this respect in his Introduction to *Women Poets of Spain, 1860-1990*: "Poetry written by women is assessed in histories of literature and elsewhere by male standards: it is judged by tastes that were formed by the reading of poetry written by males. Hence, poetry by women is almost totally ignored or at best condemned for failing to satisfy the expectations of such an exclusively masculine worldview" (1997: 1). An important contribution to the revision of Spanish literary history on the basis of feminist criteria is Zavala's *Breve historia feminista de la literatura española (en lengua castellana)*; the fifth volume in this series, which deals with the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, has an interesting chapter on twentieth-century women poets by Roberta Quance (Zavala, 1998: 185-210).

Fuertes and Paz will enrich our perception of literary practice during this period, and that ignoring their poetry and individual perspectives leads to an incomplete picture of literary development during the Franco period. This objective of reclaiming and revision is particularly relevant to Paz's poetry. Her work has so far attracted little critical attention, although the Centro Virtual Cervantes has recently added a section on her poetry on its website,² and *Revista Atlántica* (Cádiz) will dedicate an issue to her in 2007. Two critics who have discussed her work are Ana Sofía Pérez-Bustamente Mourier and José Ramón Ripoll. Some reasons for the lack of criticism on Paz's work are suggested in Chapter 1. Fuertes, in spite of the fact that she is generally regarded as one of the poets of the "Generación del 50", has frequently been accused of writing simplistic poetry of an inferior quality. She was fortunate enough to have an anthology published in Castellet's prestigious Colliure collection in 1962, which meant that her work was available and critics became aware of her poetry when she was in her late forties. Partly as a consequence of this, she has since appeared in anthologies of poetry written by the poets who started publishing in the 1950s. She is now known in Spain primarily because of the children's books she published from the 1960s onwards, and the children's programmes broadcast by Televisión Española in the 1960s and 1970s, which made her an icon of popular culture. Her poetry has been the subject of several doctoral theses in Spain and the USA; the ones I have been able to consult have been included in the Bibliography. In the 1980s and 1990s in particular, a number of articles about her work were published in the USA, the most valuable of which are referred to in this thesis. American critics who have studied her work include Alberto Acereda, Peter Browne, Andrew Debicki, Brenda Logan Cappuccio, Nancy Mandlove, Margaret Persin, Sylvia Sherno and John Wilcox. Most

² The address is: <http://cvc.cervantes.es/actcult/paz_pasamar/>.

of the Spanish critics referred to, such as José Luis Cano and Francisco Ynduráin, are contemporaries of Fuertes. As far as I am aware, no substantial critical study of her work has been produced in the UK or Ireland, and many Spaniards I have spoken to are unaware of her poetry for adults, or still fail to take her poetry seriously.

As the thesis title suggests, this study focuses on only part of the work of Fuertes and Paz, namely that produced in the 1950s and 1960s. I concentrate on this period because it is in these two decades that the process of self-definition – which involves the poets' engagement with their context and the challenges posed by defining their own poetics and understanding of the divine – is most evident, and also because it is in this period that they were most acutely aware of being silenced and marginalized by critics and society. In the case of Fuertes, her collection *Cómo atar los bigotes al tigre* (1969) may be regarded as a point of change in her poetic development. Although she writes on similar themes throughout her career, in her earlier work there is more emphasis on social injustice and the divine, while her later work, collected in *Sola en la sala* (1973), *Historia de Gloria (Amor, humor y desamor)* (1980), *Mujer de verso en pecho* (1995), and several books that have been published posthumously, tends to focus more on love and loneliness as a personal but also typically human – and therefore universal – experience. Her earlier collections stand out because of her playful and experimental use of poetic language, while in the books published after *Cómo atar los bigotes al tigre* – a title which suggests bringing under control the passions which had provoked such poetic language – this playful and imaginative use of language is frequently absent. For that reason, her earlier work is, in my opinion, generally more interesting to work with. The poetry collections that are the main focus of my investigation are therefore:

Isla ignorada (Madrid: Musa Nueva, 1950)

Antología y Poemas del suburbio (Caracas: Lírca Hispana, 1954)

Aconsejo beber hilo (Madrid: Arquero, 1954)

Todo asusta (Caracas: Lírca Hispana, 1958)

...Que estás en la tierra (Barcelona: Seix y Barral, 1962)

Ni tiro, ni veneno, ni navaja (Barcelona: El Bardo, 1965)

Poeta de guardia (Barcelona: El Bardo, 1968)

Cómo atar los bigotes al tigre (Barcelona: El Bardo, 1969)

Apart from *Isla ignorada* and *...Que estás en la tierra*, all these books, as well as *Sola en la sala* (1973), are included in *Obras incompletas* (1975); throughout this study, this will be referred to as “OI”, followed by the page numbers. Fuertes probably omitted *Isla ignorada* from *Obras incompletas* because she regarded its poems as immature samples of her work; she states that she wrote the title poem “con toda la sinceridad y lógica inmadurez de mis diecisiete años” (OI: 21). Indeed, its poems are quite different from those of her subsequent collections – they include imagery reminiscent of the *modernista* poets and traditional poetic devices and structures – and the book is therefore only referred to on a few occasions. *...Que estás en la tierra* is the anthology published in the Colliure collection referred to above; it only has a brief section of poems that have not been published elsewhere. Although the emphasis is on the above collections, I will also refer to her other poetry and her children’s books where this is particularly relevant.

In Paz’s poetry there is a much clearer divide between what might qualify as “earlier” and “later” poetry. All her poetry collections published between 1951 and 1967 focus on her own experience. This is followed by a period of silence until 1982,

when *La torre de Babel y otros asuntos* is published. In this and subsequent books, she frequently introduces poetic personae that are not based on herself, and deals with a variety of themes. The main focus is therefore on the following collections:

Mara (Madrid: Afrodisio Aguado, 1951)

Los buenos días (Madrid: Adonais, 1954)

Ablativo amor (Barcelona: Cuadernos de Atzavara, 1956)

Del abreviado mar (Madrid: Ágora, 1957)

La soledad, contigo (Arcos de la Frontera: Alcaraván, 1960)

Violencia inmóvil (Madrid: Ágora, 1967)

Where appropriate, I will also refer to poems from her later collections, which include *La torre de Babel y otros asuntos* (1982), *Textos lapidarios. La dama de Cádiz* (1990), *Philomena* (1995) and *Sophía* (2003), her short stories, collected in *Historias bélicas* (2004), and her essays on poetry, in particular *La mujer y la poesía de lo cotidiano* (1964). Unlike Fuertes's poetry, that of Paz is no longer widely available; a selection of her work can be found in the anthology *Ópera lecta. Antología Poética* (2001), published by Visor. Therefore, and also to improve readability, all the relevant poems or extracts from poems by both Paz and Fuertes have been quoted in the text.

For several reasons, the application of a comparative method of enquiry has proved to be particularly appropriate to my purposes. As the two poets are from the same historical context and develop a comparable process of reflection in their work, there are valid grounds for comparison. However, as their responses to their environment and the poetics they develop as a consequence lead to different perceptions of and conclusions about themselves, there is also scope for contrasting

such alternative responses. By using the method of comparison I have thus been able to establish a dialogue between the two poets, which has helped to prevent over-simplified conclusions on the basis of one poet's perspective, and has also brought to the fore aspects of their work that might otherwise have been overlooked. As a result, it is always their poetry, rather than a specific theoretical approach, which is highlighted; this is in line with the overall purpose of giving the poets a voice and considering how they define themselves through their poetry. This method therefore facilitates a pluralist and inductive strategy, which means that I have been able to use many different theoretical and critical sources. Because of the assumption – inherent in the methodology of comparison – that literary texts can also serve as an interpretative tool, I have been able to refer to many literary works by authors other than Fuertes and Paz. For example, a comparison of the latter's work with aspects of Juan Ramón Jiménez's poetry, which Paz recognizes as an important influence in her work, has contributed to the discussion of how she reflects on poetic inspiration and the divine, and uses sea imagery in her writing. This emphasis on literature as a critical source is reflected in the inclusion of an Index of all the poems referred to in this study, and a separate heading for literary writing, other than that of Fuertes and Paz, in the Bibliography. All these different sources together have served to inform the analysis of the two poets' work, and have enabled me to bring out the individual and particular in each poet.³

³ In this respect, my use of comparative methodology differs from that described by Bassnett in *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. In a general definition she gives as a starting point for her discussion, she states that "comparative literature involves the study of texts across cultures, that it is interdisciplinary and that it is concerned with patterns of connection in literatures across both time and space" (1993: 1). According to this definition, comparative studies seek to generalize and pinpoint universal aspects of literature, rather than highlight individual responses. I would argue that this method of approach is effective both at Bassnett's macro-level of comparing distinct cultures, and at the micro-level of comparing individual writers.

As has been indicated above, the underlying theoretical framework draws on a broad spectrum of theoretical and critical debate, from which elements are brought in as and when this is relevant and can help to substantiate and strengthen the argument. The general theme of self-definition through poetry is based on the work of the feminist theorists mentioned above, who were involved in pioneering work which in some ways reflects the experimental process of emancipation apparent in the work of the two poets. In line with my decision to prioritize poetry over any theoretical argument, I have generally not discussed why I have given preference to one specific theorist or critic over another, as this would have led to more prominence of theory and, inevitably, would have distracted from the discussion of poetry. I am also aware that it is in the nature of this kind of project, which seeks to describe a process that involves a number of different stages, that there is an element of choice at every stage, and that it is not possible – and in my opinion not desirable – to undertake an exhaustive study of all theoretical works that might be relevant. Ultimately, the choice of topics, emphases, theoretical and critical works, and examples of poetry, has been based on what I have found to be the best way to illustrate and advance my argument. The foregrounding of poetry rather than theory is especially clear in the argument about the essence of poetry, developed in Chapter 2. In recognition of the fact that the two poets develop their individual theories about their poetics independently, the discussion analyses the process that leads to their autonomous, individual conclusions, and only then refers to the general, ongoing theoretical debate on the special nature of poetic language.

Before I move on to a more detailed account of the content and purpose of the individual chapters, it is pertinent to point out some aspects of the overall structure. Chapters 1 to 3 are concerned with what might be described as the conditions or

panorama before, during and beyond poetry, which together determine the process of self-definition described. The concept of silence provides a leitmotiv throughout the first three chapters. As Chapter 1 shows, silence is closely linked to the politics of suppression of the Franco regime and the loneliness and exclusion experienced by the two poets, while at the same time it represents a necessary condition for writing poetry. In Chapter 2 it is related to the limitations of language experienced by both Fuertes and Paz in their struggle to express themselves in their poetry, and in the third chapter, the silence needed to write poetry offers a meditative space in which the poets reflect on divine meaning. The different strategies the two poets develop are exemplified by the discussion of humour in Fuertes's poetry and Paz's use of sea imagery in Chapter 4. This juxtaposition of their individual strategies brings out two contrasting ways in which women could define themselves in Franco's Spain, namely by seeking liberation through integration, reflected in Fuertes's work, or through separation, which is the position explored in Paz's work.

Chapter 1 considers the two poets' cultural and social contexts. The section on the cultural context looks at the development of poetry within the post-war conditions, and seeks to establish the two poets' response to and place within this context. I limit the discussion of contextual details to some points that are immediately relevant to the poets and their work; the social context of the post-war years has been the subject of many critical studies, and some suggestions for further reading are given in the footnotes. The subjects considered in this section are the evolution of post-war poetry, including *poesía social* and the *Generación del 1950*, and censorship and silencing; the emphasis is on the responses of Fuertes and Paz to these determining factors of literary production. The second part focuses on the social context, and in particular the circumstances the two authors encountered both as

women and as women writing poetry at a time of institutionalized discrimination. It is concerned with themes such as the two women's personal lives, as well as their awareness of their marginalized status and the isolation and loneliness that was a consequence of this, and how this is reflected in their poetry. It also addresses the issue of the autobiographical aspect of their work, and concludes that their poetry has a special function in the development of their individual identities. It is argued that their different outlooks on life inspire them to develop different poetic strategies, which enable them to reflect in their poetry on similar conditions in frequently contrasting ways. As their poetry provides them with a space of freedom in which they can develop as individuals and explore their concerns, poetry itself, and questions about its essence and purpose, provide an important theme in the work of both.

Metapoetry and comments about their work in other writing is therefore the subject of **Chapter 2**. A discussion of some metapoetic themes that occur in the work of both, including the theme of "lo cotidiano", the limitations of language and references to motherhood and children, is followed by separate sections on each poet. The section on Paz is concerned with how the poet has dealt with the theme of poetic inspiration. As this is a theme dealt with traditionally by men, and Paz is influenced by poets such as Bécquer and Jiménez, she has to address the cliché of the inspiring female Muse, which leads her to describe poetic inspiration as coming from a source within herself. Fuertes is concerned more with poetic intent, as is apparent in the discussion of parody and intertextuality in some of her poems. Her ultimate goal of communicating a didactic message and offering consolation inspires her to reject any kind of elitism, which is reflected in the down-to-earth poetic style she develops. Although the metapoetic questions addressed in this chapter take the two poets in

different directions, an important point they have in common is their acknowledgement of a link between the self, poetry and the divine. Paz's inner source ultimately has a divine origin, while Fuertes describes poetry as a divine gift, which enables her to reach out to others.

This similar source of their poetry provides the link to **Chapter 3**, which is concerned with the poets' reflections on the divine. Their acknowledgement of a divine origin of poetry is further explored and compared in a section on mysticism, which is based on intertextual references to Santa Teresa in Fuertes's poetry, while San Juan de la Cruz is relevant to Paz's work. The process of self-construction in which the poets are engaged involves defining what they mean by the divine and what its place is in their lives; their attempts to interpret the role of the divine in their poetry and their lives therefore provides the subject of the sections on the individual poets. The section on Paz includes themes such as the role of Juan Ramón Jiménez's poetry in her definition of the divine, the special significance of the symbol of the divine singing bird in her work, and her personal quest for meaning described in *Violencia inmóvil*. The discussion of the role of the divine in Fuertes's work centres on the link she establishes between the divine and social responsibility, and on her recognition of God in everyday life; it also considers her surprisingly traditional, Catholic beliefs, which are particularly evident in the belief in predestination she expresses in several poems. An essential point on which the two poets differ is expressed in the sections' titles: while Paz positions herself "en espera del Todo", and focuses on an all-encompassing Truth, Fuertes's poetry is characterized by "el juego trascendente desde lo menor"; in other words, she is aware of the divine in the often mundane details of "lo cotidiano".

Chapter 4 focuses on the two poets' individual conclusions about themselves and their place in the world by juxtaposing specific characteristics of their work that reveal the distinctive mechanisms of self-construction they develop. The discussion of Fuertes's poetry considers her use of humour. As is argued, humour is linked to the human condition and the often banal details of individual experience, while it also requires a recipient, and therefore an audience. I approach the theme by suggesting that it serves a survival strategy that enables both her and the reader to deal with difficulties; I also compare her use of humour with that of the exponents of *Postismo*. Paz, on the other hand, seeking to express in words an intuited, interiorized truth that surpasses the capabilities of language, has to look for poetic symbols that enable her to suggest the abstract, personal meaning she wishes to impart. The section on her poetry therefore deals with a symbol she uses frequently in her early work: that of the sea. It analyses some poems in which the writer uses sea imagery to deal with themes such as the loss of childhood innocence and the passing of time, the insufficiency associated with her life by the sea, and abstract truth. The juxtaposition of these two different characteristics demonstrates how the two poets, following a comparable route of self-definition, arrive at distinctive perceptions of self and society: Fuertes constantly seeks a balance between her need to take part in society on the one hand, and her perception of exclusion and alienation on the other, while Paz finds liberation through a more introspective attitude. In both cases, their poetry provides the medium through which they explore their identity and are able to define themselves.

Chapter 1: Poetry as a Space of Freedom

Al calor del silencio se maduran mis versos.
Gloria Fuertes

*Podemos
retroceder como la luna mansa
para ir metiendo más silencio allí
donde comienzan las palabras.*
Pilar Paz Pasamar

Silence may represent the beginning of poetry, but for Gloria Fuertes and Pilar Paz Pasamar, as women poets writing in post-war Spain, it also symbolized the lack of freedom they experienced both as women and as poets seeking to express themselves. The specific image of women created and imposed by the Franco regime meant that women were in all respects regarded as inferior to men, and were therefore required to submit to the strict rules of a patriarchal society in which they were hardly visible and audible. Although their personal circumstances and their outlook on life were different, the two poets were affected by their position as women within the society in which they lived, and they both, in different ways, experienced a sense of being silenced and confined to the non-public space of their home. This is reflected in their poetry, which they wrote partly as a means to explore their individual identity and their personal responses to their environment. Another factor that was important in their development as poets was the evolution of poetry in the post-war years, as poetry – and literature in general – was influenced by and responded to the social and

political circumstances that prevailed under the dictatorship. As these two factors, the subordinate position of women and the evolution of poetry, were directly related to the regime's totalitarian ethos, concepts such as silencing and oppression, and the need for self-definition that is a result of this, are relevant to the discussion of both poets. These concepts therefore provide a useful angle from which to approach the analysis of the poets' social and literary context, and how this affected their poetry and its function in their lives.¹ Both women experienced poetry as a means to deal with their confinement and solitude, as it enabled them to transgress the boundaries between reality and fiction, and so create an alternative reality, while it also provided companionship and established a line of communication with the implied reader. Thus, their poetry could become a metaphorical space of freedom.

The first section of this chapter gives a brief analysis of the context of the evolution of poetry in Spain in the post-war years, and considers how Fuertes and Paz fit into this picture. It then turns to the theme of censorship and silencing, and examines the extent to which the two poets were included in or excluded from critical attention. This is followed by a section which discusses how the two women handle the themes of silence and oppression in response to their condition of women poets writing within a patriarchal society.

¹ The significance of the socio-political context to the literary development of individual writers has been recognized by many theorists and critics. Said, for instance, says in this respect that "the realities of power and authority – as well as the resistances offered by men, women, and social movements to institutions, authorities, and orthodoxies – are the realities that make texts possible, that deliver them to the readers, that solicit the attention of critics. I propose that these realities are what should be taken account of by criticism and the critical consciousness" (1984: 5). Power and authority were certainly the determining factors during the post-war years, when the political reality of the Franco regime permeated every aspect of each person's life, and thus shaped individual responses. Medina, in her book on post-war surrealist poetry, therefore starts her argument with the observation that "la poesía española de posguerra no puede ser analizada al margen del contexto político y social del que emerge. Es imprescindible considerar el período histórico de la dictadura franquista no como un marco externo a la evolución de las ideas literarias, sino como el marco significativo [...] que determina el planteamiento y evolución de dichas ideas" (1997: 23).

1.1. The Cultural Context: The Politics of Silence

This section introduces the discussion of Fuertes and Paz's work by considering their poetry within the literary context of a society marked by an official version of truth and reality, and therefore by a policy of censorship and silencing. It first considers the evolution of poetry in the post-war years, in particular the popularity and demise of *poesía social*, and looks at the two poets' individual responses to such development.² The second part considers the theme of silence, and the critical response to the poetry of the two women within the literary and political context described. Three poems, "Niño flaco" and "Paliduchas" by Fuertes, and "El juez" by Paz, which comment on the socio-political context, serve to initiate the analysis of the two poets' work, which is at the heart of this study.

After the Civil War, many Spanish authors, artists and intellectuals were aware of being dissociated and disconnected from European thought and culture, and from Spanish writers and thinkers living in exile. This, in combination with the censorship to which they were subjected, meant that they felt confined to the limits of their country and silenced by the official ideology,³ in a way comparable to how Fuertes and Paz experienced being confined to their homes and excluded and silenced by patriarchal society. While poetry before the war, *Modernismo* around the turn of the century and the avant-garde movements of the 1920s, had been responses to European and Spanish-American aesthetic tendencies, the development of poetry after the Civil War was largely a direct response to the political and social situation within

² As the main purpose is to examine briefly the two poets' place within the literary context, this discussion is necessarily incomplete and simplified. For a more comprehensive overview of post-war poetry, see, for instance, the detailed introductions in the anthologies of Ayuso (1998), Castellet (1966), Ruiz Soriano (1997), and Luis (2000; this also has an excellent introduction by Fanny Rubio and Jorge Urrutia). Some other useful studies are those of Payeras Grau (1986), Debicki (1982 and 1988), and García de la Concha (1973). Full details of these works are given in the Bibliography.

³ As Decker (2004) demonstrates in his book on the subject, ideology has been defined in very different ways. I would define it as the set of ideas on which individuals – wittingly and unwittingly – base their conduct. In the case of a totalitarian regime such ideas are promoted and imposed from above, hence the expression "official ideology".

Spain. Although both the aesthetic movement of realism and the philosophy of existentialism developed throughout Western Europe, partly as a response to the Second World War, in Spain they had clear political connotations and were associated with anti-Francoist sentiments and attitudes. As Wright points out (1986: 15), “the mass media, in which [Franco] appeared as the personification of neotraditional values, formed an authoritarian background against which existentialist and Marxist notions stood out. This is why the labels *existencialista* and *inconformista* were not neutral epithets.”

Immediately after the Civil War, poetry, and culture in general, was in what might be described as a vacuum: many of the established poets had either died, as was the case with Lorca and Hernández, or they had gone into exile, which applies to, for instance, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Luis Cernuda and Rafael Alberti. At the same time, censorship hampered the publication and distribution of new poetry. This meant that the decade of the 1940s was a period of slow rehabilitation, in which little poetry of enduring significance was produced. Two important events during this decade that influenced later poetry were the publication of *Hijos de la ira* (1944) by Dámaso Alonso, and the development of the polemic between the official poetry promoted and supported by the regime on the one hand, and poetry that deals with existential doubt and shows commitment to exposing social injustice on the other.⁴ *Hijos de la ira*, in which the anguished speaker looks for meaning in an apparently absurd, ugly world devoid of social justice, can be regarded as one of the first examples of the latter form of poetry. Alonso later defined this kind of poetry as “poesía desarraigada”, and described it in terms that are also relevant to the frame of mind Fuertes frequently

⁴ For the sake of convenience, the term “official poetry” is used in the pages that follow to denote the kind of non-challenging, triumphalist poetry of formal perfection, promoted and often subsidized by the regime.

imparts in her poetry: it is characterized by “un inmenso desconsuelo” and “una búsqueda frenética de centro o de amarre” (quoted in Aub, 1957: 21).

The poetry promoted by the regime in the 1940s was poetry which evaded the harsh truth of post-war reality, and instead consisted of non-committed, classicist rhetoric which often sang the praises of the heroic soldier from sixteenth-century, imperialist Spain, personified by Garcilaso and initially promoted in José García Nieto’s poetry journal named after the Golden Age poet. As a consequence, *garcilasismo* became the term used for any poetry that failed to address Spain’s situation and express a challenging stance towards the country’s reality at the time. It contributed to the emergence of *poesía social*, which responded to *garcilasismo* and social injustice.⁵ The social poets followed Alonso’s example, and spoke in their work of their personal anguish and their commitment to the denouncement of the collective misery of the poor. Like Alonso, they used plain language and their writing often had a didactic purpose, as it wished to communicate with and instruct working-class people; they regarded their poetry as an instrument aiming to bring about change rather than as a form of art. The Spanish translation of Sartre’s *Qu’est-ce que la littérature?*, in which Sartre develops the idea of “engagement”, the notion that “l’écrivain doit s’engager tout entier dans ses ouvrages” (1984: 44) was very influential in the development of this poetry.⁶ Gabriel Celaya spells out the purpose of such committed poetry in his poem “La poesía es un arma cargada de futuro” (in Luis, 2000: 263-65). It includes the lines:

⁵ Different poets and critics have defined the concept of “poesía social” in different ways. Aguirre, for instance, refers to the poetry journal *Espadaña*, published in León in the early 1940s, as “el ‘órgano’ de la llamada poesía social” (1971: 7-8), whereas Wright, using a slightly different definition, refers to *poesía social* as mainstream poetry in the 1950s and 1960s (1986: 145). Here, it refers to the poetry promoted by poets such as Celaya, Otero, Crémer, Garciasol and Figuera in the 1940s, which lost its popularity and credibility in the second half of the 1950s.

⁶ See, for instance, Payeras Grau, who points out that Sartre’s book was a decisive factor in the development of *poesía social* (1986: 53), and Gracia, who says that “se lee sobre todo *Qué es la literatura* de Jean-Paul Sartre, para adoptar formas del compromiso valiente” (Gracia and Ruiz Carnicer, 2004: 247).

Tal es mi poesía: Poesía-herramienta

[...]

No es una poesía gota a gota pensada.
 No es un bello producto. No es un fruto perfecto.
 Es algo como el aire que todos respiramos,
 y es el canto que espacia cuanto dentro llevamos.

The title leaves no doubt about poetry's didactic and moral purpose. Rather than the well-structured poems supported by official culture, showing a perfection which does not relate to reality, his poems serve as a tool to reveal the truth and experience shared by everyone. A similar sentiment, but expressed in a much more incensed tone, can be found in Blas de Otero's "El mar suelta un párrafo sobre la inmensa mayoría" (in Luis, 2000: 297), which is a direct attack on Juan Ramón Jiménez's repeated statement that poetry is written for the "inmensa minoría",⁷ and on his aestheticism – characterized by its emphasis on beauty, perfection and harmony, and elements such as sensuality, evasion and melancholy – which had influenced the generation of poets of 1927 in its initial phase. The "mar" of the title refers to the role of the sea in *Diario de un poeta recién casado*, in which Jiménez looks for meaning and inner harmony by seeking communion with the sea, the moon and the stars – quite the opposite of what Otero aspires to in his poetry. The poem contains the following sentence:

Yo hablo adelantándome a las maravillosas palabras
 de los poetas a las mentirosas ondas de los mercaderes
 a los estereotipados teletipos mercenarios
 yo estoy sordo me río de los falsos redentores yo predico con olas
 que imponen pánico a los ricos
 distingo las estrellas a simple vista

⁷ Juan Ramón Jiménez dedicated both *Poesía* (1923) and *Belleza* (1923) to "la inmensa minoría". His *Segunda Antología Poética* (1922) has the dedication "A la minoría siempre", and includes the explanatory comment "No creo, 'en ningún caso', en un arte para la mayoría" (1976: 273).

ésta no ésta no ésta sí.

By stringing together a series of ideas without using any punctuation, he simulates an angry outburst against the poetry represented by Jiménez, which he considers false, corrupt, and, judging by the last two verses, irrelevant and superfluous: the stars can be discerned by everyone “a simple vista”, and do not require the poet’s interpretation. Like Celaya, he introduces plain language and discards traditional poetic diction and imagery in order to reach ordinary people.

However, by the early 1950s, when both Fuertes and Paz started publishing their work, this kind of committed poetry was increasingly criticized for not achieving its aim – as working-class people did not read social poetry – and for its increasingly hackneyed, “non-poetic” language. By the time Leopoldo de Luis published his *Poesía social española contemporánea* (1965), *poesía social* was often seen in a negative light, and many of the poets included, asked to comment on the social aspect of their poetry, tried to disassociate themselves from the label “social poet”. As Payeras Grau explains (1986: 59): “A fuerza de extenderse y repetirse la poesía social se pobló de tópicos que la empobrecieron, y el lenguaje directo y sencillo utilizado por ella acabó por ser intolerablemente prosaico.”

Surprisingly, the person who gives an excellent explanation of why *poesía social* was doomed to fail is Sartre, one of the thinkers who were supposed to have inspired its development. In the first chapter of *Qu’est-ce que la littérature*, he makes a distinction between poetry and prose, recognizing that poetic language has a special quality that makes it unsuitable for developing an argument. As he points out, poetry focuses on the word itself as object, while prose is based on the meaning communicated by words. Poetry cannot be used successfully for utilitarian and

didactic purposes alone – which would involve focusing on the meaning conveyed by the poem as a text – as this would conflict with the specific, lyric quality of poetry. As he concludes in one of the notes to Chapter 1: “Si le poète raconte, explique ou enseigne, la poésie devient *prosaïque*, il a perdu la partie” (1984: 48; italics in original). This describes exactly what happened to those who had based their poetry on Sartre’s ideas. Poets who started writing in the 1950s, including Fuentes, were very much aware of this development and started to experiment with new, alternative ways of writing poetry.

Although the early work of Fuentes shares some characteristics with *poesía social*, she developed her own, personal style. Her poetry has an important element of human solidarity and frequently has a didactic purpose, but its main focus is her own experience. Although she uses everyday language, she undermines the realist element of *poesía social* by creating alternative poetic realities and playing with surrealist elements.⁸ Debicki says about the way in which Fuentes and some of her contemporaries use common language: “these poets find innovative verbal strategies which make extremely significant meanings and experiences out of their apparently ordinary materials”, or, in other words, they “make artistic use of their apparently common language” (1982: 9, 12). Another important characteristic which makes Fuentes stand apart from social poets is her deviation from the tone of solemnity prevalent in the work of, for instance, Celaya, Otero and Figuera. Ángela Figuera developed a style which was particularly bleak and austere. In the poem “Belleza cruel” (2002: 13-14) she says that she feels that it would be morally wrong and even impossible to think about beauty (which, in spite of the misery she sees around her is

⁸ She took part in the experiment of the *postistas*, a group of poets who attempted to revive surrealism as an antidote to *poesía social* and official poetry in the second half of the 1940s. Some of the elements they borrowed from surrealist writing were stream of consciousness techniques, the random combination of ideas, wordplay, and infantile language. See Chapter 4 for a further discussion of *postismo* within the context of humour in Fuentes’s poetry.

still there, and is therefore cruel), or smile and feel a sense of joy as long as current social misery prevails. Fuertes challenges such solemnity by introducing semantic and phonetic wordplay, by juxtaposing different registers or by making apparently inappropriate intertextual references. An example of a poem that stands out because of its explicitly social content and realist approach, and which illustrates some of the points made so far, is “Niño flaco” (OI: 112):⁹

Al niño flaco,
todo se le vuelven pupas.
Al niño flaco,
le llevan a ver por rayos.
Y dice el doctor:
Que pase su padre.
Y dice la madre:
Que no tiene padre.
El niño delgado,
las piernas se lame.
El niño delgado,
no acude al certamen.
El niño no crece,
ni juega con nadie.
El niño no muere
ni vive ni nada.

Here, the focus is entirely on the social context, as Fuertes does not include herself through a poetic persona and only uses the apparently neutral third person. However, the poem is far from objective: by using short, rhythmic lines, generally consisting of complete grammatical phrases, and repetition, she suggests the structure of a lullaby or nursery rhyme; a suggestion which is enhanced by the playful, non-solemn tone and childlike language. As this is incongruent with the poem’s message – a nursery rhyme suggests consolation and caring parents – the reader is made to feel more

⁹ Interestingly, this poem was included in the poetry journal *El Pájaro de Paja* (No. 8, 1962), which is associated with much more experimental poetry with surrealist tendencies, while it was not included in Leopoldo de Luis’s anthology of social poetry.

uncomfortable than he or she would have felt if this had been a purely descriptive poem. The first two lines consist of an intertextual reference to the proverb “al perro flaco todo se le vuelven pulgas”, which disorientates the reader’s expectations by suggesting that he or she is dealing with a light-hearted, humorous poem. It thus appears that, even when addressing social injustice, personified in the misfortune of an innocent, vulnerable boy, Fuertes introduces a technique which Debicki refers to as “reversal of expectations” (in his chapter on Fuertes in *Poetry of Discovery*, 1982: 81-101), which makes the poem a very personal expression of what initially appears to be purely social commentary.¹⁰ Another poem which is based on social commentary and illustrates such reversal of expectations is “Paliduchas” (OI: 86):

Qué pálidas están,
 son como cuartillas
 flotando entre las aguas de la pena,
 van y vienen riéndose o llorando;
 algunas tienen hijos,
 todas, greñas;
 tienen la carne blanca...
 Estas locas son muertas,
 que las sigue latiendo el corazón
 debajo de las tetas.

Here reader expectations are challenged by the unexpected change in register after the fifth line. The simile of the floating “cuartillas”, combined with the suggestion of women who are “pálidas” and suffer “pena”, suggests the clichés and language of Romantic poetry. After the fifth line, the reader suddenly realizes that the “pálidas” are in fact poor women roaming the streets, a familiar sight in contemporary Madrid.

¹⁰ Debicki bases his discussion on what he refers to as the reader’s “horizon of expectations”, a term he borrows from Jauss, one of the German theorists who developed the ideas known as reception theory, which focuses on the role of the reader. See Eagleton (1996: 72) and Cuddon (1999: 387-88).

The concluding word, “tetas”, emphasizes the contrast between the poem’s beginning and end, and therefore reinforces its aim of exposing social injustice.

While Fuertes’s style is in line with the evolution of poetry in the 1950s and 1960s – like some of her contemporaries, such as Claudio Rodríguez, Ángel González, José Ángel Valente and Jaime Gil de Biedma, she develops a style that takes poetry beyond the rigid limits of *poesía social* – it is much more difficult to accommodate Paz within such developments. Although her poetry is unconventional in its attempt to define her place as a woman within the post-war conditions, she tends to use conventional poetic devices that emphasize the musical quality of poetry, rather than the innovative verbal strategies Debicki refers to, as a means of expressing herself. She actively looks for beauty and seeks to express and so redeem it, rather than repudiate it as inappropriate within the country’s circumstances at the time, as Figuera does. Unlike Otero, she appreciates Juan Ramón Jiménez’s poetry, and expresses a very different view about Jiménez and *poesía social*. Talking about Jiménez’s *Platero y yo*, which, like much of his poetry, was influenced by the Spanish Krausist movement, she said in an interview: “en *Platero* encuentro una denuncia social que no he encontrado en ninguno.”¹¹ As she was frequently confronted with the fact that she had never written *poesía social*, she included the following comment in a speech:¹²

En cuanto al tan vigente asunto, suscitador de polémica, de la poesía social, entiendo que toda poesía, por el hecho de entregarse a la sociedad, ya es social. [...] Creo que tan equivocados están los que poseen esa limitante testarudez única como esos otros que defienden el total aislamiento, “la torre de

¹¹ As we shall see in the chapters that follow, Juan Ramón Jiménez had a great influence on her poetry. The quote is from one of two interviews I had with her in October 2005. Hereafter, references to or quotes from these interviews will be followed by the date of the interview between brackets.

¹² The inaugural address she read on becoming a member of the Real Academia Hispanoamericana in Cádiz in 1963 (Paz and Pemán, 1964: 8-9).

marfil”. Nunca he hecho poesía social premeditadamente, pero admito que son innumerables los temas sociales que pueden dar ocasión a un buen poema, mientras este poema sea dado con una actitud sincera. Es ilícito escudarse en la poesía para elaborar un tono adecuado a las circunstancias. Demos cada cual nuestro mundo poético – aconsejaría yo –, y si logramos hacerlo que otro se sienta reflejado en él, ya habremos conseguido algo muy importante.

While rejecting both the “torre de marfil” of the *garcilasistas* and their followers and *poesía social*, she does not deny that good, sincere poetry can be socially or politically charged. However, she feels that poetry becomes artificial when it is subjected to a specific, narrow purpose. Distancing herself from both official and social poetry, she does not belong to an easily classifiable group of poets or poetic movement, although her poetry shares some features, including its musicality and the recurring theme of beauty, with other Andalusian poets, such as the poets of the *Cántico* group of the 1940s.

As was pointed out at the beginning of this section, silence and confinement are themes that are relevant not only to women poets experiencing the solitude and isolation of the domestic space to which they felt confined, but also to the general experience of poets within the context of oppression and isolation of post-war Spain. As Gracia explains in a chapter with the appropriate title “La estética del miedo” (in Gracia and Ruiz Carnicer, 2004: 17-37), in the years following the Civil War, the idea of silence was closely related to the fear of denunciation and its consequences of disappearance or imprisonment. Carmen Conde gives a powerful description of this in “Canto funeral por mi época” (in Ruiz Soriano, 1997: 87-89), which includes the lines:

Delatan lenguas frías sus venganzas,

y un pueblo universal ulula odios
encima de la sangre derramada.

Many people's impulse therefore was to pretend that all was normal and to deny that anything was wrong. Such silence and denial is reflected in official poetry, which deals with "safe", non-committed, non-ethical themes such as the beauty of love and nature, while the response it provoked, such as that of *Hijos de la ira*, with its grotesque, harsh vocabulary, seems like a "grito" that aims to break the silence. Alonso introduces this sustained "grito" in the first poem, "Insomnio" (2003: 81), where he says about himself: "paso largas horas gimiendo como el huracán, ladrando como un perro enfurecido". An excellent description of the atmosphere that was the consequence of the oppressive, totalitarian regime, which pervaded every aspect of each individual's perception and experience of life, is given in Luis Martín-Santos's novel *Tiempo de silencio* (1961), in which the main character, Pedro, in words reminiscent of the anger and anguish of Alonso's poems, expresses his dismay as he feels belittled by those who, invisibly and silently, decide on each individual's life from above: "Por aquí abajo nos arrastramos y nos vamos yendo hacia el sitio donde tenemos que ponernos silenciosamente a esperar silenciosamente que los años vayan pasando y que silenciosamente nos vayamos hacia donde se van todas las florecillas del mundo" (2000: 283). In "El juez" (*Los buenos días*, 28-29), the only poem she published in the period 1950-1970 that explicitly addresses social injustice, Paz refers to this atmosphere of silence inspired by the fear of an all-powerful voice that can decide the fate of any individual's life:

Tiene las manos blandas como nosotros. Besa,
pero sus labios deben herir como las zarzas.
Le tienen miedo el grillo, el aprendiz, el pobre

hermano que le llevan con el alma doblada.

Juzgar la vida es mucho. Debe ser imposible
cuando hay noches sin ruido y un mundo que no acaba
de responder. Si un hombre lleva sangre en las manos
que las limpie el rocío y se las seque el alba.

Pero hay quien los condena. La muerte por sus labios
brotan tan dulcemente que es sólo una palabra.
Y mientras tanto crecen árboles compañeros
y no se seca el campo ni se congela el agua
de los ríos.

Señor, Tú que estás en la vida
disolviendo la espuma y abriendo las granadas,
haz una muerte limpia para lo malo y sean
pájaros quienes lleven la dolorosa carga.

Pero los hombres no. Pero los labios nunca.
La vida es demasiado para poder cortarla
como cortan las manos del campo las espigas,
las hierbas silenciosas, el tomillo o la grana.

Si han de morir aquellos de los pechos oscuros,
que los condene el viento, y los prenda las algas,
o un milagro pequeño los lleve de la mano
hacia la inevitable costumbre de la nada.

In this poem, she contrasts the beauty and harmony she finds in nature with the judge's power to sentence a person to death, which imbues an unnatural atmosphere marked by fear and silence. The poem's longer sentences, all of which contain some kind of imagery, make the three short sentences that contain no qualifying adjectives and no imagery, and therefore emphasize the silence, stand out. These are the sentences that refer to the poem's stark message: "Juzgar la vida es mucho", "Pero hay quien los condena", and "Pero los hombres no." The third sentence, the meaning of which is repeated in "Pero los labios nunca", is incomplete, as it does not contain a verb: the action of condemning a person to death is so wrong that it is unspeakable. In the first stanza the enjambment of "el pobre / hermano" destabilizes the verse's rhythm, and so brings out the "miedo" – further highlighted by the image of the "alma

doblada” and the “noches sin ruido y un mundo que no acaba / de responder” – and the disharmony created by the judge. The line break in the third stanza marks a shift in focus from the judge to nature, ruled and judged by God. Much of the poem’s imagery refers to nature: its vulnerable innocence, personified by “el grillo” and the “pájaros”, its purity, seen in the cleansing power of the “rocío”, and its quality of companionship, described in the “árboles compañeros”; all this is the exact opposite of the environment characterized by fear and silence created by the judge. As this example shows, Paz tends to use traditional poetic devices such as rhyme and imagery while making references to nature and beauty, but by no means exploits them to produce the empty rhetoric of official poetry scorned by poets such as Figuera. To her, beauty is not a mere visual experience, but is associated with a harmonious equilibrium which, in the above poem, is destroyed by the regime, personified as the arbitrary judge, breaking the silence and causing destruction by pronouncing a single word. Obviously, the harmonious equilibrium Paz detects in nature contrasts with the existential anguish and the lack of rootedness expressed by Alonso and his followers.

Paz’s image of the arbitrary judge and his power to silence is not only relevant to the pronouncement of the death penalty, but, within the context of literary production, it is also appropriate to the regime’s policy of censorship and propaganda. Although censorship was generally rigid in the way it aimed to uphold Francoist and Catholic values, it also had an element of randomness. As Manuel Abellán explains (1980: 87-92), it depended on individual judgement – based on an ideology that was not clearly defined – and in many cases the censor would be a writer himself, who would condemn a work because it was written by one of his adversaries. Thus the process mirrored the practice of denunciation prevalent in the years immediately after the war. According to Gracia, poetry was the literary genre least affected by

censorship because of its small readership, which meant that it could be used to express dissidence: “la naturaleza minoritaria y marginal de la poesía [...] explica que pudiese revelar desde muy temprano zonas de disidencia estética y moral” (Gracia and Ruiz Carnicer, 2004: 152). However, as Abellán points out, because of its evasive nature, censors also tended to be more suspicious of poetry than they were of fiction, and therefore poetry was frequently censored more rigorously (216). Octavio Paz, in *El arco y la lira*, says that, in general, the State and the Church are suspicious of poetry not so much because of its evasive nature, but because of its double meaning. It refers to an immediate reality, but also has an element of universal, absolute truth: “La desconfianza de los Estados y las Iglesias ante la poesía nace no sólo del natural imperialismo de estos poderes: la índole misma del decir poético provoca el recelo. No es tanto aquello que dice el poeta, sino lo que va implícito en su decir [...] La palabra poética jamás es completamente de este mundo: siempre nos lleva más allá, a otras tierras, a otras verdades” (2004: 190). Fuertes, to avoid being censored and perhaps also because of the slow process censorship involved, published two of her early books, *Antología y Poemas del suburbio* (1954) and *Todo asusta* (1958) in Caracas, which meant, of course, that very few copies reached Spain. *Aconsejo beber hilo* (1954) was published in Madrid by *Arquero*, in which Fuertes was involved herself, but it provoked a whole page of “tachaduras”.¹³ The poetry journal *Platero*, in which Paz was involved, had an interesting relationship with its censors: while it was sponsored by the local delegation of FET y de las JONS –¹⁴ as was printed dutifully on the cover of many issues – which enabled it to develop beyond its provincial limits, the group of young poets editing the journal did all it could to evade

¹³ See the Torremozas edition of *Aconsejo beber hilo* (2004a: 7).

¹⁴ The Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista. This was the official – and only – political party; it was later renamed as the Movimiento Nacional (Hooper, 1995: 13).

ensorship. The last issue, No. 24, for instance, includes a controversial poem by Otero, which could be published unaltered by changing its original title.¹⁵ An interesting example of how propaganda was used to silence any dissent from the official view is Luis López Anglada's anthology *Panorama poético español (Historia y Antología 1939-1964)*, published by Editora Nacional as part of the celebrations of "twenty-five years of peace". In the "Advertencia preliminar" and the "Introducción", López denies that the country is ruled by a totalitarian regime and turns on its head the notion that, as a consequence of the oppressive regime and its censorship, the preceding generation of poets has been exiled and the country has lived through a cultural crisis. Referring repeatedly to the "veinticinco años de paz", which have facilitated a climate of hope and possibilities, he claims that the new generation of poets is writing poetry which is much better than that written before the war by the "Generación del 27, o de la Dictadura", and that written by "los poetas de la España viajera" (1965: 7, 8). The anthology, which includes poems by both Fuertes and Paz, also includes existential and social poetry, but, rather than expressing protest against the regime, such poems are said to show the poets' concern about their destiny and for their fellow human beings, a positive development which can only be the result of the peaceful, stable environment created in Spain after the war.

It appears that, as a consequence of the polemic between official poetry and poetry of dissent, and also of the regime's policy of propaganda and censorship – which no doubt reinforced feelings of opposition and resentment towards poetry supported by the regime – some literary critics, publishers and poets who identified with oppositional poetry had a tendency to reject and ignore any poetry that could not

¹⁵ See Ramos Ortega (1994: 56); the poem, which describes the cultural and spiritual poverty and the division between rich and poor in Bilbao, originally had the title "Oda a Bilbao"; having been censored several times, it appeared unchanged in *Platero* (No. 24, 1954) under the non-specific title "Muy lejos". For a discussion of *Platero* and censorship, see also Hernández Guerrero (1984: 11-18).

be classified as testimonial, social or experimental. As these critics had much influence on what became known and what was discarded, they were in a position that in some ways resembled that of the regime's censors. Payeras Grau, aware of this, makes a distinction in *Poesía española de postguerra* between what she calls "los marginados", a category which includes the *postistas* and the group *Cántico*, and "los consagrados", those poets who started writing in the 1950s and managed to gain the favour of the critics fairly early in their career. It certainly seems that poetry from the South, such as that of the *Cántico* poets, was marginalized by many critics, as its poetic diction was seen to be too traditional – and traditionalism was associated with Francoism – lyricist and intimist, and it generally failed to address the social and political situation. Particularly influential in the process of inclusion or exclusion in the 1950s and 1960s were the anthologies published by Ribes, Battló and Castellet. The *Antología consultada de la joven poesía española* (1952), edited by Ribes, is an anthology of nine poets selected by a panel of critics and poets. The nine writers – all men – selected as "los mejores jóvenes poetas de aquel momento" (see Castellet, 1966: 89), Bousoño, Celaya, Crémer, Gaos, Hierro, Morales, Nora, Otero and Valverde, are all from Madrid and the north of Spain, and all write poetry that can be defined as "poesía comprometida". Ayuso (1998: 27) mentions as one of the consequences of its publication, "la fijación de esta nueva poesía que tiende a mostrarse como toda la poesía. O, al menos, la más pertinente para la época." The main focus of José Battló's *Antología de la nueva poesía española* (1968) is the work of the new, experimental poetry that developed in the 1950s; it includes poems by Fuertes. José María Castellet's anthology *Un cuarto de siglo de poesía española (1939-1964)*¹⁶ includes a broader range of poets, as it is not limited to the most recent

¹⁶ Published in 1966; this is a revised and extended edition of his anthology *Veinte años de poesía*

generation and to non-traditionalist poetry; it also includes poems by Fuertes. However, his detailed “Prólogo” is based on the definition of pre-war poetry as symbolist – with its characteristics of formalism and aestheticism, and the poet as a privileged person – and post-war poetry as realist, with a collective focus. This sharp distinction, maintained rigidly throughout, means that, in his view, there is no scope for diverging, alternative ideas, and that there is no place for symbolist poetry – which would include Paz’s work – in the post-war period. Castellet also published an influential series of anthologies of individual poets in the *Colliure* collection, whose poetry, according to Cano “se caracterizaba por los temas de preocupación social y política, y sobre todo el tema de España, con su dramático destino – la guerra civil y sus consecuencias” (1974b: 13). Castellet included an anthology of Fuertes’s poetry, ...*Que estás en la tierra* (1962), prepared by Jaime Gil de Biedma, which meant an enormous boost to her career as a poet. As we have already seen, her early books appeared in small print runs, and some were published in Venezuela, which meant that in the 1950s Fuertes was not a well-known poet. Ángel González, talking about the significance of this anthology, describes Fuertes as “una valiosa figura, entonces perdida en revistas y pequeñas publicaciones inencontrables” (quoted in Payeras Grau, 1986: 108). Cano says that “su nombre sólo comienza a adquirir cierto prestigio a raíz de [esta] publicación” (1969:8), and F. Ynduráin confirms: “No puedo afirmarlo de los demás, pero de mí puedo decir que éste fue el libro que me descubrió a la poeta” (1979: 28). Now a recognized poet, her next two collections, *Ni tiro, ni veneno, ni navaja* (1965) and *Poeta de guardia* (1968), were published in Battló’s prestigious poetry series *El Bardo*.¹⁷

española. 1939-1959.

¹⁷ As was discussed in the Introduction, she became known more widely as a poet for adults by the end of the 1960s, but what really made her popular were her children’s books and her television

While Fuertes's work began to receive some recognition by the end of the 1960s, Paz's work did not follow the general trend critics such as Castellet were looking for, which may partly account for the fact that her poetic voice was consistently silenced and confined to the geographical space of Cádiz and Andalusia.¹⁸ As was pointed out above, Paz's poetry shares some elements with other poetry written in the region at the time, which was often regarded as irrelevant and too traditional by the more innovative poets, who tended to be from Madrid and the North. Although it is arguable whether, and to what extent, a case can be made for Andalusian poetry as poetry with a development, identity and distinctive elements that differ from that produced in other parts of the country,¹⁹ many Andalusian poets felt marginalized and excluded by publishers, anthologies and poetry prizes. In fact, Andalusian poetry written in the post-war years provoked some very harsh and disparaging responses from those who advocated what Pérez (1995: 90) has called the "existentialist and anti-estheticist rhetoric" of the North. A notorious example of such a response is Celaya's poem "Noche de Zugurramurdi" (quoted in Sánchez Torre, 1993: 142-43); it includes the following controversial lines, which can be read as a comparison of the – apparently – artificial quality of Andalusian poetry with the effeminate, gutless personality of an Andalusian "señorito":

Es la gracia del Sur, la verborrea
y el verso que menea las caderas.

programmes for children. Acereda (1999: 158-59) points out that many critics in Spain still fail to take her poetry seriously and tend to ignore her.

¹⁸ She was recognized as a poet of national importance for the first time in 2001 – fifty years after the publication of *Mara* – when her anthology *Ópera lecta* was published in the Colección Visor de Poesía.

¹⁹ Cano (1978), Rodríguez Pacheco (2001) and García-Posada (2004) all published anthologies of Andalusian poets with introductions in which they defend the existence of Andalusian poetry as distinctly different from other Spanish poetry. According to Paz, poetry from the South is different, but only in its structure and language, not in terms of the subjects it deals with, as ultimately there is only one subject: "La forma será diferente, pero los temas son iguales [...] ¿Qué canta el poeta? La muerte, el sentido de la vida, la justicia [...] Pero lo fundamental es que se encuentra al misterio de la vida" (18-10-05), a theme which includes a person's experience of his or her social circumstances.

A título de imagen, el piropo,
y a falta de belleza mucho adorno.
¡Vean, vean la lírica bonita,
andaluza, cobarde y señorita!

As we have seen, the oppressive nature of the dictatorship led to a cultural environment where poets were often censored, and therefore silenced, by the regime, or by critics who sought to oppose the regime and rejected writing which did not explicitly express its opposition to the Francoist ideology. Although Fuertes and Paz both developed their own, individual style, they both experienced the consequences of this. Fuertes's tendency to expose social injustice made her liable to official censorship, while her apparently simple poetic diction meant that she was frequently ignored by critics. Paz's rejection of both official poetry and social poetry, as well as her link with Andalusia, contributed to the exclusion of her poetry from influential anthologies and prizes.²⁰ Another consequence of the literary context that has been touched on is the tendency of poets to discuss their purpose in their work, and so make poetry itself the theme of some of their poems. The process described above, which started with poets looking for their voice in the cultural vacuum of the 1940s, leading first to the controversy of "poesía oficial" as opposed to "poesía comprometida" and later to individual experiments with poetic language, engendered a debate among poets and critics on how to define poetry and its purpose. This debate was stimulated by some of the anthologists. Ribes's *Antología consultada*, for instance, is the result of a panel's decisions rather than his own personal preferences. Battló incorporated a questionnaire in his anthology, with questions about the definition, objectives and evolution of poetry, and the answers given by each of the

²⁰ The most important recognition she gained with her early work was the "accésit" to the "Premio Adonais", awarded for her collection *Los buenos días* in 1953.

poets included, while Leopoldo de Luis asked each poet included in his anthology to introduce his or her own work. The question of how to define poetry also became a theme in poetry itself; many poets wrote about this in their work, as the above examples by Celaya, Otero and Figuera show. Fuertes and Paz also wrote many poems with self-reflective elements; these metapoems and the writers' ideas about poetry and language are the subject of Chapter 2. Having briefly introduced the two poets' literary context and some ways in which this influenced them, the remainder of this chapter will look at the social context, in particular at the position and treatment of women under the Franco regime, and how this affected them and is expressed in their work.

1.2. The Social Context: Women and Poetry

In the decades following the Civil War, the position of women was characterized by submission and oppression. The Francoist attitude towards women was based on the nineteenth-century idea that because of their biological inferiority women should not be financially independent, and that they should not have the same legal status as men. In addition, women were seen to be responsible for the future of the Spanish race, and therefore they were to be encouraged to marry and have children.²¹ The direct consequence of this attitude was that women were confined to their home, and were subjected first to the authority of their father and later to that of their husband. They were discouraged from working outside the home and becoming involved in public life, and those who remained single and had a paid job were frowned upon by many. Having a job outside the house was even considered “una especie de traición al Estado y a la Patria” (Gracia and Ruiz Carnicer, 2004: 93). By law, women were

²¹ See Di Febo, who mentions the “vacío demográfico provocado por la guerra civil” and Franco's ambition of achieving a population of “cuarenta millones de españoles”; the regime's propaganda therefore “equipara la maternidad a la ‘misión’ patriótica del soldado en la guerra” (2002: 99-100).

inferior to men to such an extent that their rights were similar to those of a minor: without the authorization of their husband they could not obtain a passport or open a bank account, and when a woman was widowed, it was the nearest male relative who would inherit the property.²² To propagate this ideology, which was characteristic of fascism and was also promoted, for instance, in Nazi Germany, the regime made use of institutions such as the Sección Femenina de Falange and the Church. The Sección Femenina was headed by Pilar Primo de Rivera, an austere woman who became a model for the post-war, wholesome image of the thrifty, prudent woman, mother and housewife. Through its obligatory Servicio Social, an alternative for women to military service, women were taught domestic skills and indoctrinated with the eighteen “puntos de la mujer de Falange”, which promoted an attitude of abnegation and obedience. These points, which underlined women’s subservience and negated their personality, included such commands as “No comentes ninguna orden, cúmplela sin vacilar” and “No busques destacar tu personalidad, ayuda a que sea otro el que sobresalga”, which led to the concluding point, “Ninguna gloria es comparable, a la gloria de haberlo dado todo por la Patria” (in Folguera, 1988: 82). The Church, an important supporter of the official ideology, which came to be known as “nacional-catolicismo”, had a similar propagandist role; this was acted out through the programmes of events organized for women through Acción Católica. The negative role of the Church as an instrument of (anti-feminist) propaganda has particular significance with regard to the poetry of Fuertes and Paz, as both poets sought to express their individual experience and interpretation of God and the divine in their work, and looked for ways to accommodate their personal views within mainstream Catholic religion; this is discussed in Chapter 3. A peculiar manifestation of the

²² See Gracia and Ruiz Carnicer (2004: 93-95 and 252), Martín Gaité (2003: 30), and Di Febo (1988: 105).

attitude towards women in the post-war years was the popularity of *La perfecta casada* by Fray Luis de León, which used to be given to women as a wedding gift (Di Febo, 2002: 103); in this book the author instructs his cousin, about to be married, how to become a “perfecta casada”. Although it was first published in 1583, its basic message, that of “amar es soportar”, reflects exactly the attitude and behaviour the regime wished to promote among women. Basing himself on part of Proverbs XXXI, Fray Luis de León wrote a book which is entirely about women, but in which a woman’s voice is completely absent. The patriarchal outlook on life and the duties of men and women he defines reflect the central idea about women in Francoist ideology, according to which women should remain silent and be invisible: “Como son los hombres para lo público, así las mujeres para el encerramiento; y como es de los hombres el hablar y el salir a la luz, así dellas el encerrarse y encubrirse” (1955?: 137). As Carmen Martín Gaité points out (2003: 56), Pilar Primo de Rivera exemplified precisely the kind of perfect housewife Fray Luis de León had described centuries earlier.

Fuertes and Paz, who first met in Madrid through their mutual friend, the poet Carmen Conde, both experience this outlook on women, and refer in their poetry to confinement to their home and the solitude, silence and boredom associated with this. Although they both have to deal with loneliness, their lives and personalities – and therefore the ways in which they handle this theme in their poetry – are very different. Fuertes was born into a working-class family in Madrid in 1917. She experienced the Civil War and the hunger and poverty that followed the war as a young woman. The man she was engaged to died in the war, and later she became aware of her lesbianism; she remained a single woman. For many years she worked in an office during the day and wrote poetry at night. She then became a librarian, and in the early

sixties she spent two years in the USA, teaching Spanish poetry at universities. When she returned to Madrid in 1963, she could dedicate her time almost exclusively to writing poetry and children's books. Paz was born much later, in 1933, in Jerez de la Frontera. She grew up in Madrid, and, unlike Fuertes, had the opportunity to go to university. When she studied *Filosofía y Letras* at the Universidad Complutense, she attended classes of poets such as Alonso, Aleixandre, Diego and Bousoño. She was involved in the Teatro Español Universitario, and, as she once explained during a symposium, it was her task to establish contacts with poets in Madrid for the Cádiz-based poetry journal *Platero*.²³ Her academic studies and the involvement in the literary scene of Madrid came to an abrupt end when she married and moved to Cádiz in 1957. Although this move was a positive choice, it also meant cultural isolation, as the poets she had known in Cádiz had by then moved to Madrid, and, having taken on the role of wife and mother, she became tied to her house.

To some extent, the differences in their circumstances and personal outlook explain how and why their poetry tends to deal with similar themes but in distinct ways. An important point to consider, for instance, is that although both poets start publishing their poetry in book form in the 1950s, Fuertes by then is in her thirties, while Paz publishes her first book when she is eighteen. While for the latter her acute awareness of what it means to leave behind the innocence of childhood and take on the responsibility of becoming an adult, as well as the experience of first love, underlie the poetry of her first two books, *Mara* (1951) and *Los buenos días* (1954),²⁴ to Fuertes her adolescence is a much more distant memory and is always associated with the Civil War and the misery and poverty of the first post-war years. Perhaps the

²³ See Ana-Sofía Pérez-Bustamante Mourier (2000: 16).

²⁴ According to a statement by Paz quoted in Hernández Guerrero (1984: 10), the oldest poems included in *Mara* had been written when she was fourteen. The theme of the loss of childhood innocence in her early poetry is discussed in Chapter 4.

most important difference between the two poets consists of their individual responses to their circumstances. The isolation Paz experiences is a consequence of her own choice; while trying to conform to the traditional roles of wife and mother, she attempts to accept her loneliness and find fulfilment in writing poetry. Also important are the relationships she develops with her husband, her house and the objects it contains, the sea, and God, summarized in the “contigo” in the title of her book *La soledad, contigo* (1960). Fuertes, on the other hand, leads a life that is radically different from the image of women promoted by the regime, and she is constantly aware of being eccentric, on the margins of society, or, as she puts it in the title of one of her poems, “Al borde” (OI: 42). Rather than seeking to conform and accept her position, she expresses rebellion. Of course, the fact that she was a lesbian, living in a repressive society ruled by traditional Catholic morals, must also have greatly affected her sense of being different. However, while she expresses her protest against being marginalized as a single woman and a woman poet, she veils her sexuality in her early poetry; it is not until much later that she feels able to write about her sexual identity.²⁵ As Acereda points out quite rightly in his article “Gloria Fuertes. Del Amor Prohibido a la Marginalidad”, although she hid her sexual identity in her earlier poems, it must nevertheless have greatly contributed to her sense of alienation, and therefore it must have affected her poetry; he draws attention specifically to her use of humour as an antidote to the “dolor” caused by this alienation. The contrast between Fuertes’ rebellion against the outside world and her nonconformity and modernity on the one

²⁵ . In “Del 36 al 46” (*Mujer de verso en pecho*, 48), for instance, she obliquely alludes to her lesbianism:

Juventud antigua amiga
 recortada a mordiscos.
 Peor época.
 Me la pasé amando sin saber amar.

hand, and Paz's attitude of seeking to conform – often characterized by looking for inner sources of strength – and a more traditional outlook on the other, is evident in the different ways in which they deal with similar themes, and in the poetic style they use to express themselves in their poetry of the 1950s and 1960s. Some examples in which they confront their solitude and the confinement of their home will illustrate this point.

Aware of her marginalized, eccentric status – because of her lifestyle, her sexual identity, and also because of the non-traditional kind of poetry she writes – Fuertes tends to respond by seeing herself in the centre of her room, to which she feels confined. Thus, her position in her room symbolizes what Alonso described as the “búsqueda frenética de centro o de amarre” of the “poetas desarraigados”. The poem “Miradme aquí” (OI: 120-21), for instance, opens with the lines:

Miradme aquí,
clavada en una silla,
escribiendo una carta a las palomas

Immobilized in her chair, oppressed by the claustrophobic space of her room, she writes to the pigeons, as her poetry at the time only reaches a very small audience. However, she nevertheless invites her readers to share her experience, and so end her sense of abandonment. The presence of her readers, addressed frequently in her poetry, and the process of writing poetry itself are powerful ways in which she confronts her solitude. While being confined to her room, she watches the world from which she is separated by her window. In one poem, “Ventanas pintadas”,²⁶ she

²⁶ This poem was included in ... *Que estás en la tierra* (1962: 84); Fuertes quotes it as an example of her “autobiografismo irremediable” in her “Prólogo” to *Obras incompletas* (OI: 25-26).

Ya la tarde se pasa como un huevo dormido.
 Ya la célebre mosca corretea indecisa,
 no la sienta el invierno y se da con las cosas.
 ¡Qué alegría produce cuando muere la mosca!
 El viento canta nanas en los cables tendidos,
 en la acacia sin hojas y en los postes helados,
 la luna poco a poco va quedándose muerta,
 su color, como el de todos los muertos, es blanco.
 El tranvía da gritos – lleva doble de carga – ;
 en la esquina hay un hombre que se va hacia los lados,
 dos perros amorosos,
 el verdulero tira naranjas con gusanos;
 mi ventana es un cine. ¡Hay que ver lo que veo!
 Ya vuelvo a estar a oscuras, el día se evapora,
 me duele la cabeza por debajo del pelo,
 debo estar hecha polvo. Mi médico es un cafre,
 ¡cree que voy mejorando por recetarme huevos!

Her exclamation “mi ventana es un cine. ¡Hay que ver lo que veo!” is an ironic reference to how little there is to be seen: the death of a fly, the movement of the cables caused by the wind and a greengrocer sorting his oranges is all that happens during the afternoon, creating a sense of exclusion from the world and boredom which gives her a headache. The comment about the cinema contrasts what she sees through her window with the escapist Hollywood movies, with their display of unattainable prosperity, which were increasingly popular at the time. However, as was the case in the previous example, the window can also represent her poetry, the eyes through which she sees and interprets the world, and which provide her with a means to connect with the world from her isolated position. Like the cinema, Fuertes offers the spectator – in this case the reader of her poetry – an illusion of reality. Boredom as a direct consequence of confinement and exclusion, and how this affects the poet, is also the subject of “Poeta de guardia” (OI: 167), in which she defines her task as that of a poet on night duty. When her wish to be accompanied by a surprise visitor – who

could be anyone from “la portera” to “alguna prostituta” or “algún quinqui fugado” – is not fulfilled, she ends the poem in a tone of resignation:

Y nadie suena, o quema, o hiela o llama
 en esta noche,
 en la que,
 como en casi todas,
 soy poeta de guardia.

The regular rhythm of the first line of this stanza and the staggered phrase in the lines that follow slow down the poem and prepare for the silence at the end; a silence the poet wishes to avoid but also recognizes as a necessity for writing poetry. She confirms this need in the poem “Al calor del silencio se maduran mis versos” (OI: 308), quoted in the epigraph to this chapter. In a way similar to the above stanza, where the staggered phrase has the visual effect of an empty space, this poem is preceded and followed by a silent void, as it consists of only one line, thus emphasizing the antithesis between silence and poetry expressed in the poem. The silence – and therefore solitude – is contrasted with poetry, which fills the void and provides companionship. She confirms this idea in a much later poem, where she says:²⁸

De mi silencio nacen las palabras
 y de mi soledad
 la compañía del poema inesperado.

Another poem in which the poet refers to her room and to silence is “Cuarto de soltera” (OI: 83-84):

²⁸ This poem is included in *Es difícil ser feliz una tarde* (2005a: 26), a collection of previously unpublished poems, written in the 1990s.

Por mi casa sin amo
suena un instrumento que aún no se ha inventado.
Y alguna vez consigo ver a un diablo
con una regadera llena de vino blanco.
De noche, alguien se queja por mi lado.
¡Aves del otro mundo
se vienen a morir a mi tejado!
De madrugada, el silencio es demasiado.
Luego vuelve a sonar el instrumento desafinado.
¡Mi cuarto de soltera está embrujado!
De todas sus esquinas salen llantos
de niños recién manipulados.
Todo esto sucede y otras cosas
en mi casa sin amo.

Again she depicts herself as being at home on her own. However, in this case she is by no means alone, and the creatures that surround her ensure that she is far from being bored. Although it is possible that this poem is only the expression of a specific mood, it can also be read as a reflection on the process of writing poetry and the imaginative power this involves, in the circumstances experienced by the poet. When she starts writing, the silence is replaced with the music from an instrument that is still to be invented, which is her poetry, and her imagination fills the room with creatures expressing her mood. While the “diablo” serving wine is an exuberant, cheerful character – she frequently refers to drinking wine in her poetry – writing itself is a painful process, hence the wailing sound and the “llantos” of the “niños”, which could be a reference to the poems she has just written, and are therefore “recién manipulados”. The expression of this mood in poetry that shuns traditional conventions makes it sound like an “instrumento desafinado”. Because of the absence of a patriarchal “amo”, her room – her creative space – can be unruly and become “embrujado”. An important element of this poem, and a recurring characteristic in her poetry, is the transgression of the boundaries of reality: in this poem she looks

through the “ventanas pintadas” to find an alternative reality that liberates her from the rigid limits imposed by the lonely life that surrounds her. Aware of her confinement, then, Fuertes re-creates the world according to her own perception and inclination. Silence plays an ambivalent role in this respect, as it is directly linked to her solitude, but also provides the conditions for writing poetry.

Like Fuertes, Paz addresses the solitude associated with the confinement to her home in her poetry. After her move to Cádiz, such solitude and the question of how to deal with this becomes an important theme in her work. In *La soledad, contigo* in particular, she describes the positive experience of being married and becoming a mother, but also a sense of loneliness and sadness as a consequence of her isolated life. In “La casa” (37-38) she considers the significance of her house. Interestingly, while Fuertes, rebelling against her situation, usually does so from the centre of the confined space of her room, Paz, trying to accept her house, contemplates it from a more distant perspective. In the first part of the poem, she contrasts the house’s inanimate state with herself as a conscious being:

La casa es como un pájaro
prisionero en sí mismo,
que no medirá nunca
la longitud del trino.
Encarcelada ella
que no yo, pues la habito
conociéndola, y pongo
mi cuidado y mi tino
en algo que no sabe
ni sabrá de mi cuido.
¿No me siente por dentro
removerme, lo mismo
que se siente en la entraña
la presencia del hijo?
Me ignoran sus cristales,
no nos sienten los vidrios
tras los cuales luchamos
contra el mar y sus ruidos.

No sabe que en sus muros
 crece el amor, que hay sitio
 para soñar, que hay mundos
 y faros escondidos.
 Ignora de qué modo
 la nombro y la bendigo.

It is the house rather than she herself that is imprisoned, as the house's perception is limited to its state of being an object while she, as a conscious being, is able to assign a specific meaning to it and associate it with what is important in her life. While the house "no sabe", "no siente" and "ignora", she knows it, looks after it, and is aware of the love and dreams of herself and the others inhabiting the house. Being a young mother, she also compares the space of the house with the protective space of the womb holding an unborn child. As a consequence of the house's ignorance, it will never be able to sing,²⁹ whereas she, as a perceptive, conscious person, has the gift of poetry, which, in this poem, enables her to conclude that she can accept her life as it is: addressing the house, she concludes, "¡Qué inevitable y fácil / la soledad, contigo!" In the poem that follows, "Mundo nuevo" (39-40), she is therefore able to define her new world as a limited, but nevertheless inspiring world, where she will continue to find poetic inspiration: "un reducido mundo / para cantar: Es todo." She further explores the idea of describing the associations evoked in her mind by the everyday objects that surround her in "La alacena" (41-43). Opening the door of her larder, she is engulfed by the fragrance of the herbs and spices inside:

Cada mañana abro la puerta
 de la alacena, y se derrama
 la gran marea contenida
 de sus efímeras fragancias.
 Del rojo labio de las orzas

²⁹ The significance of references to birds and birdsong in Paz's poetry is discussed in Chapter 3.

como del borde de una playa
 hasta mí llega el oleaje
 que el especiero me adelanta.

The sensory encounter with the spices in their jars and the associations they evoke change her daily task of preparing food into an experience that reminds her of the beach and the waves rolling in. Some of the objects in the larder described in the poem are given human qualities; the garlic bulbs, for instance, are “bufones y gibosos”, the parsley is “altivo”, and the nutmeg is “irascible”. Some of the larder’s inhabitants are compared to nuns or friars who, like her, live a cloistered, isolated life, as is the case with the peppers:

Encapuchados, los pimientos,
 frailucos tristes sin compañía,
 buscan retiro entre las sombras
 que los rincones les deparan.³⁰

Like Fuertes, she creates an alternative reality; at the beginning of the poem, this temporarily removes her from the confinement of her home and daily chores to the freedom represented by the sea,³¹ while the humanized spices, herbs and vegetables become her companions, and therefore become “ingredientes de la esperanza”, as she calls them towards the end of the poem.

As is evident in “La casa” and “La alacena”, objects play an important part in Paz’s work and in her perception of life. She later (1964: 1) confirmed that “no hay objeto en la creación que no pueda ser trascendido e incorporado al universo de la

³⁰ The original text in *La soledad, contigo* has “frailucos triste sin compañía”, an error which has been corrected in *Ópera lecta* and other anthologies in which the poem occurs. Wherever the original version of a poem contains an obvious typing error such as this one or incorrect accents, the corrected version will be quoted in the text.

³¹ The role of the sea as a symbol of freedom, thus representing the opposite of her own confinement, is discussed in Chapter 4.

poesía”, which is one of the main premises of her essay *La mujer y la poesía de lo cotidiano*, based on a talk she gave in the Ateneo in Madrid in 1964. In the introduction to this essay she talks about the conflict she perceives in past women poets in their perception of everyday objects and the domestic reality that surrounded them, as such objects were representative of a hostile space, an “espacio en el que estaban confinadas, reducidas”, and the domestic environment was perceived as “ese enemigo cotidiano que estorbaba el estudio y la dedicación a más altas tareas” (7). According to her, once women poets are able to accept the prevalence of the domestic space in their lives, they are in a privileged position to explore in poetry the importance of objects, which represent substance and meaning in life. Therefore the home, and the solitude associated with this, is not only a space of confinement, but also a source of illumination: “El tema de la soledad, del abandono, del recuerdo, produce en las palabras sencillas y cotidianas sobre las que desliza una chispa reveladora, un fuego iluminador, cual dos materias cuya fricción provocase la hoguera” (1). In spite of the suffering such loneliness involves, she thus actively seeks out the solitude of the home as a place of refuge and a source of poetic inspiration, as the “frailucos” do in “La alacena” when they “buscan retiro entre las sombras / que los rincones les deparan”. She acknowledges that introspection can provide the inspiration to write poetry, which is a central theme of *Del abreviado mar* (1957), and is also referred to in the epigraph to this chapter.³² Like Fuertes, she recognizes silence and solitude as requirements for creating an environment where she can write poetry, but while the former’s acceptance seems much more reluctant, Paz regards the home as an environment specifically suitable for writing poetry as it surrounds the poet with the objects that bring inspiration and provides the quiet that facilitates

³² The lines quoted in the epigraph are from “Escribo a un amigo” (*Los buenos días*, 13-14).

reflection. An early poem that deals with the important role of silence is “Recomiendo silencio” (*Los buenos días*, 23-24). It begins with a list of people who speak without thinking, such as “los enfermos de palabra”, “los borrachos de vinagre, / de espuma y bilis angustiada,” and therefore say nothing meaningful and hurt others with their words. It concludes by saying:

a todos esos y muchos más, recomiendo el mayor silencio.

Que no se oigan, que no se escuchen, que los demás están
pensando,
llorando, riendo, creciendo tristes o alegres sobre
la vida: siendo.

Silence here is seen as a condition for the development of the inner self, without which a poet cannot produce poetry, which consists of the process described in the last three lines.

However, although her aim is to embrace the solitude that surrounds her and accept it as a positive aspect of her role as a housewife living in a provincial town, some of the poems in *La soledad, contigo* and *Violencia inmóvil* also describe the anguish caused by the loneliness and boredom she experiences, as is expressed in “Reprocho a las cosas que le entretienen” (*Violencia inmóvil*, 49-50), where she sees herself as condemned to a life spent waiting for a husband who goes out to work and plays a full part in society. Her awareness of objects here inspires her to address the things important in her husband’s life as personified “cosas”:

(¡Ay, qué grandes debéis ser
que así me lo entretenéis!)

Altas de talla, bien plantadas,
y cien veces aborrecidas,

cuando se espera de esta forma
desesperada y decidida.
¿Con qué hebras tejéis los hilos
que me lo ensartan y desvían,
hurdidoras de mi coraje,
y robadoras en porfía?
¿Por qué caminos o qué atajos,
agazapadas, repentinas,
le dais el alto, santo y seña,
paso le dais, para que os siga?
¡Si yo no puedo en la distancia
ganar batallas ni partidas,
enfrentarme con vuestros aires,
regatearos con mi risa,
reclamaros con mi presencia
su necesaria compañía!

(¡Ay, qué blancas debéis ser
que así me lo entretenéis!)
Cuando llegue no habrá palabras,
razón que valga y que me asista,
vendrá cansado y solitario
con la frente desvanecida
y – a tres cuartas el corazón,
achicada y medio escondida –
yo iré quitándole de en medio
toda la carga de este día,
porque no note mi cansancio
ni se le acerque mi ceniza:
los desperdicios de mis sueños,
los retales de mi alegría,
las cortezas de aburrimiento
y el agua muda que se agría.

A nadie le dolerá el aire,
a nadie pesará este día...
¡Y he de llevar el plomo oscuro
de su memoria mientras viva,
el recuerdo de algunas horas
en las que todo enmudecía,
en las que todo fue silencio,
latir de alas oprimidas,
metal de espera por las manos,
por las sienes y las rodillas!
Nadie sabrá. Nadie. Ni él mismo.
Uno de tantos... Sólo un día...
Todo perdió su sal, su vez...
(¡Ay, qué grandes debéis ser
que así me lo entretenéis!)

By ascribing feminine qualities to the “cosas” she addresses – they are “altas de talla”, “bien plantadas” and “blancas” – she underlines the jealousy she feels towards the things that fill her husband’s life and in which she has no share. On the contrary: she feels excluded from them, as she does not understand the code they use to allure him, and she cannot hold her own and claim his attention because of the distance that separates her from his world. All she can do is make sure that she does not show her dissatisfaction, which would only alienate him even further, as he is already a stranger, a “solitario / con la frente desvanecida”, when he comes home and enters her separate, secluded world. While she develops an attitude of self-denial, refusing to give in to her negative feelings, she also denies the outside world the intimacy of her feelings, insisting that no one will ever find out how bad she has felt this particular day. This is an interesting comment, because she entrusts her feelings to the poem, which means that both the poem and the implied reader become her accomplices. However, although she feels unhappy, she does not fall into the trap of sentimentalism or self-pity, as is evident from her determination in the final stanza, and the ironic tone with which she addresses the “cosas” in the refrain. Instead, she is able to exploit the special nature of poetry and poetic language in order to enhance her sense of empowerment as an individual in charge of her own life.

Obviously, the entire discussion of Fuertes and Paz’s poetry so far has been based on the understanding that their work has a strong autobiographical element: the assumption that the poetic persona coincides with the author and that the events and views expressed in the poems are directly related to the poets themselves. In the case of both writers, a link can be established between poet and speaker. Judging by Fuertes’s own comments in this respect and by those of literary critics, many of whom

knew her personally, there can be little doubt that her work is intentionally autobiographical. She frequently refers in her poetry to the facts of her life, such as the memory of the Civil War, the poverty of her family, the early death of her mother and her failed relationships, and by reading her work we acquire a clear picture of her personality. As Sherno (2001: 5) says: “she claims that all of her poetry is autobiographical and, in fact, her image invades our imagination with such wealth of detail that the reader comes to feel her as a real presence.” According to González Rodas (2004: 33), “una característica primordial de la obra de Gloria es el elemento autobiográfico; para conocer su vida basta leer su obra.” Cano claims in *Ínsula* (1969: 8) that “conocer su poesía es conocerla a ella en persona, porque la poesía de Gloria Fuertes es fiel reflejo de ella misma”, and later (1991: 11) he says that “Gloria Fuertes es una figura humana tan inseparable de su poesía que no se la concibe sino escribiendo versos y cuentos.” As early as in the introduction to her first poetry collection, *Isla ignorada*, Fuertes confirms: “Mi poesía recuerda y se parece a mí” (7), and we saw above that she writes about her “autobiografismo irremediable” in her “Prólogo” to *Obras incompletas*. Some of the titles of her poems also suggest her autobiographical intention: *Antología y Poemas del suburbio* starts with “Nota biográfica” (OI: 41-42), and the first poem of *Aconsejo beber hilo* is called “Autobiografía”. Her later work, collected in *Historia de Gloria* – a title which in itself suggests an autobiographical work³³ – and *Mujer de verso en pecho*, contain

³³ On the title page (*Historia de Gloria*, 55), the title is followed by the comment

No me importa que todos os deis cuenta
de que esto que os cuento
me ha sucedido.

G.F.

The first poem, “Prologuillo”, ends with the line “Esto no es un libro, es una mujer” (*Historia de Gloria*, 57), which is reminiscent of Walt Whitman’s lines “Camerado, this is no book, /Who touches this touches a man” from the last poem, “So long!”, of *Leaves of Grass* (1915: 262).

many poems she called “autobios”. She also frequently includes her own name in her poems, as is the case in “Cuando yo muera” in *Isla ignorada*, where she says “cuando yo muera, / llamarme sólo Gloria / o llamarme poeta”. “Nota biográfica” opens with the lines “Gloria Fuertes nació en Madrid / a los dos días de edad”, and the first poem in *Sola en la sala* is “Carta explicatoria de Gloria” (OI: 293-94). This autobiographical element, in combination with her recognizable, individual style, reflects her approach to poetry as a means of defining herself. It was important to her that her poetic style did not resemble that of any other poet or movement, and she repeatedly claimed that she worked independently and that she had not been influenced by anyone. In *Obras incompletas*, for instance, she says: “Empecé a escribir como hablaba, así nació mi propio estilo, mi personal lenguaje. [...] Aunque después, como es lógico, leí y leo poetas, a mí no hay quien me influya, así que, como en 1934, sigo siendo huérfana e independiente” (OI: 28-29).³⁴ Paz, when comparing Fuertes’s style with her own, said that “Gloria se tiró las muletas de su formación clásica [...] mientras yo la conservé, porque me encantaba” (16-10-05). Fuertes describes her need for artistic independence in terms of the confinement imposed by those in power, in this case the intellectual authorities: “Ahora una minoría vendrá a catalogarme, a ‘etiquetarme’ o a encasillarme literaria o sociológicamente; la etiqueta se me desprenderá con el sudor de mis versos, y si me encasillan, me escapo” (OI: 33). Although Paz’s work is also self-referential, in general, rather than foregrounding the facts and direct experiences of her personal life, she uses her poetry to explore her own response to such facts, which tend to remain in the background, and serve as a basis for this process of exploration. In *Del abreviado mar*, for

³⁴ In spite of her originality, such complete absence of influence is, of course, impossible; see, for instance, the comment about her participation in the experiment of the *postistas* in footnote 8. Her explicit claim seems to confirm Bloom’s theory about the anxiety of influence he perceives in male poets.

instance, she examines the link between solitude and inspiration, but she never refers to the reason why the theme of solitude is so relevant at that point in her life, which is her decision to move to Cádiz. When asked about the autobiographical aspect of her poetry, she said that, to her, poetry is “una traducción de la experiencia vital”, adding that “para mí, fabular es escribir prosa, y lo paso muy bien [...]”.³⁵ Pero el poema es reflejo real de la vida que voy viviendo, por dentro y por fuera” (18-10-05).

It is interesting how the two poets, in spite of the differences in their attitudes towards poetry, hold comparable views on the link between personal and universal experience, and the role of autobiographical poetry in this respect. Fuertes says (OI: 22-23):

Mi obra, en general, es muy autobiográfica, reconozco que soy muy “yoísta”, que soy muy “glorista”. Lo que a mí me sucedió, sucede o sucederá, es lo que ha sucedido al pueblo, es lo que ha ocurrido a todos, y el poeta sabe, más o menos, mejor o peor, contarlo, necesita decirlo, porque necesitáis que lo digamos.

The justification Paz gives for the self-referential aspect of her work is very similar (Paz and Pemán, 1964: 1):

El poeta se pone por delante no para mostrarse, no en una exaltación, en un énfasis de individualidad, sino como un símbolo. Cuando abre sus ojos a la noche y habla de sí, lo hace para evitarle al no poeta la molestia de expresar un sentimiento con déficit de belleza. El habla por los que callan. Su “yo”, su “me”, son los de todos los otros.

³⁵ In the 1970s she started writing and publishing short stories, which have been collected in *Historias bélicas* (2004).

While both write poetry of an autobiographical nature, which means that their work provides them with a tool to develop their own identity and break free from the silence imposed on them as women by society, they also see it as their task to use their poetic gift to allow the reader to undergo the same process.

Although the poets can be identified with the poetic personae in their work and there is a clear link between their poetry and the events of their lives, it is important to consider the problematic nature of autobiography, as it is always subjective and selective. The poets only show us what they want to show us, and they may use their writing to develop an idea or express a mood and invent a suitable event to illustrate this. As we have already seen, both poets use their poetry to some extent to escape from reality and create an alternative truth. Regarding poetry as autobiography is particularly problematic, as the creative possibilities of poetic diction and the short format of lyric poetry mean that the author is not obliged to produce a cohesive, lineal text. Sherno (2001: 5) says about Fuertes's poetry in this respect: "Gloria Fuertes's considerations of self and her exercises in self-inscription pose surprising challenges. For instance, the 'I' that appears in her work does not represent a unified totality but rather a web of multiple and contradictory personae."³⁶ In fact, Fuertes frequently contradicts herself, as what she says often depends on the mood rather than the opinion or facts she wishes to communicate. Therefore, rather than being presented with an autobiographical account of their lives, the reader

³⁶ See Chapter 1, "Autobiography and Art", in Sherno's book *Weaving the World: The Poetry of Gloria Fuertes* for a more elaborate discussion of the autobiographical element in Fuertes's poetry. Fuertes not only creates contradictory personae in her work, but she also tends to give conflicting information about the facts of her life. As a result, some sources give 1917 (the correct year) as her year of birth, others 1918, and some even claim that she was born in 1920. According to Folkart, Fuertes's deliberate use of different personae can be linked to her refusal to accept the absolute subject defined by patriarchal society: "By rejecting this stable voice, her poetry violates the patriarchal concept of the unified subject. Indeed, she splits the patriarchally-constructed subject position of the poet – and especially the *female* poet – into a plethora of selves. With this fragmentation of pre-determined subjectivity, Fuertes's texts question, ironize and undermine the notion of what a woman poet should do and be in Franco's Spain" (2000: 787; italics in original).

witnesses a process of self-discovery, as both poets use their poetry as a means to explore and also create their own identity. Bearing in mind the process of fictionalization of their own lives involved in the development of their poetic personae in their work, I will nevertheless assume that the speaker can generally be identified as the poet, and will therefore tend to refer to “the poet” rather than “the speaker”.

While the idea of self-definition through writing and the sense of liberation this involves – fundamental to the poetry of both poets – is an important theme within feminist criticism, it is also relevant within the general context of poetry written in post-war Spain. In spite of the fact that much poetry in the decades following the Civil War was supposedly “social” and described feelings experienced collectively by the working classes, most poets who did not write official poetry also produced very personal, autobiographical work in which they explored their own responses to the traumatic experience of the war and the totalitarian – and therefore non-individualistic – Franco regime. In addition to the need poets felt to express their own identity, another reason why much poetry had an autobiographical aspect was the prevailing notion that poetry should be a testimony of the poet’s life at a specific time in history, an idea discussed by, for instance, Cano (1974b: 13) and Castellet (1966: 110), and which echoes Ortega y Gasset’s motto “Yo soy yo y mi circunstancia” and Antonio Machado’s notion, adapted by Vicente Aleixandre, of the dialogue between a man and his time.³⁷ The experience of the Civil War, and the trauma of surviving while others had died, was an important theme in such poetry. The Civil War is also a recurring

³⁷ In a lecture on post-war poetry Aleixandre gave in 1955 he confirmed: “El tema esencial de la poesía en nuestros días, con proyección mucho más directa que en épocas anteriores, es el cántico inmediato de la vida humana en su dimensión histórica” (quoted in Ayuso, 1998: 27). Ortega y Gasset refers to his motto in, for instance, “Unas lecciones de metafísica”, published in *Revista de Occidente* in 1981, where he says: “Nuestro ser consiste por lo pronto en tener que estar en la circunstancia. De ahí que la ocupación con nuestro ser, el hacernos cuestión de él, lleva consigo el hacernos cuestión de lo que nos rodea y envuelve” (quoted in Blasco, 2005: 28).

subject in Fuertes's poetry. In an interview with Núñez (1969: 3) she said about the impact of the Civil War:

Se me juntó el primer amor, profundamente sentido, con el follón de la guerra civil. [...] De la exaltación del amor y de la profunda tristeza de los bombardeos, de la guerra y de la muerte, de ese enorme lío, nació el impulso poético. Sin la guerra civil, sobre todo, quizá no hubiese escrito poemas nunca; o los habría escrito, pero más tarde.³⁸

Like Fuertes, many other post-war poets included their own name in their work to accentuate its autobiographical nature and the author's identity. Max Aub, referring to this, says: "Todos se llaman, se dicen, se nombran – tal vez para asegurar su permanencia, defensa del olvido. Aquí estoy, aquí estuve, yo fui – parecen decir al modo de los prisioneros en las paredes de sus cárceles" (1957: 88-89). They inscribe themselves in their work to uphold their identity within the anonymous prison represented by the regime. Fuertes, when commenting on the opening line "Gloria Fuertes nació en Madrid" of "Nota biográfica" in *Obras incompletas* (24) says:

¿Por qué como una instancia empezar un poema con mi nombre? En los primeros años de nuestra postguerra, al palpamos vivos a pesar y todavía, necesitábamos gritar – como todo superviviente – que estábamos aquí, que nos llamábamos así, que sentíamos de aquella manera. Por aquel entonces, sin ponernos de acuerdo, Blas de Otero, Celaya, Hierro, Alcántara [...], escribíamos poemas declarando incluso nuestra filiación, dirección y profesión para llamar la atención a los transeúntes que luego iban o no a pasear por nuestras páginas.

³⁸ The publishing house Media Vaca has published a selection of Fuertes's poems about the Civil War and war in general – which invariably have a strong anti-war message – in *Garra de la Guerra*, with illustrations by Sean Mackaoui (2002).

An example from José Hierro's early poetry, in which the poet includes his name and demonstrates the despondent mood characteristic of the 1940s, is the following stanza from "Fe de vida" (2002: 107-08; first published in *Alegría*, 1947):

Pero estoy aquí. Me muevo,
vivo. Me llamo José
Hierro. Alegría. (Alegría
que está caída a mis pies.)
Nada en orden. Todo roto,
a punto de ya no ser.

Fuertes, in addition to including her name in many of her poems to emphasize the autobiographical element, also frequently exploits both her first and her last name to add a humorous element to such poems. A later poem where she uses this procedure, enabling her to sum up several aspects of her personality – her down-to-earth attitude, her directness, and her sense of humour – in two lines, is "La gloria" (*Historia de Gloria*, 68): "La gloria, no la busco, / ya la tengo en mi nombre."

The discussion of the importance of self-definition through writing in feminist criticism goes back to what early feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir and Virginia Woolf have said about women's position in relation to men, and their lack of an autonomously defined identity. The main argument in De Beauvoir's *Le deuxième sexe* (1949) is that men through the ages have created the myth of woman as "the Other" as an inferior reflection of themselves, for the purpose of patriarchal self-justification. According to her, women are constructed according to a model, and from an early age they are taught to be passive and docile, so that men can persevere in their role of superiority. Therefore, woman as an inferior being is a product of society, and not of nature (1976, II: 654):

[...] dans la collectivité humaine rien n'est naturel et [...] entre autres la femme est un produit élaboré par la civilisation [...]. La femme n'est définie ni par ses hormones ni par de mystérieux instincts mais par la manière dont elle ressaisit, à travers les consciences étrangères, son corps et son rapport au monde [...].³⁹

As woman is the product of the male gaze, she does not have her own identity.

Although there is no specific reference to Spain in her book, the whole idea that women are a construct, based on a model which they should aspire to, is peculiarly relevant to post-war Spain. Following the period of the Second Republic and the Civil War, during which women had much more freedom and took over many tasks from men, the Franco regime took away this freedom and introduced an ideology based on what Caballé refers to as “la tiranía de la domesticidad” (2004: 22) and which, as we have seen, constructed a model that made use of specific examples such as that of the figure of Pilar Primo de Rivera and the perfect wife promoted in Fray Luis de León’s book.⁴⁰ Virginia Woolf had already formulated similar ideas about the absence of woman’s autonomous identity in *A Room of One’s Own*. When talking about women represented in fiction written by men, she says that “almost without exception [women] are shown in their relation to men”, which accounts only for a very small part of a woman’s life (1929: 124). She also argues that men regard women as inferior in order to feel more confident about themselves: “Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting

³⁹ De Beauvoir’s view on women is based on one of the central claims of existentialist philosophy, which is that all values are relative and that there is no such thing as human nature. Her conclusion is therefore that the position of women can change if the myth of the Other is dispelled and both men and women are taught from an early age that they are equal. Her elaboration of woman as a cultural product rather than a biological essence contributed to the distinction between gender (based on culture) and sex (based on biology) in later feminist theories.

⁴⁰ However, while *La perfecta casada* was popular in the 1940s and 1950s, the Spanish translation of *Le deuxième sexe* was well-read – clandestinely, of course – among young women in the 1960s. According to Carmen Martín Gaité (2003: 217), “a principios de la década de los sesenta, toda jovencita que se tildara de moderna devoraba la traducción española de [...] *El segundo sexo*.”

the figure of man twice its natural size” (53). Gilbert and Gubar refer to the same image of the looking-glass, and to De Beauvoir’s definition of woman as “object” and the need for her to become “subject” in Part I, “Toward a Feminist Poetics”, of *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), a book which deals primarily with nineteenth-century female novelists, but in many respects is relevant to women’s writing in post-war Spain. According to them, the ideal woman is a passive angel with no story – the equivalent of De Beauvoir’s “object”. To overcome her subordinate position, she has to start writing her own story, and so find her true self. Hence the importance assigned to autobiography and self-referential writing as a process of self-definition – becoming subject rather than object – in women’s writing and feminist criticism, and its particular relevance within the social context of Spain in the Franco years.

Although women’s writing with an autobiographical element can involve the reader in a process of liberation and self-discovery experienced by the author, as is the case in Fuertes and Paz’s work, autobiographical poetry written by women in post-war Spain was often still associated with a specifically “feminine” kind of writing which, rather than aiming to emancipate women, only confirmed their passive role. De Beauvoir, talking about this kind of writing by women, points out that it fails to communicate with the reader: “l’amateur, au lieu de saisir les mots comme un rapport inter-individuel, un appel à l’autre, y voit la révélation directe de sa sensibilité” (1976, II: 630-31); such poetry only serves as an adornment of a woman’s life and lacks self-criticism. Fanny Rubio, when discussing poetry by women written in the 1940s, claims that such poetry was generally disconnected from the situation of poetry at the time,⁴¹ as most women did not take their poetry seriously and regarded writing as a mere accomplishment. Discussing women poets who had answered a questionnaire in

⁴¹ In saying so, she obviously implies that this “situation” is determined by male poets.

the journal *La Estafeta Literaria* in 1944, she says that “la mayor parte de ellas consideran el quehacer poético como algo delicado y femenino, recreo del espíritu y cultivo virtuosista de la forma” (2003b: 90). The poetry included in Carmen Conde’s anthology *Poesía femenina española (1939-1950)* shows that some women poets writing during that period did indeed still regard poetry as a feminine accomplishment rather than a form of creative expression. However, I would argue that there are a number of exceptions, such as Ángela Figuera Aymerich, Susanna March, Alfonsa de la Torre, Concha Zardoya and Carmen Conde, as well as Fuertes and Paz. Another point that is interesting to note is that some of the poems included are genuine expressions of women’s experience, but rather than critically considering the role of women they confirm the passive, subservient attitude of women promoted by the regime. An example of such conformist poetry is “La última mujer” by María Beneyto (1967: 59-62), as it deals with exactly the same subject matter as Paz’s “Reprocho a las cosas que le entretienen”: the dutiful wife who welcomes her tired husband home after a day’s work. In Beneyto’s poem, however, there is no sign of dissatisfaction, anger or jealousy; instead, she affirms her role as the subordinate, silent, enduring housewife, who glorifies her tasks of giving her husband children – saying that she perpetuates him, not her – her housework, and pleasing her husband. The first and third stanzas of this long poem define how she sees her husband and herself:

Hombre. Heme aquí ya en la hora vespertina
a tu lado de siempre. En tu ladera,
hombre cansado de aguantar los siglos
en tus dos lomos de varón consciente.

[...]

Soy sólo una mujer que nada sabe
fuera de ver por la ventana el mundo.
La mujer silenciosa que se desliza leve,

que no pesa, ni invade, ni importuna.

While her husband is the active person, the “varón consciente” who takes part in the public life that has been dominated by men for centuries, she confirms with a certain degree of pride that she is the passive one, who, unlike Fuertes and Paz, is happy to limit her view of the world to what is visible from her window. She is silent, and tries to be invisible in order to make sure that she does not hinder her tired husband.⁴² Such writing continues the non-challenging, conformist poetry produced by many of the drawing-room “poetisas” of the nineteenth century,⁴³ and many women therefore came to consider the word “poetisa”, used generally to refer to post-war women poets, as a pejorative term, associated with this kind of writing. Fuertes, when asked to give her opinion about the word “poetisa” (Clano, 1965), said: “Lo que ocurre es que está desprestigiado el nombre de poetisa por esa serie de histéricas que solamente ven el mundo por un agujero. ¡Pobrecitas!” She points out her objections to being called a “poetisa” in the poem “¡Hago versos, señores!” (OI: 137), a poem in which she addresses a male audience. Although she ironically claims that what she does is “hacer versos”, which evokes the image of the “poetisa” fabricating poetry as an accomplishment rather than that of a poet involved in a creative process, she prefers

⁴² Beneyto did not limit herself to writing this kind of poetry; she also wrote poems that show her concern about poverty and the social situation. Leopoldo de Luis included some of her poems in his anthology *Poesía social española contemporánea*.

⁴³ A notable exception is, of course, Rosalía de Castro, who wrote about contemporary women poets (1995: 126-27):

Daquelas que cantan as pombas i as frores,
 todos dín que teñen alma de muller.
 Pois eu que n'as canto, Virxe da Paloma,
 ¡ai! ¿de qué a teréi?

[De aquellas que cantan palomas y flores / dicen que tienen alma de mujer. / Mas yo que no las canto, Virgen mía, / ¿de qué, ay, la tendré?]

not to be referred to as such. The third line leaves no doubt about the fact that she distances herself from the sweet, docile image associated with the “poetisa”:

Hago versos, señores, hago versos,
pero no me gusta que me llamen poetisa,
me gusta el vino como a los albañiles
[...]

One important way in which the work of Fuentes and Paz is different from the kind of poetry described above is that it contains no sentimentalism. Although both experience a sense of loneliness and imprisonment within their situation, which could easily lead to a sense of self-pity, they find other ways to express such feelings: Fuentes often employs self-irony and humour to distance herself from any sentimentalism, while Paz seeks to accept her situation by looking for a more abstract meaning in life; her poetry of the 1950s and 1960s is therefore characterized by the attempt to define her intuitive response to such abstract truth. Although their autobiographical context is present in their work, they both also deal with universal themes and a broader reality, and Fuentes’s poetry is particularly concerned with social injustice. Another way in which their work is different from the poetry described above is that they both have a questioning mind and a challenging attitude, which is completely absent, for instance, in Beneyto’s poem, in which the attitude described towards the husband is one of unconditional idolization, while the wife not only accepts but even celebrates her own inferiority. The female trait of submission advocated at the time is also absent from their work: Fuentes rebels against the limitations imposed on her by the socio-political context, while Paz speaks of her dissatisfaction and, as we shall see, initially rebels against her vocation as a poet and against God.

Because of their defiant, non-sentimental, individualistic attitude, which, as we have seen, differs considerably from the stereotypical ideas about women and women poets in post-war Spain, both were thought to have a style that showed characteristics of a specifically masculine mode of writing. According to Francisco Nieva, Fuertes was “anexionada” by the *postistas* because she was so modern and so unlike the way the traditional “poetisas” dressed, walked and, of course, wrote poetry. Rather than a “maestría repipi” she was “un compañero” in their poetic adventure (2003: 19). González Muela, in *La nueva poesía española* describes her as a “poetisa (odia el término) con una enorme dosis de apasionamiento y entrega, pero con un rigor masculino por limar el sentimiento, o purificarlo, no explotarlo” (1973: 13). Later, however, he includes a statement which stereotypes her as a typical woman after all, saying that “no tiene la dureza viril de un Cernuda o un Ángel González, que anatematizan los recuerdos, sino que con debilidad femenina abre la puerta a la esperanza, aunque cueste dolor” (18). Although it is arguable, of course, whether “abrir la puerta a la esperanza” is a sign of “debilidad femenina”, many of Fuertes’s poems do aim to give hope, and occasionally she therefore talks in this respect about the poet’s healing powers. In “Que quien me cate se cure” (OI: 270), for instance, she says:

quiero ser quitadolores,

[...]

ser una aspirina inmensa

– que quien me cate se cure –

Instead of Celaya's "arma cargada de futuro", she administers comforting and curative poems to lonely people.⁴⁴ Paz, in spite of her more traditional outlook on life, was also thought to be an atypical woman poet, because of her defiant attitude and because of the mature insight she revealed in the poetry written when she was still very young. Her first poetry collection opens with the poem "Dónde voy yo, Dios mío" (*Mara*, 15-16), in which she appears to stand up against her vocation as a poet, recognizing that the intense process of writing poetry, associated closely with her perception of the divine, will weigh her down and put an end to the carefree life that seems appealing, while also modestly acknowledging that others would probably be better writers. Addressing both the divine and poetic inspiration, she says:

Si quieres descansar, descansa en otros,
 apoya Tu palabra en otras bocas
 que te dirán mejor. Yo quiero ir
 a solas por el campo, sin motivos,
 sin lazos y sin cosas. Vete ya,
 no soy yo quien debiera sostenerte.
 Tu peso duele mucho, y es muy grande
 Tu fatiga de Dios sobre mi cuerpo.

She thus writes a poem which is a far cry from what a contemporary young woman might be expected to say about God and writing poetry. The book's title, *Mara*, is also significant in this respect. As she explains in an epigraph, it comes from the biblical book Ruth, in which the woman Naomi, after a life of hardship, says she no longer wishes to use that name, as it means "pleasant", or, according to Paz's epigraph, "hermosa", but Marah, which means "bitter". Bitterness and other negative emotions as a consequence of loss of childhood innocence is one of the themes dealt with in the

⁴⁴ She makes a more direct reference to Celaya's poem in "Poética" (*Historia de Gloria*, 313), where she says: "La poesía no debe ser un arma, / debe ser un abrazo".

book. Juan Ramón Jiménez was very impressed with *Mara*, and in particular with the first poem, referring to it twice during his conversations with Ricardo Gullón,⁴⁵ and he even wrote to the poet José María Pemán to ask whether the book had really been written by an eighteen-year-old woman, or if her name was the pseudonym of a male poet.⁴⁶ López Anglada (1965: 264) also acknowledged the strength – apparently not characteristic of women – of her poetic voice. Referring to the sonnets “Salida y entrada de la catedral” from *Los buenos días* (37-38),⁴⁷ he mentions “la valentía, la autenticidad con que una mujer se enfrentaba con el problema humano-religioso, la audacia de su pensamiento, la claridad de su expresión.”

An argument from feminist criticism which is particularly relevant to Fuertes’s poetry is the suggestion that the marginalization of female art and women’s quest to find their own voice, which are closely linked to the traditional view of women as passive, dependent objects and their desire to become active, independent subjects, may lead to expressions of madness. According to this theory, which is one of the themes around which Gilbert and Gubar structure their argument in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, women writers, up to the twentieth century, were considered to be mad as they deviated from the norm, and also experienced a sense of madness because of their awareness of being different. Virginia Woolf, speculating about gifted women writers in the sixteenth century in *A Room of One’s Own*, comments (1929: 75):

It needs little skill in psychology to be sure that a highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity to a certainty.

⁴⁵ He refers to it as “un poema excelente, magnífico, sobre Dios” and “una joya” (Gullón, 1958: 116, 151). The main reason he gives for his enthusiasm is the poem’s authenticity and originality.

⁴⁶ See Hernández Guerrero (1984: 12-13). In fact, Juan Ramón Jiménez and Paz briefly maintained a correspondence; the former’s letters to Paz are included in his *Cartas: Antología* (1992: 362-63).

⁴⁷ These poems are discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

She concludes: “Had she survived, whatever she had written would have been twisted and deformed, issuing from a strained and morbid imagination.” Fuertes’s experience may not have been quite so extreme, but she was clearly aware of being regarded as different – and, therefore, often mad – because of her poetry. In “Nací en una buhardilla” (OI: 58), where she talks about her childhood, she says that her mother accused her of being mad because she wrote poetry:

Cuando empecé a entrenarme en el hilo del llanto,
mi madre repetía. – Te pareces al tío,
qué tonterías dices y qué locuras haces.

There are many examples of what Woolf calls “twisted and deformed” writing in her poetry, and critics such as Wilcox (in *Women Poets of Spain, 1860-1990*, which has a chapter on Fuertes) and Sherno comment on the aspect of madness in her poetry, referring to Gilbert and Gubar’s argument. Many examples of such writing can be found in *Aconsejo beber hilo* (1954), which, interestingly, Fuertes had originally given the title “Diario de una loca”.⁴⁸ “Cuarto de soltera”, which is also included in this collection and was discussed above as a poem that deals with the process of writing poetry, can also be read as an unstable woman’s disconnected account of hallucinatory experiences in a world where the boundaries between reality and fantasy are blurred. She hears strange sounds and sees strange creatures in her bewitched room, such as the “diablo” and the “aves del otro mundo”. The “llantos de niños recién manipulados” add to the nightmarish atmosphere, which is the result of the absence not just of a man, but of an “amo”, which suggests a strong, authoritative

⁴⁸ According to an editorial comment in the Torremozas edition of *Aconsejo beber hilo*.

male: Beneyto's "varón consciente". Read in this way, the poem could be a rejection of traditional male-female relations and a celebration of freedom – expressed in the freedom with which the boundaries of reality are transgressed – or, considering the poem's dark undertone, it could deal with a woman's choice between being free but lonely on the one hand, or being subordinated to patriarchal authority on the other.

The morbid imagination Woolf refers to is also very much evident in Fuertes's poetry: it contains many references to death and suicide. In "Ya la tarde se pasa", for instance, she refers to the slow death of a fly, which produces "alegría", and the dying moon, which is white, the colour of all the dead. In "No sabemos qué hacer" (OI: 82) she describes a dark moment when writing poetry and committing suicide become two opposing alternatives:

A veces el poeta
no sabe si coger la hoja de acero,
sacar punta a su lápiz y hacerse un verso
o sacarse una vena
y hacerse un muerto.

Here, writing poetry becomes a way of overcoming an extremely negative state of mind – as rather than committing suicide she writes the poem – and so writing becomes a therapy. In this poem she avoids sentimentalism by creating a distance between herself and the poem: the title refers to poets as a collective group, and she uses the impersonal third person to make her statement. The main reason why the theme of madness is relevant to Fuertes's poetry and not to Paz's writing is the difference in attitude which has already been referred to above. Fuertes deliberately stands out, creates a rebellious persona, and distances herself from the norm, whereas

Paz generally conforms to prevailing expectations of women, and tries to deal with her negative feelings within her circumstances.

Gilbert and Gubar base their discussion of madness in *The Madwoman in the Attic* on the idea that, due to their marginalized status, women writers were struggling “in isolation that felt like illness, alienation that felt like madness” (2000: 51).⁴⁹ Both the aspects of illness, which they later explain as a sense of ill-being, of “dis-ease”, and alienation can be identified in Fuertes’s work.⁵⁰ Gilbert and Gubar argue that the alienation experienced by women writers was linked to the polarized view of woman as angel or monster: a woman who lived up to the male definition of woman as a passive object was regarded as an angel, whereas a woman who rebels against such passivity and wishes to become a subject, and therefore tell her story, was regarded as a monster. A woman, considering her personality from her own perspective, could not identify with either and would therefore feel alienated. Although they refer to nineteenth-century English novels such as *Jane Eyre*, where the angelic heroine is counterbalanced by the sinister presence of Rochester’s violent, monstrous wife – the madwoman in the attic – the image of the wayward, nonconformist “monster” is relevant to Fuertes as a woman within the society in which she lived, and to her poetry. In post-war Spain, single women were associated with a specific personality reminiscent of Gilbert and Gubar’s monster image, as they were thought to be too independent to be willing to obey to a husband. As Carmen Martín Gaité explains in *Usos amorosos de la postguerra española* (2003: 38), “la que ‘iba para solterona’ solía ser detectada por cierta intemperancia de carácter, por su intransigencia o por su inconformismo. Analizar las cosas con crudeza o satíricamente no parecía muy

⁴⁹ Prof Abigail Lee Six, speaking at the WISPS Conference in Birmingham in October 2006, introduced the idea of “pathologizing the woman writer’s wish to escape” in this respect.

⁵⁰ Obviously, in her case, her sense of alienation must have been intensified first by her failed relationships with men, and then by the realization that she was lesbian, in a society where homosexuality was considered deviant and morally unacceptable.

aconsejable para la chica que quisiera ‘sacar novio’.” A woman looking for a husband should be the opposite, and conform to the angel image: she should “ofrecer una imagen dulce, estable y sonriente” (40).⁵¹ Both Fuertes’s personality and her poetry seem to fit the description of the nonconformist “solterona”. She identifies with animals resembling monsters in some of her poems and so illustrates her headstrong personality. In “Cristales de tu ausencia” (OI: 90) she talks about the end of a relationship, saying that it failed because, in spite of her desire to respect the conformist convention, she could not be the angel she was supposed to be, as she is a “loba” instead:

Cristales de tu ausencia acribillan mi voz,
que se esparce en la noche
por el glacial desierto de mi alcoba.
–Yo quisiera ser ángel y soy loba – .
Yo quisiera ser luminosamente tuya
y soy oscuramente mía.

In another poem, “Cabra sola” (OI: 212), she expresses a defiant stance to those who criticize her, saying that she is a “cabra”, which is a strong, generally disobedient animal, and of course it is also associated with madness, because of the saying “estar más loco que una cabra”. The poem ends as follows:

Vivo sola, cabra sola
– que no quise cabrito en compañía – ,
cuando subo a lo alto de este valle,
siempre encuentro un lirio de alegría.
Y vivo por mi cuenta, cabra sola;

⁵¹ In *Desde la ventana*, she develops an argument which is analogous to that of Gilbert and Gubar’s monster as an image representing the defiant woman: she introduces the term “chica rara” to denote a female character in post-war novels written by women – the first of whom was Andrea in Carmen Laforet’s *Nada* – who, rather than conform to the angelic, idealized image of women promoted in the “novela rosa”, was of ordinary appearance and questioned traditional feminine virtues and relationships between women and men.

que yo a ningún rebaño pertenezco.
Si sufrir es estar como una cabra,
entonces sí lo estoy, no dudar de ello.

The suffering she mentions and the defiance she displays appear to be the result not only of her solitude as a poet who is misunderstood and criticized for not belonging to a poetic movement, but also by her isolation as a woman who disobeys the moral rules imposed by society.

Although Paz takes a more conventional stance and cannot be associated with the negative pole of the monster of Gilbert and Gubar's argument, this does not mean that she does not experience any discomfort about the idea of women's traditional destiny. As we have seen, in "Reprocho a las cosas que le entretienen", she shows her dismay at being excluded from participation in public life, a privilege taken for granted by her husband. In another poem, "La tristeza" (*La soledad, contigo*, 47), she addresses her husband, who has encountered her in a moment of extreme sadness. As is often the case in her work, rather than rebelling against her circumstances or trying to merely escape from the bad feeling, she dwells on it, considering it in a spiritual light, and looks for what is positive in her situation. Referring to "la tristeza", perceived in the silence she shares with it, she says

[...] Yo estaba sola
y vino ella, y quiso acariciarme.
Déjanos un momento entretenidas
en escuchar los pasos del silencio
y sentir la tristeza de otros muchos
que no tienen amor ni compañía.

As is the case in "Reprocho a las cosas que le entretienen", her sharp perception and the choice she makes to experience her feelings lead to a sense of empowerment

rather than despair. An earlier poem, in which she criticizes the traditional relations between husband and wife, is “Aldonza se casa” (*Los buenos días*, 44-47), a poem which, according to the epigraph, pays homage to Unamuno’s *Vida de don Quijote y Sancho*. Here, she laments the fact that Aldonza, a “pobre criatura” like so many women, is completely clueless about the world and does not even know her future husband. He, Don Quijote, on the other hand, has his dreams, his “locura” – Unamuno’s interpretation of madness associated with “quijotismo” – which makes him experience life beyond the immanent reality of Aldonza’s homeliness. She reproaches her for being ignorant: “[...] cómo huele tu ignorancia, / tu estúpida ternura satisfecha!” Aldonza, however, is quite happy to be ignorant, as it makes her life easier. Paz is saddened to see that this is how Aldonza – as well as many other women – chooses to live, saying, “no puedo contemplarte / sin echarme a llorar”. She wishes to lead a different life and look beyond such a limited reality, which, in her case, means accepting the challenge of her vocation as a poet referred to in the first poem of *Mara*. This involves looking for truth and meaning that transcends the immanent reality of the home, but within the role of mother and wife.

1.3. Conclusion

The purpose of this study so far has been to discuss Gloria Fuertes and Pilar Paz Pasamar’s literary and social context, to point out some similarities and differences in their circumstances, and to give some examples of poems that reflect aspects of their response to their personal situation. Both poets experienced the limitations imposed by the specific circumstances of post-war Spain, partly because of the effects of the totalitarian nature of the regime on the evolution of poetry, and partly because of the subordinate position of women, and therefore of women poets. As these limitations

were the result of oppression, both the development of poetry during the regime and the position of women can be discussed on the basis of the theme of silence and confinement. In their different responses to their circumstances, Fuentes and Paz recognize the special role of their poetry as a means to liberate themselves. Through their poetry they seek companionship, self-realization, communication and truth, and thus their work enables them to transcend the imposed immanence of domestic reality, and experience their poetry as a space of freedom. As their poetry means much more to them than a mere form of self-expression, and also because of the general move in poetry towards an increasingly self-conscious approach to writing, it is not surprising that poetry itself is an important theme in the work of both. In many poems, and in essays and other comments about their work, they discuss and explore the purpose and essence of poetry and poetic inspiration. The next chapter therefore examines how they experience the creative process of writing – what happens when they detach themselves from the world that surrounds them and encounter the silence where poetry begins.

Chapter 2: What is Poetry?

Escribo, más que cantar cuento cosas.
Gloria Fuertes

*Cantar a cada cosa,
cantar cada momento*
Pilar Paz Pasamar

Two points that have been elaborated so far which are particularly relevant to the discussion in this chapter are the important place of poetry in the lives of Gloria Fuertes and Pilar Paz Pasamar, as it provided them with a metaphorical space of freedom within the confinement of post-war, Francoist society, and the emergence of self-conscious poetry at a time when writers of both official and social poetry were gradually beginning to lose their credibility and their audience.¹ Partly as a consequence of these circumstances, poetry itself became a major theme in Fuertes and Paz's work. The poems quoted in the previous chapter include many overt or indirect statements about their different poetics. Fuertes, for instance, defines her task as that of a poet on night duty in "Poeta de guardia" and recognizes poetry as a form of therapy in "No sabemos qué hacer", while "Cuarto de soltera" can be read as a reflection on the process of writing poetry. As the epigraphs and the quote from Paz's "Recomiendo silencio" show, both poets regard silence as a condition for poetic

¹ Cooks (2000: 428) says about the new generation of poets emerging in the 1950s: "Aesthetics, the creative process, and the search for a new poetic language that could engage an audience which, in general, had turned its back on poetry, was the goal of this generation of poets." It should be noted, however, that poets continued to write *poesía social* until the late 1960s, and that the new generation described by Cooks also addressed the social context in its poetry.

creativity, although we have seen that they also struggle with the loneliness associated with this. I also demonstrated how in “La casa” and “La alacena” Paz describes the poetic inspiration provided by the everyday objects that surround her. Such concerns reflect a general change in focus in the 1950s, when there was an increasing tendency to put less emphasis on the communicative aspect of poetry, and experiment with new, more personal ways of expression. One of the reasons for this was a growing awareness of the limitations of language, and the realization that there is no fixed, objective reality. As poets began to move away from the deliberately realist elements of *poesía social* and rediscovered the special nature of poetic language as opposed to prose – Debicki refers to its “visionary dimensions and possibilities” in this respect (1982: 6) – they came to recognize poetry as a vehicle specifically suitable for exploring the problems they identified in terms of language and reality.² Although Fuertes and Paz write very different poetry, their use of poetic language shows that both are aware of these issues and address them in their work. Having established the conditions and circumstances in which their poetry was written in Chapter 1, this chapter explores the ways in which the two poets deal in their work with the question of what poetry is, and what the significance of this is in terms of the process of defining their identity.

A useful concept within the context of this discussion is that of metapoetry, as it provides the term “metapoem” for poems that deal with this question. However, as different theorists and critics have defined metapoetry in different ways, I should first of all clarify my own understanding of the term. One critic, Sánchez Torre, states that “son metapoéticos todos aquellos textos poéticos en los que la reflexión sobre la poesía resulta ser el principio estructurador, esto es, aquellos poemas en los que se

² See Mandlove (1983: 301) and Debicki (1982: 6-7).

tematiza la reflexión sobre la poesía” (1993: 84). According to this narrow definition, the whole poem should theorize explicitly about poetry. Waugh gives a different definition; although she writes about fiction rather than poetry, she gives a useful description of the phenomenon, saying that it refers to “writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact” (2003: 2). This definition is much broader, as rather than using the idea of “tematizar”, she uses the general term of “drawing attention”, which can be done in many different ways and allows for more implicit statements. On the basis of her description, I would say that metapoetry is poetry which, in a specific way and for a specific purpose, draws attention to itself as a medium. Ways in which this can be done and which are relevant to this chapter include the use of intertextuality and parody. The reference to poetry as a medium in the definition refers to the fact that metapoetry involves reflection on language as a medium, the link between language and objects, and the nature of poetic language. As we shall see, Paz and Fuertes have a different purpose and therefore their metapoetry has a different focus: Paz tends to ask metaphysical questions about poetic inspiration and the creative process, while Fuertes generally explores her practical, didactic purpose. Before discussing in detail the metapoetic elements that characterize their poetry, I will compare some aspects relevant to the work of both, which involve metapoetic references: the aspects referred to in the observations made in the epigraph to this chapter, the theme of “lo cotidiano”, the relevance of paratext, the limitations of language and the role of silence, and metapoetic references to childbirth, motherhood and children. This comparative discussion is followed by an analysis of Paz’s metapoetry, focusing on her adaptation of Bécquer’s female Muse and her response to Juan Ramón Jiménez’s poetics. The discussion of Fuertes’s work highlights her use of parody, intertextuality and

wordplay as indirect metapoetic statements, and also gives examples of direct references to her poetics in her work.

2.1. Fuertes and Paz on the Essence of Poetry

Although the quotes in the epigraph to this chapter clearly do not constitute comprehensive statements on Fuertes and Paz's poetics, they shed light on a crucial difference between the two. In line with many of her contemporaries, Fuertes rejects the aesthetics associated with "cantar", and wishes to "contar", which involves introducing the vocabulary and colloquial speech of ordinary people into a poetic context. In an interview with Alameda she says in this respect:

Es que yo no tengo dos lenguajes, uno con el que hablo y otro con el que escribo. Yo estoy segura de que también hay poesía en los diálogos que se oyen por la calle o en una reunión. Y no sé por qué se le tienen que poner otras *músicas* cuando hacemos un poema. (1978: 7; italics in original)

Paz, on the other hand, recognizes the potential of poetic language to overcome the problems posed by ordinary language in her treatment of metaphysical themes, and therefore refers to the special quality of poetic language implied by the word "cantar", which goes beyond the everyday use of words associated with "contar". The difference between the two poets is further demonstrated by the effect these verbs have on the word "cosas". Fuertes's "contar" suggests narrative, and the "cosas" of the epigraph therefore refer to anecdotes.³ The "cosas" in Paz's poetry are usually objects, and the purpose of her "cantar" is to bring out every detail of an object, or to capture a fleeting moment in words and so give it an aspect of timelessness. Such a

³ However, as we have already seen, she does much more than tell us little stories. This aspect of her work is discussed below, in her use of parody.

purpose will always verge on the impossible. This fundamental difference in focus is discussed in detail below, in the analysis of the work of the individual poets. In spite of this important difference, what they have in common is that the “cosas” they refer to are from everyday life, which has an important place in the work of both: Paz’s “cosas” are everyday objects, while Fuertes talks about everyday events, and when she refers to objects, she presents them in all their mundane ordinariness. The presence of “lo cotidiano” is a common feature of poetry written in the 1950s and 1960s and, as Waugh (2003: 53) points out, this is closely related to the increasing awareness that language – and in particular descriptions from daily life – plays a central role in the construction of reality, which is ultimately a subjective, personal interpretation. This has already been referred to in the previous chapter, where Fuertes and Paz’s poetry was discussed as a means to construct their own reality and identity through autobiographical writing. Paz, in her treatment of objects in “La casa” and “La alacena”, shows that she regards “lo cotidiano” as a means to transcend the immanence of daily life: objects such as her house, or the herbs and spices in her larder, are tangible representations of an immanent reality, which can be transcended by describing the personal interpretation and memories attached to such objects. It is this personal interpretation that can give ordinary objects an aspect of beauty.

However, as she recognizes in her essay *La mujer y la poesía de lo cotidiano* when she introduces Fuertes’s poetry, such writing also involves a risk of touching up the truth in order to make it look better. When comparing the poetry of earlier women writers with that of Fuertes, she says (1964: 26-27):

Gloria Fuertes nos da la sincera versión de su mundo, de un mundo feo, expresado con fidelidad. Entendámonos. La versión de lo cotidiano que las mujeres habían dado hasta ahora llevaba en sí una evidente holgura verbal. Panes y peces, gallos

poéticos, sombras catedralicias, aromas dormidos... Ha habido un ropaje verbal de belleza, en el que los objetos se revestían e incluso se adornaban, se nombraban con suprema categoría. En Gloria no hay ropaje ni categoría. La palabra se nos da desnuda como el objeto.

A poem by Fuertes which seems to respond to and illustrate Paz's comments is "La linda tapada" (OI: 283; the poem was first published in *Cómo atar los bigotes del tigre*, 1969):

No te tapes Poesía
 te reconozco en las cosas pequeñas
 y en las casas grandes,
 allí donde estés, daré contigo.
 Te huelo poesía,
 te presiento en el alto y en el bajo,
 en el monte y en el burdel,
 en el mar y en el borracho,
 en la alegría del mar
 y en el dolor del mal.
 No te tapes poesía que te veo,
 no me tientes a retóricos sonetos,
 vamos a hablar como siempre,
 ¡o te mando de paseo!

Rejecting any kind of "ropaje" and "categoría" – instead of the "cantar" involved in this she wishes to "hablar como siempre" – she recognizes that poetry already exists all around her and that there is no need to dress it up in any kind of rhetoric, while she is also aware that it can be found in both "el alto", in grand houses, nature, happiness, and "el bajo", represented here by small objects, a brothel, a drunk, pain, and bad things. Although Paz is different in that she favours the sonnet form because of its musicality, and generally values aesthetic aspects of poetry, she also uses simple words and shies away from empty rhetoric and superfluous embellishments. As we

shall see, her ideas about poetic language are influenced by, and to some extent reflect, the aesthetics Juan Ramón Jiménez developed in his “poesía pura”.

Intertextual references in a poem’s title or epigraph – Genette coined the term *paratexte* for such references – are often of a metapoetic nature, and form an important part of the poem. This is also the case in the title of the above poem, as it not only indicates the poet’s theme, the refusal to “tapar” poetry with words that make it more “linda” and therefore give a distorted picture of the world, but also refers to the title of a zarzuela, and so points to popular culture and those Fuertes wishes to reach with her poetry. While this reference is particularly effective, she does not make such explicit allusions to other writing in her titles all that frequently, and she rarely uses epigraphs, which is probably related to her claim, discussed in Chapter 1, of being an independent, self-taught poet. Paz, on the other hand, who embraces the opportunity to learn from her models, frequently acknowledges the influence of other writers in epigraphs to her poems, which serve to pay homage to a writer, or establish a dialogue with a phrase or idea expressed by another poet. As we have seen, the epigraph to “Aldonza se casa” alerts us to the fact that this poem is her response to how Aldonza is presented in Unamuno’s *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho*. By preceding the collection *Ablativo amor* with the line “Salí tras ti clamando y eras ido...” from San Juan de la Cruz’s opening stanza of his *Cántico*, the reader is made immediately aware that the love poems that follow are likely to have a mystical dimension. A quote from the *Cancionero popular* is elaborated in “Extremadura” in *Del abreviado mar*, thus confirming her affinity with traditional, popular verse forms evident in her early poetry. The poems of *La violencia inmóvil* are preceded by the

quote “La violencia inmóvil del mar...” from a poem by Luis Rosales,⁴ which transforms the abstract title into a much more meaningful image. Other epigraphs in this collection consist of quotes from poems by Emily Dickinson, Juan Ramón Jiménez, and Pedro Salinas. Two cases in which Paz’s poem is a response to Jiménez’s poetics are the concluding poem, “Del abreviado mar” in the collection with the same title, discussed below, and “A Juan Ramón Jiménez y nuestros animales de fondo”, included in a more recent collection, *La torre de Babel y otros asuntos* (1982), where the title suggests both a dedication and a dialogue.

Another aspect relevant to metapoetry which is dealt with in the work of both poets is that of the lack of confidence in language as a means to convey reality. Again, the different focus and purpose of their poetry means that they emphasize different aspects of the limitations of language. Paz, who struggles to express ineffable reality in language, uses specific poetic devices, such as the musical elements of rhythm and rhyme, and different kinds of imagery, to try to enhance its scope. Fuertes, on the other hand, is more concerned with everyday reality, but is increasingly aware of the ambiguity of such reality, and the fact that this is veiled – “tapada” – by poetic and semantic conventions. While both poets, in different ways, try to deal with the insufficiency of words within the poetic context, they also explicitly refer to the constraints of language, which may lead to fragmentation, ellipsis, and ultimately silence. An example of this is the final stanza of Fuertes’s “Poeta de guardia”, where she slows down the poem’s rhythm and staggers the final lines, and so prepares us for the silence at the end. A poem in which Paz reflects on

⁴ When asked where this quote comes from, Paz said that she did not know from which poem or book it was. She had heard it quoted elsewhere and decided that it was so beautiful and relevant to her book that she would use it in the title and epigraph (18-10-05). In fact, some of the lines quoted in her epigraphs contain errors, and appear to have been quoted from memory.

the role of silence in poetry is “No es esto” (*Del abreviado mar*, 57-58), where she refers to:

nuestro repetido intento
de cantar y de alcanzar,
de decir frases que tienen
sentido cuando el silencio
las deja sin descifrar.

When asked about her predilection for the sonnet, she made an interesting comment about the role of silence within its structure, saying that its limited form, its natural flow, and the change from quartets to tercets prepare for the silence at the end (16-10-05). Silence became an increasingly important theme in poetry in the second half of the twentieth century, culminating in the “poética del silencio” of the *novísimo* poets in the 1970s. According to Pérez Parejo (2002: 360-61) the “poética del silencio” of those poets is based on the insufficiency of language and is characterized by “brevedad, sugerencia, reticencia, condensación y abstracción”.⁵ A well-known example from the 1960s of a poem which explores the themes of the limitations of language and the silence that is a consequence of this is “Preámbulo a un silencio” by Ángel González (2003: 112-13). In this poem, González casts doubt on the ability of language to convey reality, and therefore gives up, concluding the poem with the silence announced in the title:

y sonrió y me callo porque, en último extremo,
uno tiene conciencia
de la inutilidad de todas las palabras.

⁵ Also relevant is Terry’s discussion of the preoccupation with the limitations of language and the role of silence in the poetry of Crespo, Sánchez Robayna and Valente in *La idea del lenguaje en la poesía española: Crespo, Sánchez Robayna y Valente* (2002).

González loses faith in the existence of a fixed, objective reality, and therefore also in language as a means to communicate. Both Fuertes and Paz show that they are aware of this issue in their experiments with descriptions of alternative realities (see Chapter 1), and in metapoetic references. Fuertes's attitude towards reality is ambivalent. Although she shares with social poets the conviction that poetry can convey a message and bring about change, which depends on poet and reader having exactly the same perception of reality, her experiments with language also lead to explorations of her personal perception of the world around her.⁶ In *Historia de Gloria*, where the focus is more on her own, personal experience than in the poems collected in *Obras incompletas*, she expresses doubt about the objectivity of reality, and alludes to the fact that she may have her own, interpretative role in defining it in one of several poems called "Poética" (*Historia de Gloria*, 189):⁷

No sé si inserto la realidad
 en la poesía,
 o meto la poesía en la realidad
 o simplemente meto la pata.

Paz makes some important references to language, silence and reality in the first section of *Violencia inmóvil*, a collection which marks a change in focus in her poetry. In the preceding books she concentrates on tangible objects and how they can serve to define intangible, universal truth. In *Violencia inmóvil*, the focus shifts to abstract truth and reality, and she finds that objects and words are no longer sufficient

⁶ The social poets were optimistic about the communicative power of language; according to Pérez Parejo (2002: 326), "afirman el valor de la palabra para conocer la realidad y transformarla". Indeed, Sartre's entire argument about "littérature engagée" in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?* is based on the assumption that language provides a stable reflection of the world.

⁷ Fuertes published a number of poems called "Poética", included mostly in her later work, in which she makes direct statements about her poetics, thus referring to the long tradition of "ars poetica", a poetic subgenre in its own right that was initiated by Horace and revived during the Renaissance. By using deliberately plain language and conveying a down-to-earth message, she subverts the subgenre, which is often regarded as highbrow and artificial.

to express the doubts and conflicting ideas about reality she now experiences. The first poem, “Hay algo que nos pasa inadvertido” (9-10),⁸ introduces the poet’s new mood of doubt and fear. It contains a reference to Borges’s story “El Aleph”, which deals with the difficulties involved in using language to describe new, abstract experiences, as language consists of a lineal description of what is already familiar.⁹ The second poem, which introduces another major theme of this collection, the loneliness the poet experiences, begins with the lines: “Sólo me queda el corazón. Palabras / ya no me bastan. Sobra el pensamiento”, which suggest that words are no longer adequate to describe her thoughts, therefore leaving a silence where the only sound left is the primordial rhythm of her own heartbeat.¹⁰ In this context, silence refers to a pre-linguistic condition where poetry originates, also described in the epigraph to Chapter 1. Octavio Paz, who, like Pilar Paz Pasamar, regards writing poetry primarily as an intuitive process, explores a similar idea of poetry originating from the silence that precedes human language, and representing natural rhythms such as that of the heart and breathing, in his poetry and in his essay *El arco y la lira*. Pérez Parejo (2002: 225) talks in this respect of Octavio Paz’s attempt, in his poetry, “de regresar al origen del lenguaje donde las palabras no estaban contaminadas para así alcanzar la reconciliación entre el mundo y el hombre. Así, la palabra surge como huella del silencio, de donde parte el poema y a donde llega finalmente.” This is Octavio Paz’s response to the awareness of twentieth-century poets that words have

⁸ Although this poem has no title, as is the case with many of the poems in *Violencia inmóvil*, the first line is given in the table of contents. Wherever a poem, by her or any other poet, has no title, the first line, or part of it, is used as the title; this also applies to the poems listed in the Index.

⁹ Steiner (1985: 30-31) also recognizes the lineal and therefore temporal aspect of language as the reason why intangible truth cannot be expressed in language. According to him, “in ultimate truth, past, present, and future are simultaneously comprised. It is the temporal structure of language that keeps them artificially distinct.”

¹⁰ There are many references to the rhythm of her heartbeat in *Violencia inmóvil*, while her “corazón” is also a recurring image in her earlier books; it occurs, for instance, in the two poems entitled “Del abreviado mar”, quoted below. She once referred to the significance of the heartbeat as “el sonido del corazón, que a fin de cuentas es el que manda y quien, desde el primer poema hasta el último, controla, ordena las arteriales de la poesía” (Paz Pasamar and Pemán, 1964: 9).

lost their original meaning as, over the centuries, they have become increasingly corrupted and tainted, acquiring multiple meanings and having turned into clichés (see Paz, 2004: 29-30).¹¹ Fuertes, conscious of the same process, rather than aspiring to return to a primordial state of language, purifies and revitalizes words by exposing this overuse of language through the deliberate inclusion of clichés in her poems. She thus draws attention not only to the cliché, but also to the words' original meaning. As this is an important feature of her poetics, several critics have commented on this. Benson (2000: 212), for instance, says in this respect: “Al obligar a sus lectores a leer literalmente esas palabras, en su nuevo contexto, Fuertes permite ver más allá de ellas, sentir su frescura original y a la vez percibir su carácter absurdo”; Mandlove (1983: 302-03) talks about Fuertes's reclamation of outworn or used language, while Newton (1987: 2) summarizes the process as follows:

[...] el punto de partida de la gran mayoría de los poemas [de Gloria Fuertes] se halla en frases hechas, canciones, refranes y otras fórmulas archiconocidas, y que los principios que rigen esta obra se basan en la original transformación que dicho material sufre en manos de la autora [...] El resultado es una dimensión nueva e inesperada de la lengua, una revitalización de ciertas áreas que habían perdido toda su fuerza semántica.

Some examples of this are the intertextual references to the proverbs “al perro flaco todo se le vuelven pulgas” in “Niño flaco” and “estar más loco que una cabra” in “Cabra sola” in Chapter 1, while it is also relevant to her use of parody, as is discussed below.

¹¹ Octavio Paz therefore regards the poet's task that of being a “purificador del lenguaje” (2004: 47). Steiner, also aware of “the ambiguities and imprecisions which history and usage have brought into common language”, says, when comparing Renaissance writers with contemporary authors: “The great treasure of [language] lies before them, suddenly unlocked, and they ransack it with a sense of infinite resource. The instrument now in our hands, on the contrary, is worn by long usage” (1985: 39, 45).

All the points raised so far are referred to in more detail in the discussion of the individual poets' treatment of metapoetic themes. To round off this comparative overview, it is interesting to consider the metapoetic nature of some of the references the two poets make to children and their bond with children, and to childbirth as a metaphor for poetic creativity. Although Fuertes did not have children herself, children played an important part in her life and in her poetry. Throughout her work she speaks out against the injustice of innocent, vulnerable children being the victims of war and poverty, as is the case in "Niño flaco". An aspect of her attitude towards children which is specifically relevant here, is her awareness of the importance of educating children, as they are the adults of the future. This is reflected in her children's stories and poetry, which not only encourage children to read, but frequently have an overtly didactic or moral message. The stories of *Él dragón tragón*, for instance, all conclude with the same comment, "y la amistad reinó entre ellos", and some of the poems in *Plumilindo* deal with animal characters who are marginalized because they stand out from the rest, and are therefore in need of "cariño". In an interview with Gálvez (1993) she defines her purpose in writing for children as:

sin llegar a caer en la moraleja, enseñar cosas positivas. Esto es lo que yo intento con mis poemas. Cuando los niños leen mis cuentos se ríen, piensan y creo que hasta desean ser como mis héroes, pienso que quieren ser mejores, querer a todos los niños y no ser guerreros de mayores. Yo siempre digo que un joven o un niño con un libro mío en las manos nunca tendrá, en el futuro, una pistola.

In addition to communicating her pacifist message to tomorrow's adults, she also wants to encourage children to read and write poetry, as they will produce the next

generation of poets, able to “enseñar cosas positivas”. She refers to this in the first stanza of another “Poética” in *Historia de Gloria* (107):

No es todo hacer una poesía para el pueblo,
sino un pueblo para la poesía,
por eso escribo para el niño
y para el adolescente
que pronto serán el nuevo pueblo decente.¹²

As is the case in the work of Paz, who, unlike her, had experienced pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood, Fuertes establishes a relationship between motherhood and poetic creation in her work, which is evident, for instance, in her repeated use of the verb “nacer” in the metapoem “Telegramas de urgencia escribo”, which is discussed below. In her “Prólogo” to *Obras incompletas* (OI: 32-33), Fuertes elaborates the metaphor of childbirth to describe her “proceso creativo”, saying:

Primero siento, después pienso, en ese sentir-pensar se engendra el poema y, veloz, se inicia el recorrido mágico: corazón-mente-dedos, y entre los dedos – muslos creadores – se produce el parto, el asombroso nacimiento del nuevo poema. [...] Perdonad que la metáfora me haya salido tan fisiológica, pero bien veis que el nacimiento de un poema es en parte como un parto, un parto sin dolor – el dolor se siente antes del alumbramiento, durante el fugaz ‘embarazo’.

The link between motherhood and creative writing later became an important topic in feminist criticism. Showalter, for instance, refers to metaphors of literary maternity, such as the notion of giving birth to a text, in her influential article “Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness” (1986: 250-51).

¹² The poet Pablo Méndez (Madrid, 1975) provides an interesting example of Fuertes’s success in this respect in *Lo que aprendí de Gloria Fuertes*, a book in which he describes the influence she apparently had on the youngest generation of poets, who knew her from her children’s books, and later moved on to read her poetry for adults.

Paz, in the first part of *La soledad, contigo*, “El hijo”, in which she deals with the experience of being pregnant and being a young mother, draws several parallels between physical and poetic creation. In the poem “Oración para poder amamantar a mi hijo” (23-24), for instance, she compares the despair she feels about her inability to breastfeed her baby with the lack of poetic inspiration she experiences. In a prayer that imparts a defiant attitude towards the God addressed in the “oración”, she asks:

¿Para qué me cosiste y enhebraste
con hebra tan dulcísima y tan fina
y por qué se me queman las palabras
en un profundo pozo de cal viva?

Here, a moment of frustration caused by her inability to feed her baby is experienced in similar terms as her failure to write poetry. A sonnet written much later and included in *La torre de Babel y otros asuntos* comments on how motherhood and having a family have borne upon and have determined her poetics. The poem, “En defensa propia” (48), is dedicated “A una amiga que me reprocha no dedicarme por entero a escribir versos”, and compares her friend’s life and poetry to her own work and circumstances:

Tú creces, mientras yo me multiplico.
Tú hacia arriba, señora, alta, importante,
contemplativa, tan de mí distante
que a pequeños quehaceres me dedico.

Tú, de versos sublimes mil, y rico
tu mundo, yo los hijos por delante.
Tú luna en plenitud, y yo menguante
ala inclinada sobre mucho pico.

Ciprés engalanado y solitario,
llama inflamada en el fervor diario...
¡Nadie estorbe tu lámpara encendida!

Mientras, acompañada me disperso:
 el hijo, el hombre, el hombro, el ala, el verso...
 ¡Mas no cambio tu vida por mi vida!

While her friend has been able to devote all her time to writing poetry, Paz, who published this collection after fifteen years of silence (her previous collection, *Violencia inmóvil*, appeared in 1967), had spent most of her time raising a family. The first line is crucial, as it summarizes her comparison of her friend's poetics to her own: her friend, being able to dedicate herself exclusively to her poetry, only grows in one direction, while Paz, through having children and experiencing motherhood, has multiplied herself and has grown in different directions, as she states in "me multiplico", which is later echoed in "me disperso". Motherhood has added a new dimension to her life, and therefore also to her poetry. Her friend has reached a solitary place, removed from the ordinary world: the "torre de marfil", which, as we saw in Chapter 1, Paz rejects. She, on the other hand, is "acompañada", and therefore often distracted by the "pequeños quehaceres" to which she dedicates herself. However, as we have seen, it is exactly those small tasks associated with everyday life that make her aware of the objects that surround her, and provide her with poetic inspiration.

Before considering Fuertes's poetics in more detail, the following section will analyse the metapoetic aspects of Paz's work, and consider what inspires her to write poetry and what defines her "cantar".

2.2. Pilar Paz Pasamar: Poetic Inspiration and the Female Muse¹³

¹³ A different version of this section will appear as the article "Metapoesía en *Del abreviado mar* de Pilar Paz Pasamar: una poeta busca su Musa interna" in *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* (Glasgow).

Paz's poetics will be discussed on the basis of a comparison with some elements of the poetry of Bécquer and Juan Ramón Jiménez, with whom she shares what, to some extent, can be referred to as a Neo-Romantic approach to poetry. Some of the characteristics of such an approach can be found in both Bécquer and Jiménez's work, which influenced Paz. According to Pérez Parejo, the Romantic poet "es poco menos que el elegido para abrirse paso entre lo sobrenatural y acceder al misterioso mundo de las ideas puras. El poeta romántico ha nacido para nombrar el absoluto, lo decible y lo indecible" (2002: 472). He later mentions "la concepción romántica del autor según la cual el creador da forma a la inspiración configurando la obra" (476). All these features are relevant to the discussion of Paz's work. Her ideas about inspiration coming from within will be compared with Bécquer's image of the inspiring, exterior, female Muse, an image which suggests that women can provide poetic inspiration, but cannot be artistically inspired themselves. Juan Ramón Jiménez is particularly relevant, as Paz recognizes him as her "maestro", and has said that her ideas about poetry frequently reflect his views (16-10-05).¹⁴ An analysis of similarities and differences in their work will therefore reveal much about Paz's poetics. Most of her poems referred to here are from *Del abreviado mar* (1957), which contains many poems with metapoetic reflections on inspiration, poetic language and her purpose as a poet. Both the first and the last poem bear the title "Del abreviado mar"; to prevent confusion, they will be referred to in this and the following chapter as "Del abreviado mar" (I) and (II).

In two poems in which she refers to the elusiveness of poetic inspiration and language, Paz comes very close to using the same imagery of the Muse and the elusive, beautiful woman that Bécquer refers to in his *Rimas*, the "Introducción

¹⁴ Critics such as Ramos Ortega (1984: 136) and Ripoll (1986: 11) also comment on the influence of Jiménez on Paz's work.

sinfónica”, and his “Cartas literarias a una mujer”. The reason for this is that she personifies poetic inspiration, addressed as “tú” in the poems. “El poema” (*Mara*, 85-86) addresses poetic inspiration as follows in the first stanza:

Qué haría yo sin ti, qué haría yo
si no vinieses más?
 ¡Pobre destino
el mío, el de esperar
esta luz, cada instante, y presentirla,
y dolerme la mano
de querer escribir cosas sin nombre!

She again expresses her anxious desire to have the companionship of such inspiration in “La poesía” (*Del abreviado mar*, 24-35),¹⁵ which deals with the difficulty of converting her thoughts into words and poetry. It concludes with the lines:

Acato el mutilado sonido que me tañes,
las imprevistas flores, tus fugas y visitas.
Déjame que te nombre como puedo nombrarte:
la Nunca Poseída.

Writing “Nunca Poseída” with capital letters, she personifies poetry, and because of the gender of “poesía” it becomes female. Like Bécquer’s woman, as described, for instance, in “Rima XV”¹⁶ and his *leyenda* “El rayo de la luna”, it, or she, is unpredictable and ineffable. Also interesting is the allusion to the string instrument in the first line, which is reminiscent of the harp awaiting its female player in “Rima VII”, where Bécquer compares the harp waiting for the Muse with what he refers to as his “genio [que] duerme en el fondo del alma”.

¹⁵ Unless otherwise stated, the poems by Paz in the remainder of this chapter are from *Del abreviado mar*.

¹⁶ The numbers correspond to those used in the Espasa Calpe edition, which follows the numbering of the posthumous edition of the *Rimas* in *Obras completas*, first published in 1871.

Like Paz, Bécquer recognizes the inability of ordinary language to express a timeless truth that goes beyond words and analytical argumentation, but sees poetry as a means to explore and express this truth. In order to represent the inexpressible in words, Bécquer chooses the motif of a beautiful, objectified woman to symbolize ideal harmony and beauty, and that of unattainable love to illustrate the tendency of meaning to escape words. In his work, a woman's beauty, personified in the Muse, becomes the inspiration for poetry, and in fact represents poetry itself, as he explains in the first "Carta literaria a una mujer". This letter is an elaboration of "Rima XXI", which opens with the question, posed by a woman, "¿Qué es la poesía?", and concludes with the reply: "Poesía eres tú". The reasons he gives for this in his letter are that woman represents "belleza" and "sentimiento", which, combined with the male poet's "razonamiento" – the "genio" referred to in "Rima VII" – can produce poetry. "Rima XI" is an example of unattainable love as a metapoetic symbol: presented with three women who offer their love, he rejects the first two, the Mediterranean and the Nordic woman, and chooses the third, the intangible and unattainable one, who represents herself with the words:

– Yo soy un sueño, un imposible,
vano fantasma de niebla y luz;
soy incorpórea, soy intangible;
no puedo amarte.

Aware that woman is a metaphor for poetry, the reader is able to recognize that this poem is partly intended as a reference to the ineffable quality of poetic writing. The "Introducción sinfónica", which precedes most editions of *Rimas*, is based on the metaphor of the woman as Muse, and states that the poet's ideas are offspring of his imagination, conceived by his Muse. According to this image, a woman cannot be

inspired to write poetry. Moreover, the image presented in “Rima XI”, which reduces woman to a symbol of an unattainable ideal and the passive object of poetry, also excludes her from literary creativity, because if woman is generally recognized as a mere symbol in poetry, it is difficult for her to overcome her status and become a poet herself. Although such imagery, and in particular that of the beautiful, mysterious, but unattainable woman, is typical of the nineteenth-century Romantic movement that influenced Bécquer’s poetry, the notion of the objectified woman representing poetry and art occurs throughout history. An early example is the story of Pygmalion, who fell in love with the statue Galatea in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a story which Bécquer refers to in the *leyenda* “El beso”, also about a man falling in love with the statue of a woman. Other examples include the way in which women are represented in the poetry of the *modernistas* – who were partly influenced by Bécquer’s *Rimas* – and, from English and American literature, Robert Browning’s ironic use of the motif in “My Last Duchess”, in which a jealous duke who has killed his wife, after having her picture painted, describes how he prefers the painting to the real woman as he can now have her smile all to himself, and Edgar Allan Poe’s account in the short story “The Oval Portrait” of a painter producing a portrait of his beautiful wife by transferring her beauty to the canvas and thereby killing the real woman.¹⁷

¹⁷ Some women writers have mocked the cliché of the female Muse and its inherent assumption that women are unable to produce literature. See, for instance, Rosalía de Castro’s novel *El caballero de las botas azules* (1867), in which appears a Muse who is an ugly “abominación” according to the man she is supposed to inspire (1995: 103), and some of the poems of Alfonsina Storni, such as “La invitación amable” and “A una mujer que haga versos”. The latter poem is a sonnet in which a woman with poetic aspirations, expressed in clichéd references to beauty, ends up subjugated by a universal male figure. As the speaker says in the two tercets (2005: 295):

Y pedirás un carro de purpuradas rosas,
coronado de dulces abejas rumorosas
para tirar, cantando, con un ala muy fina...

Y unciéndote al arado, el grito del arriero,
(disimulado acaso en un cuerpo ligero:
amigo, hermano, oyente) te gritará: ¡Camina!

Of course, the whole tradition of the objectivation and depersonalization of women, as well as the stereotyping of women as intuitive and men as analytical, has been the source of much debate among feminists and feminist critics from the 1940s onwards. Simone de Beauvoir, whose claims about woman as “the Other” in a male-dominated society have already been referred to in Chapter 1, explained the recurrence of the woman as Muse in literature as follows. As “la poésie prétend capter ce qui existe par delà la prose quotidienne” (1976, I: 297), woman, representing the mysterious Other – all that man aspires to but cannot attain – becomes a poetic reality, the very substance of man’s poetic work, which makes it understandable that she should become his inspiration, and therefore his Muse (296-98). However, her view is based on the established assumption that the poet is male. Gilbert and Gubar address this in *The Madwoman in the Attic*, where they argue that this is a consequence of the fact that creativity and authorship are traditionally linked to authority, the male writer and God.¹⁸ According to them, “the poet, like God the Father, is a paternalistic ruler of the fictive world he has created” (2000: 5), a definition which can be applied to Bécquer, who fathers his ideas and describes the poet as possessing an internal “genio” in “Rima III” and “Rima VII”. As was discussed in the previous chapter, Gilbert and Gubar claim that women have been able to become writers by telling their own story, and so become the subject rather than the object of literature.

While many women writers, including Paz and Fuentes, have followed the process of developing their own identity through their work, few of their contemporaries have dealt with the apparently male domain of poetic inspiration in their work as profoundly as Paz has done. She therefore takes as her examples

¹⁸ As we saw above, Showalter approaches the issue from a different angle, recognizing a link between motherhood and literary creativity.

Bécquer and Juan Ramón Jiménez, both of whom write about poetic inspiration, and, like her, emphasize the musical quality of poetry, while avoiding superfluous words and hackneyed poetic clichés and conventions. The difficulties involved in “nombrar” the ineffable, referred to in the quotes from Paz’s “El poema” and “La poesía”, is a motif in the work of both Bécquer and Jiménez.¹⁹

An important strategy Paz uses as an isolated woman writing about poetry is that of looking for inspiration within herself, which means that, following Bécquer’s metaphor, she becomes her own Muse. In the poem “Consejo” (13-14), for instance, in which she addresses a female reader, her advice is to learn to be self-sufficient rather than rely on others, and to draw inspiration from one’s inner resources. It includes the following stanza in which she refers to artistic creativity:

Llámate tú. Sé música de tu propio instrumento,
color de tu pintura, cincel en la madera
de tus sueños. Dibuja lo que quieras decirte,
escíbete tu historia, escúlpete en tu piedra.

While she encourages the reader to use herself as raw material to produce a work of art – her own colour, the wood of her own dreams, and her own stone – she should also be her own music, draw her own ideas and write her own story, which is emphasized by the repeated use of second-person pronouns. She will thus become the personified agent of her own art and, by extension, of her own life, rather than the object produced by others. This, however, is a rare example of a poem where she addresses the reader, giving specific advice. Normally she uses her poems to share

¹⁹ Jiménez’s search for “el nombre exacto de las cosas” (from “Intelijencia, dame”, included in *Eternidades*), and therefore the encounter between poet and reality, is a central theme of his “segunda época”. It is echoed by many other writers, including Jorge Guillén (see Terry, 2002: 20-29), José Hierro (see, for instance, his poem “Nombrar parecedero” in 2002: 197-99), and, as is discussed in more detail below, by Paz.

her intimate thoughts with an implicit reader. A crucial poem in this respect is “Del abreviado mar” (I) (9-10), which deals with the introspective attitude that may trigger poetic inspiration. The “abreviado mar” of the title is a metaphor for the inner self, a space which imbues a meditative attitude:

*Al mar pequeño se va
cantando y no
se vuelve más.*

Mar abreviado, mar mío,
interno, dulce y amargo,
donde la nave del sueño
tuerce la espuma del cántico.

*Al mar pequeño se va
cantando y no
se vuelve más.*

Hay en cada corazón
un pequeño y dulce mar.
El que navega en sus sueños
lleva su propio compás.
No hay brisa más limpia y nunca
sabe tan buena la sal
como en esta travesía
de la propia soledad.

*Al mar pequeño se va
cantando y no
se vuelve más.*

A vela, casi volando,
las jarcias frente a los vientos,
mi corazón en la punta
del mástil de mi silencio.
Como peces asustados
se asoman mis pensamientos...
¡Ya están echadas las redes
y mis manos en acecho!
– A ver quién me va a impedir
pescar mis propios secretos – .

*Al mar pequeño se va
cantando y no
se vuelve más.*

Gotea un agua de verso.

Although the internal space that defines her inner self is an inspiring place, it is clear from the first stanza that the confrontation with herself is also painful. The internal sea is both “dulce” and “amargo”, and the “nave de sueño” that traverses this sea “tuerce” the canticle’s foam, which suggests a painful and forceful process.²⁰ The suggestion of this painful element and the link between poetry and the divine she establishes by saying that poetic inspiration, “la espuma”, inspires a “cántico” are reminiscent of what she says about poetic inspiration and the divine in the stanza from “Dónde voy yo, Dios mío”, quoted in Chapter 1. The image of the ship fighting against the waves is further emphasized by the refrain: the complete grammatical phrase of the first line suggests a pause at the end, but the enjambment with the word “cantando” of the second line imitates the rhythm of the waves clashing against the ship. In the second stanza, the all-inclusive “cada corazón” refers to both women and men, as is also implied by the impersonal use of “el” in “el que navega”, which is quite different from Bécquer’s emphasis on his own “genio”, and his exclusion of women from writing. In the third stanza she describes her personal experience of the “travesía” and the confrontation with her own thoughts and secrets this provokes. An important, additional effect of the introspective attitude she describes is the freedom it brings: Spain’s regime may be characterized by severe censorship and a collective ethos, but “El que navega en sus sueños / lleva su propio compás”, and no one can “impedir pescar mis propios secretos”. As she says in the concluding line, as a result of the process she describes, “Gotea un agua de verso”. The unbounded turmoil that is

²⁰ This duality is also referred to in the title of *Violencia inmóvil*, the poems of which are the result of a meditative attitude which can inspire both a violent and a tranquil response; see the discussion of some of its poems in Chapters 3 and 4.

the internal sea has been checked and produces tangible, countable drops of water.²¹ This image not only refers to the slow process of transforming poetic inspiration into poetry – a process consciously rejected by Celaya, who says, using the same imagery, that his work “no es una poesía gota a gota pensada” (see the previous chapter) – but also introduces the poet’s aim to capture abstract meaning in words, and therefore that of the limitations of language, which is an important theme in this collection. It is also interesting to compare the end of this poem with that of González, quoted at the beginning of this chapter: while González finishes with silence, Paz ends with the beginning of poetry. The poem also has an important paratext: its epigraph, which reads “A las arenas / del abreviado mar lleguéme un día. L. de Góngora”, explains where the image of the “abreviado mar” representing the inner self comes from. The words are an adaptation of the first quatrain of Góngora’s sonnet “De la marquesa de Ayamonte y su hija, en Lepe” (1969: 65):

A los campos de Lepe, a las arenas
del abreviado mar en una ría,
extranjero pastor llegué sin guía,
con pocas vacas y con muchas penas.

Although this might not be a poem with a profound, metaphysical undertone, the “abreviado mar en una ría” connotes a reference to the philosophical *topos* of the microcosm of man, “el hombre como mundo breve”, here metaphorically evoked by the expansive sea, as opposed to the “ría”, subject to the tides of the sea and therefore

²¹ A similar process of poetic inspiration is described in “Lo inesperado” (*Mara*, 82). This poem, which also refers to the painful aspect of poetic inspiration – referred to as “el dolor blando” – ends with the lines: “Por el jardín del alma, como frailes reunidos, / se pasean en fila, compañeros, mis versos...”; here, the inner self is referred to as “el jardín del alma”, and, as is the case with the drops of water, the verses appear rhythmically, and so give structure to what before was without form. The reference to “frailes” has a similar purpose as that to the “frailucos” in “La alacena” (see Chapter 1).

part river and part miniature sea.²² As will be discussed in Chapter 4, Paz frequently uses sea imagery; here Góngora's image, which provides the title of the collection and that of the first and last poems, points the reader to the book's themes of introspection as a means to describe universal meaning, and also that of intangible reality, compared here with water. Another poem where she refers to such imagery to describe the ineffable and alludes to the opposition between a microcosm – that of what can be held in a hand – and the vast expanse of the sea is “No es esto” (57-58), which includes the lines:

No es esto, no. Es mucho más.

[...]

Es lo que queda detrás
de la mano que ha querido
coger el agua del mar.

A poem which also has the process of looking for poetic inspiration within herself as its subject is “Misterios” (55-56). This poem is based on the image of a mirror, which is relevant both to metapoetry, as this is poetry which is self-reflective,²³ and to the discussion from feminist criticism of woman as object.²⁴ Gilbert and Gubar refer to the magic looking-glass in “Snow White” to illustrate the woman writer's need to examine her image in the mirror and overcome the reflection of “the Other” imposed by male writers, before she can become an autonomous writer

²² Góngora further elaborates this image in lines 1-26 of “Soledad segunda” (1994: 420-25). Juan Ramón Jiménez refers to exactly the same space of the “abreviado mar en una ría” representing the microcosm of man in “Riomardesierto” in *Animal de fondo* (2005: I, 2: 1162-63), where the “riomar” is the place where the river meets the sea, or, in other words, where the speaker (the river) becomes consciousness (the sea).

²³ Sánchez Torre therefore gave his book on metapoetry the title *La poesía en el espejo del poema*.

²⁴ See Virginia Woolf's use of the image of the looking-glass, and the references to Simone de Beauvoir and Gilbert and Gubar in the previous chapter.

and create her own identity. Paz, however, in spite of her traditional lifestyle and her isolation as a woman poet, does not seem to be aware of any need for this process at all. When looking into the mirror, she wants to look beyond her image and seeks the encounter with her inspiration, which is personified:

Delante ahora de mí misma,
frente al espejo,
voy mirándome hacia adentro,
y no te encuentro.

She then wonders about the essence of this inspiration, interpreting it as a reflection of her interiority, and expresses the wish to find it:

Para soñarte me miro,
pero tú llevas mi sueño.
¿Quién de los dos atraviesa
la frontera de otro? Tengo
delante de mí la imagen
reflejada en el espejo,
a ver si, asomándome
al pretil de mi deseo,
puedo conseguir mirarte
y llegar hasta el encuentro
de esta invitación sonora
que me hace música el tiempo.²⁵

So, rather than fixing her gaze on the female Muse, she regards inspiration as a mysterious force to be found within herself. As she ultimately associates this force with the divine, she refers to “los dos” rather than “las dos”.

²⁵ It is interesting to note that Fuentes, in “Ventanas pintadas” (quoted in Chapter 1), also uses the image of “asomarse para ver” what lies outside ordinary observation. In her case, the reference is to the secret world hidden behind windows painted on the wall; these windows can give her access to an imaginary, alternative reality, which she creates through poetry. Hence, both poets use similar imagery to describe their wish to perceive a reality that lies beyond the ordinary, and describe this in poetry.

In addition to having to overcome the notion of the inspiring, female Muse, Paz, in establishing herself as a female poet writing about metapoetry, has to deal with the prevailing image in the poetry of Bécquer and other male poets of the objectified woman who symbolizes abstract beauty and harmony, concepts which, because of their intangible, transcendental quality, tend to transgress the limits of language. Faced with the same problem of how to express what is ultimately inexpressible, she often personifies abstract concepts and addresses them directly, as is the case in “El poema”, “La poesía” and “Misterios”, while she also concludes that the description of simple, everyday objects and events can point to a truth beyond language because of the memories and associations they evoke, a topic which has already been referred to in Chapter 1.

Paz recognizes Juan Ramón Jiménez as her main example, as is evident from the many intertextual references to him in her work, and also from her poetics. Many of the ideas she expresses about her poetry in her work – by means of her poems’ subject matter and her use of poetic language – can be found in Jiménez’s work as well: the emphasis on beauty, the avoidance of superfluous embellishment, and the link between poetry and the divine. However, Jiménez follows Bécquer’s example of treating metapoetic themes in a way that excludes women from the creative process. As Pérez Parejo points out (2002: 193), “Juan Ramón, con el antecedente de Bécquer, desarrolla el símbolo de la mujer, ella, la amada, que denota y connota a la vez a la obra, a la belleza artística e ideal”, and later he comments, “La poesía existe porque hay belleza, percepción estética que Bécquer cifra en lo femenino, como luego haría Juan Ramón” (268).²⁶ Particularly relevant in this respect is Jiménez’s development of his “poesía pura”, which involved “la depuración expresiva y conceptual” of his

²⁶ Jiménez was, of course, a great admirer of Bécquer’s work; he called his first poetry collection *Rimas* to pay homage to him.

poetry (Olmo Iturriarte and Díaz de Castro, 2005: 362), first introduced in *Diario de un poeta recién casado*, and further elaborated in *Eternidades, Piedra y cielo, Poesía*, and *Belleza*, all published between 1917 and 1923. One of the “tres presencias desnudas” that represent his “poesía pura” or “poesía desnuda” is “la mujer”.²⁷ A well-known poem in which he discusses the development of his poetry from the clichés and superfluous adjectives related to *Modernismo* to pure poetry is “Vino, primero, pura” (*Eternidades*, in 2005, I, 2: 378), where he describes the process from abandoning *Modernismo* to embracing pure poetry by using the image of a woman undressing herself, until “Se quedó con la túnica / de su inocencia antigua.” The paragraphs below will discuss some ways in which Paz follows and deviates from Jiménez’s poetics, and how she avoids using his image of the naked woman, while nevertheless referring to similar ideas about poetry and poetic language.

Paz responds to Jiménez’s poetics in “Del abreviado mar” (II) (75-76),²⁸ which has an epigraph that consists of the first stanza of a poem by Jiménez, to which she makes an intertextual reference in the first two lines of the poem. Paz finds in Jiménez’s work an awareness of both minute detail and of the significance of such detail as a component of a harmonious universe, which, in Jiménez’s case, is linked to the Spanish Krausist movement from before the Civil War. In “Del abreviado mar” (I) and “No es esto” we can recognize a similar awareness in Paz’s poetry, which contrasts the microcosm of the inner self, or the detail of water in a hand, with the apparently boundless sea. The epigraph in “Del abreviado mar” (II) is from Jiménez’s “Andando” (from *Baladas de primavera*, 1907; in 2005, I, 1: 712):

²⁷ The other two are “la obra” and “la muerte” (see Lanz, 2005: 681).

²⁸ By using the same title as that of the first poem, Paz suggests that the last poem deals with the same, metapoetic theme as the first one, and that it concludes the process of the “travesía” introduced in “Del abreviado mar” (I).

*Andando, andando,
que quiero sentir cada grano
de la arena que voy pisando...*
J. Ramón Jiménez.²⁹

The poem describes the speaker's heightened perception of minute grains of sand, regarding himself in lyrical possession of this microcosm, while at the same time he is also aware of the "noche inmensa que vas bajando".³⁰ Paz starts her poem by referring to the same image of the sand, the effect it has on her, and the opposition between detail – here, her "corazón" – and the "mundo", which is followed by her conclusions about the purpose of her poetry. Jiménez calls his poem a "sueño" in an epigraph; Paz also refers to dreams, which are related to the inner space where poetic inspiration can be found:

Cada grano que piso
es mi propia alegría.
Cada sueño que cruzo
me abre una nueva puerta.
Mi corazón, rondando,
se confunde en el mundo
y vuelve a mí dichoso
en gloria y oleaje.
Mi vocación se mece
como una enredadera
o un manojito de algas
frescas sobre la espuma.

Cantar a cada cosa,
cantar cada momento,
apretar la palabra
como pisa la uva
el hombre en los lagares
y llenar con el zumo
derramado los bordes,
las cosas y los nombres
que entregue la canción.

²⁹ The original poem has "oír" instead of "sentir".

³⁰ His awareness of small, tangible objects as part of the universe is one of the main themes of his later work, as is evident, for instance, from the title of the collection *Piedra y cielo*.

Al abreviado y solo
 mar de mi pensamiento
 he llegado esta noche
 decidida de luna...
 ¡No tener más que esto
 y entregarlo del todo!
 ¡No tener nada nunca
 y estrechar en el aire
 las manos limpias sobre
 la piel de la esperanza!
 ¡No ser nadie y tener
 la nada repartida!
 ¡No esperar, y morir
 en espera del Todo!

The link between poetry and the divine – which, as has already been noted, is also an important theme in Jiménez’s poetry – is firmly established, as writing poetry is her “vocación” and leads to an awareness in the third stanza of a universal “Todo” which she can share with others.³¹ While in “Dónde voy yo, Dios mío” she shies away from poetry and its association with the divine, as she recognizes that poetic inspiration involves a “peso” and a “cansancio inmenso”, here it brings “alegría” and provokes spiritual generosity. In the second stanza, where she gives the elaborate image of the grape press to define her purpose in poetry, she returns to detail, referring to “la uva” and to the image of a liquid – this time the juice of the grapes rather than water – to explain the difficulty of finding the correct words to describe the ineffable, which, as

³¹ It is interesting to compare this poem with “Un libro, un vaso, nada” by José Manuel Caballero Bonald (2002: 29-30), first published in *Las horas muertas* (1959). In this poem, the speaker experiences the opposite when writing poetry: there is no perception of the divine and no true inspiration. Therefore, all he writes are “páginas vanas” or “himnos vacíos”. Instead of feeling that he has something to share with others, he is only aware of absence and isolation, and his poem, in lines reminiscent of González’s pessimism, ultimately leads to “nada” rather than Paz’s “Todo”:

Solos
 estamos: toda la ausencia cabe
 entre la realidad y el sueño. Aquí
 mi obstinación es mi alegría:
 un libro, un vaso, nada.

has been commented above, is also a recurring image in Jiménez's poetry.³² The image of the second stanza prepares the reader for the abstractions expressed in the third, and sets off the detail of the grape and its purposefulness in the bigger process described, against the universe – the “Todo” – of the last line. Like Jiménez, Paz refers to her purpose of communicating what she intuitively. Gullón, when describing Jiménez's purpose, gives a definition of poetry that is also relevant to Paz, and is explicated in the above poem: “Poesía [...] no es transporte ideológico de una mente a otra; poesía no es aquello que puede decirse en lenguaje científico o crítico, sino la expresión de una intuición con sentido, realidad y validez en sí misma” (1960: 185).

Another poem by Paz which reflects on many of the themes prevalent in Jiménez's later work is “La sencillez”, a title which refers to the latter's pure poetry: what Olmo Iturriarte and Díaz de Castro call the “depurada sencillez” of the poetics of Jiménez's “segunda época” (2005: 361). However, while in the previous poem the views expressed are very similar, this poem reveals some differences in the poetics of the two poets. As was the case in some of the examples given above, Paz addresses the personified, abstract concept that is the poem's subject matter:

Ahora tú, sencillez, préstame labios
 para nombrar las cosas. Tú, la última
 en ser considerada, y entre todas
 la de olor más antiguo y el más dulce.
 La adolescencia olvida tu hermosura,
 la muerte y el olvido te discuten,
 los hombres vuelven locos tus esquinas.
 Como en un árbol viejo, se suspenden
 entre tus ramas verdes los alados.
 Todo aquel que a ti llega va de vuelta,
 todo aquel que te busca va a su encuentro.
 Restauras el olor envejecido

³² Guillén (1972: 85) suggests a process very similar to that evoked by Paz's “derramar” in his discussion of San Juan de la Cruz's use of figurative language. Commenting that such language enables him to connote the ineffable, he says that “el lenguaje rebasa [...] sus límites intelectuales”. The relevance of San Juan de la Cruz is discussed in Chapter 3.

de la palabra, llegas al asombro;
 das la mano a quien quiere desnudarse
 frente a la luz más pura, desenvuelves
 la pesada armadura de las voces,
 le das al hombre paz, tiñes su sombra
 con el color invulnerable y fijo.
 Quien te sabe tomar sabe que llega
 a ser, al fin, quien quiso ser. Tú sola,
 como una madre vieja y poderosa,
 enseñas que los nombres y las cosas
 han nacido de ti, y a ti regresan,
 cansados y sumisos, al regazo
 de la primera, hermosa sencillez.

The first sentence is reminiscent of Jiménez's "¡Inteligencia, dame / el nombre exacto de las cosas!" in *Eternidades* (2005, I, 2: 377). However, while Jiménez emphasizes the role of intelligence in the process of gaining "conocimiento" about universal truth, Paz adopts a more humble attitude and stands back in wonder, experiencing "asombro". As Lanz (2005: 816) points out in a note to one of the poems in *Belleza*: "Para Juan Ramón Jiménez, la creación poética es anhelo de conocimiento, de ahí que la palabra poética sea el instrumento capaz de penetrar en el misterio."³³ Paz, not necessarily seeking to "penetrar en el misterio" but content to observe and experience its phenomena, focuses on the pure, original meaning of words that can be perceived through intuition and instinct, which involves the removal of the "pesada armadura de las voces". Hence the reference to smell rather than meaning when she describes "sencillez" as having the "olor más antiguo", and the capability of restoring "el olor envejecido / de la palabra". Likewise, an adolescent, leaving behind the more intuitive phase of being a child, loses the "hermosura" of the "sencillez" on entering the phase of intellectual development. Although she uses Jiménez's image of

³³ In fact, the "cosas" the two poets refer to are also very different: while Paz includes everyday objects in her poetry, the "cosas" that Jiménez mentions include "viento, mar, pájaro" and "sal". Gullón talks in this respect of "la exclusión de lo prosaico y cotidiano, de lo hecho a medida de lo común y para el común, de la trivial medianía que este poeta despreciaba por parecerle símbolo de la mediocridad hostil, reacia a la transubstanciación poética" (1960: 147).

nakedness to describe this “sencillez”, she avoids the image of the objectified woman by using the impersonal “quien”, and the reflexive infinitive “desnudarse” rather than the adjective “desnuda”, which would qualify an object that can be watched. The image with which she ends the poem defies the imagery used by Jiménez, Bécquer and many others of the passive, beautiful young woman representing inspiration rather than creation. Here, the woman is “vieja y poderosa”, and she is the mother that all words and objects originate from, which return to her submissively.

One poem from *La violencia inmóvil* which also deals with the theme of the existence of an all-encompassing, primordial truth that can be perceived intuitively is “...Y tuvieron”. Here Paz contrasts such truth with modern intellectualism and empirical science, whose methods have a tendency to corrupt words and reveal what is only a very minor element of truth.

...Y tuvieron
 todas las cosas sospechosas su verdad sostenida
 en alto, como damas el sombrero.
 Y estás tú, con tu razón, y estaba
 el vecino, y el otro, con la suya,
 y cada cual se recreaba
 con su racimo insobornable
 comprobando la exactitud del silogismo.
 Y estaban, además, los prácticos,
 menos gozosos, eso sí porque a pesar
 de su lógica tampoco conseguían
 acaparar al mundo con las manos.
 Todos, todos a una poseían
 un instante glorioso, una victoria
 tan precaria como el día de sol
 que amanece atisbado por cárdenos umbrales.
 Menos una,
 menos una, por suerte, que olía desde lejos
 la triunfal desbandada de gaviotas
 enloquecidas,
 desocupadas, absurdas por el cielo de otoño,
 doradas sinrazones de la fuga y el miedo,
 al descubierto como mi cabeza,
 esta pobre cabeza tan ganada o perdida en lo imposible

sin etiqueta, ¡al aire, al aire, al aire...!

The poem consists of two parts; the first line of the second part is “Menos una”. The first part has a hurried pace, emphasized by the repeated use of “y”, and the repeated word “todos” at the beginning of the last sentence. It suggests a degree of chaos, caused by the fact that “las cosas sospechosas” are all claiming their truth by holding up their “verdad sostenida en alto”: these “cosas” are no longer said to have been born from the “madre vieja y poderosa” representing “la primera, hermosa sencillez” of the previous poem, but they depend on empirical proof. As each individual only focuses on the narrow scope of his or her evidence, no one is capable of “acaparar al mundo con las manos” – an intertextual reference to the hands trying to retain sea water in “No es esto” – because each individual only has an instant of precarious victory.³⁴ As everyone is hurrying along and involved in his or her own narrow field, there is also a suggestion of a lack of communication.³⁵ The fast pace of the first part changes abruptly with the words “Menos una”, where Paz introduces her own, solitary outlook on life, which rejects narrow-minded, short-lived solutions. Instead, she focuses on infinite time and space, and the freedom this brings, represented by the scattered seagulls in the sky and the exposure of her head to the elements. As was the case in “La sencillez”, there is a reference to smelling as a more instinctive process than that involved in reasoning.³⁶ Even though, as was pointed out above, her search

³⁴ The image expressed by the words “acaparar al mundo con las manos” is also evoked in the poem “Los niños y el mar” (*Mara*, 46-47), a poem in which a boy is said to try to “abrazarse a la marea”. See the discussion of this poem in Chapter 4.

³⁵ This “incomunicación”, which is a result of the loss of a common language – the primordial meaning of words – is an important theme in Paz’s *La torre de Babel y otros asuntos*, which begins with “La torre”, a poem based on the biblical myth of Babel and the loss of a common language.

³⁶ She makes a similar reference to this instinctive process as opposed to reasoning in “Felicidad”, included in *Sophía* (2003: 17), where happiness is described as a concept that can never be approached intellectually. It starts as follows:

Jamás con la conciencia,

for truth in this collection involves an element of fear, her views about life and language, and the expression of this in her poetry, are still intact. As a consequence, she continues to be faced with the challenge of using poetry to express the apparently inexpressible; the reference to poetry as “la Nunca Poseída” from before, is redefined here as “lo imposible / sin etiqueta”.

Like Paz, Juan Ramón Jiménez regards intellectualism and science as limiting forms of knowledge that fail to recognize a broader, universal truth that can only be intuited. This is very well illustrated in the latter’s poem “Ruta” from *Piedra y cielo* (in 2005, I, 2: 509-10), where he defines the poet’s mission within the setting of a ship’s voyage:

Todos duermen, abajo.
Arriba, alertas,
 el timonel y yo.

Él, mirando la aguja, dueño de
 los cuerpos, con sus llaves
 echadas. Yo, los ojos
 en lo infinito, guiando
 los tesoros abiertos de las almas.

The helmsman, responsible only for the technical, scientific aspects of the voyage, only looks after the passenger’s physical survival, whereas the speaker, aware of the infinite, is able to guide their souls with his poetry. However, while Paz shares his implied opinion about the essence of poetry, she does not subscribe to the speaker’s confident and superior self-image. The poem’s implication is that the vast majority of people, sleeping in the ship’s hold, are unaware and unable to see, while the poet is a

siempre con los sentidos.
 Te puedo oler, gustar, mirar, palpar,
 pero nunca saberte.

Here, happiness is described as a concept that can never be approached intellectually.

visionary who is able to perceive and interpret the universe. This distinction is emphasized by the contrast between “abajo” and “arriba”, pointing out that the anonymous “todos” are – literally – below him.³⁷ Paz, on the other hand, counts herself among the “sencillos” in “Hay algo que nos pasa inadvertido”, and in “Defensa propia” she distances herself from another poet, saying that the latter moves “hacia arriba” and is “señera, alta, importante”, while she dedicates herself to “pequeños quehaceres”. Moreover, while Jiménez appears to have found what he is looking for, and is confident that he can communicate the ineffable,³⁸ Paz continues to be aware of the poet’s limitations, and responds to poetic inspiration with “asombro”, mentioned in “La sencillez” and repeated in “Hay algo que nos pasa inadvertido”. Therefore, although she recognizes Jiménez as her “maestro” in terms of poetic language and the essence of poetry, she develops her own poetics, based on her personal experience and outlook. Her continual struggle to reconcile “palabras” and “cosas” – Saussure’s distinction between the signifier and the signified: the word as it appears on the page and the actual concept it invokes – shows that, like her contemporaries, she was aware of the limitations of language in terms of expressing reality.

As the above discussion has shown, Paz, in seeking to define the essence of her poetics, focuses on the theme of poetic inspiration as a source from within. She thus embarks on a process of introspection and internalization which was undoubtedly provoked by her sense of isolation, and also by her personal inclination towards solitude and meditation. By regarding poetic inspiration as a form of companionship which enables her to explore themes that are important to her, writing

³⁷ It is this arrogant position Otero and other poets writing *poesía social* attacked in the 1940s and early 1950s; see the previous chapter.

³⁸ According to Sánchez Torre (1993: 172-73), “el sistema poético juanramoniano manifiesta una confianza plena en la palabra [...] para la captación y revelación del mundo.”

poetry provides a form of liberation, as is exemplified in “Del abreviado mar” (I).

Fuertes also seeks emancipation through her poetry, but, as we shall see below, in her case this involves defining a poetics that serves to establish a link between herself and the outside world.

2.3. Gloria Fuertes: Poetic Purpose Expressed in Parody and Intertextuality³⁹

Like Paz, Fuertes is aware of the limitations of language, and she also recognizes the transcendental aspect of poetic language: the mystery involved in poetic inspiration and the capability of such language to point to a truth that goes beyond the everyday, common language and events that are at the heart of Fuertes’s work. She, unlike Paz, claims to be an independent, autodidactic poet and experiments with new ways of making poetry out of colloquial language, and in doing so addresses the issues of the limitations of language and the essence and purpose of poetry. While the main focus of the discussion below will be on parody and intertextuality, as this is a fundamental aspect in her poetry of the 1950s and 1960s, and how she uses them as tools to define her poetics, it will also briefly consider some other ways in which she experiments with poetry. The discussion is based on three poems. The first two poems discussed in detail, “El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte” (from *Antología y Poemas del suburbio*, 1954) and “Maletilla” (from *Poeta de guardia*, 1968), are significant not only in how they illustrate the argument, but also because they introduce an aspect of Fuertes’s poetics that has not been referred to so far: the orality of her work, and her emphasis on the importance of reading her poetry aloud to an audience. The third poem, “Telegramas de urgencia escribo” (from *Ni tiro, ni veneno, ni navaja*, 1965), highlights a major difference between Fuertes and Paz: while Paz’s foremost purpose,

³⁹ A version of this section, based on the analyses of “El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte” and “Maletilla”, will be published as the article “Parody and Metapoetry in Two Poems by Gloria Fuertes” in *Romance Studies* (Swansea).

as we have seen, is to poetize an intuited truth which cannot be expressed in any other linguistic register, Fuertes primarily has a didactic purpose, as a consequence of which she wishes to use ordinary language within a poetic context in order to communicate her message. All three poems use parody as a means to convey this message.

As is the case with the concept of metapoetry, there are different definitions of parody and intertextuality. Hutcheon has developed a useful definition of parody in *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, saying that it always involves a new text, the parodic text, and an existing, parodied text: “in the background will stand another text against which the new creation is implicitly to be measured and understood” (1985: 31). Such a process is only possible if the parodic text is not a mere imitation, but has a critical element; parody, therefore, is “imitation with critical difference” (36). This difference is achieved by means of what she refers to as ironic inversion, which consists of the replacement of a specific convention, genre or individual text, with its opposite (6), a process which, in Fuertes’s case, can also be described as subversion, because it involves the challenging and toppling of both aesthetic and social norms. As parody means criticising another text, and so drawing attention to the parodic text as an artifice, it always has what Hutcheon refers to as a “metadiscursive level” (1). The critical element of parody enables Fuertes to expose clichés and so demystify and purify language. Like Paz, she is therefore aware of the problematic nature of poetic language, but she approaches it from a very different angle. Her self-conscious exposure of poetry and language can be linked to Shklovsky’s theory of *ostranenie* or defamiliarization:⁴⁰ by confronting the reader

⁴⁰ Waugh (2003: 65) says about defamiliarization in this context: “Literature here becomes a means of renewing perception by exposing and revealing the habitual and the conventional. [...] Literature can thus be seen as inherently self-conscious, for ‘laying bare the device’, when applied to the literary work itself, results in self-conscious parody.”

with language that frequently appears to be the opposite of poetic language, but which has been implanted into a poetic context, she draws attention to the different possible meanings of words, and the poem as artifice. As parody involves a new text and the text it implicitly refers to, the concept of intertextuality should also be clarified. Pérez Parejo gives a broad definition of both the process of intertextuality and the intertext, which will provide the basis for the discussion below. According to this definition, intertextuality refers to the inclusion of any fragments, expressions or quotes from other texts, while the intertext may consist of any cultural message.⁴¹ The latter in particular is important to the discussion of Fuertes's poetry, as she tends to refer to extrapoetic modes of discourse rather than to literary texts.

In "El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte" (OI: 52), Fuertes parodies a market vendor's street language, which functions as the intertext:

– Muy barato,
para el nene y la nena,
estos cuentos de risa
y novelas de pena
¡aleluyas a diez!
Vendo versos,
liquido poesía,
– se reciben encargos
para bodas, bautizos,
peticiones de mano –,
¡aleluyas a diez!
No se vaya,
regalo poesía,
llévese este cuarteto
que aún no me estrené!
Para la madre,

⁴¹ Pérez Parejo's definition is as follows (2002: 142-43): "En principio, la intertextualidad consiste en la aparición en un texto propio de fragmentos, versos, expresiones o citas pertenecientes a textos ajenos. Supone el conjunto de relaciones de un determinado texto tanto con los de otros autores como con los del autor mismo, pero las relaciones también pueden establecerse, en un sentido más amplio del término, con cualquier mensaje de la cultura o con cualquier manifestación artística." Although I have used Genette's term "*paratexte*" above, I have decided not to apply the other elements he distinguishes in his five-element schema for references to texts within a text in *Palimpsestes*, as his subtle distinctions between "intertextuality", "metatextuality", "hypertextuality" and "architextuality" (see Macksey, 1997: xviii-xix) seem unnecessary within the context of my analysis.

para la novia,
el mejor regalo
un verso de amor!

Desperate to sell his goods, the luckless poet reduces the price of his merchandise, and when he notices that he is losing his audience, he even offers his work free of charge. Extolling the virtues of his goods and using street market clichés such as the notion of “liquidar” a range of goods and selling unique products “que aún no me estrené”, the speaker offers a mixture of products which are all equally cheap: children’s books, popular genres such as “novelas de pena” and the “aleluyas”, but also the “cuarteto”, associated not only with high culture but also with the traditional verse forms cultivated by the state-promoted *garcilasistas*. The spoken – or shouted – language is interpolated with the three lines starting with the advertising convention “se reciben encargos / para”, a text one might expect to find on a placard on a vendor’s stall. In spite of the non-poetic vocabulary, there is no doubt that we are dealing with a poem: the text is presented as such in a poetry collection, it has the verse form associated with the genre, and it uses the traditional poetic devices of rhythm and rhyme. Fuertes’s metapoetic purpose in using the street vendor’s words as the parodic frame for her poem is to debunk the special status of poetry. By setting off the mundane market scene against the poetic structure of the text, she challenges the elevated standing of “Poetry”. Although the poem can be seen as a reference to the unpopular status of the genre at the time in general, the luckless poet using the market as a venue is also an indirect autobiographical reference to her own experience of being a “poeta sin suerte”. She felt excluded from the select world of poetry at the time, and the speaker’s idea of selling his work cheaply, or even giving it away, reflects her own wish to be read. Although the poetic persona created in this

poem is an anonymous, male poet, the speaker may nevertheless be legitimately associated with herself, as her own personality, attitude and experience are reflected in the speaker's words. She starts the poem by mentioning children's literature, and she herself wrote many children's poems and stories, while it concludes with a remark on a love poem, and love – both personal love and the importance of love and friendship in the world – can be regarded as the overall most important theme in her work. The text's boisterous tone reflects her own exuberant personality.

An additional reason why this poem is particularly effective as a parody is that Fuertes saw herself as an oral poet and gave many public readings of her work in bars and at local events.⁴² Read aloud to an audience, she would take on the role of the vendor, and the audience would be forced to act as the vendor's target and possible customers, and so become part of the context of the performance in which meaning was generated. This would have had a shock effect on those expecting a different kind of poetry, while working-class people would have identified immediately with the situation and would have felt included in the poem. F. Ynduráin, in his "Prólogo" to her *Antología poética (1950-1969)* emphasizes the importance of the oral aspect of her poetry and the impact of her public readings, saying that "es la suya, inevitablemente, una poesía oral, y esta *Antología* no puede ser sino muy lejano eco de su verso, al faltar su interpretación recitada" (1979: 42). He also mentions what he calls her "madrileñismo", which refers to her use of the vernacular of Madrid and her specific sense of humour, giving local colour to many of her poems (34-35). Two other poems that, in a similar tone, evoke street scenes in Madrid are "Puesto del Rastro" (OI: 66-67) and "El sacamuelas" (OI: 240). "Puesto del Rastro" consists of a

⁴² In the late 1940s, she was particularly interested in promoting public readings of poetry written by women in Madrid. According to the website of the Fundación Gloria Fuertes, "en 1947 funda junto a Adelaida Lasantas el grupo femenino 'Versos con faldas' que se dedica durante dos años a ofrecer lecturas y recitales por cafés y bares de Madrid" (see the Fundación's website, <<http://www.gloriafuertes.org/biografia.htm>>).

vendor pronouncing a long list of objects for sale, and is reminiscent of Ramón Gómez de la Serna's treatment of used objects in *El rastro* (1915). According to a footnote added by Fuertes, "el poema es una especie de auténtico pregón". She also explains that the "Rastro" is a market in Madrid "donde venden de todo, pero usado" (OI: 66). This emphasis on the fact that the objects have been used, and therefore have their own story – which is also a fundamental theme in Gómez de la Serna's book – shows that, like Paz, she is aware of the special role of objects in defining a person's identity and perception of reality. The speaker of "El sacamueles" uses commercial jargon similar to that in the above poem in order to try to sell his goods – which include "píldoras mensuales", "hojas de afeitar" and a "crecepecho" – to the women walking past. As, like the "vendedor", he has no luck and is ignored by the public, the poem ends with an aside placed between brackets: "y recojo y me marcho...".

Particularly relevant to this kind of market setting and street language is Hutcheon's observation that a specific form of ironic inversion is that of carnivalesque and social inversions, described by Bakhtin in *Rabelais and his World* (Hutcheon, 1985: 74). Although Bakhtin's study focuses on folk humour and carnival in the Renaissance, some aspects of his discussion, such as the emphasis on the culture of the marketplace, the form of folk parody associated with carnival, and its participative element (1968: 3-7) – in the above poem, the reader's involvement or the audience's participation in the poem – seem particularly relevant to Fuertes's poetry. Sherno, who has explored the relevance of Bakhtin's theory on carnival to many of the aspects of Fuertes's work, establishes a link between folk humour's purpose of rebelliously inverting the official order and its relevance within Franco's oppressive regime (2001: 198). In the above poem, by encoding her message of

protest against official culture and her marginalization as a working-class poet within a parodic structure, she is able to challenge prevailing ideas about poetry in general and about her own work and role as a poet in particular.

To conclude the discussion of “El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte”, it is interesting to consider how its effects are enhanced by its position within the book. As we have seen, it is irreverent in its treatment of poetry because of its non-poetic language and the suggestion of poems as cheap merchandise. In addition, the rhythm of the short lines and the exclamation marks suggest a declamatory voice. Both the poems that precede and follow it carry a contrasting message, as they deal with poetry in a more reverential tone and refer to its special purpose and meaning. The preceding poem, “Inesperada visita” (OI, 51-52), gives a list of poets, including “Pilar Paz”, who once came to see her; the poem concludes as follows:

¡Todos venían para salvar el mundo!
 Ateridos venían con la voz al descubierto.
 Papeles encendidos traían como antorcha,
 a ayudarme venían con sus brazos vacíos,
 expuestos a morir o a perder todo;
 – ¡Que pasen esos chicos, son poetas!

Encendimos la lumbre del misterio
 y yo los recibí en mi misma celda.

The visit was important, as the poets had come to save the world, which suggests that poetry has a transcendental significance and is sacred. This is further enhanced by the poets’ self-sacrificial attitude: in spite of the cold their voices are exposed,⁴³ and they are ultimately prepared to die for their cause. In the concluding lines, the association

⁴³ The word “descubierto” also suggests openness, discovery and freedom; it is interesting how it is reminiscent of the end of Paz’s “... Y tuvieron”, where she says that she has her head “al descubierto”, like the seagulls, holding up her head “¡al aire, al aire, al aire...!” Likewise, the comment that the poets “a ayudarme venían con sus brazos vacíos” echoes Paz’s lines “¡No ser nadie y tener / la nada repartida!” of the third stanza of “Del abreviado mar” (II).

of poetry with mystery, the seclusion of Fuertes's cell, and the religious connotations of both clash with the content of "El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte". The poem that follows the vendor's words, "A lo mejor un día..." (OI: 53), provides a similar contrast. Its title has a dreamlike quality; its content deals with the abstract, transcendental meaning of poetry and the mystery of poetic inspiration. It opens with the following lines:

Porque la poesía es un milagro.
 Algo que puede ser y no sabemos en qué consiste,
 algo así como cuando dejamos de estar enamorados,
 o lloramos bajito en una caja.
 No se puede decir, me voy a sentar a hacer milagros.
 La poesía es un misterio.

The poem starts with an abstract comment, apparently beginning in mid-sentence. Its structure of long lines suggests a soft-spoken, thoughtful reading; rather than evoking a market vendor's public, shouting voice, here she talks about crying "bajito", while hiding in "una caja". Thus, the tone and content of both poems clash with that of "El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte", and the three poems together make a complex, metapoetic statement about Fuertes's purpose, experience and definition of poetry, in spite of their colloquial language and apparently simple messages.

In the poem "Maletilla" (OI: 168) she again uses parody to comment on her poetry and her experience as a poet:

Maletilla de las letras
 por los caminos de España;
 sin hacer auto-stop a los catedráticos,
 ni a los coches oficiales
 ni a las revistas que pagan...
 – sólo a los camioneros y las tascas –;
 ...y no me dieron ninguna oportunidad

por ser nieta de puta y basta.
 Ya toreo por mi cuenta,
 sin permiso salto vallas,
 siete corridas ya tengo, toreadas,
 – quiero decir siete libros
 igual que siete cornadas – ,
 maletilla de las letras
 por los atajos de España.

While “El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte” refers to a specific intertext, “Maletilla” can be regarded as a parody of the poetic genre in general. The use of colloquial language and convoluted sentences suggests thoughts that have been penned down in haste rather than a well-planned structure and complex language based on learning and intellect. However, a careful reading of the poem shows that it is far from straightforward, and that it constantly requires the reader to adjust his or her expectations. Her defiant use of language underlines the poem’s metapoetic theme of her independence as a poet and her rebellious attitude towards cultural authority. If “El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte” challenges art as an elevated genre, in “Maletilla” the elevated status of those who have the power to take decisions on art are challenged. The semantic complexity of the first line shows that we are dealing with a poem that is not as simple as its linguistic register might suggest. The word Fuertes has chosen to describe herself, “maletilla”, is well-suited to define her career and personality, and introduce the poem’s subject: the figure of a bullfighter suggests a strong, defiant personality ready to fight, while a “maletilla” also suggests a self-taught bullfighter coming from the margins, who has had to make his own way.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The *RAE* dictionary gives the following definition of “maletilla”: “Persona joven que, desasistida de medios y ayudas, aspira a abrirse camino en el toreo comenzando a practicarlo, a veces, en las ganaderías o procurando intervenir en tientas, capeas, becerradas, etc.” The image of the “maletilla” recurs in the poem “Ella pide una oportunidad” (*Mujer de verso en pecho*, 161). Here, the figure of the

However, by combining the word with “letras”, she also hints at a poet’s struggle to subdue language in her poetry, while the suggestion of travelling evokes a completely different meaning of the word: that of a small “maleta”. The reference to travelling is relevant in that Fuertes, from the 1960s onwards, gave many recitals of her work in rural parts of Spain, in order to reach those who would otherwise be excluded from poetry. In her “Prólogo” to *Obras incompletas* she says in this respect: “Voy por los pueblos, aldeas y provincias de España. A los que no compran libros (porque allí no llega el libro, o el dinero, o la alfabetización), yo, humildemente, les llevo mi libro vivo, en mi voz, cascada rota, en mi cuerpo, cansado y ágil” (OI: 31). Finally, the word “letras” also suggests the study of literature, and therefore points forward to the “catedráticos” of the third line. The three types of vehicle that might take her further along the road – both the road that she is travelling literally and that of her career as a poet – and which she wishes to ignore, represent the three established routes towards success: recognition by academic critics, promotion and support provided by the regime, and publication in commercially based journals. As all three have scorned her in the past because of her supposedly inferior poetic style, her defiant language and

“maletilla” personifies – paradoxically – “la Paz”. Referring again to the forlorn, self-made and marginalized aspects of the “maletilla”, the poem starts with the lines:

Como un maletilla, ella.
 (Ella es la Paz.)
 Va destrozada,
 mal vestida,
 delgada,
 acerico de balas,
 rasguño de metralla.

It concludes with the comment:

La Paz,
 como un maletilla
 sólo pedía una oportunidad.

Like Fuertes, in whose work world peace becomes an increasingly important theme in her later work, “la Paz” is marked by her past of poverty and war experience, and feels a compelling need to be noticed.

her poor background, she turns her back on them and instead opts for the working-class lorry drivers and the “tascas”, cheap bars which, like Fuertes’s poetry, are often frequented by prostitutes. The angry outburst that ends the first sentence contains the “taco” – a word she would later use to refer to the kind of slang words she included in her poetry – “nieta de puta”.⁴⁵ She thus confirms the prejudices against her poetry voiced by some critics, but at the same time creates the parodic intertext of a verse line with perfectly regular rhyme and rhythm.⁴⁶ In the second sentence she elaborates the metaphor of the self-made “maletilla” referred to in the title and the first line. Having rejected established, cultural authorities, she now works independently, and can therefore jump across the barriers set up by such authorities, without being held accountable. She continues the bullfighting metaphor to comment on her experience of writing poetry, implying that although the seven books she has published so far have been a positive achievement, “siete corridas [...] toreadas”, the creative process

⁴⁵ In the metapoem “...Si a veces hablo mal” (*Historia de Gloria*, 147-48) she explains her use of “tacos” as a response to being ignored as a poet. This poem also makes a dig at academics:

...Si a veces hablo mal,
 es porque me dejan
 como un mueble,
 como una mesa cojitranca me dejan,
 sin equilibrio
 me tambaleo,
 y me tengo que calzar con un taco
 ¡Coño!
 Aunque se horroricen los eruditos
 ¡Leche!

⁴⁶ She was frequently criticised by reviewers of her poetry readings. Although such reviews are now difficult to trace, an example I found in Fuertes’s own collection of articles about her readings – which, as is understandable, mainly consists of positive reviews – is an article by Juan Carlos Molero in a Madrid newspaper, published in November 1967. It summarizes the negative criticism of many contemporary critics: according to his judgement, her poetry “es una poesía muy irregular. Junto a poemas francamente buenos tiene otros que..., en fin, que no lo son tanto. Falta criba, rigor, selección. Gloria Fuertes tiene, además [...] mucha, demasiada, facilidad versificadora y ello le lleva, cuando se descuida, al retruécano y al juego de ingenio”. The rhythm and rhyme of the line “por ser nieta de puta y basta” would deliberately confirm – and therefore parody and subvert – such criticism. As is discussed below and in Chapter 4, her play on words is not gratuitous, and serves specific purposes in her poetry. (Source: Fundación Gloria Fuertes, Madrid.)

has also been a painful struggle that has left its mark: the “siete cornadas”.⁴⁷ By replacing the “caminos” of the second line with “atajos” in the last, she again makes sophisticated use of different meanings of a word. In its meaning of “shortcut”, the “atajos” suggest back roads rather than the main roads implied by “caminos”, and could therefore be associated with the poet’s sense of being sidelined, while it could also refer to the alternative route she takes and the different audience of “los que no compran libros” she seeks to address. On the other hand, an “atajo” is also a word or sentence crossed out in a text, which at the time would have been linked to censorship. The suggestion here is that by reading her poetry to working-class people in provincial backwaters, she can avoid the “atajos” associated with “official”, mainstream culture. The poem, through its use of language, the parodic references to the poetic genre, and its challenging vocabulary, derides the special status of poetry, promoted and upheld by specific cultural institutions. One reason why Fuertes’s use of brief, intertextual references and elaborate parody as a means to comment on her poetics – a frequent feature in her poetry of the 1950s and 1960s⁴⁸ – makes her poetry interesting, is that it gives the reader an active role in the poem’s interpretation, and therefore its construction. As Hutcheon (1985: 33) points out, “parody is a sophisticated genre in the demands it makes on its practitioners and its interpreters. The encoder, then the decoder, must effect a structural superimposition of texts that incorporates the old into the new.” The application of this sophisticated process to

⁴⁷ In addition to the “maletillas” referred to in this poem and in footnote 44, Fuertes frequently refers to bullfights in general in her poetry. According to Sherno, in her discussion of carnival mentioned above, such references to bullfights, and also to the circus and the sports arena, have a special significance in her work, as they enable her to refer to an alternative world with its own set of rules, removed from officialdom, where she can express her rebellion: “They represent the enactment of communal spectacles which sustain their own rules while momentarily suspending those of the official social structure” (2001: 208). Pérez Parejo (2002: 463) makes the interesting point that such references to an alternative world also have metadiscursive significance because of “su condición de escenario o de actividad artística”, which is certainly also relevant here.

⁴⁸ In her later work she tends to make more direct statements about her poetics, as is evident from the examples from *Historia de Gloria* quoted in this chapter.

texts that are from everyday, non-intellectual situations gives Fuertes another means of mocking an academic approach to poetry.

In addition to referring to non-poetic settings and language such as that of the market place, she also frequently uses other non-literary texts, such as letters, telegrams, advertisements, and news announcements⁴⁹ as the poem's intertext. A poem where she combines such an intertext with explicit statements about her poetics is "Telegramas de urgencia escribo" (OI: 141), the first poem of *Ni tiro, ni veneno, ni navaja* (1965),⁵⁰ where she enhances her metapoetic statements by inscribing them in the non-poetic framework of a schematic overview, while the "ingredients" suggest a recipe:

Escribo, más que cantar cuento cosas.
 Destino: La Humanidad.
 Ingredientes: Mucha pena
 mucho rabia
 algo de sal.
 Forma: ya nace con ella.
 Fondo: que consiga emocionar.
 Música: la que el verso toca
 – según lo que va a bailar –
 Técnica: (¡Qué aburrimiento!)
 Color: calor natural.
 Hay que echarle corazón,
 la verdad de la verdad,
 la magia de la mentira
 – No es necesario inventar –.
 Y así contar lo que pasa
 – ¡nunca sílabas contar! –.
 Y nace sólo el poema...
 Y luego la habilidad

⁴⁹ Taking a newspaper announcement as the basis for a poem was a common feature of contemporary, realist writing. José Hierro's well-known "Réquiem" (2002: 211-14), for instance, was inspired by a death notice, while the poem "Accidente de trabajo" by Jesús López Pacheco (quoted in Camacho Guizado, 1969: 389) reads like a newspaper article. Fuertes's "Nota biográfica" (OI: 41-42) starts with the lines "Gloria Fuertes nació en Madrid / a los dos días de edad", thus echoing this style, before changing from the impersonal third person to the first person.

⁵⁰ Because of their self-referential nature, metapoems often appear at the beginning of a collection, and serve as an explanation or a defence of the writer's poetics. (Consider, for instance, the first poems in Paz's collections *Mara*, *Del abreviado mar* and *La violencia inmóvil*, and Fuertes's title poem in *Poeta de guardia*.)

de poner aquello en claro
si nace sin claridad.

Using a condensed style of short phrases apparently written in haste – an impression that is supported by the reference to the telegrams and the sense of urgency referred to in the title – she is able to summarize her poetics in less than a page.⁵¹ Indeed, in her “Prólogo” to *Obras incompletas*, she says about this poem: “En este poema de veintiún versos resumo (y doy facilidades) todo lo que pueden decir de mí, con estudio, rigor y trabajo, en tesis de esas de quinientos folios” (OI: 30). Some of the poem’s elements refer to the objectives of *poesía social*. The “contar” rather than “cantar” reflects the notion of communicating the truth, “la verdad de la verdad”, with “claridad”, without decorative embellishment that involves “contar sílabas” and leads to “inventar”. As social poetry wishes to bring about change, her message is urgent, and therefore there is no time to think about formal and technical aspects. Sánchez Torre (1993: 184) specifically associates such narrativity with *poesía social*, saying that “característico de los metapoemas sociales será su insistencia en que la poesía debe relatar y relata simple y llanamente lo que ocurre, ni más ni menos”. He later adds: “ ‘Contar lo que pasa’ se hará, así, sinónimo de denunciar la situación que se vive e intentar que la palabra [...] sirva, en uno u otro modo, para transformar el mundo” (188). However, as the poem shows, there is much more to Fuertes’s poetics than its association with *poesía social*. Addressing her work to “la Humanidad” – written with a reverential capital – she crosses the boundaries of a mere social or political category, and shows her respect for humanity. The “calor” and “corazón” suggest tenderness, while the poem on the whole constitutes a humorous approach to

⁵¹ In fact, Fuertes describes her poetics and introduces her work in Leopoldo de Luis’s anthology by quoting this poem (2000: 307-08).

a serious subject. The emphasis on the verb “nacer”, mentioned above in the comparative part of this chapter, allows her to refer to the creative process in the same way as Paz does in some of her poems: through the image of giving birth to her poetry. This brings out the poet’s personal involvement in the process, and the attachment she feels towards her poetry.

While Fuertes often uses an entire poem to draw the reader’s attention to its status of artifice, she also frequently draws attention to specific words or phrases. The purpose of this is to frustrate and unsettle the reader’s conventional expectations of poetry and so draw his or her attention to the poem’s meaning, or to add a humorous element. However, in doing so, she avoids traditional poetic devices, and experiments with alternative strategies. We have already seen that she often makes intertextual references to proverbs and clichés, or refers to different meanings of a word, as she does with the words “maletilla”, and “contar”, used first in its meaning of “to communicate” and then that of “to count” in “Telegramas de urgencia escribo”. Another example of such semantic wordplay can be found in the use of the verb “meter” in one of the poems called “Poética” quoted above (*Historia de Gloria*, 189), where she follows the profound comment about whether she puts reality in poetry or the other way around, with the much more light-hearted reference to the idiom “meter la pata”. Frequently, she inserts apparently inappropriate, non-poetic words into her poems, such as the “tacos” referred to above or the word “cafre” in the phrase “mi médico es un cafre” in “Ya la tarde se pasa”, discussed in Chapter 1. She also uses forms of phonetic wordplay, in particular paronomasia, which consists of the replacement of one letter of a word by another. This is the case, for instance, in “color” and “calor” in “Telegramas de urgencia escribo”. An extreme example of paronomasia can be found in the poem “Yo” (OI: 223):

Yo,
 remera de barcas
 ramera de hombres
 romera de almas
 rimera de versos,
 Ramona,
 pa' servirles.

Sherno says about such use of language: “Fuentes makes comic use of paronomasia to underscore the unstable and provisional character of text and language” (2001: 166).

In other words, this is another expression of Fuentes’s awareness of the limitations of language, and its link to an unstable, subjective interpretation of reality. As Folkart points out, this poem can also be regarded as a comment on Fuentes’s awareness of her unstable role in society, as it ironizes “the various subject positions that patriarchy has established for her” (2000: 793). A slightly different example of wordplay, where she exploits both the sound and meaning of words, can be found in “Miradme aquí” (OI: 120-21): “Es peligroso el mar si no sé nada, / peligroso el amor si no se nada.”

Making minimal changes to the spelling, she can use the same line twice, but with different meaning. At the same time, she uses a technique Browne (1997: 93-108) refers to as “quiasma semántico”: the first part of the first line has a semantic link with the second part of the second line, while the first part of the second line is linked to the second part of the first line. This is a device that occurs a number of times in Fuentes’s poetry written in the 1950s and 1960s. Such experiments with alternative poetic strategies have been well documented.⁵² All such details contribute to her

⁵² García-Page, for instance, has made a detailed study of the linguistic aspects of wordplay in her work, focusing particularly on the different forms of paronomasia (see his unpublished doctoral thesis and his book and articles on the subject, referred to in the Bibliography); Browne (1997) compares Fuentes’s experiments with texts and language with those of Ángel González.

humanization of poetry,⁵³ giving it a very personal, often humorous tone, which allows it to break with the restrictions of *poesía social*, adding “algo de sal” to her “pena” and “rabia”.

Although Fuertes developed her own, recognizable style, her use of apparently non-poetic language, reflecting her challenging stance towards both traditional, elitist poetic conventions and social standards, is a characteristic of the work of many of her contemporaries, not only in Spain, but also in Spanish America. One poet worth considering in this respect is the Chilean poet Nicanor Parra, who developed the poetics of antipoetry. Fuertes herself refers to this term in two of her poems, and several critics have drawn parallels between her work and that of Parra.⁵⁴ The word antipoetry itself suggests opposition towards poetry expressed within a poem, and, therefore, parody, which makes it relevant to the discussion of Fuertes’s poetics. Other characteristics of Parra’s antipoetry, such as its orality, its colloquial language and emphasis on mundane reality, are also prevalent in her work. In spite of such similarities, however, hers and Parra’s poems are different in terms of both style and purpose, and I would therefore be reluctant to describe her work as antipoetry.⁵⁵ In particular their outlook on life, and therefore their intent, is very different. Both writers agree that the poet has to put himself or herself at the same level as the reader, what Parra refers to as “bajar del Olimpo” (Costa, 1998: 20), but according to him, poetry has no other function than that of showing the banality of life (38):

⁵³ In the words of Cooks (2000: 434), Fuertes’s poetics “places the ordinary person at the center of the poetic landscape by humanizing the poet and deconceptualizing the poem.”

⁵⁴ One of her poems has the title “¿Antipoema?” (OI: 273), and in another, self-descriptive poem, “Minicursi”, she refers to herself as “antipoeta” (OI: 329). An influence of Parra’s work on Fuertes’s poetry is suggested in Perriam, et al. (2000: 158) and by Sherno (2001: 88-91).

⁵⁵ Because of the specific connotations of “antipoetry” in Parra’s usage of the word, I have given preference to the word “non-poetic” when I refer in general terms to the features in Fuertes’s poetry that seek to undermine traditional poetic conventions.

El antipoeta [...] es todo menos un visionario; es, por fin, “el hombre de la calle” a quien le pasan las cosas, es el hombre de hoy y de ayer, el hombre de medio siglo que ve lo “absurdo”, lo “feo” y lo “brutal” de todo lo que le rodea – y que es existencialmente incapaz de darle sentido al caos. Hace, por tanto, lo que hacemos todos: encogernos de hombros y seguir adelante.

As the final poem of *Poemas y antipoemas*, “Soliloquio del Individuo” (1998: 113-16), concludes: “Pero no: la vida no tiene sentido.” To Fuertes, however, life does have meaning, as is clear, for instance, from the many references to her faith in her poetry, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Therefore, in her opinion, poetry does have a moral and didactic purpose, pointed out, for instance, in the poem “Inesperada visita”, referred to above, where the poets have gathered “para salvar el mundo”.

Although she sides with an uneducated, working-class audience, she nevertheless sees herself as a visionary, who interprets the “milagro” mentioned in the poem “A lo mejor un día...”. Therefore, while Fuertes’s work has elements of Parra’s antipoetry, rather than shrugging her shoulders and turning away from the ugliness she sees around her, she uses her poetry to expose and challenge what she perceives as injustice, whether this is social or personal. In spite of her often irreverent treatment of poetry within her work and her challenges to art as an elevated, privileged system, then, poetry itself is ultimately sacred to her, and through her parodic sacrilege of established notions about poetry, rather than merely bringing it down, she redeems it.

2.4. Conclusion

Recognizing the significance of poetry as a medium through which they can develop their identity, both Pilar Paz Pasamar and Gloria Fuertes ponder the meaning and essence of their poetry in their work. Paz elaborates a contemplative attitude towards

poetic inspiration, which enables her to define her own personal poetics and so set herself up as an independent, subjectified woman in a society where many women continue to have a submissive, objectified role. This independence provides her with a sense of freedom which she is able to celebrate on her own, as is the case in “...Y tuvieron”. Fuertes, on the other hand, rather than displaying a tendency to withdraw from the world, seeks to be incorporated in it. She achieves this by setting herself specific communicative and didactic tasks, while she also physically enters society by giving readings of her poetry. However, such attempts at integration on the basis of her independent, wayward personality also cause friction, which in this chapter has been manifest in her defiant stance towards her critics, elaborated through the effective use of parody and intertextuality.

As the above analysis of their poetics and the ways in which these are presented in their work has also shown, both Paz and Fuertes are aware of the limited possibilities of expression through language, and how these affect their poetics. Such limitations are due to personal factors – as each individual associates words with different meanings, depending on his or her memories, life experience and literary background – and also to the fact that, over a period of time, words and phrases have become associated with specific secondary meanings, resulting in multiple messages and clichés. On the other hand, when an experience is abstract and new, it is difficult to find words to describe and communicate it, as language requires a common ground of knowledge. As we depend on language to express ourselves, this leads to a paradox which Pérez Parejo (2002: 326) recognizes as an important theme of metapoetry: “La crítica del lenguaje en la metapoesía revela la paradoja entre la necesidad del lenguaje y la experiencia de lo indecible.” As we have seen, Paz and Fuertes deal with this paradox in different ways. Paz exploits the musical aspects of poetry – its sound and

rhythm – and imagery to support her explorations of the elusiveness of poetic inspiration and literary creativity, while she also makes elaborate intertextual references to the work of other poets, such as Góngora, Bécquer, and Juan Ramón Jiménez, to facilitate this process. Fuertes approaches the problem from a different perspective: aware of the same paradox, she deliberately uses ordinary language and clichés, parody and alternative strategies within a poetic structure, which enables her to show everyday language and colloquialisms in a new light and give new meaning to outworn words. The poetic framework she thus creates supports her statements, both overt and implied, about her poetic identity and purpose, both of which are also based on ordinary life and language. Both poets, by using such devices in their work to support and elaborate their message, acknowledge the special nature of poetry: they recognize that poetry can contribute to overcoming the problems posed by language, and that it can therefore be used to point to a truth that goes beyond language.

Of course, the recognition of this special nature of poetry, and the questions about its purpose ensuing from this, is as old as language itself. The debate about the nature and purpose of poetry in the Western world was initiated by Plato, who wanted to banish poets from his ideal city because their use of language corrupted people's minds (*The Republic*, Book X). Many twentieth-century philosophers, including, as we saw in Chapter 1, Jean-Paul Sartre, have commented on the special qualities of poetic language, which set it apart from ordinary prose language or spoken language. Three literary theorists who have attempted to define poetry and its special use of language are Jakobson, Riffaterre and Longenbach.⁵⁶ Although the theories they

⁵⁶ I have chosen these theorists because they wrote at different times of the twentieth century and because they give slightly different definitions which illustrate my point about the special nature of poetry. There are obviously many more theorists, from many different backgrounds, who have written about poetry. It is perhaps no coincidence that two of the theorists, Jakobson and Riffaterre, can be

develop are ultimately incompatible, all three frame their theoretical arguments around a concept that defines the special nature of poetry in slightly different ways: Jakobson says that poetry thickens language, Riffaterre introduces the principle of semantic indirection, and Longenbach says that poetry depends less on meaning than on the way in which it means. All these concepts bring out the fact that poetic language draws attention to itself, through the use of strategies such as the ones described above, as a result of which its meaning differs from and transcends that of factual prose language. According to Jakobson, the poetic function consists of the message emphasizing itself: “By emphasizing resemblances of sound, rhythm, image, poetry thickens language, drawing attention to its own formal properties and away from its referential significance” (paraphrased by Scholes in 1974: 26). An example of this process of thickening language can be found, for instance, in the refrain of Paz’s “Del abreviado mar” (I), where the rhythm of the lines suggest the movement of a ship against the waves, which supports the poem’s imagery of a ship traversing the sea of her inner self, used to describe the process of introspection and inspiration. Riffaterre introduces his *Semiotics of Poetry* by referring to semantic indirection, explaining that “poetry expresses concepts and things by indirection. To put it simply, a poem says one thing and means another” (1987: 1). He relates this principle to the semiotic process, which involves the integration of signs from the mimetic level – the level that aims to represent reality and literal meaning – into a higher level of significance (4). Although such significance may be created by means of the more traditional poetic devices mentioned by Jakobson and is obviously discussed in much more detail in his book, the term “semantic indirection” seems a particularly relevant way of describing Fuertes’s experimental strategies that make the apparently

linked to Structuralism, as this branch of theory evolved around the attempt to apply linguistics to poetic language (see, for instance, Eagleton, 1996: 3-5).

straightforward meaning of a poem such as “Maletilla” pull into many different directions. Longenbach, in *The Resistance to Poetry*, discusses a number of aspects of poetry, such as the use of metre, syntax, figurative language and the speaker’s voice, in order to show that the power of poetry depends less on literal meaning than on the way in which it means. As it is the poet who decides on the poetic strategies used to determine the way in which his or her work has meaning, this description emphasizes that poetry is a very personal expression. Longenbach therefore concludes that “the poem’s language creates an interior space where for a moment [a reader] may hide” (2004: 10), and that poems “offer the illusion of the intimate space of the human voice” (107). In “Del abreviado mar” (I), Paz refers to such a hiding place and her inner self, while in her other poems she invites the reader to join her in her intimate thoughts. The very personal way in which Fuertes gives meaning to her poems by using specific strategies is evident in “El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte”, where she involves the reader in a complex statement about poetry, while also referring to her own background and giving the poem an element of humour. Octavio Paz gives a personal account of his experience of poetry and its special nature in his essay *El arco y la lira*, in which he says about words used within a poetic structure that “sin dejar de ser instrumentos de significación y comunicación, se convierten en ‘otra cosa’” (2004: 22), and, referring to the metaphorical value of words, he claims that “las palabras se conducen como seres caprichosos y autónomos. Siempre dicen ‘esto y lo otro’ y, al mismo tiempo, ‘aquello y lo de más allá’”(49). The poet Rodríguez Pacheco (2001: 69), referring to the same idea, defines it as follows:

El lenguaje [...] es experiencia y nombra la concreción; el milagro del lenguaje, superando sus niveles, es lo que no dice y, sin embargo, sugiere, lo que incita a una interpretación de otro universo que subyace en lo explícito que se nombra, en lo

que normativamente concretizan las palabras, en definitiva, lo real subjetivo. Se llega así a alcanzar, conocer, gozar, intuir, sentir otra realidad por sugestión; y es la intuición, la sensibilidad, la imaginación, quienes instituyen otra realidad que vigoriza el espacio, que posibilita la alegoría, que subvertiona lo concreto y proyecta esta disidencia más allá de la propia expresión haciéndola perturbación, desasosiego, frente a lo sistematizado.

As a consequence of this ability of poetry to transcend everyday reality and point to another, absolute truth beyond language – Debicki’s “visionary dimensions and possibilities” referred to at the beginning of this chapter – poetry is particularly suitable for the exploration of metaphysical questions, and the theme of God and the divine. As we have seen above, both Paz and Fuertes are aware of this. Paz’s meditations on the ineffable quality of poetry show that she recognizes a close link between poetry and the divine. This is evident, for instance, in “Del abreviado mar” (I), where poetry is described as a “cántico”, a word with religious connotations, in the third stanza of “Del abreviado mar” (II); in “Misterios”, where the mysterious force that brings poetic inspiration is associated with the divine; and in “Dónde voy yo, Dios mío”, where the intense process of writing poetry is associated with a religious vocation and her perception of God. The section on Fuertes’s poetics concluded with her recognition of poetry as something sacred, because of its ability to improve people’s lives. In “A lo mejor un día...”, where she establishes that “la poesía es un milagro”, she recognizes a link between poetic creation and the divine, referring to the “Creador” as “el mejor Poeta”. In fact, her beliefs – a personal faith based on traditional Christian doctrine – is the subject of many of her poems. The following chapter explores how the two poets exploit their poetics and the different poetic strategies they have developed to address metaphysical themes related to the

divine and ineffable truth, and so define the relationship between the self and the divine.

Chapter 3: Beyond Poetry

*La poesía es una palabra salvadora,
como Dios.*
Gloria Fuertes

*de Tu Garganta brota el pájaro fonema,
los onomatopeyas del viento, el poema,
que rubrica el aliento de cada criatura.*
Pilar Paz Pasamar

Aware that poetry can invoke and communicate a truth that goes beyond ordinary speech, both Gloria Fuertes and Pilar Paz Pasamar write many poems that seek to articulate their personal thoughts and meditations on the subject of the divine, thus addressing the paradox of their perceived need to write about experiences and beliefs that are ultimately inexpressible. In this context, silence, already discussed against the background of the socio-political context and as a consequence of the limitations of language, takes on the meaning of a meditative attitude and space where poetry begins, expressed in the epigraph to Chapter 1. Paz recognizes this significance of silence in, for instance, “Del abreviado mar” (I), where inspiration comes with “mi corazón en la punta / del mástil de mi silencio”. Fuertes, who, as we have seen, tends to rebel against the silence and solitude surrounding her in the 1950s and 1960s, is able to write much later, when reflecting on the past in “Todo lo pasado” (*Mujer de verso en pecho*, 40):

No me asustan la soledad y el silencio,
son los lugares preferidos de Dios
para manifestarse.

Although Fuertes and Paz take the subject of the divine in different directions, an important similarity between the two is that their thoughts about the divine are based on their intimate “inquietudes”, which they feel they need to express in their poetry. As a consequence, and also because of the link between poetry and the divine recognized by both – as is evident, for instance, from the lines quoted in the epigraph to this chapter – I would argue that these “inquietudes” provide the motor that sustains their poetry. Paz in fact wrote a poem called “La inquietud” (*Del abreviado mar*, 18-19), in which she describes such emotional restlessness as an inspiring factor in her life, saying that “nace mi verso bajo tu sonrisa”. Their preoccupations are the result of their questioning, independent minds; they are constantly drawn between a conventional pole of traditional Roman-Catholic beliefs, and an unconventional pole, marked by their own personalities, thoughts and experiences. Fuertes’s beliefs are essentially based on a Christian God, but at the same time she feels alienated from the Church because of its link with Francoism, its teachings, and its rejection of her lesbianism, which she therefore has to conceal and come to terms with in private. In the case of Paz, her circumstances of being a dedicated mother and wife mean that she ostensibly conforms to the Church’s expectations, but her personal beliefs lead to an interpretation of the divine that is not limited to the traditional Christian God. Both poets experience a confrontation with a Church based on outward appearances that encourages submissiveness – in particular by women – and discourages individual thinking, while it condemns any expression of defiance. Gracia writes in this respect of “una religiosidad [...] exhibicionista y ritual” and “una piedad de escaparate”,

based on ostentatious Masses and processions, while “la creencia íntima y la evaluación de la religiosidad privada se retrajeron a un remoto plano de la experiencia” (Gracia and Ruiz Carnicer, 2004: 120-21).

The all-pervading presence of the Church and its role as an instrument of propaganda within the national-Catholic ideology developed by the Franco regime should not be underestimated, as any reference to religion within literature would immediately provoke strong feelings among both sympathizers with and opponents to the Church and the regime. A case in point is Carmen Laforet’s novel *La mujer nueva* (1955), which narrates the protagonist’s religious experience that leads her to become involved in all the official, religious institutions in Madrid, associated immediately with the regime. Although the novel describes a genuine experience, based on the author’s own crisis of faith, the book was vilified by those who had praised her for her defiant stance in *Nada* (1945).¹ Another example of a book based on a religious theme is Dámaso Alonso’s *Hijos de la ira* (1944), which describes the poet’s existential doubt following the war, and a process which finally leads to redemption and union with God. The book was generally acclaimed as one of the most influential poetry collections of the post-war period, but the reason for this was primarily its exposure of social injustice. Rather than referring to its religious theme, which was often ignored or interpreted exclusively in existentialist terms, critics regarded it as a forerunner of *poesía social*. Leopoldo de Luis, for instance, refers to it as a “clamor contra la injusticia”, without making any mention of its religious dimension, in his anthology *Poesía social española contemporánea* (2000: 205-06). Religious thought expressed in literature, then, had become a controversial topic, as sympathizers with the Church would be quick to condemn any non-orthodoxy, while opponents to the regime would

¹ See Caballé, 2004: 456.

consider any reference to religious themes objectionable and ideologically suspicious. When Fuertes is grouped with other contemporary poets writing about similar subjects, she is almost invariably referred to as a social poet, and not as a religious poet. In the case of Paz, her emphasis on religious themes may well be one of the main reasons why she has been consistently ignored by many contemporary critics. A final point to note in this respect is that both poets, whose experience was embedded in post-war culture, also participated in traditional expressions of faith. Fuertes, for instance, wrote many “villancicos” – although later ones had didactic messages similar to those that can be found in her other poetry – while in “Hay un dolor colgando” (OI: 75) she refers to the “icono viejo” of “la Virgen Madre” which, like any other woman, she had on her wall. Paz also makes frequent references to Mary in her early poetry, and wrote a “Soneto a Santa María de África” as part of the “pregón” for Holy Week in Ceuta in 1966; obviously, the phenomenon of Semana Santa exemplifies the exhibitionism and ritualism referred to by Gracia.²

Bearing in mind this context, which makes it difficult to dissociate traditional, Catholic beliefs from an ideology that permeated every aspect of people’s lives, this chapter first of all looks at mysticism and its relevance to the two poets’ treatment of the subject of the divine, making specific reference to Santa Teresa’s *Libro de la vida* and San Juan de la Cruz’s *Cántico*. Because of the intimist approach to the divine – focusing on the relationship between self and God – that is characteristic of mysticism, it is not surprising that there are many references to mystical writing in the work of the two poets. However, it should also be noted that sixteenth-century

² However, as the printed version of the sonnet points out, Paz “ha sido la primera mujer que ha hecho un Pregón de Semana Santa.” An interesting example of an early poem by Paz about Mary is “Canción de Navidad” (*Mara*, 50-52). Although this poem is based entirely on the Christian tradition of the Holy Family – which was exploited by the regime because it confirmed the role of women and the family it sought to promote – the focus is on the doubt, anguish, vulnerability and pain of a young woman who is about to give birth for the first time.

literature was very prominent in the early Franco years – Fuertes and Paz’s formative years – and that both San Juan de la Cruz and Santa Teresa played an important part in the socio-cultural context.³ The section on Paz that follows, focuses on her adaptation of San Juan’s image of “filomena”, and compares her ideas about the divine with those of Juan Ramón Jiménez. It concludes with a discussion of how the theme of the divine is dealt with in *Violencia inmóvil*. The section on Fuertes seeks to establish how she differs in her treatment of the subject, considering, for instance, her interpretation of an often humanized God, who is frequently addressed or described with apparent irreverence.

3.1. The Two Poets and the Mystical Tradition

Both Fuertes and Paz refer to the Spanish mystical tradition in their work, and make intertextual allusions to Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz. Because of their development of a personal understanding of the divine, driven by their “inquietudes”, their poetry has some features of mystical writing, although I would argue that Spanish mysticism is essentially a sixteenth-century phenomenon, which developed within a specific social and cultural context that was obviously very different from that of the twentieth century. A general definition of mysticism, relevant within the context of this chapter, would be to say that it involves the separation of consciousness from physical experience through an ascetic process, which leads to the soul’s union with the divine.⁴ In the case of Paz and Fuertes, the solitude imposed by

³ See the references to sixteenth-century literature and *garcilalismo* in the 1940s in Chapter 1. In 1942, the celebration of the fourth centenary of San Juan de la Cruz’s birth received much attention, while Santa Teresa became the patron saint of the Sección Femenina, and Franco carried around the relic of one of Santa Teresa’s hands. For the role of Santa Teresa in Francoist propaganda, see Di Febo (1988 and 2002). In fact, Fuertes wrote a poem about the return of the relic of Teresa’s hand to the Carmelites after Franco’s death (“Cuando la revolución de mil novecientos veinte”, included in *Mujer de verso en pecho*, 78).

⁴ This is a definition based on Hatzfeld (1955) and Estébanez Calderón (2000).

patriarchal society to some extent provides the ascetic element of the mystical process, as it produces an introspective ambience, in some respects comparable to that of a convent; this is suggested, for instance, by the reference to the “frailucos tristes sin compañía” who “buscan retiro entre las sombras / que los rincones les deparan” in Paz’s “La alacena” (see Chapter 1). The discussion below analyses some aspects of Fuertes and Paz’s work on the basis of a comparison of examples from their poetry with elements from Santa Teresa’s *Libro de la vida* and San Juan de la Cruz’s *Cántico*, which I have found to be particularly relevant in this respect. Before doing so, it is appropriate to return briefly to the theme of language and the ineffable, and consider its significance in the context of mystical writing.

Hatzfeld (1955: 15) establishes a link between mystics and poets, saying that both have similar experiences: “Uno y otro buscan a tientas en la oscuridad lo que no pueden producir por sí mismos; después, en un instante, reciben una ‘iluminación’ que les hace aprehender intuitivamente, no analíticamente, una realidad oculta para el hombre corriente.” As the average person is unable to perceive this intuited reality, the mystic, and therefore the poet, becomes a mediator between the ineffable experience and its communication to the reader. Octavio Paz, who also compares writing poetry to mystical experience (2004: 24-25), defines the poet’s task, or mission, as “construir un puente entre el mundo, los sentidos y el alma” (93). As he, like the mystic writers described by Hatzfeld, recognizes a divine source of poetry, poetic inspiration is sacred (118). In the case of both Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz, it was exactly their commitment to communicating the ineffable that meant that they could make a lasting contribution to the development of Spanish literature. As Carmen Martín Gaité points out, Santa Teresa’s main contribution to literature

consists of her frequent comments on the process of writing in *Libro de la vida*.⁵ San Juan de la Cruz, on the other hand, although he includes the famous metapoetic comment about his “balbuco” in stanza 7 of the *Cántico*, stands out because of his introduction of symbolism in Spanish poetry,⁶ basing himself on the nuptial imagery provided by the biblical Song of Songs, and the pastoral imagery used by Virgil and introduced into Spanish literature by Garcilaso. As we shall see, Santa Teresa’s writing, with its down-to-earth, spontaneous language and numerous metapoetic comments, is particularly relevant to the discussion of Fuertes’s poetry, while San Juan de la Cruz’s symbolism has influenced Paz’s work. One aspect the two poets share with both Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz is their avoidance of rhetorical language, as such language would turn the poem into an artefact rather than a genuine attempt to communicate the ineffable. As the discussion of “La sencillez” by Paz and “La linda tapada” by Fuertes in the previous chapter has shown, both poets regard clarity of style as an important aspect of their poetry.

Although, given the discussion and quotes from her poetry so far, Fuertes and mysticism may seem an unlikely combination, she refers to the mystical aspect of her poetry several times, and she wrote a number of poems in which she mentions Santa Teresa or makes intertextual references to her writing. It is particularly interesting to compare the latter’s *Libro de la vida* with Fuertes’s work, as it shows that there are striking similarities in their circumstances and motivation, and that they were writing with a comparable purpose in mind. Teresa primarily wrote her *Libro de la vida* to

⁵ She argues: “La necesidad de adaptar el estilo al tema, es decir, de aplicar cierto criterio de ordenación para parcelar el caos de un mundo tan desconcertado como el del espíritu, provoca en ella misma un desconcierto que solamente puede afrontar hablando de él, de los tormentos que le produce y de los problemas de elaboración literaria que le plantea. Viene así a entretenerse su discurso con una serie de reflexiones sobre el imprevisible proceso de ese mismo discurso, de cuyos altibajos hace participe el lector, riquísima e insólita novedad en la historia de las letras españolas” (1999: 63).

⁶ F. Ynduráin claims that “San Juan inaugura entre nosotros la poesía *simbolista*, y en ello radica su encanto tan distinto” (quoted in D. Ynduráin, 2004: 198; italics in original). The manuscript of the *Cántico* – and therefore the order of stanzas – referred to is that of the Carmelitas Descalzas de Jaén, used by D. Ynduráin.

defend herself before the Inquisition's confessors, and to instruct illiterate novices. However, in her attempt to write about her mystical experiences she achieves much more than that. According to Chicharro, "ella acepta desnudar su intimidad, contando lo que de suyo es incontable, con el solo fin de manifestar la grandeza de Dios" (2004: 78). This is exactly what Fuertes aims to achieve, because her autobiographical writing reflects universal, human experience,⁷ and such experience is directly related to the divine, as is discussed below. The sense of love and compassion associated with their beliefs pervades all their work. Such compassion is not linked to any political ideology, and, as Benítez points out in an article on Fuertes, "Hay algo profundamente teresiano, de santidad hosca y rebelde, en el modo en que asume Gloria Fuertes las lacras de la sociedad; hay convivencia y compasión más que denuncia ideológica" (1980: 29). Fuertes's experience of poetic inspiration is comparable to Teresa's mystical experience, which involves a state of rapture and is described in terms of a mystical vision in "Rapto" (*Historia de Gloria*, 347):

La poesía se apodera de mí
y yo me entrego.
La asisto y la resisto,
me dicta y me conmueve;
después,
escribo lo que ella quiere.

Describing the process in similar terms as Santa Teresa, Fuertes accepts poetic inspiration as a divine gift; in "De prestado" (OI: 278), she therefore refers to "mi verso, de Otro dictado". Another similarity between Fuertes and Santa Teresa which is interesting to point out, although it is related to their purpose rather than their

⁷ As she says (1999: 22-23), "Lo que a mí me sucedió, sucede o sucederá, es lo que ha sucedido al pueblo"; see the discussion of this aspect of her work in Chapter 1.

mystical inclination, is their anti-intellectual style. Their simple style, characterized by apparently artless writing and the emphasis on everyday life, is a direct consequence of the readership they wish to address: Teresa addresses uneducated nuns, while Fuertes writes for everyone, but specifically wishes to reach the working classes. In an interview with Larra Lomas (1996: 86) about the religious aspects of her work, she says in this respect: “Yo escribo como hablo. Por eso mi poesía lo mismo estremece a un analfabeto que a un catedrático. Eso lo sé y eso es lo que quiero que siga sucediendo.” Their didactic purpose makes both women aware of a sense of urgency, reflected in their large volume of writing, which frequently gives the impression of a certain degree of carelessness. In another interview, with Soledad Alameda (1978: 6), Fuertes comments:

Mi poesía está hecha de un tirón [...] No tengo tiempo para mirar si este adjetivo es mejor que el otro o para meditar sobre la arquitectura del poema, como se dice. El tiempo que otros emplean en hacerlo más bonito, prefiero usarlo para hacer otro poema y así tengo dos en vez de uno.

Several critics have also established a link between Santa Teresa’s deliberately simple language and pretence of lack of learning, and her marginalized status as a woman and descendent from Jewish “conversos”. Claiming to be a visionary in a society dominated by the patriarchal Inquisition, she had to pretend that she was not very intelligent in order to avoid censorship;⁸ as such, she was struggling against exclusion in a way comparable to Fuertes’s experience. Given the similarities in their purpose, outlook and experience, and their rebellious nature, it is understandable that Fuertes refers to Teresa in her work and to some extent identifies with her. She does

⁸ See, for instance, Jiménez Faro (1996: 13), Chicharro’s footnote 10 to Chapter XIII in *Libro de la vida* (2004: 220), and Weber (1990: 10).

so in a humorous way in “Aleluyas de Santa Teresa”, one of the poems for children included in *Don Pato y don Pito* (1983: 40-41). Fuertes, who proudly acknowledged that she was the first woman to ride a bicycle in Madrid,⁹ thus asserting her independence as a woman, here says about Teresa, in an aside made between brackets, that Teresa is very much like herself: “Esta gran Santa poeta, / hoy iría en bicicleta”.

Fuertes’s sense of humour, and her perception of the place of humour in life, is directly related to her interpretation of the divine and its emphasis on the presence of God in what is earthly and human, which is discussed in more detail below. She herself associates her mysticism with humour and laughter in “Poema” (OI: 55), a metapoem in which she defends herself against criticism of the apparently non-poetic, urban focus of her poetry. The poem starts with the question, “¿Que no soy mística porque canto el suburbio?”, which she answers by saying, “Y canto el suburbio porque en él veo a Cristo”. This is later elaborated with the lines, reminiscent of Teresa’s emphasis on the mundane: “Yo me hundo en lo espiritual, / haciendo un poema en el arrabal.” It concludes with the statement: “que lo místico mío es reír”. She thus regards laughter as a divine gift, which enables people to deal with difficulties.¹⁰ While this applies to other people, and she seeks to make others laugh with her poetry, it also applies to herself. In the poem “¡Vaya encuentro!” (OI: 154), she describes what in Santa Teresa’s terms would be a mystical experience; here, Fuertes seeks to obliterate her own sense of despair by describing what happens in an apparently light-hearted, jocular tone:

⁹ In the interview with Alameda she says, “Creo que fui la primera mujer que iba y venía por todo Madrid en bicicleta y de las primeras que se pusieron la falda-pantalón, primero, y el pantalón, después” (1978: 8).

¹⁰ Characteristically, she later contradicts this statement and denies any mystical inclination by saying “No soy mística porque siempre me río” (quoted in González Rodas, 2004: 42).

- Que vivo porque no vivo – (yo)
- “Vivo sin vivir en mí” – (Santa Teresa)
- Vivo porque vivo en ti – (yo)

Paz also comments on Santa Teresa’s apparent impatience to die and unite with God in her essay *La mujer y la poesía de lo cotidiano*. Like Fuertes, she notices Teresa’s emphasis on the mundane, but at the same time her negative attitude towards the reality of daily life. She says (1964: 10):

Santa Teresa amó, pero consciente de que lo hacía bajo un propósito de despedida. Fue activamente negativa frente a lo cotidiano, que no es la vida misma, sino el contenido de esta vida. “Vivo sin vivir en mí – y tan alta vida espero – que muero porque no muero”... ¿No afirma en la espera de esa alta vida la pequeñez de lo temporal? [...] La única razón de toda esa actividad fundadora, andariega, nómada, fue la de entretener su impaciencia...

As we have seen, daily life and objects have a special significance to Paz, as they represent “el contenido de esta vida”, while at the same they serve to symbolize a truth that both underlies and transcends “lo cotidiano”.

Many of Paz’s poems reflect an awareness of the ineffable, and her attempt to express such awareness. However, unlike Fuertes, she perceives the ineffable and the divine in a truth that transcends the limitations of time and space, which explains why Paz does not establish a link between the divine and her social context in her poetry, and her work does not have a didactic purpose. It also in part accounts for the fact that Paz has written a much smaller volume of poetry than Fuertes, as instead of being aware of a sense of urgency, she is much more concerned with finding the right words to express herself. According to her, “la poesía es como una fruta del ser, que se madura lentamente” (16-10-2005). It is therefore not surprising that Paz makes a

number of intertextual references to San Juan de la Cruz in her work, as his *Cántico* has a similar aim of seeking to express an ineffable experience. Because of the symbolism and sparseness that characterize San Juan's attempt to express what is ultimately inexpressible, it is impossible to define the exact meaning of the *Cántico* and to decide to what extent it is a religious poem or a love poem, and therefore whether it deals with spiritual or physical union.¹³ As expressions of human love and divine love have a similar source, an ineffable experience the cause of which is perceived to lie outside the self, it can be argued that it is unnecessary to define the exact meaning and purpose of the *Cántico*.

A similar ambiguity exists in Paz's *Ablativo amor* (1956), a collection of eighteen sonnets which all deal with the theme of love – both divine and human – and which has the verse “Salí tras ti clamando y eras ido...” from the first stanza of the *Cántico* as its epigraph. Apart from the introductory and concluding sonnets, the poems generally emphasize an awareness of absence and describe a mood of waiting, sometimes in hope and other times in despair. Ripoll (1986: 13), comparing the book's themes with those of the *Cántico*, also points out the relationship between waiting and silence: the silence caused by the absence of the loved one, and also by poetic language failing the poet:

El amor a las cosas de la naturaleza, a las personas y al primitivo verbo se debate a ciegas y casi violentamente con las grandes lagunas del silencio vacío, con una respuesta nula de esa misma llamada poética, y al par se ensancha con la fe inexplicable y existente en esas propias fuerzas amorosas.

¹³ For this reason I reject San Juan's own *Declaraciones* as the “correct” interpretation of the poem, and agree with D. Ynduráin that they represent a text written as an afterthought, in different circumstances and for a different purpose. (See D. Ynduráin, 2004: e.g. p. 99). I therefore refer to the poem as the *Cántico* rather than the *Cántico espiritual*.

A poem that makes specific reference to such silence is *Soneto II*:

Intermediario ser, anfibio alado,
Amor hecho de raptos y de ausencia,
a otros alimentaste con tu ciencia
desposeyéndome del esperado.

Bien sé como eres aunque disfrazado
cruzaras tantas veces mi dolencia
haciéndome creer que era experiencia
de ti lo que ni apenas tu recado.

Ahora, burlada, llega el importuno
labio de quien te sabe a repetirme
tu nombre con informes y resabios.

Condenada a la espera y al ayuno
no te alzaré la voz ni habrás de oírme
porque la soledad no tiene labios.

Like the sixteenth-century mystics, she recognizes that Love manifests itself either in “raptos” or through its absence. By using the abstract word “Amor” rather than San Juan’s “Amado” throughout the book, its meaning becomes even more ambiguous. It can refer to the personal experience of the divine or the experience of human love, but also to poetry and poetic inspiration. While others have knowledge of such “Amor”, which enables them to express the experience in words, she is condemned to the ascetic process of waiting and fasting, recognizing that, until she has such knowledge, there are no words to express her loneliness.

Another poem that is relevant within this context is Paz’s “Misterios”, which has already been discussed in Chapter 2 because of its metapoetic associations.

Describing a process of introspection, which involves “mirándome hacia adentro” in front of the mirror, she seeks a kind of awareness within herself that differs from her visual perception, saying that she ultimately wants to

[...] llegar hasta el encuentro
de esta invitación sonora
que me hace música el tiempo.

As was pointed out, the “encuentro” refers to both poetic inspiration and the experience of the divine. These lines invoke “la música callada” and “la soledad sonora” of Stanza 15 of the *Cántico* (2004; 252); the process of watching a reflection combined with the desire for it to become the reflection of the “Amado”, the divine or poetry, is described in Stanza 12 (251):

¡O christalina fuente,
si en esos tus semblantes plateados
formases de repente
los ojos deseados
que tengo en mis entrañas dibuxados!

D. Ynduráin gives an excellent description of this experience, saying about the speaker that, when she is successful, “ella, reflejada en la fuente ve el espíritu que sale por los ojos de las entrañas donde ha concebido la imagen – los ojos – del amado” (2004: 218). This also defines Paz’s ambition to find the resources within to see the abstract in a concrete image that can then be described in words. She makes a more direct reference to the same stanza of the *Cántico* in the sonnet “Fuente” (*Mara*, 45):

Pensamiento en la luz cristalizado,
ascenso dulce y suave de una aurora
que renueva su canto con las horas
y en líquido temblor se ha devanado.

Tú, perfecta ascensión, has encontrado
el único ideal entre las nubes
y, rompiendo la calma sorda, subes

hecha ofrenda y frescor hacia el Amado.

Déjame a mí copiar esa arrogancia
de mirar a los cielos y entenderse,
de darse con el alma entre temblores.

¡Oh, fuente que procuras la fragancia
de este patio que cuidas y adormeces
con la mística nana de tus flores!

Again, there is a clear link between poetry and the divine, and the poet's desire to express the ineffable. The "pensamiento" that has been crystallized in the light (reminiscent of San Juan's "christalina", an apparent reference to "Christ") gradually becomes organized in threads, "hecha ofrenda", dedicated to the "Amado". The sound of poetry is implied in the fountain's "canto" and its breaking the "calma sorda". The "temblor" of poetry emerging is mentioned again in verse 11, where it is related to "darse con el alma". Her overall purpose is to copy what she perceives in front of her, both with her senses and with what Ynduráin calls the "ojos de las entrañas", in the poem.

As the above discussion has shown, both Fuertes and Paz make intertextual references to mysticism and, in different ways, explore and identify with certain aspects of mystical writing. One thing they have in common is that they both experience and describe the suffering of separation from the "Amado" experienced by the mystics, often symbolized by thirst. Fuertes, for instance, describes such feelings in "Yo en un monte de olivos" (OI: 254), a title which refers to the biblical Mount of Olives and Christ's suffering. The "pasión del hombre" she observes in human pain and social injustice, urges her to write poetry and express her thirst for love, which would mean the end of such pain and injustice: "Sudo tinta y tengo sed, sed tengo, / mucha sed de manos enlazadas." However, as is the case with Christ and the saints,

her mediating role in this process remains unrecognized, and when people see her in the street they greet her with the words:

– Ahí va Gloria la vaga.
– Ahí va la loca de los versos, dicen,
la que nunca hace nada.

Because she is misunderstood, writing poetry becomes similar to a personal martyrdom. Sherno (2001: 161) says in this respect: “Poetry is Fuertes’s way of the cross, a radical (if figurative) sacrifice of self, not on behalf of, but alongside of, the suffering needy, oppressed and outcast about whom she writes.”¹⁴ An example from Paz’s poetry where she refers to the image of thirsting after divine love can be found in “La sed junto al aljibe”, the final poem of one of her more recent collections (*Textos lapidarios*, 99-100). The entire poem explores the image of the well of divine love, which the thirsting poet can smell, but can never quite reach. It opens with the lines:

Por el camino de mi sed Te llevo,
no hay otra ruta en la que Te desveles
y aunque a mi alrededor no corra, huelo
Tu agua profunda que mi sed aviva.

Just as she can never succeed entirely in expressing the ineffable in words, she can never quite perceive the divine.

Both poets, then, refer to aspects of mysticism to elaborate their ideas about God and the link between poetry and the divine, but their motivation to do so is

¹⁴ Allusions to madness as a consequence of nonconformity and the exclusion by the majority this may provoke is referred to again in Chapter 4.

different: while Paz seeks to express in words a concept of the divine that is essentially an abstraction, Fuertes, whose beliefs are underpinned by social motives, adapts the traditional Christian God, describing him in down-to-earth, often humanized terms. The sections below focus on their often contrasting perceptions of the divine, and how this is expressed in their poetry.

3.2. Pilar Paz Pasamar: “en espera del Todo”

As the final stanza of “Del abreviado mar” (II), quoted in Chapter 2, shows, Paz’s poetic vocation consists of waiting in readiness to catch glimpses of an overall truth, and modestly trying to express such moments in poetry. Ripoll¹⁵ therefore summarizes the religious theme in her work as her aim to “expresar concisamente esa unión inquietante de nuestra vida con el todo”, saying that “para mí, aquí estriba la religiosidad de Pilar: en la necesidad de coaligar la existencia con la identidad de lo absoluto.” This section looks at four different topics associated with how she handles this theme of expressing the union between the self and the absolute. First, it considers some early poems set in church buildings, which deal with the emotions and doubt provoked by such places, as they represent the official Church and doctrine. This is followed by a discussion of Paz’s adaptation of the image of “filomena” – the bird that represents the soul of poetry – in her work, and a comparison of her views about the divine with those of Juan Ramón Jiménez. It concludes with an analysis of some of the poems from *Violencia inmóvil*, in which the focus is no longer on small objects that reveal the divine, but on a universe that provokes questions and inspires doubt and fear.

¹⁵ In his article “La solitaria voz de Pilar Paz Pasamar” on <http://cvc.cervantes.es/actcult/paz_pasamar>.

In three sonnets in *Los buenos días* (37-39), “Salida y entrada de la catedral” I and II, and “El reclinatorio”, Paz distances herself from the superficial religious display associated with the church building. In the first two sonnets she does so by referring to the architecture and physical building of the cathedral. Although the poems are written as prayers, as would be appropriate within the setting of the cathedral, they are totally unconventional and reveal a non-submissive spirit, challenging the God associated with the building. The first sonnet starts with the lines: “Como el fuste divide en dos la entrada, / Tú tienes mi esperanza dividida”. We later learn that the awakening of her questioning mind and her sense of “asombro” – a word that recurs in “La sencillez” and in some of the poems of *Violencia inmóvil* – have made her feel that half of her no longer belongs to the God represented by the cathedral and all it stands for. The second sonnet concludes as follows:

Señor, Tu nombre entre las naves suena
como el sonido de algo sepultado
cuando le duele tanta tierra encima.

Te buscaré esta noche en la serena
oscuridad, si todos han callado
ajenos a la gloria de Tu clima.

She rejects the hollow sound with which God’s name is pronounced in the inhospitable building, as it evokes a claustrophobic image of imprisonment and suppression. Instead, she will look for God in the serene darkness where he exists, but where none of the other church-goers will be aware of his presence. She continues this theme in “El reclinatorio”:

¿Quién colocó mentira sobre el suelo
para las descansadas bienvenidas?

¿Para qué fe sin luz, ansias mullidas
arropan al dolor con terciopelo?

Quien cabalgue amargura, vaya a pelo
con las roncas espuelas doloridas,
fluyéndole la sangre por las bridas,
sobre las ancas de la bestia en celo.

De rodillas aquéllos, los que ignoren
que pueden encontrarte en una rosa
o en la terrible soledad espesa.

Que es muy fácil, Señor, que aquí te lloren
con una bienvenida presurosa
y la sangre rotundamente ilesa.

The ritual of kneeling on the “reclinatorio” represents a lie, as those involved in it only go through the motions of a faith without any depth: their cushioned “ansias” are nursed by the soft velvet, and although they cry, their blood is not involved in this, as their inner being remains completely detached. She, however, is aware of an alternative, which means passionate involvement, represented by the image of riding an untamed, uncushioned, bareback horse “en celo”. Unlike those kneeling down, she is aware that God can be found in both a rose and in terrible solitude. The rose is a small, beautiful detail of nature, but, given Juan Ramón Jiménez’s influence in Paz’s work, it may also symbolize a poem, as is often the case in Jiménez’s poetry. The idea that God can not only be found in beauty, but also in personal suffering, is a key concept of Paz’s perception of the divine. In “Del abreviado mar” (I), the encounter with the inspiring “cántico” was both “dulce” and “amargo” – the same “amargura” referred to in “El reclinatorio” – while, as we shall see, in *Violencia inmóvil* she is very much aware of a positive as well as a negative, bitter, fear-inspiring aspect of the divine.

A recurring image in Paz's work which symbolizes poetry and poetic inspiration, is that of the nightingale – or other singing-bird – representing the poet's "cantar". While the symbol as such is far from original,¹⁶ she develops the image of the bird and its "trino" to symbolize the divine aspect of poetic inspiration and expression. This process culminates in the poetry collection *Philomena* (1995), based on the leitmotiv of Philomena, a bird which "simboliza al poeta que, de tanto cantar, muere de sus propios esfuerzos dentro de un día" (16-10-2005). The quote in the epigraph to this chapter, which reveals the link between the divine and poetry, as well as the role of poetry, is from "Idioma" (17), one of the book's poems. When asked about the significance of the bird in her earlier work, Paz confirmed that, although the name "Philomena" is never used, the bird always has the same significance of representing "el interior poético". The image is based on the "canto de la dulce filomena" mentioned in stanza 39 of San Juan's *Cántico*, which represents the voice of the "Amado", united with the "esposa".¹⁷ According to Paz, Philomena is "el alma en oración. Al trasladarla al hacer poético, es el alma del poeta que canta." Because of

¹⁶ Referring to a bird and birdsong as a symbol of the poet and the poetic process are common in poetry; such imagery is a characteristic feature of Romantic poetry, and is also common in Juan Ramón Jiménez's work.

¹⁷ Philomena has, in fact, a rather curious history, dating back to Greek mythology. Starting off as Philomela, she was a young princess who was raped by her brother-in-law King Thereus, and was later turned into a nightingale, a story recounted by Ovid in Book VI of the *Metamorphoses*. She then reappears as a nightingale as part of the pastoral imagery in Virgil's poetry, which was adapted in the Renaissance by Italian poets, who again influenced Garcilaso. She appears, for instance, as "la blanda filomena" in Garcilaso's "Égloga I" (l. 231) and is also mentioned in other pastoral poems, on the basis of which the image was adapted by San Juan de la Cruz. Reina (1995), who discusses Paz's later poetry in the light of the "tradición andalusí", not only discusses the link between the Andalusian-Arabic tradition and the development of Spanish mystical poetry, but also mentions the nightingale as an important symbol within this tradition, saying that "el ruiseñor era uno de los pájaros sagrados para el Islam y, en Al-Ándalus, por su carácter migratorio y su bello canto, estaba relacionado con los poetas". Philomela has also been used as a cliché for women poets. Hopkins (1970: 133), for instance, in a disparaging poem directed at an anonymous "Poetess" – who has thus been robbed of her identity – says:

Miss M's a nightingale. 'Tis well
Your simile I keep.
It is the way with Philomel
To sing while others sleep.

the attentive attitude this involves, she also defined Philomena as “el poeta en vigilancia”,¹⁸ which coincides with Fuertes’s idea of the “poeta de guardia”. In the first poem of *Los buenos días*, “Rondador, por el aire” (9-11), Paz establishes a link between a singing bird and the poet. The poem starts as follows:

Donde te encuentro es en
 el instante preciso
 que no te reconozco.
 Cuando las cosas tienen
 tanta fuerza que casi
 parecen ellas solas.
 Pero apenas mi mano
 roza la superficie,
 tú asomas desde el fondo
 de la materia, y vienes,
 y brotas como el agua
 de dentro de la tierra
 cuando se la socava.

The second stanza reveals that the “tú” she addresses is, in fact, a blackbird:

A hurtadillas te miro
 saltando por las hojas,
 mirlo imprevisto, ave
 impuntual y ligera.

In spite of its light-hearted tone, the poem, describing the poet playing hide-and-seek with a fluttering blackbird, suggests much about Paz’s ideas about poetic inspiration and its source, which is only partly within her inner self. In the first three verses, the bird’s agility provides an image of the elusiveness of the ineffable: when the experience is there, she fails to recognize it. Objects in themselves are just objects, but touched by the poet they may acquire a specific meaning beyond that represented by

¹⁸ All the quotes are from one of the interviews with Paz (16-10-05).

“ellas solas”. The metaphorical bird appears from within like a source of water that may quench the poet’s thirst for the experience of the ineffable. As the bird is “imprevisto” and “impuntual”, such moments are unpredictable, and so the poet will always have to be vigilant.¹⁹

The symbols of the bird and birdsong are also important in “La casa” and “La alacena”, which, as was discussed in Chapter 1, deal with the process of the poet giving special meaning to objects through a process of association. Paz is able to recognize the link between such objects and the associations they provoke because she is conscious of them. This was discussed within the context of “La casa”, as in this poem she contrasts the house’s lack of consciousness with the building’s deeper meaning, which she can recognize because of her memories associated with it. It starts with a reference to a bird and birdsong:

La casa es como un pájaro
prisionero en sí mismo,
que no medirá nunca
la longitud del trino.

Here the bird is used in a simile that compares the house with a bird. As the “pájaro” is imprisoned within itself, it cannot make any associations, which is expressed in its inability to measure its own song: a measurement is always taken against something else, which involves some kind of association with the environment. The poet, who associates the house with a growing number of happy memories, connects her

¹⁹ While in this poem the “rondador” is a blackbird, in “Del abreviado mar” (II) she refers to her “corazón, rondando” to describe the perceptive process that leads to poetic inspiration and creation:

Mi corazón, rondando,
se confunde en el mundo
y vuelve a mí dichoso
en gloria y oleaje.

awareness of the abstract presence of such memories with the divine, which is expressed in the exclamation: “¡Cómo crece la sombra / de Dios aquí escondido!” at the end of the poem. Typically, the experience is described in terms of something that is intangible: a “sombra”. In “La alacena”, the minute description of the associations evoked by the objects in her larder is preceded by a reference to a nightingale:

Como en convento de clausura,
 todos esperan, todos callan,
 y el ruiseñor contemplativo
 del tiempo trina y les delata.

Waiting in a meditative attitude, reminiscent of the atmosphere of a convent’s cloister, the spices and vegetables are perceived by the nightingale, which “les delata” one by one to the poet. This gives her a special awareness of the objects, which inspires her to write the poem. Here the nightingale reveals the “interior poético” of each object to the poet, making her aware of the ineffable beauty of even the smallest, seemingly most insignificant objects, which all form part of a divine “Todo”.

As was pointed out in Chapter 2, it is interesting to compare Paz’s treatment of themes such as poetry and the divine with that of Juan Ramón Jiménez, because of the apparent similarities between the approaches of the two poets, and also because Paz herself recognizes his influence. Indeed, when we consider, for instance, the function of the poet’s awareness and perception in the above discussion, this is reminiscent of the role of consciousness and its relation to the divine in the later work of Jiménez. However, as I did in Chapter 2 in the context of poetry, I would argue that there are also important differences between the two, which are illustrated in particular in Paz’s *Violencia inmóvil*. Therefore, before moving on to a discussion of that collection, I will first point out some further similarities and differences between the two poets, in

order to provide a better understanding of the “cosmovisión” that underpins Paz’s poetry.

In many respects, Paz coincides with Jiménez in her treatment of the subject of the divine. Like him, she recognizes that it is her consciousness as a poet that enables her to give transcendental meaning to objects, and therefore perceive the divine in everything. Because of this there is a close link between poetry and the divine; in the case of Jiménez, poetry is the divine, while Paz recognizes a divine source of poetry, which is frequently represented by the symbol of a bird. Both explore their “cosmovisión” in their poetry, and each collection represents a specific stage in their process of discovery, although Paz also writes about other themes in her work. When asked about her views about Jiménez’s development of the theme of the divine and how it influenced her early poetry (16-10-05), she left no doubt about the effect it had on her work, describing how he “me abrió un universo” because of his “misticismo no cristológico”. She thus recognizes the mystical aspect of his entire oeuvre, which can be regarded as a twentieth-century “camino de perfección” towards an understanding of the ineffable,²⁰ while she also acknowledges his alternative, non-Christian approach to the divine. As, in the 1950s and 1960s, Christian doctrine was imposed as the only possible truth, there can be little doubt that reading Jiménez’s non-dogmatic poetry encouraged her to question such doctrine and look for an alternative approach to the divine, as is evident in “El reclinatorio”. Describing his beliefs during our interview, she said: “Me encuentro con un panteísta absoluto. Con un hombre que está en el espacio, inserto ya como una tesela en el universo, en el sitio donde sigue.” This definition refers to Jiménez’s development of the concept of the “estación total”, which involves “desmentir los límites temporales que acotan cada estación para tratar

²⁰ As Jiménez said himself, “la evolución, la sucesión, el devenir de lo poético mío ha sido y es una sucesión de encuentros con una idea de dios” (quoted in Lanz, 2005: 680). Like the mystic poets, he uses symbolism to express the ineffable.

de conseguir [...] una estación total abarcadora de todo tiempo posible en sucesión, en devenir”.²¹ Two poems in *Violencia inmóvil*, “Presente” (20-21) and “Si algún día tuviésemos” (15) are based on a similar idea of timeless being. In “Presente”, she says that she has come to realize that time, and therefore history, does not exist:

Hoy he sabido ver la historia de otro modo
 porque al fin he sabido que no existen historias
 sino un instante único en el que somos todos
 creados, aunque no lo entendáis, al mismo tiempo.

This poem deals with history, in the sense of the chronological progression of time, and focuses on the idea that she feels more connected with heroes from the past now that she has come to realize that we all exist in “un instante único”, which is a concept that is difficult to understand because we are unable to look beyond the limits of time and space. The poem “Si algún día tuviésemos”, which deals with the same theme, has a more religious undertone:

Si algún día tuviésemos
 redondo, controlado,
 el Gran Verso temblante
 en las manos, como un recién nacido.
 Y si bajo su peso
 pudiéramos seguir como antes vivos,
 y cantarlo.
 Si hubiese alguien capaz
 del hallazgo inaudito,
 merecedor de semejante palpito,
 si alguien pronunciase
 las grandes sílabas del amor, sería
 necesario de nuevo construir el mundo,
 iniciar, proyectar un universo
 distinto, donde él, Nombre Único,
 la gran frase magnífica, pudiese

²¹ Del Olmo Iturriarte (2005: 880); Jiménez develops this concept in the poems of *La estación total con las canciones de la nueva luz* (1946).

mantenerse en su sitio,
posar su vuelo. Todo lo viviente
y lo vivido y por vivir tendría
que comenzar en ese instante.

Here Paz speculates about the discovery of ultimate truth, “el Gran Verso” or the “Nombre Único”, and how such discovery would lead to a different conception of the universe, in which all living would be understood to take place in the same instant. However, although this instant and the speculative process leading to its definition, reflect Jiménez’s “estación total”, the poem also expresses some important differences between the two, based on the fact that Paz can only speculate, as she is aware that the state of being outside the limitations of time and space implied by the “estación total” cannot be achieved by a person, trapped within the human body and the limitations this imposes. Such limitations, discussed in terms of language in Chapter 2, provide the key to the difference between the two poets: Paz is aware of the limitations of the human condition, whereas Juan Ramón Jiménez feels that he is able to achieve the “estación total” and so express the universe. Therefore, for Jiménez poetic creation resembles knowledge and becomes the equivalent of divine creation, and the poet, poetry and “dios” – not written with a capital because this god is an interactive god, a “dios deseante y deseado” that is the fruit of his own creation – fuse into one and the same.²² Paz’s God, on the other hand, is a concept she will never be able to grasp.

²² Many of the poems of *Animal de fondo* would serve to illustrate Jiménez’s concept of the divine in his final poetry, as all the book’s poems deal with the same subject of the “dios-poeta”. A particularly interesting poem is “En amoroso llenar” (2005, I, 2: 1159), as it essentially describes the same situation as that of “La ruta” from *Piedra y cielo*, quoted in Chapter 2 because it clarifies the poet’s understanding of his own position as a poet: he is set apart from others because of his special task. “En amoroso llenar” follows the same structure. However, describing other people doing their modest daily chores, the speaker, rather than the person able to perceive truth, as in “La ruta”, here creates such truth as the “dios-poeta”:

Todos vamos, tranquilos, trabajando:
el maquinista, fogueando: el vijilante,
datando; el timonel, guiando;

The process towards acceptance of this position, which consists of intuiting the divine, while at the same time recognizing the impossibility of defining it within the limited perception and expression inherent in the human condition, provides an important theme in *Violencia inmóvil*. In this collection, the focus shifts from the small objects that give Paz an awareness of divine beauty to the larger questions posed by the universe, which fill her with “asombro” and fear, and ultimately lead to acceptance. The first section of the book deals with the ominous aspect of such questions; the “violencia inmóvil” refers to God, the sea that symbolizes God, and to the conflicting emotions within herself. As was indicated in Chapter 2, the first poem, “Hay algo que nos pasa inadvertido”, introduces an element of fear, based on the inability of language, bound by the laws of temporality, to describe a timeless, intangible truth. She therefore describes this truth as “algo que nos transita y que no vemos” and therefore is “misterio”. The objects that in previous books enabled her to perceive a transcendental truth representing the divine, here make way for a universe that does not reveal its secrets. It is interesting to compare part of this poem with the lines from “Rondador por el aire” quoted above:

[...] Los experimentales

el pintor, pintando; el radiotelegrafista,
 escuch[e]ando; el carpintero, martillando:
 el capitán, dictando; la mujer,
 cuidando, suspirando, palpitando.

... Y yo, dios deseante, deseando;
 yo que te estoy llenando, en amoroso
 llenar, en última conciencia mía,
 como el sol o la luna, dios,
 de un mundo todo uno para todos.

While this poem is relevant in how it sums up Jiménez’s perception of the poet, poetry and the divine, it is also interesting to note, once again, his reference to women: while men can be identified with many different professions, there is only one occupation for women, namely that of being “la mujer”, which is described in stereotypical terms. This poem therefore again draws attention to how Paz chose male poets as her examples because she was impressed by some aspects of their work, but consciously chose to ignore their ideas about women, in order to develop her own poetics.

en sus laboratorios blanquecinos,
 el místico en su celda, el negro en paroxismo
 y la mujer de parto, y el viejo de los cuentos
 de los fantasmas provincianos,
 y todo aquel que despertó una noche
 creyendo en lo que había dudado mucho tiempo
 sabe que existe un lado intransitable
 de donde surge el estremecimiento.

Both poems essentially deal with the same experience of revelation, a process which Octavio Paz, in a chapter about poetic revelation, appropriately titled “La otra orilla”, describes as a progression from “extrañeza” to “reconocimiento”, saying that “la extrañeza es asombro ante una realidad cotidiana que de pronto se revela como lo nunca visto” (2004: 128). However, the two poems approach this experience in completely different ways. In “Rondador por el aire”, the young poet is at the centre of the poem, and describes an introspective attitude, enhanced by the focus on small objects. The presence of the bird, with its divine connotations, enables her to recognize the transcendental aspects of such objects, revealed to her as a “brotar” of water from “el fondo” of the objects. The speaker is optimistic and confident, as is expressed in the poem’s playful and structured use of rhyme and rhythm.²³ In “Hay algo que nos pasa inadvertido” such confidence has gone, a change which is immediately evident from the poem’s free verse and lines of irregular lengths. The poet does not include herself in the poem, and focuses on the experiences of others, all of which involve a form of revelation, but not a painless, purely pleasant revelation; instead of the “brotar” of water, we here have a “surgir” of “estremecimiento”. The youthful confidence of before has now been replaced by a

²³ Such youthful optimism about a world in which objects form part of a well-structured universe is reminiscent of Jorge Guillén’s pre-war confidence in the world, expressed in his emphasis on the geometrical perfection of objects, summarized in the well-known phrase “El mundo está bien / Hecho” in “Beato sillón” (included in Gaos, 2001:79).

more mature voice, which is aware of others and human suffering,²⁴ and therefore the lack of answers to questions about meaning and the divine. The poem, which deals with the limitations of both language and human progress, concludes by saying that the secret of the universe will not be revealed by such progress. Instead:

Alguien queda en la tierra, olfateando
los astros y los vientos.
Solo adivina. Vive
por cada vivo y muere en cada muerto.
Está cerca de Dios más que ninguno.
Con más miedo que nadie,
con más miedo...

Truth and God can only be intuited by someone who is aware of a dark aspect of divine truth, which inspires “miedo”. Instead of the poet herself being able to define objects, we here have a prophetic, anonymous “alguien”, who, turning to smell rather than words that have become meaningless in the course of time,²⁵ is aware of the universe and the intangible.

Although most of the poems of the collection’s first section deal with similar questions, some exhibit a mood of fear, while others have a more positive tone. The second section deals with a variety of subjects, but in the third Paz returns to the theme of the divine. Nine of the fourteen poems are sonnets, and consist of prayers addressing the “Señor”. The use of the sonnet form, with its stable, regular structure, suggests a regained sense of equilibrium, while the references to the “Señor” suggest a return to a much more traditional approach to the theme of the divine. None of these poems, however, read like conventional prayers based on submissive reverence and piety, as is evident, for instance, from the concluding poem, “Violencia inmóvil”:

²⁴ Paz was very much struggling with her sense of solitude at the time; the poem “Reprocho a las cosas que le entretienen”, for instance, discussed in Chapter 1, is also from this collection.

²⁵ This specific role of references to smell was discussed in the previous chapter.

Tú sabes la verdad del mundo, Loco mío,
 y cómo has de entregarla lejano y maniatado,
 en Cruz, como las aspas de un molino empinado
 en solitario calma y aparente desvío.
 De lejos parecías un aquietado río
 incapaz de abarcarnos con tus brazos atados,
 pero de cerca fuiste un viento desatado,
 blandiendo las espigas e incendiando el estío.
 De lejos parecías quieto, sin movimiento,
 que eras como ese mar pacífico de al lado
 y me acerqué esquivándome de su salpicadura...
 Y entonces me abarcaste, me cegaste violento...
 ¡Gracias, Señor, te doy por haberme golpeado!
 ¡Gracias, por derribarme de la cabalgadura!

Referring back to the experience dealt with in the poems of the first section, she describes how the divine, when perceived from a distance, has the appearance of calmness, “un aquietado río” or “ese mar pacífico de al lado”. However, being engulfed by the divine is a violent experience resembling “un viento desatado” or being blinded by the sea’s “salpicadura”. Referring to Christ’s suffering as related to offering truth to the world, she addresses God as “Loco mío”, as this truth – and his offer – can never be understood completely by mankind. In spite of the strong emotions the experience has caused, she thanks God “por derribarme de la cabalgadura”, an intertextual reminder of the youthful defiance expressed in “El reclinatorio”. It is interesting to note that Fuertes also establishes a link between madness and a truth that others cannot perceive; see, for instance, “Yo en un monte de olivos”, referred to above, where Fuertes is called a “loca” for the same reason. The association she makes between such madness and a perception of truth that others are unaware of is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.²⁶

²⁶ In addition, Fuertes also uses the image of riding on horseback to express a defiant attitude associated with a sense of freedom; see the epigraph to the first section of Chapter 4, which reads “Libérate de la angustia / huyendo de la quema / sobre los lomos del humor” (from *Historia de Gloria*,

Although Paz's treatment of the theme of divine truth, which provides an important leitmotiv in all her early work and culminates in a sense of fulfilment in "Violencia inmóvil", resembles the process and different stages described by the mystic poets, there is always a certain ambiguity in her approach to the divine. In the very first poem, "Dónde voy yo, Dios mío" (*Mara*, 15-16), rather than identifying with San Juan de la Cruz's "salir tras ti clamando", she actively rebels against the divine and poetry, and flees from God, saying: "¡Déjame ya, Señor! [...] No recorras / este arenal desierto de mi huida." In her explorations of poetry and the divine of *Del abreviado mar* she expresses views akin to those of Juan Ramón Jiménez, whereas in *Violencia inmóvil* she clearly rejects his dios-poeta and is more inclined towards a Christian perception of God. Her more direct experience of the divine in this collection is much closer to fear than to mystical exaltation. Such ambiguity is a result of her recognition that we are ultimately unable to define absolute truth, and her attitude is therefore one of observation "en espera del Todo". Pérez-Bustamente Mourier says about Paz's treatment of the theme of the divine: "El diálogo que entabla Pilar Paz con Dios no es el de la poesía piadosa o doctrinal, sino el de la conciencia inquisitiva, con sus interrogantes, sus dudas, su malestar, sus arranques de júbilo y también de hastío."²⁷ Ripoll says in this respect:²⁸

Su búsqueda de Dios no era, ni producto de una angustia, ni de una necesidad ritual, sino fruto de una pasión natural [...]. La voz de Pilar no ha hecho más que construir un continuo diálogo con el misterio de la vida, con la eterna palabra, con el silencio soberano, pero también con las cosas mundanas, con la naturaleza, con el paisaje que le rodea, con el mar, necesario pretexto para seguir viviendo en la pregunta.

77), and the quote from "Desde siempre" (OI: 74), where she describes herself as "desde siempre [...] cabalgando al revés".

²⁷ In her article "Alquimia del saber, voz de Pilar", on <http://cvc.cervantes.es/actcult/paz_pasamar>.

²⁸ In "La solitaria voz de Pilar Paz Pasamar", on the same website.

When I asked her how she would now define the divine and its place in her poetry, Paz said: “Dios es el medio en el que nos movemos. Esto es el tronco de mi obra. Y todo lo demás, son ramitas” (16-10-05).

3.3. Gloria Fuertes and “el juego trascendente desde lo menor”

An important difference between Fuertes’s treatment of the theme of the divine and that of Paz is that while Paz stands back to consider in wonder her intuitive awareness of an abstract God and how such perception can be expressed in poetry, Fuertes’s consciousness of the divine is associated immediately with social responsibility and a recognition of the presence of God in mundane, everyday life. As was pointed out above, she regards her sense of humour as her personal interpretation of mysticism, and she recognizes Christ’s passion in the suffering she sees around her and in her own personal circumstances. Leopoldo de Luis, aware of these aspects as the determining factors of her poetry, summarizes her poetics by saying that “el juego trascendente desde lo menor, crea la excentricidad de Gloria Fuertes” (1998: 16). As she is also conscious of the potentially didactic element of poetry, she describes the task of herself and her colleagues in the following terms in “No perdamos el tiempo” (OI: 45-46):

Debemos de inquietarnos por curar las simientes,
por vendar corazones y escribir el poema
que a todos nos contagie.
Y crear esa frase que abrace todo el mundo,
los poetas debiéramos arrancar las espadas,
inventar más colores y escribir padrenuestros.

The semantic connotations of the verbs “curar”, “vendar” and “contagiar” are the same as those suggested by the lines “quiero ser quitadolores, / ser una aspirina inmensa” from “Que quien me cate se cure”, discussed in Chapter 1, although here there is a collective rather than an individual focus. The task implied by “debemos” emphasizes the moral and didactic purpose of poetry, and therefore the poet’s responsibility. The reference to “escribir padrenuestros” gives a specific dimension to her commitment, as it reveals that there is a link between her poetic purpose, her sense of social duty and the involvement of God. This means that her social commitment differs fundamentally from that of many other poets writing at the time, who base such commitment on the social responsibility advocated by Sartre’s existentialism.²⁹ Jiménez Martos refers in this respect to her “poesía social de raíz cristiana” (1961: 17), while Cillero Ulecia introduces her in a newspaper article as “poeta netamente social, pero, eso sí, con profunda raíz cristiana” (1968: 17). An interesting consequence of Fuertes’s link between poetry and social commitment, and the didactic purposes associated with this, is that she, as a poet, has a task similar to that of God, namely that of saving the world.³⁰ As a result, God is also a poet, as she confirms in “A lo mejor un día...” (OI: 53), where she says: “Al Creador, de siempre le gustaron los versos; / porque como ya dije, es el mejor Poeta.” According to González Rodas (2004: 44), “Gloria Fuertes ve a Cristo como otro poeta”, and therefore “ambos, Dios y el poeta, tienen una meta común, salvar a la humanidad”. This means, then, that we are again faced with the image of a “dios-poeta”, although it is used in a sense that is very different from Juan Ramón Jiménez’s image. In “Poeta independiente” (*Historia de Gloria*, 280-81) Fuertes points out the religious and

²⁹ Wright (1986: 161-70) gives the examples of Rafael Morales, Ramón de Garciasol and Leopoldo de Luis as other poets whose social commitment constitutes “a Christian response”.

³⁰ This is confirmed in, for instance, “Inesperada visita” (discussed in Chapter 2), where Fuertes describes how other poets had visited her “para salvar el mundo”. See also the poem quoted in the epigraph to this chapter.

didactic significance of her work by establishing a link between her own purpose and that of Santa Teresa, saying: “[soy] religiosa, porque fundé mil Casas con mis versos.” Mentioning the convents founded by Santa Teresa as a metaphor for her poems, she not only defines her purpose, but she also shows her faith in the positive power of her poetry.

Another important difference between Fuertes and Paz’s approach to the divine is that while Paz’s abstract portrayal of the divine is not limited to the narrow Christian interpretation of God, Fuertes never renounces the conventional, Christian beliefs expressed in her first collection, *Isla ignorada*, where she says in “La verdad” (38), a poem dedicated to “mi hermano Jesús”: “No hay más verdad que Él y su Doctrina.” However, such beliefs mean that she constantly clashes with her personal and socio-political context. As we have seen, her rebellious rather than obedient nature together with her sexuality, deviant in the eyes of the Church, made her feel like an outcast. Because of the link between the Church and the regime, Catholicism was associated with fascism, which meant that the association of social commitment with Christian beliefs was problematic. As Leopoldo de Luis explains (2000: 187), “el fascismo [...] ideológicamente propugna la discriminación y justifica la política de coloniaje. Para el fascismo hay razas, o clases superiores, y la poesía social defiende, en el más amplio sentido, al hombre único igual y libre.” As a consequence, Fuertes develops a very personal interpretation of her Christian beliefs in her work, representing the reader with a God with many human qualities – indeed, there is a certain degree of interdependence between God and humanity – concerned primarily with human suffering, and often addressed with apparent irreverence. In many poems she thus distances herself from the impersonalized, almighty, fear-inspiring God of the hierarchal Church. When asked by Larra Lomas (1996: 88) whether “el lenguaje

de la Iglesia es el correcto para anunciar a Dios”, she lashed out against the Church of the 1930s, saying:

No siempre. [...] Cuando yo era pequeña entraba en la iglesia y salía corriendo por lo que oía en el sermón. Yo ya era inteligente, qué le vamos a hacer, y aquello ni era Dios, ni lo entendía Dios, y no había más que perseguir a los rojos hasta en el vientre de su madre. [...] Eso ni era amor ni era Jesús, era fanatismo, que es malo en todos, pero anda que en un cura que tiene que iluminar almas. A mí aquellas homilias de los curas no me llegaron [...]. Yo digo que Dios está en todos los sitios y a veces en el templo.

Some examples from her poetry will illustrate the “lenguaje” Fuertes uses “para anunciar a Dios”, in a way that suits her own purpose and reflects her personal explication of what is meant by God and the divine. A poem in which she openly attacks the Church is “Resulta, que Dios está desnudo” (OI: 137):³¹

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 tejer 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.

³¹ This poem was included in *Todo asusta* (1958), one of the collections published by *Lírica Hispana* in Caracas, which could therefore avoid Spain’s censors; the anthologies ... *Que estás en la tierra* (1962) and *Antología poética (1950-1969)* (first published in 1970), both published in Spain, omit the poem.

Combining references to the Church, the socio-political context, and the Bible, she exposes the hypocrisy of post-war morality.³² The perceived indecency of the girl with her breasts exposed is covered up by the censorship provoked by the denouncing “religiosos murmuradores”. The complex image provided by “tejer vuestro ganchillo de censuras” refers to the male censors, but also conjures up a picture of “beatas” who are crocheting, and so provide a decorative material that will not only cover up the girl, but also the truth: the girl will be condemned, but those watching the “estampa” – probably the “murmuradores” themselves – will escape unblemished. She mocks the lack of life experience of the “viejecitas beatas”, the naiveté that is the result of not questioning reality as represented by the regime, by saying that they are now old enough to understand. The reference to God’s nakedness, which would obviously be completely taboo and a shocking image to the hypocritical “beatas”, implies God’s humbleness, and the fact that he is not covered up by such hypocrisy. While the poem on the whole is reminiscent of the biblical story of the woman accused of adultery by the Pharisees (John 8.1-11), it can also be linked to “La linda tapada” (see Chapter 2), which deals with the idea that poetry should be honest and humble rather than dressed up.

In spite of the fact that Fuertes hits out against hypocrisy in her work and shows an irreverent attitude – Sherno (2001: 147), discussing this aspect of her poetry, mentions “the playful and irrepressibly iconoclastic spirit evinced repeatedly in her work” – her beliefs also have a surprisingly orthodox element, while she also refers to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. As Logan Cappuccio (1988: 165), commenting on the poet’s preoccupation with predestination, points out, “la fe de

³² When Brey (1981), quoting the lines “dejad de tejer [...] viejecitas beatas” from this poem, asked Fuertes, “¿cuál es el pecado que más le desagrada en los cristianos de hoy y de siempre?”, Fuertes replied: “Lo reflejo exactamente en esos versos. La hipocresía y la mentira. Todo aquel que voluntariamente hace daño a alguien con una frasecita, con un alfilerazo.”

Fuertes está basada mayormente en la doctrina tradicional”; her originality lies in “su habilidad de presentar lo convencional desde una perspectiva totalmente nueva e inesperada.” This is evident, for instance, in “Disco de gramófono en una tarde de gramófono” (OI: 86-87), where she describes herself dancing, saying: “mis tumbos entretienen / al Gran Marionetista.” By describing God as a puppeteer, she suggests that he is pulling the strings and controlling her movements, while the purpose of this is merely to entertain him. Two poems in which she talks about predestination in unequivocal terms are “Todo está preeligido” (OI: 178) and “Él lo sabe (OI: 207-08).³³ The first poem leaves no doubt about her belief in predestination:

Fuerzas invisibles
nos empujan al vaso o a la boca,
a estrechar una mano
o a cortar una vena.
No elegimos amigos
tampoco profesiones
y ni elegir podemos la forma de morirnos
(quitando los suicidas)
y tampoco ellos van al lugar preferido.

In this poem, suicide is suggested as a way of rebelling against predestination, although it is not a very effective method, as it does not lead to freedom, while it is also suggested that the decision to “cortar una vena” is ultimately determined by “fuerzas invisibles” rather than personal choice.³⁴ It is interesting that the poem “Él lo sabe”, which again talks about predestination in the clearest terms, also questions the traditional, Christian image of God by suggesting the possibility of a female God. It starts as follows:

³³ Both these poems, as well as “El dramaturgo” (quoted below) are from *Poeta de guardia*.

³⁴ References to suicide are a recurring feature in Fuertes’s poetry; see the poems in Chapters 1 and 4 that are also relevant in this respect.

essentially contradictory doctrine of predestination combined with sinfulness – which requires free will – which has provided the Church with the powerful concept of guilt. Although this poem gives an unusually bleak interpretation of the divine and divine authority, Fuertes did believe that suffering was somehow imposed, or at least not prevented, by God. In the interview with Larra Lomas (1996: 87) she says: “Yo no entiendo de teología, pero ¡para qué le valdrá a Dios el sufrimiento! ¡No podía hacer una tregüecilla!”

Although in some examples she presents us with the image of a supreme God who predestines people's fate, Fuertes usually refers to a down-to-earth, humanized God whom she addresses as an equal rather than a superior being, using colloquial vocabulary. Poetry in which God was addressed in a serious tone was a common feature of the 1940s, when official poetry often had a religious undertone, while other poems expressed anguish and doubt. By adding an irreverent, humorous element to poems in which she addresses this theme, Fuertes is not only original, as Logan Cappuccio points out, but she can also be said to subvert a tradition of twentieth-century religious poetry that dates back to Unamuno.³⁵ She in fact refers to him and his references to a non-superior God in “Mi poeta” (OI: 220), which starts with the lines: “Mi poeta es Unamuno, / el que a Cristo llama Hermano”. Logan Cappuccio (1988: 185) interprets the human aspect of Fuertes's God and the important place he has in her life as follows: “Lo más insólito del Dios de Gloria Fuertes es su carácter ‘humano’. En efecto, es como si su omnisciencia fuera resultado de haber experimentado todas las emociones nuestras. Por eso Fuertes puede contar con Él para anular la soledad que tanto le molesta”. Payeras Grau (1986: 106) says in this respect: “Gloria Fuertes posee una religiosidad afirmativa, construida sobre un Dios

³⁵ See, for instance, Ruiz Soriano (1997: 19).

humanizado, sobre la figura del Cristo compasivo del Nuevo Testamento.” An early example of a poem in which she introduces a humanized God is “Vamos a ver...”

(OI: 43):

Vamos a ver si es cierto que le amamos,
vamos a mirarnos por dentro un poco.

Hay cosas colgadas que a Él le lastiman,
freguemos el suelo y abramos las puertas,
que salgan las lagartijas y entren las luces.

Borremos los nombres de la lista negra,
coloquemos a nuestros enemigos encima de la cómoda,
invitémosles a sopa.
Toquemos las flautas de los tontos, de los sencillos,
que Dios se encuentre a gusto si baja.

The first two lines suggest a poem with a traditional, moralistic message. However, rather than overtly preaching to the reader, she gives an image of cleaning the house, which enables her to include a clear statement against the regime and the animosity after the Civil War. The overall purpose of all this is to make sure that God will feel at home in our house when he comes down to visit us. Another such example can be found in “Parece que se ha dicho todo” (OI: 128), a poem which ends with the lines: “Una madre ha parido un nuevo niño / Dios se ha puesto de pie para mirarle.” In this image of divine love and compassion, she emphasizes the equality between God and humankind by saying that God has to stand up in order to be able to see.

An interesting consequence of Fuertes’s humanized God, which has been noted by some critics, is the interdependence between God and humanity. Sherno, for instance, says in this respect that “she exchanges the Biblical account of man made in the likeness of his Creator for her own vision of a deity who reflects the fragile image

of humanity.”³⁶ A typical example of this can be found in the poem “Dios llama al fontanero” (OI: 235), in which God needs the help of a plumber, because, as he says, “se me ha roto este grifo de llanto”, thus implying that he has been crying too much because of all the human suffering he is aware of. In “Aquel silencio” (OI: 149-50) Fuertes gives her own version of the creation myth, saying that God created humankind because he could no longer stand the silence surrounding him. A similar idea of God being lonely without humankind is “¿Qué sería de Dios sin nosotros?”, in which the reader is again invited to reverse roles, and feel compassion towards God:

Lo más triste de Dios
es que no puede creer en Dios.
Ni ponerse el sombrero nuevo
para ir a misa como tú y yo.
Tampoco puede dar gracias al Señor,
ni hacer novillos
ni tirar una piedra a un farol.

¿Qué sería sin nosotros de Dios?

Fuertes also uses parody, which, as was discussed in Chapter 2, involves the combination of a parodic, new text and a parodied, existing text, in her treatment of the theme of God. She refers to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew, 5.1-10) in “Letanía de los montes de la vida” (OI: 73-74), and on three occasions the Lord’s Prayer serves as the parodied text. The poem “Oración” (OI: 47-48) opens with the line: “Que estás en la tierra Padre nuestro”, and the entire prayer emphasizes God’s presence on earth in everyday life.³⁷ The lines that constitute the poem’s first two sentences read as follows:

³⁶ Sherno (2001: 148). See also Logan Cappuccio (1988: 187-88), Acereda (2002b: 18-19), and González Rodas (2004: 42-43).

³⁷ This line also provided the title for the anthology ...*Que estás en la tierra* (1962).

Que estás en la tierra Padre nuestro,
 que te siento en la púa del pino,
 en el torso azul del obrero,
 en la niña que borda curvada
 la espalda mezclando el hilo en el dedo.
 Padre nuestro que estás en la tierra,
 en el surco,
 en el huerto,
 en la mina,
 en el puerto,
 en el cine,
 en el vino,
 en la casa del médico.

Debicki, in a discussion of this poem, says that “our traditional views of God as a transcendent being and of prayer as a solemn activity are undercut by the tone and attitude of the speaker” (1982: 84); her purpose here is to destroy conventional notions of “the grandiloquence of religion” (87). Another poem referring to the Lord’s Prayer, “La Pica” (OI: 210), uses the metaphor of the bullring for God’s place in our lives; it opens with: “Dios, / torero nuestro de cada día...” We, like bulls in the bullring, suffer pain, inflicted by “la pica”. However, rather than allowing the “picador” – representing our misfortunes – to kill us, we should allow the “Torero-Dios” to decide when we die. “Oración para ir tirando” (OI: 228-29) invites God to join us on earth, and is therefore reminiscent of “Vamos a ver...”, quoted above. It starts with the lines: “Padre nuestro que estás en los cielos / ¿por qué no bajas y te das un garbeo?” The effect of parodying what is considered by many to be a sacred text – after all, the words of the Lord’s Prayer are supposed to be Christ’s own words (Matthew, 6:7-15) – and replacing it with words that are irreverent in terms of Catholic conventions but nevertheless constitute genuine, personal prayers, suggest both sacrilege and piety, and therefore destabilize the reader’s expectations and experience of the poems.

Because of her social commitment, modest lifestyle, non-intellectual approach to life, and the emphasis on both human and divine love in many of her poems, it is perhaps not surprising that she refers to Saint Francis as her “santo preferido” (Larra Lomas, 1996: 86). In the poem “San Francisco” (OI: 110), she describes the saint as a beggar and the patron saint of beggars: “Lleva todas rotas las manos y piernas / y medio vacía va la limosnera”, while “le guardan las espaldas los mendigos”. Fuertes frequently refers to beggars in her poetry, not only because of her purpose of addressing social injustice, but also because of a form of wisdom she recognizes in the unpretentious beggar who is not tied to earthly possessions. In “Cosas que me gustan” (OI: 78), she therefore says: “Me gusta [...] / santiguarme si pasa un mendigo cantando”; the poem “Vicente era vidente” (OI: 106-07) is an example of a poem that deals with a beggar who is a visionary, a “vidente”. In line with this, she concludes her comments on Saint Francis in the interview with Larra Lomas by saying that “San Francisco en su humildad era un sabio.” One poem in which she identifies her vocation as a poet with that of both a saint and a beggar is “Aquí estoy expuesta como todos” (OI: 169):

[...]
 lo llaman ser poeta y es ser santo,
 nadie nos canoniza pero andamos,
 con raras aureolas por las sienas,
 por las noches a veces relucimos,
 con invisibles seres conversamos,
 apariciones múltiples tenemos
 y dormimos sentados en la sala.
 [...]
 Que yo tengo de santa y de mendigo
 esto de amar a un ser sobre las cosas
 esto de no tener nunca zapatos
 y esto de que Dios baje por peinarme.

She compares being a poet with being a saint, as both are misunderstood and therefore martyrs, while the process of writing poetry is comparable to having visions at night.³⁸ She is like St Francis because she has characteristics in common with both saints and beggars: she has the wisdom and ability to forgo earthly goods and love others instead. The reference to God in the last line undermines the rest of the poem, as she moves from references to sainthood and martyrdom to a human God whom she wishes would come down to do something as mundane as comb her hair. As happens so often in her poetry, she builds up certain expectations, which are then suddenly undermined. In this case, having suggested a holy aspect to writing poetry, and therefore her own sainthood, the last line re-establishes her as a down-to-earth, humble person.

The references in the previous paragraphs to the destabilizing effect of Fuertes's use of parody and specific comments that undercut reader expectations refer to an aspect of her poetry that has already been discussed in the previous chapters. While in Chapter 2 we saw that Fuertes is aware of the instability of language, and therefore truth, the different – and in some respects incompatible – references to God we have seen in this chapter suggest that she, like Paz, recognizes the impossibility of defining absolute truth within the limitations of language. Sherno elaborates this idea, establishing a link between Fuertes's recognition of the limitations of language and her unstable treatment of the subject of the divine, arguing that the concept of God is just as ambiguous as that of language. She concludes that "Fuertes's deity is not a repository of fixed values and absolute truths, but rather the epitome of ambiguity, change, and provisionality. Likewise, language (and by extension poetry) is an open-ended process that, avoiding the systematic construction of meaning and thought into

³⁸ Such special powers of distinction are also referred to in *Ahora* (OI: 75-76), where she says: "mi cuerpo es un ojo sin fin / con el que para mi desventura veo todo".

calcified dogma, experiments playfully with possibilities” (2001: 163). However, although I agree with her that Fuertes’s poetry reflects an open-ended and therefore unstable process, avoiding any dogmatism, I do not think that her treatment of the divine can be regarded as an extension of this. As we have seen above, Fuertes’s beliefs are based essentially on conventional, Christian doctrine, which has a determinedly human element in the figure of Christ who identifies with human suffering, but also regards such suffering as predestined, as God determines our future and “nos engatusa con ser protagonistas / de escenas que no nos van ni nos vienen al pelo” (in “El dramaturgo”). I would therefore argue that, rather than reflecting the instability of her perception of God, her use of language echoes the instability she experiences personally as a consequence of the incompatibility of her traditional beliefs on the one hand, and the exploitation of such beliefs by Church and State on the other. As has been mentioned before, an important issue in this respect must have been her sexuality, which she had to come to terms with privately and somehow incorporate into her belief system.³⁹ Although her poetry aims to be autobiographical, censorship and her private struggle of accepting her own identity meant that she had to find alternative ways of expressing herself, as she could not always incorporate her most intimate thoughts into her poetry. I would therefore suggest that while Fuertes recognizes the difficulties involved in expressing what she understands by “God” within the limitations of language, her belief system is firmly based on the Christian faith; the destabilizing factor lies in the difficulties she encounters in reconciling her own perception of this faith with the official interpretation.

³⁹ Most critics, including Sherno, do not mention Fuertes’s lesbianism, which is probably largely due to the fact that Fuertes does not refer to this at all in her earlier work, and only sporadically, usually indirectly, in her later work. Acereda specifically deals with her sexuality in his article “Gloria Fuertes. Del Amor Prohibido a la Marginalidad” (2002a), referred to in Chapter 1. According to Paz (16-10-2005) her homosexuality was a well-known fact among her friends.

3.4. Conclusion

Pilar Paz Pasamar and Gloria Fuertes both use their poetry to express the “inquietudes” they experience in terms of themes related to God and the divine. Indeed, such metaphysical questions constitute the guiding principle in the work of both. Perhaps an unexpected difference between the two poets is that Paz, who seems more inclined to conform to the expectations of society in other ways, rejects the dogmatic, Catholic belief system as the only valid expression of the relationship between humankind and the divine, whereas Fuertes, in spite of her rebellious stance and alternative lifestyle, firmly believes in a conventional, Christian God. Paz, who elaborates a contemplative attitude towards poetic inspiration, recognizes a divine source of such inspiration; she encounters the divine at the point where language turns into silence. She explores this perception by making intertextual references to San Juan de la Cruz and by using complex imagery such as that represented by the bird Philomena, which accentuates different aspects of the relationship between the self, poetry and the divine. She is thus able to interpret this relationship in terms of her own, individual inclination and experience, and develop a concept of the divine in which she becomes an active agent. Because of her emphasis on this personal process and her perception of the divine as a truth that transcends the limitations of time and space, the context of social injustice does not play an immediate part in her treatment of the theme. Fuertes, on the other hand, is acutely aware of the here and now, and therefore of the social injustice that surrounds her; her interpretation of the divine is immediately linked to this awareness and the ambition to improve social conditions. She therefore writes with a degree of urgency and has a didactic message, and so develops an outlook and style which in some ways resemble those of Santa Teresa. By creating in her poetry a God with human traits and experience of human suffering,

her perception of God provides her with a sense of companionship in a way that is perhaps comparable to how Paz finds companionship in poetic inspiration, as was described in the previous chapter. Fuertes's religious beliefs, based on traditional Catholic doctrine, intensify the problematic nature of her need to integrate into society. The sense of alienation from society she perceives, discussed in terms of her otherness in Chapter 1 and her response to negative criticism of her poetry in Chapter 2, is augmented by her desire to adhere to a belief system that has been exploited by the Franco regime.

So far, the discussion has focused on comparing how Fuertes and Paz define themselves through poetry by treating similar themes in different ways. The following chapter concentrates on their contrasting perspectives by elaborating a characteristic feature of each poet's work, humour in the work of Fuertes and sea imagery in Paz's poetry, which highlights their different positions as two alternative female responses to the limited scope for self-development that characterized Spanish society in the 1950s and 1960s.

Chapter 4: Self-Definition through Poetry: Individual Strategies

The argument so far has demonstrated that both Gloria Fuertes and Pilar Paz Pasamar are able to define their identities by writing their poetry as individual, female responses to the collective, patriarchal ideology of the society in which they live. In their work they therefore respond to their socio-cultural context, and deal with the challenges posed by defining their own poetics and their individual interpretations of the divine. The comparison of specific elements from the process of self-definition the two poets are engaged in has highlighted the similarities as well as the differences in the development of their identity and, as an immediate consequence of this, of their poetics. This chapter focuses on the distinctive mechanisms of self-construction they develop. As we have seen, there are two important differences in this respect. Fuertes is looking for integration into society: her poetry seeks to communicate with the reader; she needs her readership, and gives readings of her poetry in order to reach out to her audience. In addition, she is very much aware of society and social injustice, and addresses the inequities she encounters in her work. Paz, on the other hand, is much more inclined to separate herself from society and regard her poetry as a place of refuge and introspection. Closely related to this distinctive outlook is their different perspective in how they see themselves in relation to the divine. Fuertes, seeking to be part of the world that immediately surrounds her, recognizes the divine in the details of the here and now, while Paz, in isolation, wonders about universal truth and the relationship between self and infinity. This chapter looks at a characteristic feature of

each poet that exemplifies such distinctive mechanisms of female self-construction: humour in the poetry of Fuertes, and sea imagery in that of Paz. Humour provides Fuertes with a means to communicate, to emphasize the here and now and to criticize her surroundings, while it also enables her to develop a strategy of self-defence against the frequently hostile society into which she wishes to become integrated. Because the latter aspect of her use of humour is evident throughout her work, the section on her work takes the idea of humour as a survival strategy as a starting point. Paz, endeavouring to explore and express thoughts and experiences that are not only abstract but also unique to her, uses symbolism in order to express herself. As we have seen in the discussion so far, the sea is a recurrent image she uses for this purpose; the section on her work therefore looks at her use of sea imagery as an individual strategy of self-definition in her poetry.

4.1. Laughter amidst Darkness: Humour in the Poetry of Gloria Fuertes

*En lo oscuro me alumbra la vida
que lo místico mío es reír.*

*Libérate de la angustia
huyendo de la quema
sobre los lomos del humor.*

Gloria Fuertes

As we have seen in the previous chapter, there is a close link between Fuertes's poetics, her concept of the divine, and humour. When comparing her references to mysticism with Santa Teresa's ideas in this respect, I concluded that Fuertes regards laughter as a divine gift, which enables people – and not least herself – to deal with difficulties. I would therefore argue that her humour, as has been evident in her poems discussed so far and the lines quoted in the epigraph, serves specifically as a strategy

to counteract the bleakness that surrounds her, and her own dark moods. I agree in this respect with Acereda, referred to in Chapter 1, who considers her use of humour as a means of self-preservation and regards her “humor” as an antidote for her “dolor”. Miró (1966: 5), also recognizing this function of humour in her work, says that Fuertes “utiliza el tubo de escape del humor.” As we have seen, her anguish, caused by her sense of being rejected by a society she wishes to be part of, is frequently expressed in references to suicide in her poetry. A humorous poem where she laughs off the thought of suicide and exploits the antithesis between descriptions of her personal suffering and humour is “Nunca se sabe” (OI: 347):

Si no tuviera esperanza,
me tiraría por la ventana;
pero...

¿dónde está la esperanza y la ventana,
si vivo en un sótano?

The last two lines not only contain a joke, but they also undercut the statement of the first two lines, as they render irrelevant the big question of the contrast between hope and despair she experiences.¹ Such instances, where humour is used to avert the darkness that invades her mind, abound in her poetry. The idea of humour as a survival strategy – both for herself and the reader – therefore provides the overall theme of this section. Following a brief discussion of some relevant concepts referred to in the previous chapters, I will consider the relevance of *Postismo* to Fuertes’s use of humour. An image that I have found to be particularly appropriate to the analysis of the practice and purpose of humour in her work is that of the distorting mirror of

¹ A poem which refers to suicide in an entirely serious light is “No sabemos qué hacer”, discussed in Chapter 1, where rather than a joke, it is the decision to write poetry that staves off the thought of suicide.

Ramón del Valle-Inclán's *esperpentismo*, which is the subject of the second half of this section. However, as was the case with the discussion of metapoetry, parody and mysticism in the work of Fuertes and Paz, my first task is to formulate a workable approach to the subject that can serve as a basis for my analysis.

Humour is a phenomenon that is particularly difficult to define, as it is determined by many different elements, including social and cultural factors, and the personality and state of mind of the recipient. Another issue is that philosophers and other thinkers tend to discuss the comic and humour as part of their broader worldview. As is evident from McFadden's chronological account in *Discovering the Comic*, each thinker interprets and defines humour within the premises of his own philosophy or other field of thinking – frequently in turn consisting of a response to previous philosophies – which makes it problematic to quote them out of context. Schiller, Hegel and Nietzsche all comment on the comic as part of their thinking; Bergson's *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic* is often ambiguous in its metaphorical use of language, and Freud's ideas expressed in *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* are firmly grounded in the latter's theory of psychoanalysis. Because of this, and also due to the dependence of the interpretation of humour on time, place, culture and language, the books I have read on humour in twentieth-century Spain by Martín-Casamitjana, Medina and Ríos Carratalá – all of which are based on the relevant literature on humour – form an important part of the theoretical and critical framework of this chapter. An additional problem involved in writing about humour is that it seems to evaporate as soon as it has been identified as such,² which means that illustrative examples suddenly do not seem to contain humour any

² As, for instance, Freud points out, the consequence of describing the technique on which a joke is based is “that the joke invariably disappears as soon as we eliminate the operation of these techniques from its form of expression” (1966: 42).

more as soon as they are subjected to a critical analysis; this is a problem I have also been aware of in the process of writing this chapter.

An approach to humour which is relevant within the context of this chapter, is that of considering the distinction between humour and the comic made by some theorists, while regarding jokes, and the laughter they may provoke, as expressions of both. McFadden (1982: 78) describes the idea that humour is associated with individual traits while comedy is based on types; he links the development of humour with the emergence of the emphasis on the individual of Romanticism. As such, humour is superior to the comic, as is argued, for instance, by Freud. Making a similar distinction, he confirms that humour is personal and therefore involves an emotional response, whereas comic pleasure is anonymous and therefore requires an unconcerned person (1966: 228). Martín Casamitjana, who partly bases her argument in *El humor en la poesía española de vanguardia* on Freud, claims that “la comicidad” involves laughter that can only occur through emotional distancing (1996: 32), meaning that the recipient laughs at a person’s misfortune from a perspective of superiority, whereas “humorismo” includes emotion, and therefore “exige un[a] componente sentimental” (428). Freud in fact mentions humour “that smiles through tears” and operates as a “defensive process” (1966: 232 and 233), both of which are relevant to the concept of humour as a strategy introduced above. He further elaborates the idea of humour as a way of dealing with suffering in his essay “Der Humor”, where he says that the comic only gives pleasure, while humour is one of the methods the human mind has developed in order to avoid the compulsion to suffer (1970: 280). Ríos Carratalá (2005: 56), making a similar distinction between the comic and humour, confirms that the comic provokes “la carcajada”, while humour “no sólo provoca la sonrisa, sino que hace más soportable el dolor, la frustración, la

impotencia”, which means that “el humor forma parte de un eterno juego de contrarios”. As we shall see, all these definitions coincide with and characterize Fuertes’s use and purpose of humour, which are based on emotional involvement and a didactic and critical purpose. She thus distinguishes herself from the other writers mentioned in this chapter, the *postistas*, Gómez de la Serna and Valle-Inclán, which means that it is useful to bear this difference in mind.

Two other, closely related, elements of humour that are also relevant here are its surprise factor and the element of incongruence that is inherent in humour. According to Ríos Carratalá (2005: 39), “el humor juega con lo imprevisto, la sorpresa, la ruptura de un orden”, while Martín Casamitjana adds to this the idea of “la duplicidad de planos entre los que se percibe una incongruencia, inadecuación o discordancia”, where such incongruence is an “incongruencia descendente”, which “implica minoración valorativa” (1996: 41 and 421). These definitions are appropriate to the element of humour in the poems by Fuertes discussed in previous chapters, and are particularly relevant to her use of parody in the poems quoted in Chapter 2, where she debunks the special status of poetry through what Martín Casamitjana (1996: 282) defines as “la degradación de lo solemne a lo vulgar”. Another example of this phenomenon can be found in “Aquí estoy expuesta como todos”, discussed in Chapter 3, where she suddenly moves from the idea of sainthood to expressing the wish “que Dios baje por peinarme”. Bergson notes in this respect that any reference to the speaker’s body will turn a serious speech into comedy, saying that “any incident is comic that calls our attention to the physical in a person, when it is the moral side that is concerned” (1911: 50-51).³ The definitions referred to are also immediately

³ In fact, although Bergson’s essay is a key text on humour, his overall theory on the comic is not all that relevant to the discussion of this chapter. Focusing on French *vaudeville*, he insists on the incompatibility between laughter and emotion throughout his book, arguing that “the comic [...] appeals to the intelligence, pure and simple; laughter is incompatible with emotion. Depict some fault,

applicable to “Nunca se sabe”, quoted above, which requires the reader’s emotional involvement, while its humour depends on the surprise ending. There can also be no doubt about the descending process involved, as the joke brings Fuertes – literally – down to earth. The above definitions together provide the theoretical framework for this chapter.

Two concepts that have been discussed in previous chapters and which are worth reconsidering here are madness and the special role of “lo cotidiano” in humour. Madness is closely linked to humour, as expressions of madness involve deviations from the norm that may be perceived as comical or humorous by the recipient, and so provoke laughter. In Chapter 1, madness was discussed in the light of the marginalization of women and Gilbert and Gubar’s theory about women’s response to this. However, while Fuertes clearly reacts in her poetry to her marginalized status as a woman, she also frequently refers to madness as a symptom of a more general rejection of specific individuals by society, describing characters such as prostitutes, beggars, clowns and other social outcasts. The figure of the beggar was referred to in the previous chapter, and the clown – who exemplifies the contrast between humour and pathos – is discussed below. What makes such characters special is that they are often shown to have visionary and healing powers. In “No tiene que ver nada” (OI: 76), for instance, she suggests that

Se puede estar muy loco
y curarle las lepras
a los otros.

however trifling, in such a way as to arouse sympathy, fear, or pity; the mischief is done, it is impossible for us to laugh” (139). As this chapter will demonstrate, Fuertes’s use of humour transcends the mere comic and frequently involves an element of “arousing sympathy”.

Here the outcast, regarded as a “loco” by some, is shown to have powers superior to those of others, whose narrow-minded perspective is limited to that offered by official truth. Fuertes, who always identifies with such marginalized characters, recognizes a parallel between them and the figure of the poet, who is also an outcast – and therefore a mad person – endowed with similar powers. This characterization of the poet underpins Fuertes’s ideas about her role as a poet, which has been described in the preceding chapters.⁴ An example where she describes herself as a mad poet is “Voy haciendo versos por la calle” (OI: 89), which includes the lines:

¡Cuánta mujer habrá haciéndose cisco
mientras yo fumo y miro por la vida!

[...]

¿No ves la noche que me mira como tonta?

Roaming the streets at night, others, who look at her collectively and anonymously in the dark, consider her to be clueless, while she in fact is aware of the truth of life. She might be an outcast and made the object of ridicule, but at the same time she is smart enough to escape the fate of most other women. I would suggest that by exploiting the apparently mad characteristics of marginalized individuals while also emphasizing their superiority, as well as by her own frequent pretence of madness, Fuertes is able to subvert the collective ethos of the Franco regime in a humorous way.

The suggestion that humour involves “la degradación de lo solemne a lo vulgar” means that descriptions of “lo cotidiano”, the details of mundane, everyday life, can facilitate the humorous treatment of a theme or subject. The emphasis in

⁴ In Chapter 1, I mentioned the healing powers she assigns to her poetry, which she describes as “una aspirina inmensa” (OI: 270). In “Vaya encuentro” and “Yo en un monte de olivos”, both discussed in Chapter 3, she refers to herself as “loca” because of her status as a misunderstood poet.

Fuertes's poetry on truthful descriptions of "lo cotidiano", in all its beauty and ugliness,⁵ means that her poetry lends itself very well to the description of a humorous approach to life, and partly accounts for the fact that humour is so prevalent in her work. Such a link between "lo cotidiano" and humour was evident, for instance, in Chapter 3 in Fuertes's references to a humanized God, involved in everyday life. As Ríos Carratalá points out, humour is linked to human identity (2005: 68), which means that God can only be treated in a humorous way if he is humanized and linked to everyday living (67):⁶

Nos podemos reír con Dios, incluso de Él, pero sólo cuando le identificamos con alguien cercano, no en el sentido espiritual sino en el físico. Convertido en un individuo más, inserto en un contexto reconocible, provoca nuestra risa al observar el choque entre su divinidad y una cotidianidad que acaba minando cualquier concepto trascendental.

This is exactly what happens in "¿Qué sería de Dios sin nosotros?" and "Dios llama al fontanero", referred to in the previous chapter. In the former poem she laments the fact that God cannot enjoy the fun of "hacer novillos" or "tirar una piedra a un farol", while in the latter God needs a plumber to mend a leaking tap and roof, a problem caused by the many tears he sheds because of his awareness of human suffering. The relevance of "lo cotidiano" and madness are only two of a number of aspects of humour that have already been referred to in the previous chapters.

Some of the humorous ways in which Fuertes uses language – including paronomasia and other forms of wordplay – and the imagination, particularly in her early work, mean that it is possible to establish a link between her and the *postistas*, a

⁵ See the discussion of "La linda tapada" in Chapter 2.

⁶ Such a link between humour and humanity has been confirmed by thinkers such as Hegel, Bergson and Freud (McFadden, 1982: 143). Bergson states as one of his premises that "the comic does not exist outside the pale of what is strictly *human*" (1911: 3; italics in original).

group of poets she befriended in the late 1940s. Although, as we have seen, Fuertes claims to be an autonomous poet who developed her style independently, some of her early poems show many of the characteristics of *Postismo*, a self-styled avant-garde movement that sought to ridicule and undermine the prevailing trends in poetry by emphasizing the role of humour and the imagination, and presenting the surreal – based on an individual rather than a collective interpretation of the real – as an alternative to the existential and aesthetic movements that characterized post-war poetry. An analysis of some similarities and differences in the use of humour by Fuertes and the *postistas* provides an interesting angle of approach to the theme of this chapter.

Founded by Carlos Edmundo de Ory, Eduardo Chicharro and Silvano Sernesi, *Postismo* followed in the footsteps of the pre-war avant-garde movements, producing its own journal and iconoclastic manifestos.⁷ The movement was essentially a response to the state of poetry in the 1940s, and in particular to the artificial poetry of the *garcilasistas*. Towards the 1950s, other writers, including Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, Félix Casanova de Ayala, Francisco Nieva and Ángel Crespo, became briefly associated with the group, after which each poet went his own way. Jaume Pont summarizes the characteristics of what he calls the “juego poético postista” as “humor, eufonía musical, juegos de palabras e imaginería onírica” (quoted in Herrero, 1998: LXII). As the manifestos show, the group places great emphasis on the use of the imagination, which is formed in the unconscious and provides images of the surreal: the individual’s experience of reality.⁸ In the “Segundo manifiesto”, first

⁷ Due to censorship, only two issues of the journal could be published, the first one under the name *Postismo*, and the second one as *La Cerbatana*; both appeared in 1945.

⁸ In Chapter 1 a similar kind of process was referred to as the poetic creation of a metaphorical, alternative space of freedom that helped Fuertes to deal with the reality that surrounded her. A particularly relevant example of a poem in this context is “Ventanas pintadas”, where she describes both real windows, and windows painted on the wall which fire her imagination.

published in *La Estafeta Literaria* in 1946, the founders state that *Postismo* is the culmination of all writing based on the unconscious that has preceded the movement, which means that they are able to mention Santa Teresa – who, as we have seen, was also a source of inspiration to Fuertes – as one of the “primeros patronos del Postismo” (in Herrero, 1998: 407-08). Medina (1997: 176-78) recognizes a link between surrealism and mysticism, saying that the surreal is comparable to the ineffable of the mystic writers; hence the legitimacy of the reference to Santa Teresa in the “Segundo manifiesto”. All the features mentioned can also be recognized in Fuertes’s poetry. She apparently was an intimate friend of Carlos Edmundo de Ory,⁹ and the poetic adventure of the *postistas* took place a few years before she started publishing her work. Herrero, in his *Antología de poesía Postista*, includes her as one of the movement’s sympathizers, or “filopostistas”. All the poems by Fuertes in this anthology are from *Aconsejo beber hilo* (1954), the book in which what Payeras (2002: 102) refers to as her “guiños postistas” are most evident. Herrero (1998: XLVII) refers to the title of this book, which consists of apparently meaningless wordplay, as a “título postista”. In spite of her links with *Postismo* in the 1940s and the early 1950s, she later rejected the movement, partly because she did not want to lose her independence as a poet,¹⁰ and partly also because poetry meant much more to her than just a “juego”: unlike the *postistas*, she regarded poetry as something sacred, which, if it reached ordinary people, could ultimately improve the world. However,

⁹ González Rodas (2004: 30), for instance, confirms that “Gloria mantuvo una gran amistad con Ory”. See also Nieva’s comments about how she was “anexionada” by the movement, quoted in Chapter 1.

¹⁰ In a “Poética” written in the 1990s she says (*Es difícil ser feliz una tarde*, 53):

Fui surrealista por el placer
de liberar mi imaginación de todo freno
hasta que descubrí,
que podía escribir con total libertad
sin ser surrealista ni postista
y de ahí nació mi estilo.

bearing this in mind, a discussion of some of the “*guiños postistas*” in her early poetry will contribute to the analysis of her use of humour. The *postista* elements relevant to humour that will be briefly examined are the emphasis on the imagination, the use of apparently unconnected but grammatically correct phrases, different forms of wordplay, and the overall relevance and significance of infantile language.

The key element of *Postismo* is the use of the imagination. According to Jaume Pont, “toda la teoría postista gira en torno a un fundamento axial degenerativo y dominante: *la imaginación*” (1996: 254; italics in original). Medina (1997: 50) says about the importance of the imagination to avant-garde movements in general: “El arte vanguardista preconiza la ruptura con el arte mimético al pasar de ser un arte objetivo a ser un arte subjetivo. La exaltación de la imaginación como base de la creación artística se convierte en la razón de ser de la mayoría de los ‘ismos’.” In fact, Fuertes constantly moves between the subjective promoted by the *postistas* and the objective, mimetic writing of the social realists in her poetry, which is due to her dual purpose of representing her inner self, while she also wishes to expose post-war reality. She confirms this duality in her metapoem “*Telegramas de urgencia escribo*”, discussed in Chapter 2, where she says that her poetry contains both “*la verdad de la verdad*” and “*la magia de la mentira*”. Such magic occasionally leads to nightmarish, hallucinatory imagery, as is the case in “*Cuarto de soltera*”, quoted in Chapter 1, but it usually results in hilarity. While the use of the imagination and oneiric imagery does not necessarily involve humour, it is interesting to note that Freud establishes that the unconscious process of dreams, and the role of the imagination in this process, is comparable to that of jokes, in that both involve similar, psychological processes of modification which take place in the unconscious (1994: 149-68). The *postistas* invoked such processes in their poetry through rapid and spontaneous writing. Fuertes

used a similar technique; she says she writes with “urgencia” and confirms in “Escribo”, (*Historia de Gloria*, 58): “Escribo sin modelo / a lo que salga”.¹¹ This method of writing frequently leads to unexpected twists, word combinations and jokes, and therefore humour, which would probably have been absent, or at least much weaker, if she had been concerned more with poetic structure.

One method of writing poetry that is based on rapidity and spontaneity, and which was practised by both Fuertes and the *postistas*, is that of writing apparently unconnected, but grammatically correct phrases: the “enumeraciones caóticas” associated with Surrealism and children’s verse. Fuertes has written a number of poems that consist of lists of independent phrases, sometimes connected through the use of anaphora or progressing numbers. Perhaps the most effective example of such a poem is “De los periódicos” (published in *Todo asusta*, 1958; OI: 127), where such a list is concluded with an absurd explanation:

Un guante de los largos,
 siete metros de cuerda,
 dos carretes de alambre,
 una corona de muerto,
 cuatro clavos,
 cinco duros de plata
 una válvula de motor
 un collar de señora
 unas gafas de caballero
 un juguete de niño,
 la campanilla de la parroquia
 la vidriera del convento,
 el péndulo de un reloj,
 un álbum de fotografías
 soldaditos de plomo
 un San Antonio de escayola
 dos dentaduras postizas
 la ele de una máquina de escribir
 y un guardapelo,

¹¹ As we saw in Chapters 2 and 3, such urgency and spontaneity can also be interpreted in the light of Fuertes’s didactic purpose, as the poet felt that she had an urgent message to put across, and therefore had no time to think about the formal and technical aspects of poetry.

todo esto tenía el avestruz en su estómago.

Although the list of objects seems random and pointless, the reader is drawn to imagine each object, as, apart from the “clavos”, the “dentaduras postizas” and the “guardapelo”, they are all qualified by descriptive prepositional phrases. The reader is also compelled to continue to read the list, as the objects are all part of the same, ongoing sentence, and there is no apparent link with the title until the very end of the poem. The surprising last line purports to explain the relevance of both the list and the title, but of course it does not give a satisfying explanation, as such objects would never be found in an ostrich’s stomach. At a superficial level, the bizarre list, the element of suspense and the twist in the last line can be said to have a comical effect, but the poem also operates at a deeper level. The first thing to notice is that only a few of the objects mentioned bear no direct relation to Fuertes’s own experience and outlook on life. The “soldaditos” are a recurrent feature in her anti-war poems, while the references to Catholicism – the church bell, the convent and the image of St Anthony – show her attachment to the Catholic faith. In addition, her use of apparent nonsense is a reminder of childhood; according to Freud (1994: 119-21), such writing constitutes a rebellion against the compulsion of logic and reality, and against the lack of freedom of thinking in later life.¹² Ríos Carratalá (2005: 109) summarizes this idea as follows: “El placer de disparatar se descubre en la infancia, cuando es posible jugar con las palabras como si fueran objetos, sin la coerción que en el estadio adulto

¹² Because of Fuertes’s use of what may be regarded as infantile language in some of her poetry for adults, it is perhaps not surprising that some of her poems for adults also appear in her children’s books. “De los periódicos” is in fact included as “Noticia de los periódicos” in *La pata mete la pata* (1999f: 89). The only line that has been changed completely in the children’s poem is “una corona de muerto”, which has been replaced with the less emotionally charged phrase “la sábana de un fantasma”.

impone la razón crítica.”¹³ Fuertes’s inclination to rebel against intellectualism and the lack of individual freedom of thinking is something she shares with the *postistas*. As we have seen, for instance, in the discussion of “Maletilla” in Chapter 2, she frequently hits out against academic rigidity, while her individualistic approach to life is clearly incompatible with the totalitarian ideology promoted by the regime. In the interview with Larra Lomas (1996: 85) she therefore confirms that “La única manera de tener paz, armonía y humor es no matar al niño que siempre debemos ser.” Her use of deliberately simple, infantile language can also be considered in the light of pretence of lack of learning as a response to patriarchal society. In the previous chapter it was suggested that Santa Teresa used such language in order to hide her intelligence and so avoid the Inquisition; in the case of Fuertes, she can be said to subvert the want of intelligence traditionally expected and required from women in a patriarchal society by consistently emphasizing her – feigned – lack of erudition.¹⁴ All these factors mean that a poem such as “De los periódicos”, which, on a first reading, may only achieve a comical effect, does in fact invite the reader to think about the underlying meaning and purpose of the specific use of language. The special, participative role of the reader of a humorous text has been recognized by many theorists and critics. As McFadden points out, humour does not exist without an audience, which has a co-creative role: “The comic is something that would never exist in art or in life without the imaginative impulse of the viewer or reader, alone or in cooperation with an exhibitor or writer.” In other words, if the viewer or reader

¹³ Fuertes refers to exactly the same idea in the “Prologo del grillo” in her children’s book *Diccionario estrafalario*, where she says about writing the book: “lo he escrito jugando. Describo palabras, lo que a mí me sugieren que indican” (1997: 7). The idea of childhood innocence as opposed to the critical reasoning associated with adulthood is also referred to in Paz’s poetry. In “La sencillez” she mentions how an adolescent, leaving behind the more intuitive phase of childhood, loses the purity – the “hermosura” – of simple language on entering the phase of intellectual development (see Chapter 2). See also the discussion of “Los niños y el mar” below.

¹⁴ See also Gilbert and Gubar (2000: 58), who refer to the phenomenon of aphasia as an expression of such intellectual incapacity expected from women writing in a patriarchal culture.

does not “see the joke”, it is not there (1982: 22).¹⁵ Persin, in an article on the use of humour in Fuertes’s poetry, emphasizes the reader’s participative role in the creative process, saying that “by encouraging the reader, through humor, to read the poem for a second time, Fuertes calls attention to the reader’s role in the creative process” (1988: 148). Thus, by using humour, the poet is able to facilitate communication with the reader and so establish contact with the outside world from her lonely position.

A characteristic feature of the poetry of both the *postistas* and Fuertes is the frequent use of wordplay. As is the case with the “enumeraciones caóticas”, phonetic wordplay involves an element of surprise in that words are grouped together because of their phonetic similarity rather than their semantic relevance or appropriateness. The immediately comical effect of combining words with similar sounds but disparate meaning is exploited persistently by the *postistas*. Perhaps one of the most effective *postista* poems is “Carta de noche a Carlos” by Chicharro, as this is a poem where the oneiric elements suggest that there is a meaning to the poem which, however, the reader can never quite perceive. This aspect, in combination with the poem’s constant use of phonetic wordplay, has a comical effect. The poem (published in “Carta quinta” of *El Pájaro de Paja*, 1951), a letter to Carlos Edmundo de Ory in which the poet repeatedly says he is writing a letter and sending – unaccounted-for – rocking chairs, ends as follows:

Sigo enviándote mecedoras,
cuídalas, límpialas, pómpalas,
góndolas, lámparas, ordéñalas,
albérgalas en tu pecho
que el sultán viejo lo dice:
si el refrán mata a la rata
pon tu casa enjalbegada

¹⁵ McFadden is not consistent in his distinction between humour and the comic; at this point in his book the two concepts appear to have the same meaning.

que a decir viene lo mismo.

The long list of rhyming words with an insistent proparoxytone rhythm loses meaning when the invented word “pómpalas” is added, followed by the unexpected – and therefore immediately comical – change from the imperative verb forms to the inappropriate nouns “góndolas” and “lámparas”, before ultimately regaining meaning in “albérgalas en tu pecho”. The line commenting on the use of a “refrán” sounds like a proverb itself because of the use of paronomasia;¹⁶ the final line concludes the entire poem, which constantly shifts between meaning and nonsense, with a comment about linguistic meaning. The list of rhyming imperative verb forms is reminiscent of the list “remera, ramera, romera, ramera, Ramona” in Fuertes’s poem “Yo”, quoted in Chapter 2. A similar example occurs in “Poeta de guardia”, which has been referred to as a serious metapoem where Fuertes describes her task as a poet and the loneliness this involves. However, she is also able to include humour in this poem. It starts as follows: “...¡Otra noche más! ¡Qué aburrimiento! / Si al menos alguien llamase llamara o llamaría!” The three different inflections of the verb “llamar” give this line a humorous aspect because of their phonetic and semantic similarity, while at the same time drawing out the line’s message, and so embodying her experience of boredom, loneliness and waiting. Many other verses could be quoted to illustrate this phenomenon. Perhaps a particularly apt example of a poem where she is able to use the play on phonetic similarity to great effect is “En pocas palabras” (OI: 279):

DEPORTE: un hombre
una tabla

¹⁶ Paronomasia is a frequent feature in Fuertes’s poetry (see Chapter 2) and also in that of the *postistas*. An excellent example can be found in the poem “La mala visita” by Casanova de Ayala (in Herrero, 1998: 147-48), a poem about a fly, which includes the lines: “la mosquita pisa y pasa / vuela y posa por la casa.”

una ola.
 MUERTE: un hombre
 unas tablas
 una ola.
 AMOR: un nombre
 una cama
 y una
 – sola – .

Written in a form suggestive of a riddle, which, like a joke, has a surprise ending, Fuertes here uses repetition and near repetition of words to achieve a humorous effect. In addition to the phonetic wordplay involved in sound repetition – in particular in the identical pronunciation of “un hombre” and “un nombre” – she makes comical use of anaphora, semantic wordplay (the different meanings of “tabla”) and the poem’s visual effects, while parodying the complex structure and language that traditionally characterizes poetry about death or love. However, as is so often the case in her poetry, the underlying message is serious and sad: she demonstrates that life can apparently be summarized in just a few, identical or similar words, while she also brings out her loneliness by separating the word “sola” from the rest of the poem. Although poetry that contains phonetic wordplay may, to some extent, appear to have an element of gratuitousness, it can also be said to expose the nature of language and words, because words are considered objects in their own right rather than mere references to objects, as Ríos Carratalá was quoted above to say with regard to infantile language. Martín Casamitjana (1996: 67), referring to such language, acknowledges that “el poema fonético no es, pues, un acto nihilista, sino por el contrario, un acto de purificación para volver a la palabra virgen.” Therefore, an additional purpose of the use of wordplay in the poetry quoted above is to draw attention to the poets’ awareness of the limitations of language, a subject discussed in Chapter 2. A final point in this context that is interesting to note, is the

link between humour, humanity, and language, in that both humour and language are intrinsically bound up with human experience. Bergson comments in this respect that “language only attains laughable results because it is a human product, modelled as exactly as possible on the forms of the human mind” (1911: 129).

As the above discussion of some aspects of *Postismo* shows, Fuertes, as a “filopostista”, shares some of its characteristics, and although some critics have regarded it as a rather eccentric movement with little or no relevance within its social and cultural context,¹⁷ its writers – like Fuertes – are clearly concerned with the ideology promoted by the regime, and the effect this has on individual freedom and contemporary poetry. The regime’s power ultimately depended on its manipulation of language, and therefore, as Medina (1997: 52) concludes, “el Postismo desplegó una rebeldía contra el lenguaje del poder subvirtiendo los propios mecanismos del poder”. Following this line of thought, she introduces the idea of the subversive use of language by the *postistas* as a “contradiscurso del discurso del poder”, saying that “la proclamación postista de un nuevo lenguaje implica, en último término, el cuestionamiento de la estabilidad de las normas que gobiernan el discurso franquista” (85). This concern with language and its relation to reality, expressed, for instance, in the metapoetic comment at the end of Chicharro’s poem, is, of course, a major concern of the experimental poetry of the 1950s, which means that *Postismo* may be considered a predecessor of such poetry.¹⁸ An important point in which the poetry of both the *postistas* and Fuertes stands out from other post-war writing is its overall

¹⁷ García de la Concha, for instance, is able to say in his “Prólogo” to *La poesía española de posguerra*, a critical analysis of post-war poetry of more than five hundred pages, that he has decided not to make any reference to *Postismo* in his book because “no tuvo apenas significación en la dialéctica de posguerra” (1973: 12).

¹⁸ See also, for instance, Debicki (1982: 5). Because of its preoccupation with language and the individual interpretation of reality, *Postismo* can also be regarded as a precursor of Postmodernism in Spain, and in particular of the *novísimos* poets.

emphasis on humour as a means of breaking with past and present, and revitalizing poetry.

One poem by Fuertes which illustrates all the points about her use of humour that have been elaborated so far is “Era pastor de gatos...”, from *Aconsejo beber hilo* (OI: 91-92). This poem abounds with what Fuertes refers to as “la magia de la mentira” and what Carlos Edmundo de Ory, when defining *Postismo*, calls “la locura inventada”:¹⁹ the magic of free, individual, imaginative thought, which rejects and challenges the official version of reality, and therefore constitutes madness:

Era pastor de gatos y tenía
una larga callada por respuesta.
Las noches las pasaba en los tejados,
jugando con las hebras.
Los gatos y las gatas le miraban,
apoyado en las cuatro chimeneas;
el pastor de los gatos se reía
por nada, o mirando a su vecina prisionera.
Era entendido en noches y sabía
sin mirar el reloj la hora que era,
y subía y bajaba su rebaño de gatos
por los campos de tejas.
Algunos aseguran que está loco,
otros que está poeta,
yo, que lo trato mucho, sólo digo
que es un sabio vestido de princesa.

The incongruence between the pastoral image and the urban roof setting – we are confronted with a “pastor de gatos”, his “rebaño” and the “campos de tejas” – provokes an immediately comical effect. This is enhanced by the way in which the concept of reality is challenged: although the shepherd is out of place on the rooftops, the carefully combined, realistic images used to describe him, suggest that nothing

¹⁹ In the “Segundo manifiesto” (in Herrero, 1998: 399).

about the description is unreal or impossible.²⁰ As is the case in other poems, it is the underlying, emotional significance that adds an element of humour. The shepherd on the rooftops of Madrid, looking after stray cats, provides a ridiculous image, but at the same time he is occupying a marginalized space, which means that he is an outcast, perceived as mad by those representing bourgeois society. However, as a consequence, he has a degree of freedom that others – including the “vecina prisionera”, which is likely to be a reference to the poet herself – will never achieve. Because words have been corrupted by society, he has a defiant “larga callada por respuesta”, while others are also unable to appreciate what he laughs at. Related to this freedom is his supernatural understanding of the night, which is the time associated with the unconscious and the imagination, when the strict dividing lines between real and unreal are blurred. The shepherd therefore exemplifies the outcast who is regarded as a “loco” because he deviates from the norm, but is in fact a “sabio”, whom, as we saw above and in the discussion of St Francis in Chapter 3, Fuertes also associates with the figure of the poet. Both shepherd and poet thus become “wise fools” in an inverted world; hence, perhaps, also the reference to disguise and cross-dressing in the final line, with its oblique suggestion of a fantasy world evoked by the “princesa”. Referring to the idea of the poet as a wise fool, Fuertes once said in an interview²¹ about *Aconsejo de beber hilo*, which, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, she had originally given the title “Diario de una loca”: “En 1955 [sic] publiqué aquí en España, *Aconsejo beber hilo*: diario de una loca que no lo estaba tanto.” As I have pointed out in the previous chapters, she was aware of the marginalized status she shares with the “pastor de gatos” for a number of reasons. In

²⁰ Incongruence has already been mentioned as an element of the comic above. As Martín Casamitjana (1996: 202) points out, such incongruence is particularly effective when reality is challenged: “todo lo irreal, inexistente, fantástico, maravilloso, es susceptible de provocar un efecto cómico por la incongruencia que representan con respecto a la realidad objetiva elevada a la categoría de norma.”

²¹ Published in the Falangist paper *Ofensiva* (see Ortiz, 1959).

fact, her use of humour and references to the surreal can be added to this list: she is the only female poet included in Herrero's anthology, and Medina, in her book on post-war Surrealism, does not mention a single woman writer. Ríos Carratalá (2005: 48-49) gives an interesting quote that confirms that humour was a quality considered incompatible with femininity in the Franco years:

Han cambiado los tiempos, a pesar de que en pleno franquismo José Antonio Pérez Rioja afirmara que “la mujer, encerrada en la concha de su feminidad, no puede sentir, o en muy escasa medida, la ironía o el humorismo” [...]. Según él, los hombres debemos alegrarnos, pues en caso contrario “la mujer habría perdido las cualidades y los defectos que constituyen su verdadera esencia: la feminidad”.

Her use of humour, then, is yet another way in which she challenges the Francoist notion of the feminine, discussed in Chapter 1, and becomes a pioneer for future generations of women writers.

As we have seen above, Fuertes's constant awareness of marginalization is based on the idea of an individual perception which deviates from the accepted view: the notion of seeing things differently. She refers to her awareness of this in “Desde siempre” (also from *Aconsejo beber hilo*; OI: 74):

Desde siempre los enamorados se cogen las manos.
Desde siempre las frutas se cogen del árbol.
Desde siempre los niños se cogen del pecho.
Desde siempre los guardias se cogen del preso.
Y la yedra al piano
Y la tapia al ciempiés.
Desde siempre mi alma cabalgando al revés.

While every person and object described seems to act in harmony with universal expectations, and is therefore accompanied – even the “preso” is not alone – Fuertes is on her own because she challenges such expectations.²² This notion of seeing things differently, “al revés”, leads on to the second angle from which her use of humour will be discussed in this chapter, which is that of the humorous representation of sad reality as a means to cope with such reality. A particularly relevant image in this respect is that of Valle-Inclán’s distorting mirror, exploited in his *esperpentos* and referred to specifically in *Luces de bohemia* (1920).²³

Like Valle-Inclán, Fuertes exposes to the reader the comic side of tragic events in life by using what the former in Scene 12 of *Luces de bohemia* calls “una estética sistemáticamente deformada” (2004: 162), symbolized by a concave mirror which shows reality in a distorted, often grotesque way.²⁴ This technique involves the distortion of images and language, and therefore the inclusion of inappropriate words, comments and references – all of which, as the poetry discussed so far has shown, can also be found in Fuertes’s work – that disorient and often shock the reader, while also providing an element of humour. Used by Fuertes as a survival strategy, it enables her

²² The defiance expressed by the word “cabalgando” is echoed in the image of escaping “sobre los lomos del humor” in the epigraph to this chapter.

²³ Other critics generally ignore the relevance of Valle-Inclán’s image, and instead, when trying to establish a link between Fuertes and literature from before the war, point out the significance of Ramón Gómez de la Serna (see, for instance, Cano, 1984: 154 and González Rodas, 2004: 49). They mention, for example, Fuertes’s “madrileñismo”, recognized by Francisco Ynduráin, and the frequent emphasis on objects in her work (see Chapter 2), while they also mention her use of the term “glorierías” – named after Gómez de la Serna’s “greguerías” – to describe a number of brief poems she wrote mainly in the 1990s. However, while the work of Gómez de la Serna in some respects is relevant to the discussion of Fuertes’s poetry, in particular in its rebellion against the narrow-minded perception and definition of reality by bourgeois society, an important difference to bear in mind is that he was an exponent of Ortega y Gasset’s theory of the “deshumanización del arte”, which involved an emotional distancing that was clearly the opposite of Fuertes’s poetic purpose. As Serrano Vázquez points out in her book on Ramón’s “greguerías”, Gómez de la Serna is aware of the poverty and injustice prevalent in contemporary Spain, but rather than using humour didactically in order to improve the situation, he exploits it to evade reality (1991: 36-41).

²⁴ As has already been noted, the image of the mirror and its reflection is a recurring motif in literature; see the references to the mirror as a motif relevant to feminist criticism and metapoetry in Chapters 1 and 2. Ultimately, what the mirror symbolizes is the reflection of reality, and how this is perceived and manipulated by the author.

to re-create reality, making it laughable and therefore bearable. Another consequence is that, because of the subjective aspect of the mirrored image, she is able to manipulate the mirror's representation, and so provoke a premeditated response among her readers. This is particularly useful to Fuertes because of the didactic and moral purpose her poetry tends to have. As was noted above, she differs in this respect from the objectives of the *Postistas*, whose poetry shies away from moralizing, and therefore makes no direct references to the often shocking reality of post-war Spain. Another important aspect of the "estética de la deformación" is that it heightens the reader's awareness. According to Pérez Parejo (2002: 135), it serves to fine-tune "nuestro espíritu crítico ante lo real y se crea un distanciamiento perfecto para una perspectiva cóncava de nuestro mundo." And so, "estirando la realidad hasta hacerla increíble hemos llegado en ocasiones a conocerla en profundidad." In other words, showing tragic events in a comical light sharpens the reader's mind, and can therefore demystify reality and promote a critical response. The dichotomy between bleak reality on the one hand and its distorted, comical reflection in the concave mirror on the other is present in many of Fuertes's poems. Although she adapts Valle-Inclán's model of the distorting mirror to suit her own personality and purpose, the basic principle of reflecting reality in an exaggerated way, thus encouraging both laughter and serious thought – often accompanied by a sense of uneasiness – is very much the same.²⁵

²⁵ While it is interesting to draw a parallel between the metaphor of the mirror used in Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos* and the way in which Fuertes reflects reality in her poetry, their ultimate purposes are, of course, different. As has been evident throughout this thesis, Fuertes is emotionally involved in her poetry and invites the reader to do the same, in spite of the fact that her use of humour enables her to temporarily distance herself and the reader from sadness. Valle-Inclán's "estética", on the other hand, is based on emotional detachment. As Cardona and Zahareas point out, "el esperpento se relaciona con una perspectiva y Valle-Inclán explicó que la base de los efectos grotescos son el distanciamiento artístico y la enajenación. Es decir, un 'outsider' sin compromiso alguno, algo así como un titiritero que mira sus títeres, puede servir de símbolo para el artista distanciado que ve la realidad de una manera objetiva virtualmente convertido en un desinteresado 'extranjero'" (1970: 30; italics in original). Valle-Inclán developed this image of the author as a disinterested puppeteer in his second

The dichotomy described between harsh reality on the one hand and its humorous reflection in the mirror Fuertes holds up to the reader on the other can be found in many of her poems. It occurs, for instance, in the poem “Nunca se sabe”, quoted above, and is evident in the inclusion of humour in “Poeta de guardia” and in the humorous treatment of the poet whose talent is not recognized by the public in “El vendedor de papeles o el poeta sin suerte”, discussed in Chapter 2. A poem in which she makes specific reference to both the reflecting mirror and the duality she perceives between opposite values is “No mata la calidad sino la cantidad” (OI: 162):

En demasía lo bueno se hace malo,
la píldora veneno
y vicio la caricia;

sabes de todo un poco y vas al cine,
sabes de todo mucho y te suicidas.

Mucha vida (cien años) es la muerte
– se hace malo lo bueno en demasía – .
La soledad, es ese gran espejo
donde acabas por verte monstruoso;

el silencio la tuerca en el oído
que se te va ajustando al agujero,
demasiado silencio es igual que una bomba
y demasiado amor es igual que un entierro.

In this poem she questions the notion of happiness by continually comparing specific concepts with their reverse, considering their mirrored reflection. An element of self-irony is added by the fact that the reader, familiar with her poetry and therefore her

esperpento, *Los cuernos de Don Friolera*, where Don Estrafalarío concludes that the puppeteer, who “ni un solo momento deja de considerarse superior” to his puppets “tiene una dignidad demiúrgica” (2000: 131-32). Although this perspective is very different from that of Fuertes in terms of her poetic purpose and use of humour, the description of the author as a non-caring god is surprisingly reminiscent of her treatment of the subject of predestination discussed in Chapter 3, where God was described as the “Gran Marionetista” and “el dramaturgo”, while she says about humankind in “Él lo sabe”: “marionetas somos, / escorpiones amaestrados”. The reference to the scorpion, a Kafkaesque image of the insignificance of humanity, is further enhanced by the suggestion of people resembling insects, lying “de patitas”, in “El dramaturgo”.

circumstances, realizes that she has in fact reversed reality and its reflection in most of the statements she makes: while she says that too much of a good thing makes it bad, too much tenderness becomes a vice and too much love changes into a burial, the reader understands that “lo bueno”, “la caricia”, and “amor” are exactly the things that are missing from her life, as is summarized in the statement about “la soledad”. The lines about loneliness serving as a mirror show that she is aware that her sense of isolation tends to distort and exaggerate what she perceives as reality, while she is also able to look at her tragic image and laugh at it, thus avoiding a sense of self-pity and putting her experience into perspective. The reference to her own, distorted image as that of a monster is a reference to the grotesque, which also plays an important part in Valle-Inclán’s “estética”.²⁶

Humorous references to what is ugly and monstrous are an immediate consequence of reflecting reality in a concave mirror; they are common in Valle-Inclán’s work and in early twentieth-century art in general. As Martín Casamitjana explains (1996: 112): “La intromisión de la fealdad en el arte contemporáneo conlleva la presencia de una especie de humor que tiene su razón de ser en lo feo y lo horrendo, es decir, lo grotesco, que surge como consecuencia del proceso de deformación a que el artista somete la realidad.” She sees this trend as a negation of the traditional link between art and beauty. As we saw in the discussion of “La linda tapada” in Chapter 2, Fuertes responds in a similar way to the post-war aesthetics of official poetry by deliberately including references to ugliness in her work. According to Bakhtin (1968: 19-20), such grotesque realism is based primarily on “degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the

²⁶ In Chapter 1, the image of the woman as a monster, and the relevance of this to Fuertes’s poetry, was discussed in the light of the angel-monster polarity described by Gilbert and Gubar, while the use of grotesque, harsh vocabulary by poets such as Dámaso Alonso in *Hijos de la ira* was interpreted as a “grito” attempting to break the censorial silence imposed by the regime.

empty mummies, frogs or hyenas. Another cause of our ugliness and emptiness is that we fail to “desatar las correas”: trapped in our narrow-mindedness, we have forgotten how we used our imagination when we were children, when we could still play with “un aro y un balón”. While the individual images have a humorous effect, the poem’s overall purpose is to expose the human ugliness Fuertes perceives in contemporary life. Although she does not include herself in the poem, it is very much the world as it is represented here that causes her sense of isolation and alienation. By using the outlet of grotesque humour, she is able to disguise her strong feelings and avert a sense of bitterness, while at the same time sending out a strong moral message without reverting to preaching. An example of a poem which is based entirely on the grotesque inversion of life and death, and shows the dead as being alive and preoccupied with everyday tasks, is “Los muertos” (OI: 99-100). Such a description provokes laughter, which we apparently share with the dead, as she introduces the subject by referring to “la risa de los muertos”. She explains that at night the dead return to their former bedrooms, where they “hacen sus cigarros / o se cosen sus medias”, while in general they have a great time:

[...]
si no cogen el sueño,
los muertos desvelados
se salen de sus sitios
y se cantan saetas,
se sacuden gusanos,
se cuentan los cartílagos
y se vuelven al hoyo
parsimoniosamente.

The vivid description, the reference to the party atmosphere, and the suggestion that the skeletons only pretend to be dead because that is what we, the living, expect from

them, cause a degree of hilarity, but at the same time provide Fuertes with a means to deal with her own memory of those who have died. References to the dead and close relatives and friends who had died in the Civil War are a common feature in post-war poetry, but normally such poems take on the form of a dignified, commemorative lament.²⁷ Fuertes, by turning the idea of the lament upside down and reverting to grotesque humour instead, is able to liberate herself from her sadness and even feel accompanied by the dead, as, according to her poem, they return to their previous homes. The fact that this is the poem's underlying purpose is evident from the comforting message in the concluding lines:

Y no les gusta nada que les tengamos pena;
los muertos tienen suerte
están mucho más cerca del Señor.

Gabino-Alejandro Carriedo, one of the poets associated with *Postismo* and one of the founders of *El Pájaro de Paja*, wrote a very similar poem, "Breve historia de los muertos", in which the poet seems to take comfort from the continuing presence of the dead in their previous homes (in Ruiz Soriano, 1997: 269-70). It ends as follows:

[...]
abren las cartas que llegaron tarde,
concluyen la lectura del periódico
del día de su fallecimiento,
hurgan un poco en la despensa,
contemplan a los hijos que reposan
y se van por la puerta, sigilosos,
un algo tristes, pero confortados
porque no hay novedad, porque aun sin ellos,
parece que todo marcha,
pues está recogida la cocina

²⁷ See, for instance, "Los amigos muertos" by José Luis Hidalgo, "Ellos" by José Hierro and "Los muertos míos vuelven" by Concha Zardoya, all included in Ruiz Soriano's anthology (1997: 126, 138-40 and 258).

y el grifo no gotea.

According to Pont (1996: 262), the *postistas* frequently make reference to the grotesque: “La poética del Postismo es connatural a la visión paródica y grotesca de un ‘mundo al revés’”, a “visión” that also brings to mind the work of Fuertes and Valle-Inclán.

One way in which Fuertes expresses this “mundo al revés”, the dichotomy between bleak reality and its comical reflection that characterizes Valle-Inclán’s “estética”, is by referring to the complex figure of the clown. Clowns represent entertainers who exaggerate their physical features and are laughable because of their clumsiness and the mistakes they make, thus giving them a pathetic aspect. Fuertes identified with clowns in several respects, as she also saw herself as an entertainer when she gave her public readings, while her avoidance of feminine elegance, her hoarse voice and her use of prosaic language gave her performances a certain aspect of clownish awkwardness. While she made her audience laugh with her often humorous poetry, her work also reveals an underlying sense of pathos, which is an immediate consequence of her emotional involvement in her writing. Like Fuertes, clowns are lonely characters who belong to a marginalized world: that of the circus. In one “Oración” (OI: 128), where she feels abandoned by everyone, she recognizes the laughter of a clown as a survival strategy, therefore concluding her prayer by saying:

[...]
haz un milagro más,
dame la risa,
¡hazme payaso, Dios, hazme payaso!

As a clown, she not only provides herself with a specific identity, but also takes on the task of making others laugh in an ailing world, a task which she describes in

“Nací para poeta o para muerto” (OI: 160):

Nací para puta o payaso,
escogí lo difícil
– hacer reír a los clientes desahuciados – ,
y sigo con mis trucos,
sacando una paloma del refajo.

The suggestion that laughter can alleviate the suffering of those who are terminally ill is yet another reference to the redemptive powers of her poetry, while at the same time, by giving herself the task of making others laugh, she combats her own sense of being side-lined. An important aspect of the twentieth-century clown is that he represents the character of the antihero who exploits humour as a means of self-defence. Ríos Carratalá (2005: 88), when discussing the antihero, talks in this respect of “un humor de resistencia, que intenta dar refugio a quien es consciente de su inferioridad en otros campos que no son los del ingenio. Con él corroe, mediante la sátira, la ironía y la ridiculización, aquello que lo oprime.” An iconic example of such an antihero is Charlie Chaplin, referred to by Fuertes when she described herself as a clown to González Rodas. As he states, “para Gloria, el mundo es un circo, y el hombre-poeta, un payaso. Nos decía que ella quería ser el Charlot de la poesía española, y nos hace reír con su poesía, y con sus trucos, aunque tras la sonrisa del payaso se filtren sentidas lágrimas” (2004: 49). A final aspect of the clown that is interesting to consider is that of the clown’s mask of make-up, which distorts and exaggerates his features. When we think of the humorous mask in a figurative sense it becomes a façade: the façade of humour that covers up the serious message that

underlies Fuertes's poetry. In addition to serving the purposes described above, such a disguise also frequently enables her to avoid censorship, while according to Sherno (2001: 212) she uses a façade of naïve humour to conceal her erudition and her critical attitude towards society: "Fuertes hides behind a facade of naïveté, using humor and hyperbole to conceal a high degree of erudition as well as an attitude of incredulity and skepticism regarding the myths of official culture."²⁸ Fuertes refers to clowns and the circus in a number of other poems, and they are a recurring feature in her work for children. In "Autobiografía" (OI: 71), for instance, she says: "Yo quisiera haber sido del circo", while "El circo" and "El clown" (OI: 226 and 289-90) deal with the circus environment. Perhaps the most relevant example of an autobiographical reference to the figure of the clown is the children's story "El ogro payaso", included in *Cangura para todo* (1999c: 81-92), where she describes an ugly ogre who decides to become a clown and make children laugh. Ultimately, what motivates him is his need to be recognized and loved by others, a need which is also expressed in many of Fuertes's poems. In the first story of *Cuentos para 365 días*, "Coleta payasa ¿qué pasa?", a girl says she wants to be a clown because "hacer reír es una obra de caridad" (1999f: 7), which summarizes the poet's recognition of the special alleviating quality of humour referred to above.

The dichotomy between laughter – the laughable, distorted reflection of reality in the concave mirror – and the darkness of sad reality means that Fuertes constantly has to look for a balance between these two opposing poles. In "No mata la calidad sino la cantidad" she warns several times that too much of something results

²⁸ This pretence of simplicity was also referred to above in the context of her pretence of lack of learning, and in Chapter 2 in the discussion of the complexity that underlies the apparently simple poem "Maletilla". It is also evident in the stanza from "Nací para poeta o para muerto", quoted above: its language is deliberately non-poetic, but the structure used in this and the other two stanzas is that of the "lira", a poetic form associated with Renaissance poetry and used, for instance, by San Juan de la Cruz in his *Cántico*. She thus shows that she is not only well read and aware of such poetry, but that she is also perfectly able to write poetry in traditional verse forms.

in its opposite. She deals with this need for balance in “Equilibrista” (OI: 259), another poem set in a circus environment:

Subir por la cuerda floja
y el cable tenso alcanzar
– lo difícil no es llegar,
lo difícil mantenerse –
crucificado en el aire
huyendo de la pendiente
sin mirar a las cabezas
que esperan el accidente.

Here, the circus artist’s entertainment does not consist of making the audience laugh, but in publicly exposing the danger involved in moving along the rope. If we interpret the rope as a symbol for the path of life, Fuertes can here again be seen to refer to her role as a poet: laying bare her life and inner self in her poetry, she captivates the audience’s attention. Life is shown as a difficult balancing act in which her faith, alluded to by the shape of the Cross – which emphasizes the suffering involved in life – provides the necessary equilibrium between her sadness, loneliness and serious attitude on the one hand, and humour and laughter on the other. The idea of the poet finding her equilibrium is a reminder of what Dámaso Alonso was quoted to say about “poesía desarraigada” in Chapter 1, which was characterized by “una búsqueda frenética de centro o de amarre”.

As we have seen here and in the previous chapters, Fuertes’s personality and work are characterized by several binary oppositions. She is defiant but also despondent, and she questions the contrast between wisdom and foolishness. Her Christian beliefs are rooted in an ideological tradition which she rejects, and she regards herself as both a mystic and a down-to-earth person: a “mística terrenal”. She also uses prosaic language which she presents as poetry, and she reverts to simple

language to convey complex meaning. Herrero (1998: XLVIII) calls her “lúcidamente ingenua”, saying that “es una enfermera vocacional ansiosa por sanar el mundo – posición lúcidamente ingenua – con sus versos.” González Rodas (2004: 27), summarizing the dual effect that her use of humour has on the reader, says that her poetry leaves “siempre una grata sonrisa y una honda preocupación”. I would argue that, ultimately, the dichotomy faced by Fuertes consists of the incompatibility between the marginalized self and the need to form part of society. Humour, by distorting this reality, makes it more bearable, and also provides a means towards integration in society because of its communicative aspect. However, while Fuertes finds in humour a survival strategy amidst the dark world that surrounds her, this by no means indicates that her humour has an element of bitterness. In fact, in a review of *Poeta de guardia* by Rafael Morales (in *La Provincia*, 1969), entitled “Fuertes, o el humor amargo”,²⁹ she wrote an emphatic “NO” in the margin in response to the reference to bitter humour in the title, and encircled the words “la alegría de vivir”, thus confirming her fundamentally optimistic worldview.

The discussion of this section has highlighted the relevance and significance of humour in the poetry of Fuertes. Before moving on to the analysis of sea imagery in Paz’s poetry, it is interesting to consider the absence of humour in the work of the latter poet. As a matter of fact, in the course of this section several characteristics of humour have been mentioned that account for such absence. As we have seen, humour focuses on the material level of everyday life and avoids abstractions. Although Paz also refers to “lo cotidiano” in her poetry, her purpose in doing so is to transcend the immanence of everyday objects and find ways to describe abstract truth. This difference between the two is exemplified by their different treatment of the

²⁹ Consulted in the archives of the Fundación Gloria Fuertes in Madrid.

divine: whereas Fuertes envisages a humanized, down-to-earth God, who can therefore be treated with humour, such treatment would be inappropriate and even impossible in Paz's approach to the theme. Another relevant point in this respect is that beauty expressed in poetic language and imagery provides an important element in Paz's work, while, as we have seen, humour often involves a certain "minoración valorativa" (Martín Casamitjana, 1996: 421), which means that it is much more likely to be found in what is ugly, grotesque or distorted, than in something that has beauty and perfect form. Seeking to express beauty, Paz carefully plans and structures her poems. However, as we saw in the discussion of *Postismo*, it is the spontaneity involved in rapid writing that produces the comical imagery that originates in the unconscious. For these reasons, Paz's specific purposes in poetry are generally incompatible with the conditions that facilitate humour and laughter. Instead, she uses complex imagery that can support her in her aim to describe what is abstract and exists beyond time and space.

4.2. Sea Imagery and the Confrontation with Self and Infinity in the Poetry of Pilar Paz Pasamar

*¿Dónde está el mar para darle
mi voz entera, mi voz?*

*...y quedo a oscuras frente al mar, el absoluto
mar que apenas se inmuta ante el dolor del hombre.*
Pilar Paz Pasamar

Seeking to articulate in poetry personal experiences that go beyond shared, rational knowledge and therefore cannot be easily expressed, Paz frequently uses symbolism to represent her abstract thoughts. In doing so, she follows the example of other poets

seeking to express the ineffable, such as San Juan de la Cruz, Bécquer and Juan Ramón Jiménez. A symbol she uses frequently in her poetry is that of the sea. As she explained in our interviews, the reason for this has been its proximity during most of her life, which made her aware of its constant presence when she was in Cádiz, and of its absence when she lived in Madrid. In a paper she delivered in Cádiz she said in this respect (1989: 71-72):³⁰

Vivir junto al mar “del vendaval” gaditano durante tantos años y recibir cada tarde las indescriptibles – diferentes todas ellas – luces del poniente, no sé si en lo formal, pero sí en la inclinación interior de la postura, ha tenido que incidir necesariamente en cuanto escribo, tal la planta que por necesidad arquea el tallo para aproximar sus hojas hacia la abertura por donde penetra la luz.

Because of the prevalence of the sea in her work and its special symbolical significance, a study of her use of sea imagery in her poetry of the 1950s and 1960s will help to pinpoint the characteristics of Paz’s poetic purpose and language in a way comparable to how the analysis of humour in Fuertes’s work has led to some significant conclusions about her work. However, the different nature of imagery asks for a different approach. First of all, I argued that humour represents a way of life and a survival strategy in Fuertes’s poetry, as a result of which humour is evident throughout her work. Obviously, the same cannot be said about the use of imagery as it serves a different purpose – that of expressing or illustrating abstract ideas – and clearly there are only a limited number of poems in which the sea appears as a motif in Paz’s work. The sea is almost completely absent in *Ablativo amor*, discussed in Chapter 3, while it is much more prevalent in Paz’s other poetry collections. This

³⁰ She delivered this paper, “Poemas con mar dentro”, at the Ateneo de Cádiz in July 1985; I will refer to it again in the course of this chapter.

means that the discussion is limited to a relatively small number of poems, whereas in the previous chapter I could have quoted from a wide range of different examples to illustrate my argument. Another important difference between the two sections is that while many theorists and critics have written about humour in general, and about humour in Spanish avant-garde writing in particular, there is very little theoretical and critical context in terms of sea imagery, which is probably due to the many different ways in which poets have used such imagery. I will therefore contextualize the discussion by referring to some examples of other writing in which the sea serves a similar purpose as that of Paz.

Several of the poems discussed in previous chapters include references to the sea, used in different poetic contexts and for different purposes. In “La alacena”, the sensory encounter with the fragrances of the spices in her larder is compared with sea waves rolling in. In “La casa” she describes the physical proximity of her house to the sea, saying that from behind its windows “luchamos / contra el mar y sus ruidos”, while in “Violencia inmóvil” she compares God with “ese mar pacífico de al lado”. The poem “Del abreviado mar”³¹ is based entirely on the image of the sea, which is associated here with freedom. Wilcox identifies the sea as a recurring image in poetry written by women, concluding that in the twentieth century it frequently symbolizes regeneration and emancipation (1997: 12 and 72).³² As he points out, such imagery is prominent in the poetry of Concha Méndez, who, in *Canciones de mar y tierra* (1930), uses marine imagery (references to the sea, ships, bathing costumes, mermaids) to describe her process of self-definition as an independent woman and poet (91-95). An interesting parallel can be drawn between the first poem from this

³¹ All references to “Del abreviado mar” in this chapter are to the first poem of that title.

³² This idea is further developed by Persin in her article “Mermaids, Pirates, Women and the Sea in Recent Spanish Poetry by Women” (2007: 239-54), which focuses on maritime imagery in contemporary poetry by women.

collection, “Navegar” (quoted by Quance in 2003: 58), and “Del abreviado mar”. In “Navegar” Méndez says the following:

Que me pongan en la frente
una condecoración.
Y me nombren capitana
de una nave sin timón.

Por las mares quiero ir
corriendo entre Sur y Norte
que quiero vivir, vivir,
sin leyes ni pasaporte.

Perdida por los azules
navegar y navegar.
Si he nacido tierra adentro
me muero por ver el mar.

In both poems, the speaker is in control of her own ship, which therefore symbolizes a sense of liberty and emancipation, while the exhilarating backdrop of the sea exemplifies their experience of such freedom. In “Navegar”, however, such emancipation is associated with the freedom to roam the seas without a task or purpose, and therefore the speaker’s ship is “una nave sin timón”, while Paz’s sea is a metaphor for her inner self. Her freedom is associated with determining her own direction, and she therefore refers to the image of a person who “lleva su propio compás”, which, as we have seen, leads to an internalized process of self-definition through writing poetry. Such metaphorical use of the sea as an inner space of freedom is only one of several ways in which Paz makes reference to the sea. I have identified four principal ways in which she uses sea imagery in her work. Firstly, she refers to the sea to symbolize youthful innocence, with the limitless sea providing an image of the apparently limitless possibilities characteristic of the naïve perception associated with childhood and early adolescence. This idea is explored specifically in the poem

“Los niños y el mar”. Secondly, there is the physical presence of the sea in Cádiz, associated with happiness, but also with the insufficiency experienced by a woman poet living in a provincial town. Thirdly, the sea symbolizes timeless, universal truth in Paz’s quest for meaning, which is most evident in *Violencia inmóvil*. Finally, the sea also plays a central part in the historical and geographical interest she develops in the different cultures that have influenced Cádiz and the countries surrounding the Mediterranean. However, as she develops this interest in her later writing, it will only be referred to briefly. The discussion of this chapter is based on these four points, always bearing in mind the confrontation – implicit in such imagery – of herself as a human being whose experience is limited by time and space, on the one hand, and the infinite sea, on the other. As is expressed in the two contrasting quotes of the epigraph, such a confrontation can be either positive and inspiring, or negative.

An important theme in *Mara* and *Los buenos días* is that of the loss of childhood innocence, and the poet’s awareness of her changing perception of life and the passing of time as an adolescent and young adult. A child’s naïve notion of his own, limitless strength and possibilities are explored in “Los niños y el mar” (*Mara*, 46-47) in the image of a child’s attempt to embrace the sea:

Todos iban corriendo. Tamboriles
ligeros, cada pie, sobre la arena.

Aire, espuma, azahar, sobre las sienas,
caricias de la mar, carnes morenas.

Todos iban corriendo menos uno
que quería abrazarse a la marea.
Todos iban corriendo por el aire
casi, de tanto contemplar las velas
y las altas gaviotas – blanquecinos
presagios de la playa –

El mar se queja
en su ruidoso abandonarse tanto,

en su ansiedad de renovar sin treguas.

Todos iban corriendo, menos uno...

La tarde ya ha soltado su melena
de sales y de vientos débilmente,
con el último sol, pálida y ciega.

Yo lo vi con los brazos extendidos,
pretendiendo abrazarse a la marea
en un juego infantil y desbordante...

Locos y palpitantes,
los otros van corriendo por la arena.

The first thing to notice in this poem is how the sea reflects the children's playfulness, innocence and youth. By referring to the sea as "la mar" rather than "el mar", Paz emphasizes the sea's peaceful, motherly quality.³³ Giving the children gentle "caricias", the sea is placid and has an "ansiedad de renovar" which does not pose any risk or danger, as the winds are light and the sun is pale. The boy separating himself from the group is involved in a game he plays with the sea: "un juego infantil y desbordante". As she herself, as the poem's adolescent speaker, is watching the boy and realizes she no longer shares his naivety and the confidence resulting from this, the poem introduces the theme of the loss of such innocence. This theme is further explored in *Los buenos días*, which includes many poems that deal with the consequences of growing up and maturing as a person. In "Las cosas olvidadas" (12), for instance, she laments the fact that growing older necessarily involves forgetting things. This is a sign of the limitations of life, which can only move forwards in time

³³ "La mar" is traditionally associated with what are perceived to be feminine characteristics; Hemingway describes the difference between the masculine "el mar", which is "a contestant [...] or even an enemy", and "la mar" in *The Old Man and the Sea* (1999: 23). Wilcox (1997: 12), referring to Ostriker, makes the point that for many women poets the sea represents a secure, even gratifying place, an association which, according to him, is encouraged by the "mère / mer" homophony in French. In "Con ella en las orillas" (*La soledad, contigo*, 20), a poem in which Paz presents her newborn daughter to the sea, she in fact refers to the sea as a "mar maternal", saying that her daughter "aprenderá a decirte madre / cuando comprenda tu fatiga".

– forever adding things to remember – and never backwards, as she expresses by using the metaphor of a “madeja”:

[...] Por la ilusoria

madeja que es el tiempo, busco en vano
el hilo de regreso [...]

She therefore concludes that “La eternidad no es mía”: realizing that life is subject to such limitations, she has lost the belief, represented by the child in the above poem, that it is possible to embrace the eternity symbolized by the sea.³⁴ As was discussed in Chapter 3, she later arrived at a different conclusion about time, which was influenced by Juan Ramón Jiménez’s concept of the “estación total”.

The theme of the loss of childhood innocence and the poet’s awareness of the limitations of human perception, introduced in “Los niños y el mar”, foreshadows Paz’s later theme of seeking to define universal truth – exemplified by the image of “abrazarse a la marea” – in human terms, and the realization that this is ultimately unachievable.³⁵ As we have seen in Chapter 3, this quest for truth and meaning

³⁴ This distinction between the ages of the naïve and the reflective, and the nostalgia associated with this, is, of course, a major theme in literature. First described by Schiller, reflection on the naïve can be related to Romanticism (see McFadden, 1982: 144). In the previous section the awareness of the loss of childhood innocence was discussed in the light of Fuertes’s use of infantile language as a form of rebellion against the language resulting from critical reasoning, associated with adult life and – in her case – patriarchal society.

³⁵ The image of the sea symbolizing universal truth has been used by many other poets; some examples will be referred to later in this chapter. A poem that is relevant in this respect is “Se canta al mar” by Nicanor Parra (1998: 65-66), as its speaker describes a gesture of trying to embrace the sea very similar to that described in the above poem. Seeing the sea for the first time, the speaker describes “nuestro saludo” as follows:

Entonces fue cuando extendí los brazos
Sobre el haz ondulante de las aguas,
Rígido el cuerpo, las pupilas fijas,

involves a mystical, meditative attitude and experience such as that of the boy in the above poem. It is interesting to consider the description of this meditative attitude in more detail. As the poem shows, it is associated with standing apart from the others, and being separated from the noise and hurried movement they produce; the boy thus experiences a deeper sense of awareness, and therefore a sense of freedom, of which the others are ignorant. Throughout the poem, the group represented by the anonymous “todos” is contrasted with the individual boy, whose condition of separateness is emphasized by the repeated “menos uno”. The “todos” are associated with running each time they are mentioned; the thumping sound the children’s feet produce on the sand is reflected in the rhythm of “Aire, espuma, azahar”. The third stanza, recounting the children’s experience, hurries along, with a sudden interruption in mid-sentence, suggesting the lack of a cohesive thinking process. The ellipsis at the end of the one-line stanza suggests a change of mood. After the second ellipsis we return to the others; while the boy, standing still in silence, has had a special experience – which is all the more special because it is observed by the poet – the others have not had such an experience, and are still running in exactly the same way as in the first stanza.

A similar contrast between a noisy group and a contemplative individual can be found in two other poems, written at very different stages of Pilar Paz Pazamar’s life. The first one, “...Y tuvieron”, is included in *Violencia inmóvil* (24) and was discussed in Chapter 2 in the context of the innocence the poet associates with the

En la verdad sin fin de la distancia
[...]

As is the case with Paz, the experience of the existence of a “verdad sin fin” causes “inquietudes”, which in turn inspire the speaker to write poetry:

Nació en mi mente la inquietud y el ansia
De hacer en verso lo que en ola y ola
Dios a mi vista sin cesar creaba.

original, primordial state of language, when language was untainted by over-usage. In this poem, the speaker herself is the individual: while the others fall over each other to shout meaningless phrases, she – once again described with the words “Menos una” – is set apart because of her purpose of looking for original meaning. Her rejection of the empirical reasoning of the others gives her a sense of freedom, but she also describes herself as “tan ganada o perdida en lo imposible / sin etiqueta”; in other words, she gains in awareness by rejecting the empty claims of the others, but at the same time there is a sense of fighting a losing battle, because she knows that what she wants to achieve is ultimately beyond her reach, as truth is ultimately “sin etiqueta”, and therefore unsayable. The other poem, “Un solo hombre reza en la mezquita”, from the collection *Philomena* (1995: 39), was written in Istanbul in 1991, during one of the foreign trips Paz was able to make in her later life. Here, the poet returns to her voyeuristic role: visiting a mosque, she notices how restoration work is going on, aimed at pleasing tourists rather than those who come to pray. The workers, whose “dedos restauradores” are busying themselves with the mosque’s material aspect, are contrasted with one single man, “un solo orante” who, in a manner reminiscent of the boy on the beach, has separated himself from the rest and their superficial preoccupations to devote himself to private reflection. Here the mature poet, who has gone through the process of searching for God and has arrived at the conclusion that she will never be able to understand God and explain her experience of the divine, describes the praying Muslim as a “criatura / que ha decidido perseguir a Dios”, just as she has done herself throughout her life. In “Los niños y el mar”, then, Paz describes the boy’s action as a game, as she, as an adolescent, is becoming aware of the impossibility of embracing universal truth; in “...Y tuvieron” she is in the middle of the process of seeking to express such truth, conscious of its value but also of the

elusiveness of ultimate meaning, and in “Un solo hombre reza en la mezquita” she contemplates with respect a man who, like her, has decided to “perseguir” an evasive “Dios”, which she recognizes as a rewarding but difficult choice. The attitude of the boy, the poet and the Muslim in the three poems involves a – temporary – rejection of logical reasoning and a search for truth that transcends such reasoning, epitomized by the boy’s childhood innocence. In a comment on “Los niños y el mar”, Paz said in this respect that the boy’s wish to embrace the sea constitutes “un deseo imposible, que sólo puede provenir de la inocencia” (1989: 73).

The poet’s acknowledgement of the significance of the boy’s action described in “Los niños y el mar” suggests that she had a similar experience when she was a child, and recognizes herself in the boy’s attitude and “juego”. In fact, she refers to the meditative attitude she associated with the sea when she was a child and the privacy that such an attitude necessarily involved in the autobiographical short story “El sustituto”, included in *Historias bélicas* (2004: 103-12). The story, set in Madrid, where she lived when she was a child and a young adult,³⁶ is built up around the importance the “Estanque” in the “Parque del retiro” has to her, “aquél pedazo de agua estancada sobre el que flotaban las barquillas y las pelambreras de los sauces” (103), which helped her to cope with the absence of the sea, described as “la infinitud del mar que añoraba rabiosamente” (112). Such infinity is something she is unable to explain to her friends, who have never seen the sea: “Aquella masa de agua verde y estancada era un remedo del otro azul tan recordado, tan inmenso que no podía describir a mis compañeras con palabras” (107). This image reflects the poet’s later struggle of sharing her experience of the ineffable with others in her writing. Like the boy in “Los niños y el mar”, she wishes to be alone in order to experience the special

³⁶ The events described take place at the end of the Second World War, so she would have been twelve years old.

significance of the water in the pond: “a mí, a la hora de contemplar el estanque, me hubiese gustado estar a solas, como en las orillas de la playa” (106). As we saw in the previous chapters, in her poetry such solitude has contradictory connotations, as it refers to the privacy needed to meditate and write poetry as well as the loneliness and the isolation she experienced after her move to Cádiz. A parallel can be drawn between these conflicting feelings and the contrasting associations evoked by the sea: while she misses the sea “rabiosamente” when she lives in Madrid, it develops into a symbol of the insufficiency she experiences when she lives in Cádiz as a married woman.

Throughout her work, the physical presence or the memory of the sea is linked to both happiness and a sense of belonging, and to the unhappiness caused by the isolation associated with Cádiz, and therefore also with the sea. As a consequence, the sea is represented in her poetry as both a friend – an accomplice in her search for meaning – and as an unfeeling, incommunicative enemy. In the poem “Mundo nuevo” (*La soledad, contigo*, 39-40), for instance, written in an optimistic mood, she describes her new world as sufficient and the sea as a friendly presence. Addressing her husband, she says: “El mar, contigo, al fondo, / su amistad nos ofrece”. In “Poemas de otoño, I”, included in *Mara* (61), the sea represents the opposite. Describing the acute pain caused by someone’s absence, the unfeeling sea does not offer any respite: here the sea is “el absoluto / mar que apenas se inmuta ante el dolor del hombre”, and she is very much aware of “Mi soledad, tan íntima”, as opposed to “esta orilla inmensa”. These contrasting aspects of the sea are both present in the poem “La casa” (*La soledad, contigo*, 37-38), in which she contrasts the house’s lack of consciousness that is due to its status of object with her own awareness. In the lines quoted above she refers to the windows of her house, “tras los cuales luchamos /

contra el mar y sus ruidos”, while later in the poem she says that she gives the house her human warmth and a deeper sense of being by, among other things, letting in the fresh sea air:

[...]
la enciendo con mis gritos,
con el sol, con el aire
del salado vecino.

The sea is thus regarded as a life-giving power, and as one of the phenomena linked to the poet’s consciousness. As Ripoll (1986: 10) points out, the closeness of the apparently infinite sea also provides an image of tempting adventure and possible escape from her trapped position within her limited, material world:

Allí en su casa, a pocos metros de la playa, sigue repartiendo sus fuerzas entre la cotidianidad de un hogar con muchos hijos y el frondoso palpitar de la memoria, mientras las olas del mar le advierten del ruido de un mundo lejano e impenetrable, al tiempo que le exponen ante su ventana la tentación de un largo viaje a lo desconocido.

Paz embarked on a “largo viaje a lo desconocido” in spiritual terms, reflected mostly in *Violencia inmóvil* and in *Philomena*, while she was also able to physically travel to other countries from the 1980s onwards, as is reflected in her later poetry, in which she alternates poems about her own, interior experience with those concerned with other people and different settings.

One poem in which she deals with the theme of the insufficiency associated with her life by the sea is “Desde donde respiro” (*Los buenos días*, 17-18). Written at a time when she spent her summers by the sea and the rest of the year in Madrid,

where she studied at the Universidad Complutense, it anticipates some of the themes and motifs of *La soledad, contigo* and *Violencia inmóvil*. The first three stanzas read as follows:

Muy lejos de este mar doméstico, casero
como el pan bienoliente, como la maternal
lluvia y los días de sencilla tristeza,

muy lejos de este mar que como un niño juega
con la inocente gracia de su inmovilidad,
muy lejos de esta mesa donde apoyo los codos
mi conciencia respira.

Como lleva la madre al hijo en su mirada
aun siendo todavía el hijo el aire, el pájaro,
la brisa, El acaso, un pensamiento,
yo llevo la violenta pesadez de una hora
donde mi vida se confunde
con el ruido infinito de una región que no conozco.³⁷

The extended first sentence contrasts the domestic, homely ambience of the house by the sea with the distant place, Madrid, where she would like to be, as this is the place associated with the development of her consciousness. Her longing is accentuated by the repetition of “muy lejos” and the postponement of the sentence’s subject and verb. The image of the sea representing the innocent game of a child may be regarded as an intertextual reference to “El niño y el mar”, although its significance is very different: here the sea is the active agent, and innocence here denotes the lack of opportunities for development that weighs heavily on Paz’s mind. Commenting on this poem, she said: “Naturalmente, y como queda tanto por vivir, y la vida es sugerencia al poeta le resulta insuficiente el propio mar” (1989: 75). The description of such insufficiency anticipates her later experience of dissatisfaction after her permanent return to Cádiz.

³⁷ Although the capital “E” in “El acaso” seems unnecessary and perhaps an error, it appears in the poem’s text in *Los buenos días*, in the anthology *Ópera lecta* (2001:34), as well as in “Poemas con mar dentro” (1989: 75); I have therefore retained it.

It is interesting how this sense of insufficiency is expressed in this poem, as it points forward to the image of the “violencia inmóvil del mar” in *Violencia inmóvil*: she refers to the “inmovilidad” of the sea, here suggesting a lack of change, while in the third stanza she refers to the “violenta pesadez” she experiences. In the last three lines of this stanza the image of the sea and her own experience are fused: the image of the “ruido infinito de una región que no conozco” is inspired by the noise of the infinite sea. In addition, it is also used here to describe her awareness of an inner restlessness which she cannot quite grasp: the awareness she is seeking, but which is also the cause of her dissatisfaction. When discussing the image of “la violencia inmóvil” during our interviews, she told me that it pertains to both the sea, and all it symbolizes in *Violencia inmóvil*, and to the experience of women, feeling frustrated with the lack of opportunities to take part in public life, referring to “la violencia del volcán que las mujeres llevamos dentro [...] porque la mujer ha sido relegada de su actividad. Pero cada mujer – como cada volcán – tiene su hora de violencia” (16-10-2005).³⁸

The themes described above, those of innocence as opposed to experience and consciousness, and the awareness of insufficiency that is the immediate consequence of such consciousness, lead on to the overall theme in her work of poetic language as a means to explore such contrasting experiences and her search for the encounter with

³⁸ She is not the only woman poet who has used this metaphor. “On my volcano grows the Grass” by Emily Dickinson (quoted by Gilbert in Showalter, 1986: 34), the speaker also describes “my volcano”, which from the outside is a “meditative spot”, while inside the “Fire rocks”:

On my volcano grows the Grass
 A meditative spot –
 An acre for a Bird to choose
 Would be the General thought –

How red the Fire rocks below –
 How insecure the sod
 Did I disclose
 Would populate with awe my solitude.

and expression of the ineffable. The sea can provide a useful image in this respect, as the apparently limitless, timeless sea, consisting of a liquid rather than a solid substance, can be seen to represent a certain abstract quality. As I pointed out in the previous chapters, in *Del abreviado mar* the emphasis is on poetic language as an expressive tool, while in *Violencia inmóvil* the search for the divine provides the most important theme. Although the sea serves as a symbol in both collections, an important difference is that the earlier collection was largely written when Paz still lived in Madrid, while *Violencia inmóvil* was written in Cádiz. As a consequence, the sea in *Del abreviado mar* tends to be more abstract, while the imagery in *Violencia inmóvil* was inspired by the immediate presence of the sea. Seen in this light, the poem “Del abreviado mar” acquires new meaning: in addition to describing the process of poetic inspiration, it also provides the image of an internal sea that substitutes for the absent sea the poet associates with home. Paz says about this poem in this respect (1989: 76):

Para encontrar la solución [al problema de añorar el mar], no hay más remedio que, a falta de medio geográfico, reconstruirse el propio e íntimo y cordial elemento, y como en una antigua atarazana, carenar y apañar la propia nave, acercarse, con Luis de Góngora en la cita, a las arenas “Del abreviado mar”.

The privacy involved in the process of poetic inspiration is thus enhanced by the choice of an image which, as she later explained in “El sustituto”, she found she could not share with her friends in Madrid who were unfamiliar with the sea, while it is also an image that has special significance to her at the time. A poem from the same collection in which she again elaborates the image of the absent sea is “Secreto”

(48-49). The physical distance between the poet and the sea is here interpreted in terms of a lack of communication with the sea. The poem concludes as follows:

Saca y subasta tus peces,
 [...]
 escupe en la orilla antes
 que lleguen a tu secreto...
 Te miro desde la orilla
 acurrucada, en acecho,
 recitando de memoria
 tu letanía y tu rezo...
 Que no. Qué pena me das,
 tan grande y tan sin contento...
 Te pierdes lo que te pierdes
 por avariciosa. Pero
 – mar amarga y amarilla –
 yo bien me sé tu secreto:
 ¡Qué darías por saber
 lo que pasa tierra adentro!

Being far from the sea – although she imagines herself on the “orilla”, her meditative attitude consists of reciting “de memoria” – the sea no longer has any content, and in any case jealously hangs on to its secret. When the sea is proximate it seems infinite, but in its absence Paz is aware of its limited scope: in the opening stanza, addressing the sea, she says that she realizes that “atada estás para siempre, / de cara a los cuatro vientos”, while at the end of the poem the sea’s secret consists of the wish to see what happens further inland, where the poet is herself. Bearing in mind the significance of the sea in “Del abreviado mar”, this poem not only alludes to the physical absence of the sea, but also to her perceived absence of poetic inspiration. In “Del abreviado mar”, where the sea is also said to have an aspect of bitterness and she also describes a meditative attitude, poet and sea are united, and she has no problems catching fish, which represent her own thoughts and therefore her own secrets:

Como peces asustados
 se asoman mis pensamientos...
 ¡Ya están echadas las redes
 y mis manos en acecho!
 – A ver quién me va a impedir
 pescar mis propios secretos – .

Confident and with a challenging attitude – expressing the same readiness and concentration in “en acecho” as in “Secreto” – nothing can stop her from catching the fish that represent poetic inspiration, whereas in “Secreto” she finds that the sea would sooner auction the fish than reveal its secret. The frustration she experiences as a result is punctuated by the repeated “s” sound in “Saca a subasta tus peces”. At this stage, then, she associates poetic inspiration with her wish to be close to the sea.

She expresses this wish in “Retorno” (11-12), the second poem from the collection. In the second stanza she says:

Quiero volver a cantar
 con la voz de entonces, voz
 de entonces, la que he perdido.
 Quiero volver [...]
 [...]
 por lo que Dios ilumina,
 mira, toca, peina, tuerce,
 agita, golpea por
 el mar, por el mar azul.
 Donde el corazón encuentra
 agua de beber.

The immediate closeness of the violent movement of the sea – in “Del abreviado mar” she also uses the verb “torcer” – is here associated with the intensity of experiencing the divine, which could provide her with a poetic voice which she has lost. She again refers to this “voz” and its connection with the sea in “Sur” (69-70), an exuberant poem in which she celebrates her imminent return to Cádiz, and where she

asks: “¿Dónde está el mar para darle / mi voz entera, mi voz?” Of course, once she has settled in Cádiz she soon discovers that her heart does not always find spiritual fulfilment, “agua de beber”, when she lives by the sea. In Chapter 3, I referred to her repeated references to the spiritual “sed” she experienced there. While physical thirst is used frequently in mystical writing to symbolize the longing for such fulfilment, the image is all the more poignant in Paz’s work, as she experiences such thirst while at the same time being close to the immense quantity of water of the sea, which cannot quench her thirst. In an essay about the poet José Luis Tejada (2000a: 15) she also describes such thirst in terms of her cultural isolation: “Cuando, voluntariamente, opté por Andalucía, unimos en la amistad cercana Cádiz y El Puerto, hermanamos, hermanos en el barrunto y la sed. Los demás, en la diáspora; nosotros aquí, viendo, sorbiendo claridades y olvidos, pies en tierra andaluza, con sus ventajas e inconvenientes. Con la sed.”

The encounter or re-encounter with the sea at specific moments in time has also inspired many poems by other writers. Parra’s “Se canta al mar”, referred to in footnote 35, was inspired by the poet’s first experience of the sea. Two other poems by contemporaries of Paz that elaborate similar themes on the basis of a confrontation with the sea are “Despedida del mar” by José Hierro, and “Oda al mar” by Leopoldo de Luis. In “Despedida del mar” (included in *Tierra sin nosotros*, 1947) Hierro visits the sea for the last time before moving away. In the first stanza he writes (2002: 35-37):

Por más que intente al despedirme
guardarte entero en mi recinto
de soledad, por más que quiera
beber tus ojos infinitos,
tus largas tardes plateadas,
tu vasto gesto, gris y frío,

sé que al volver a tus orillas
 nos sentiremos muy distintos.
 Nunca jamás volveré a verte
 con estos ojos que hoy te miro.

As is the case in most of the poems in which Paz refers to the sea, what inspires the speaker is the solitary confrontation with the vastness of the sea, which makes him aware of the limitations of his own being. Like Paz, he uses the image of internalizing the sea, so that it will be with him during his absence; the reference to “beber” from its special quality implies an awareness of thirst similar to that of Paz. This special quality consists of its infinity, which constitutes the reason for his failure to be in communion with the sea during his absence: bound by time and space, he will have experiences that will change his outlook, and therefore the sea – although essentially unchanged – will not appear to be the same on his return. Leopoldo de Luis’s “Oda al mar”, published in *Platero* (No. 12, 1951), is a long poem that describes the speaker’s re-encounter with the sea after a period of absence, after he has had the kind of experiences Hierro refers to. In one stanza he describes the sea’s purity in terms that capture the themes that are central to Paz’s *Violencia inmóvil*:

Tú eres el hondo reino donde habita
 el primigenio impulso, oh mar violento.
 En ti la voz de Dios pura palpita
 con genesíaco acento.

The sound of the deep – and therefore endless and timeless – “mar violento” reflects the “primigenio impulso” of an original state of language, which is pure, has a

“genesíaco acento”, and is associated with the divine.³⁹ In Luis’s poem, the purity and infinity the speaker recognizes in the sea is contrasted with the hunger, injustice and hate he has experienced in inland Spain in the early post-war years. Because of the purity of the sea – it is pure because it has not been tainted by such experience – it has restorative powers.

In Chapter 2, I pointed out that the title *Violencia inmóvil* is linked directly to the sea; as is explained in an epigraph, it is based on Luis Rosales’s phrase “La violencia inmóvil del mar”. The apparent oxymoron of violence that is motionless aptly introduces the tension and conflicting emotions dealt with in this collection, while it also immediately foreshadows a mood that is much darker than that of the preceding books. Furthermore, the word “inmóvil” suggests a quality of being inflexible and non-responsive. The dark image evoked by “la violencia inmóvil del mar” – perhaps foreboded in the “mar [...] amargo” and her “nave” which “tuerce la espuma” in “Del abreviado mar” – is entirely the opposite of that of the calm, caring sea experienced by the ignorant child in “Los niños y el mar”. The book’s title is elaborated in “¡Ah, la inmovilidad de los violentos!” (13), a poem that reads like an outburst of despair:

¡Ah, la inmovilidad de los violentos,
la temible
pasividad de los que esperan
irrupir en silencio...!
¡El tremendo
silencio del silencio,
el sonido
expectativo de lo eterno,
la boca cerrada de lo ajeno
en calma, que nos juzga

³⁹ See the discussion of this pre-linguistic condition and its link to the divine in Paz’s poetry in Chapters 2 and 3. The idea of the “genesíaco acento” is reflected in the poem “Génesis”, the first poem of *Philomena*, where the bird Philomena, representing the soul of poetry, is said to have existed “anterior al inicio”, and therefore to have a quality of timelessness.

sin palabras, el quieto
 silencio de los quietos...!
 ¡Ah, la pasividad,
 la inmovilidad, eso
 que es mar a nuestro lado,
 mar silencioso,
 cancerbero
 de Dios, el más callado
 de todos los que espían nuestro sueño!

Apparently written in haste, the poem lacks the attention to detail and formal balance that characterizes most of her work. Perceiving an ominous silence all around her, she cries out to break this silence.⁴⁰ “The inmovilidad de los violentos” of the first line suggests an imminent threat of an abstract power outside herself – “la boca cerrada de lo ajeno” – which she is unable to influence because of its abstract quality. This dark power, which reflects her experience of being aware of the ineffable, but also of her failure to communicate with it because it remains silent, is expressed in the symbolical reference to the sea as an unfeeling, non-communicative presence that serves as God’s jail keeper, watching silently over humanity, which is imprisoned in the limitations of life by an uncaring divine power. As always in Paz’s work, there is an immediate link between the experience of the divine and poetic inspiration. She alludes to the relevance of the imagery of this poem to the sometimes frustrating process of waiting for poetic inspiration in a “Dedicatoria” to this collection, in which she says that she dedicates *Violencia inmóvil* “especialmente a aquellos con los que comencé y con los que permanezco en la esperanza y en la desapacible inmovilidad del quehacer poético.” The “desapacible inmovilidad” here suggests a frustrating process of waiting for poetic inspiration. She uses the same word, “inmovilidad”, combining it with its opposite, “activa” – thus forming another oxymoron – in a

⁴⁰ There is no exclamation mark before “El tremendo” in the original text; I have added it to complete the exclamation suggested by the exclamation mark at the end of the sentence.

reference to poetic inspiration in her inaugural address to the Real Academia Hispanoamericana in Cádiz delivered in 1963, four years before the publication of *Violencia inmóvil*: “Hay que tener preparados el corazón y la inteligencia, entregarnos a una espera, a la activa inmovilidad, a la humilde pasividad, a la paciencia, a la tarea de repartir amor” (Paz Pasamar and Pemán, 1964: 2). Both poetic inspiration and the experience of the divine, then, are marked by a process of meditative though expectant waiting, which sometimes leads to enlightenment, and sometimes is unpleasant and only met by silence. In both cases, the “violencia inmóvil” associated with the sea symbolizes and reflects the poet’s experience. It is also interesting to note how the repeated references to silence in the above poem, and the image of an invisible power judging us, are reminiscent of “El juez”, quoted in Chapter 1 in the context of the political situation, where God represents goodness and harmony, and is contrasted with the unapproachable human judge.

The first poem of *Violencia inmóvil*, “Hay algo que nos pasa inadvertido” (9-10), which introduces the doubtful, dark mood Paz experiences at the beginning of the quest analysed in Chapter 3, also refers to the sea as an ominous presence. It first depicts the sea as “el mar inmóvil y monstruoso”, which is followed by a reference to “su pavorosa mancha negra”. Before reaching the conclusion of the poem and introducing the new theme of “miedo”, she returns to the image of the sea and some of the other motifs mentioned in this chapter. Contrasting those seeking to explain the Earth and life on the basis of empirical discoveries with the visionary powers of the mystic poet, she writes:

Ayer, el mar. Hoy quedan las galaxias,
la patria azul del firmamento.
A lomos de los mismos corceles de esperanza,
va el hombre hacia el secreto.

Pero alguien canta mientras tanto
 desolado y profético.
 Como desde el principio, desde el ave
 primera que rompió el primer silencio.
 No esperan su equipaje en los navíos,
 nadie cuenta con él para el proyecto.
 Sus naves interiores atraviesan
 un inútil camino sin regreso.

Mankind, confident that science will eventually reveal all truth, claims to have discovered the secret of the sea, and is now turning its attention to the galaxies. However, the reader is aware that the sea's "secreto" in Paz's use of imagery denotes a non-scientific secret, associated with poetry and the revealing power of poetic language, and therefore the "alguien [que] canta". This poet shares an awareness of timeless truth with Philomena, "el ave / primera que rompió el primer silencio". Because the discoverers do not take the poet and his awareness of the real "secreto" into account, their voyage is doomed to fail. The image of the internal ships that "atraviesan / un inútil camino sin regreso" is clearly an intertextual reference to "Del abreviado mar", where Paz's crossing is by no means smooth, but certainly not "inútil", as it concludes with the "goteo" of "un agua de verso".

One important aspect of Paz's use of sea imagery in her poems about her awareness – or lack of awareness – of the divine, is that the motif of the sea only serves as a means of expression, and is never equated with divine truth or power. In a comment on "Secreto" and the above passage from "Hay algo que nos pasa inadvertido" (1989: 82), she says in this respect:

El mar es analogía, algo que simbólicamente se corresponde con lo más trascendente de nuestras vivencias. Pero los símbolos y las alegorías y ni siquiera los mitos, suplen la realidad del intercambio de las relaciones humanas. Tampoco es Dios, sino una criatura de su universo. Su enorme masa

abarcadora está a su vez inmersa en otro círculo, y lo mismo que en nosotros, por sus zonas, incluida la abismal recóndita, está la Presencia que trasciende e imana, como en cada ser. El, asociado a nuestro proceso vital, es su mejor símbolo.⁴¹

Bearing in mind her statement about this purely symbolical meaning of the sea, I would like to return one more time to the work of Juan Ramón Jiménez, and in particular to his *Diario de un poeta recién casado* (1917), in which the sea also has a prominent place.⁴² As is the case in much of Paz's early work, and in particular in *Violencia inmóvil*, Jiménez's *Diario de un poeta recién casado* represents a search for both poetic identity and the divine. An important difference is that while Paz's quest leads to a conclusion in her collection, namely that she will "seguir viviendo en la pregunta" (according to Ripoll, quoted in Chapter 3), which will continue to inspire her poetry, Jiménez's book only heralds the beginning of a quest that ultimately leads to definitive answers and the poet regarding himself as a "dios-poeta". At the same time, while Paz's search only represents a spiritual voyage, Jiménez physically travels to and from the USA. Perhaps the most important difference, however, is that Jiménez, unlike Paz, regards the sea as an element of a harmonious universe, in which he himself plays a central part. Increasingly aware of his own role in creating reality, in his later work the sea represents his consciousness.⁴³ One poem from *Diario de un*

⁴¹ She also emphasizes this symbolical meaning of the sea in her work in a personal communication by e-mail (13-12-06), in which she says in this respect: "el tema del mar siempre hay que dejar claro que lo uso como analogía, en comparación con el Creador, con la infinitud".

⁴² This book was referred to in Chapter 1 because of the intertextual references Otero makes to it in "El mar suelta un párrafo sobre la inmensa mayoría". In terms of the discussion of sea imagery, it is relevant to note that Jiménez changed the title of the second edition of the book (published in Buenos Aires by Losada in 1948) to *Diario de poeta y mar*, because, as he explained to Gullón (1958: 84): "quería destacar la importancia que en su gestación tuvo la presencia del mar, el contacto con el mar. El libro está suscitado por el mar y nació con el movimiento del barco que me traía a América." This new title not only underscores the importance of the sea, but also that of the poet's individual, confrontational experience in relation to the sea, highlighted by the use of the coordinating conjunction "y"; Paz does the same in the title "El niño y el mar", while Ernest Hemingway called his story of an old fisherman confronted and challenged by the sea *The Old Man and the Sea*.

⁴³ See the discussion of the link between the sea and the poet's consciousness in, for instance, Sánchez Blasco (2005: 16), Gómez Trueba (2005: 661 and 663) and León Liqueste (2005: 1208 and 1212).

poeta recién casado in which he describes the harmony he experiences between himself, the sea and the sky, and therefore the place of the sea as a central element in his “cosmovisión”, is “Los tres” (2005, I, 2: 178-79). It includes the lines:

Sólo estamos despiertos
el cielo, el mar y yo – cada uno inmenso
como los otros dos – .

Assigning equal status to the sky, the sea and himself, the sea is no longer a mere symbol, and as he is equally “inmenso” as the sea, he uses the sea to define his own infinity. This is quite the opposite of what Paz does in her poems based on sea imagery, as she contrasts her own limitations as a human being with the infinity of the sea. One thing the two poets have in common is that both have embarked on a voyage of discovery which involves both positive and negative experiences; as a consequence, both describe moments of communion with the sea as well as those when the sea is hostile and incommunicative. In “Monotonía” (78-79), for instance, Jiménez’s sea appears to be as silent and as reluctant to share its secret as that in Paz’s “¡Ah, lo inmovilidad de los violentos!” introducing the sea as follows:

El mar de olas de zinc y espumas
de cal, nos sitia
con su inmensa desolación.
Todo está igual – al norte,
al este, al sur, al oeste, cielo y agua – ,
gris y duro,
seco y blanco.

Here the sea has lost its poetic, abstract connotations, and is described in terms of unappealing, solid materials. It attacks the poet’s ship, having nothing else to offer

other than its “inmensa desolación”, which Paz experiences so often when she considers the monotony of her life by the sea.

While the poems from *Violencia inmóvil* referred to so far have served to illustrate Paz’s negative experiences, one poem in particular from this collection stands out because of its surprisingly positive and light-hearted nature. In “A veces, el mar cobra”, the sea all of a sudden is a friendly presence which provokes a sense of pleasure:

A veces, el mar cobra
la turgencia de un seno
o una mejilla adolescente.
También la vida, a veces,
toma grata apariencia
de juvenil estreno.
Son las horas propicias para el verso,
son los mudos instantes
donde poder tirar de los menudos
alfileres clavados en el alma,
y abrir nuestro paquete y hacer “camping”
en el coto rociado de los sueños,
y estirar nuestras manos
bajo el sol amarillas.
Es la hora de vivirnos
solos e iluminados.
No es hora para frases, ni promesas,
ni palabras, ni gestos.
Cuando el mar aparece como un niño
debe estorbarnos todo
lo que no sea soledad
y gozo, y llanto propios
de elegidos.

Once again referring to innocent childhood and youth – the heaving sea resembles “una mejilla adolescente” and “el mar aparece como un niño” – to depict a peaceful and even cheerful ambience, the poet experiences a moment of happiness. She is able to “tirar de los menudos / alfileres clavados en el alma”, and can delight in having a

proverbial picnic on the beach without pondering her life and how the sea might symbolize the insufficiency she experiences or the limitations of humankind.

Enjoying the moment, she recognizes the beauty of the location, and counts herself among the “elegidos” who have lived in peace with their environment in Cádiz, even though this involves “llanto”. Introducing this poem, she writes (1989: 72):

Por sensibilidad histórica, me siento unida desde el primer al actual habitante de estas orillas milenarias por el hilo del asombro ante la belleza. En esos instantes en que la creación parece estar en perfecta concordancia con el Creador. Son los minutos en que se dan gracias por no ser ciego.

The “sensibilidad histórica” she mentions here refers to an interest she developed in her later work, published after *Violencia inmóvil*, in which the sea becomes a geographical space which has affected the lives of those living on its coasts. This new significance of the sea in her work is particularly evident in *Textos lapidarios. La dama de Cádiz* (1990), which consists of her first short story published in book form, “La dama de Cádiz”, and two sections of poetry, “Poemas lapidarios” and “Presencia del Sur”. In “La dama de Cádiz” she connects past and present in a narration that deals with the discovery of a Phoenician-Punic sarcophagus in 1980. “Poemas lapidarios” was inspired by *Lapidario Alfonsi* by King Alfonso X, while the poems of “Presencia del Sur” deal with the geographical area of the South, and its specific identity. In an introductory note to “Poemas lapidarios” Paz explains her new interest explored in this book referring to “el reflejo evidente que existe en el libro de las tres culturas integradoras de la época: árabe, hebrea y cristiana, de las que lo andaluz es producto” (5). This preoccupation with Andalusian culture and the role of the sea in

its development recur elsewhere in her later work, but this lies outside the scope of this study.

As this section has shown, Paz uses sea imagery throughout her early work to illustrate the themes developed in her poetry. She frequently refers to the sea to explain in poetic language the feelings and the often abstract experiences provoked by her confrontation with self and infinity. The sea thus serves as a symbol for the abstract and timeless, chosen primarily because of its presence in her life and its association with her experience in Cádiz. As such, it elucidates themes such as her awareness of the loss of childhood innocence as an adolescent and young woman, the sense of both happiness and insufficiency she experiences as a married woman in Cádiz, and the abstract themes of poetic inspiration and the experience of the divine. In *Violencia inmóvil* the image is used to put into words her complex quest for meaning; the collection's title, derived from a specific image of the sea, conveys the idea of an acute, powerful response that is imminent but as yet not forthcoming. On the whole, her poems based on sea imagery, such as "El niño y el mar", "Desde dónde respiro", "Del abreviado mar", "Secreto", and the poetry quoted from *Violencia inmóvil*, are core poems in the understanding of Paz's personal, poetic and spiritual development.

Two characteristics of Paz's poetry that have been discussed in previous chapters and that have come to the fore again in this discussion of sea imagery are the element of privacy, and the emphasis on the process of searching rather than the awareness resulting from this that is expressed in her work: instead of providing any answers in her poems, the poet tends to dwell on the questions. Because of the private nature of her poetry, the reader of her work is an implicit reader, who is privileged to share the poet's intimate thoughts. In all the poems discussed here, the symbol of the

sea, in its different meanings, enhances the atmosphere of the poem, which suits the poet's inclination to explore her state of mind rather than to respond to and communicate with her environment. In her case, then, the infinite and intangible qualities of the sea, as well as its ever-changing aspect, provide her with a particularly appropriate image to express the private element of her writing and reflect the differences in mood and perception that colour her poetic quest. Although Fuertes also dwells on her – frequently negative – emotions in her work, she actively seeks to break away from such moods and her isolated position. As this chapter has shown, humour is a particularly effective strategy in this respect: it helps her to change her perspective and so overcome her negative feelings, and it also establishes contact with the reader, who becomes directly involved in co-creating the poem. Humour and sea imagery thus exemplify two diverging strategies which the two poets use to achieve their contrasting aims. However, as I have sought to demonstrate throughout this thesis, their different poetic strategies ultimately contribute to the same purpose, namely that of defining themselves in terms of the restrictive social conditions that largely determine their lives, in a way that reflects their individual personalities, priorities and beliefs. The fact that such a process of self-definition inevitably involves a degree of conflict and ambiguity has become particularly evident in the discussion of this chapter. As I have argued, Fuertes uses humour as a strategy to face the dichotomy she experiences between self and society, where the self is marginalized by the society it wishes to take part in. Paz, on the other hand, seeks to reconcile the solitary self with infinity, which involves a confrontation that leads to conflicting emotions, expressed in apparent oxymorons such as the inner sea that is “dulce y amargo” in “Del abreviado mar”, and the implicit reference to a threatening sea in the title *Violencia inmóvil*. I would suggest that in the case of both poets, it is

their perception of such conflict that inspires them to write poetry and develop the poetics that enables them to express their thoughts and experiences.

Conclusion

This Conclusion will draw the argument developed in the course of this study to an end on the basis of three central questions. The first concerns the process of self-definition through poetry which has been central to this thesis. I will undertake to define what this process consists of in the case of each poet, and substantiate my overall conclusions on the basis of specific points that have been elaborated in each chapter. Following on from this, I will deal with the questions of why it has been worthwhile and productive to compare the two poets, and argue how I have met the aims set out in the Introduction.

As I have sought to demonstrate throughout this thesis, both Gloria Fuertes and Pilar Paz Pasamar regard their poetry as a means to construct their identity. The process they engage in leads them to contemplate their position as women and poets within society, and ponder the themes of the essence of poetry and the link between poetry, the self and the divine. Although their writing therefore follows a similar overall process, the ways in which they define themselves lead to contrasting conclusions, and therefore to the development of different poetics, tailored to express their individuality. Fuertes primarily defines her identity by setting herself a task as a poet, which gives purpose to her life and provides her with a place in society. This task consists of writing poetry of a moral and didactic nature, which imparts healing and companionship to the reader, and therefore also to herself. By writing such poetry she seeks to become integrated in society. This reflects her need to be noticed and

recognized by others, which is evident throughout her work. Paz, on the other hand, interiorizes the process of self-definition. This enables her to conform to the expectations of society to some extent, while at the same time seeking liberation through a process of self-realization that involves defining a self on the basis of her own independent thought, in a way that has not been imposed by the outside world.

In Chapter 1, I considered the contextual circumstances of the two poets, which cause a degree of dissatisfaction and friction, and therefore influence their development as writers. Fuertes responds to her socio-cultural context through rebellion and expressions of madness. A relevant poem in this respect is “Cuarto de soltera” (p. 43), which can be interpreted as a description of the process of writing poetry by a poet who feels ill at ease with her environment. Paz’s response to her social context is epitomized in “Reprocho a las cosas que le entretienen” (pp. 49-50), which shows the poet’s recognition of poetry as a means of empowerment. The two poets’ different positions in terms of self-development, which in Fuertes’s case involves becoming integrated into society, even if it is hostile to some extent, and in the case of Paz consists of empowerment through an introspective development of self-awareness, have been examined in Chapters 2 and 3. In Chapter 2, I argued that Paz considers the essence of poetry by asking metaphysical questions about poetic inspiration and the creative process, while Fuertes generally explores her practical, didactic purpose. Paz dwells on the source of poetic inspiration in poems such as “Misterios” (p. 99), which exemplifies her tendency to look inward for answers to such questions; as I concluded that this poem reveals the link she establishes between poetic inspiration and the divine, it could be referred to again in Chapter 3, in the context of San Juan de la Cruz’s symbolic “fuente” (p. 147). Fuertes, on the other hand, in line with her more down-to-earth approach, does not speculate about abstract,

divine meaning, but describes a humanized God who shares her own purpose of improving the world in a practical sense.

The two poets' different positions and purposes lead to distinct emphases in their poetics. Fuertes focuses on the material level of the palpable realities of everyday life and avoids abstractions. Her work is therefore characterized by the use of ordinary language and spontaneity. Although Paz also avoids superfluous, clichéd words, she produces carefully constructed poems, in which she attempts to verbalize her abstract thoughts in metaphorical language. This essential difference in their use of poetic language, as well as the contrasting purposes it reflects, was explored in Chapter 4, where I reasoned that humour, immediately associated with spontaneity and mundane reality, provides Fuertes with a suitable strategy to communicate with her readership and confront the dark moods that are a consequence of her wish to integrate into a society from which she feels alienated, while Paz is able to exploit sea imagery as a means to explore the confrontation between self and infinity, and the sense of insufficiency that is the consequence of the role allocated to her by society. Although the two poets define themselves in different ways, which reflect their contrasting personalities and priorities, they are both aware of an element of suffering that is involved in the process of self-definition. Paz in fact refers to this in the first poem of her first collection, "Dónde voy yo, Dios mío" (p. 64), where she recognizes that writing poetry that explores her own being and her perception of the divine will weigh her down and prevent her from leading a – superficially – carefree life. This is further acknowledged throughout her poetry, and ultimately leads to a sense of crisis, which is described and dealt with in the poems of *Violencia inmóvil*. Fuertes expresses a comparable sense of despondency in many of her poems. She frequently refers to suicide as a means to express such emotions; significantly, it is humour (see

the poem “Nunca se sabe”, p. 183), a divine gift that helps her to deal with life, or writing poetry (see the poems “No sabemos qué hacer”, p. 67, and “¡Vaya encuentro!”, p. 143), which she regards as her task and therefore her *raison d’être* in life, that enable her to overcome such moods.

The above findings only constitute a summary of all the conclusions that have been provoked by the comparison of how Fuertes and Paz deal with the theme of self-development through poetry in their work of the 1950s and 1960s, and which are discussed in more detail in the four chapters. I would therefore argue that this comparison has been a productive way of discussing the two poets’ work; I am especially aware of the fact that the comparative approach has led to observations that I would undoubtedly have missed if I had focused on only one poet or a different combination of poets. In my opinion, what has made the choice of theme and poets particularly fruitful, is the fact that the two poets follow a similar process of defining their identity, leading ultimately to a sense of self-acceptance, while at the same time they represent opposite views – that of liberation through integration or through separation – in terms of how they address the issue of defining themselves. I would suggest that it is this constant clash of contrasting responses to similar issues and themes, faced by women poets seeking to define themselves in Franco’s Spain, which has made the comparison worthwhile.

Finally, I would like to return to the research goals set out in the Introduction. The first aim I defined was that of analysing the process of self-definition the two poets engage in through writing poetry, which involves interpreting their poetry as individual alternatives to the collective ethos and literary practices promoted within the patriarchal society of Franco’s Spain. This reflects the main theme of this thesis; how it has been dealt with and how my aim has been met has been discussed above.

In addition to this specific research goal, I also formulated a more general aim, namely that of contributing to the feminist enterprise of revising the literary canon by considering poetry by women as an alternative to the existing canon. I believe that I have achieved this revisionary aim by drawing critical attention to Paz's work, and also by discussing Fuertes's poetry on the basis of a theme that, as far as I am aware, has not been discussed in depth elsewhere. In addition, I would argue that by discussing two rather different voices, I have been able to provide a more rounded alternative perspective on post-war poetry than would have been the case if I had focused on one poet: the spectrum offered by two poets is more varied, and it has allowed the discussion to branch out. I therefore hope that, by writing this thesis, I have demonstrated that a study of the early work of the two poets enriches our perception of the complex nature of poetic practice in the 1950s and 1960s, and that women poets such as Fuertes and Paz, although they were generally less visible than their male counterparts, wrote poetry that is worthy of critical attention, and provides valuable insight into the experience of women living and writing in Spain in the post-war decades.

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1. Gloria Fuertes and Pilar Paz Pasamar: Primary Sources
2. Other Literary Writing
3. Works of a Generic, Theoretical Nature
4. Works of a Specific, Critical Nature
5. Websites
6. Specialist Dictionaries, Encyclopaedias and Other Works of Reference Consulted

Although I have made every possible effort to obtain copies of Gloria Fuertes's books for children and the articles about her published in the USA, I have been unable to obtain copies of all of them, as some books are out of print and some of the articles are held only in the USA.

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