GETTING FROM THE FORTIES TO
THE SIXTIES IN BRITISH POETRY

Michael J. Gronow
Universidad de Sevilla

What might be called the subliminal aim of this paper is to open up the way for an analysis of the role of poets who are women in the development of British poetry during the sixties and early seventies. As is argued here, the possibility of carrying out such an analysis depends on tracing the different strands that make up the elongated knot which constitutes the modulations affecting the development of male poets’ work between the end of the Second World War and the 1960s. Putting emphasis upon the gradual character of this process of change, the fieldwork carried out here amidst the poetic compositions of the period under consideration tries to trace the strand that brings to the fore the identity of the poet as a theoretical figure. This is because such research also recognizes, although indirectly in the case of this paper, that the transformations experienced by this same figure cannot be separated from processes within critical and literary theory from the 60s onwards, as well as within culture in general, that contribute to the undermining of the authoritative authorial voice.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

With regard to the theoretical background of this paper which attempts to map out the transformations experienced by the figure of the poet within British literature between the forties and the sixties, brief reference will only be made to the contribution of Pragmatics and Structural Semantics, especially during the eighties, to our understanding of the relationship between discourse and metadiscourse. In this sense, it would seem relevant to mention Susan Ehrlich’s highlighting of specific formal aspects of discourse that act as determining factors in the interpretation of texts (1990), as well as Deidre Burton’s exploration of the interplay of “situation” and “tactics” in dialogue (1980), together with Lucien Dillenbrach’s debunking of attempts at understanding the relationship between the mise en abyme and the so-called primary text in hierarchical terms (1989). During this same period, and by means of a definition of textual iconicity, J. J. van Baak also illuminates the relationship between structural elements within texts and their value as metadiscourse:

Iconicity here is based on the fact that the particular poetical distribution of the semantic elements constituting the spatial world-pictures marks the spatial properties of the linguistic syntagma: linearity, consecutivity. This...really involves a metalinguistic procedure, as can be concluded from the syntactic marking. In their function of literary signs these specific syntactic patterns become illustrations, icons in the most literal sense, of world-pictures in which inclusion is the most fundamental spatial feature modelling ideological, axiological, etc. values. (1983, 28).

We would argue that the two schools of linguistic criticism referred to here help us to understand how the iconic, or mimetic, character of discourse is self-undermining in the sense that the feature of “inclusion” underlined by J. J. van Baak is affected by the simultaneity of what is internal and external as a result of the deepening of our knowledge of the transmission-reception model of literary texts from the 1960s onwards. While keeping in
mind the impossibility of establishing a cause-and-effect realtionship between cultural developments and literary trends, from the point view of this paper, it does seem possible to affirm that, between the forties and the sixties, the figure of the poet within British literature is somehow aware of/somehow affected by/somehow dependent upon the destabilizing forces that undermine the status of the poetic artefact as traditional literary icon.

FROM THE 40S TO THE 50S

If an attempt is made to trace the development of the theoretical figure of the poet in the second half of the twentieth century in British literature, a first stage can be discerned during which the prophetic-romantic facet of that same figure seems to undergo a process of erosion. Besides, this phenomenon cannot be isolated from the historical circumstances which determine the artist’s role in society. Even as the figure of the prophet became an inevitable part of culture due to men’s knife-edge existence during the Second World War, that of the traditional poet became undermined by the democratization that affected class relations. While reminding us that soldier-poets “...played out roles in a cosmic drama,” Linda M. Shires states the following:

From 1939-1945 hundreds of men and women in military and government service wrote poetry. Writing out of extreme conditions of exile, fear, isolation and danger, they made their way into print... [T]he lyric of personal experience seemed to provide the best way to make sense of so terrible and abstract a holocaust. (1985, 68)

Relevant to the idea of the democratization of the figure of the poet is the following comment by Bruce K. Martin: “Many new poets appeared during the war, and most have been forgotten by even the most eclectic anthologists” (1985, 17). This resultant loss of dimension on the part of the poet, reinforced by the arrival of peace, is summed up in this line from “The Sleeping Princess” by Alex Comfort, written in 1946: “My trade is shrunked down / to a negative...” (Skelton 1968, 248-49). Although emphasis will be given here to Robin Skelton’s anthology entitled Poetry of the Forties, other compilations have also been taken into consideration, given the space they dedicate to the transition between the forties and the fifties in British poetry, especially those edited by Robert Conquest (1956), James Reeves (1957), Kenneth Allott (1962), David Wright (1962), John Press (1969), Edward Lucie-Smith (1970), Alan Bold (1976) and D.J. Enright (1980).

One of the ways in which the poet maintains his prophetic dimension during the War period is through those compositions that juxtapose the global conflict and the question of religious faith, as in “Stormy Day” by W. R. Rodgers (Allott, 228), “Soldiers Bathing” by F. T. Prince, “Good Friday” by Leonard Clark, “Christ Walking on the Water” by Vernon Watkins and D. Gascoyne’s “Ecce Homo” (1943), this latter poem linking modern Man’s guilt with the historical fact of the Crucifixion: “He is in agony till the world’s end, / And we must never sleep during that time: / He is suspended on the cross-tree now...” (Skelton, 106, 104-6, 183, 100). Also, the vatic voice is contextualized within a supra-historical time scale, as in “The Maharrat Ghas,” written by Alun Lewis in 1945: “And did a thousand years go by in vain? / And does another thousand start again?” (150). The spatial dimension of this voice is equally vast, as is indicated by Gascoyne’s “Wartime Dawn”: “And one more day of War starts everywhere” (1988, 129). Space and time are cancelled out by the arrival of the Atomic Age, according to D. Paul’s satirical poem “The Sleeping Passenger” (1946), this situation being the result of human indifference:

You do not talk of the atom bomb,
The weather, or what grows in your garden.
You are master of your situation
Because you have never sized it up.
You have already reached your destination. (Skelton, 237)

As Paul's composition also underlines, the era of perennial death in the post-war world is the result of "[t]hose victories from which we die".

Within this dimensioned of space-time the quotidien acquires special significance, thus pointing to the inevitable destiny of the prophetic figure of the poet once the War is over. In this same sense, the dawn-songs from the forties by Laurie Lee and Lawrence Durrell, entitled "Day of Days" and "This Unimportant Morning" (66, 145), concerned with the ordinary process of awakening, are typical of this kind of poem which appears frequently during the war years as a result of the precariousness of existence. As is reflected in the Durrell composition, the eternal is completely interfused with the everyday: "[Y]ou turn your face away, afraid to speak / The big word, that Eternity is ours." In "Goodbye" (1945) by Alun Lewis, the following is found: "So we must say Goodbye, my darling, / and go, as lovers go, for ever" (110). Here, that which becomes truth is what traditionally corresponds to the specific conditions of a lover’s mind, thus giving a new twist to the relationship between poetic art and the capacity of love discourse to act as a metaphor of the poetic process itself. Thus, both art and love are obliged to survive in extreme conditions. For this reason, small details at particular moments need to be recorded for a posterity that might not even come about, as in "Spring Song" by Paul Dehn: "Let it be recorded for those who come after, / If any are left to come after, that today / Streams melted on the moor..." (Skelton, 77).

The intellectual analysis, with a greater or lesser degree of detail, of universal phenomena such as love will become a characteristic of the poetry of the 50s, this tendency also showing through during the war years, given that it is a moment when spiritual points of reference become necessary. At the same time, we have suggested that, as a result of the precariousness of existence during the war years, the spiritual is seen to be inherent in the ordinary and the quotidian. It is the tendency toward ordinariness that produces the situation whereby concepts are submitted to detailed examination, as already mentioned, a factor that contributes to the transformation of cultural icons in signifiers as opposed to signified. The theoretical figure of the poet as signifier exists within a dimensionalized reality which has become its own point of reference -- a new naturalness, shall we say. This capacity for continuous self-undermining is suggested in Norman MacCaig’s "Nude in a Fountain," published in 1946: "A perpetual modification of itself / Going on around her is her" (Skelton, 236). Thus, the contrastable becomes dimensionalized contrastability.

The theoretical question which is raised as a result of this situation revolves around the way in which the figure of the poet continues to survive. Meanwhile, another way of defining the situation is in terms of the humanization of the mythic, as reflected in compositions such as "Adam’s Dream" and "The Charm" by Edwin Muir (1956, 21, 29) and "Lovesong" by Ted Hughes, also from the fifties (Bald 1976, 144-45). Reference can also be made to Anthony Thwaite’s "Oedipus" from his collection entitled Home Truths (1957). Here the protagonist cannot withstand the idea of being consciously in love with his mother.

If she who first embodied me
From swollen foetus crouched beneath
Hot sallow blood and milk, if she
Speaks through your eyes, tastes of your breath
Then hide me where I cannot see. (1984, 1)
However, at the same time, this ‘I’ is a human being who loves her subconsciously:

Held fast against your breast, I find
A shapeless memory takes shape
Upon the pillow. Heart and mind
Blunt both my eyes in blind escape
And when I waken I am blind.

Ironically, the subconscious is that which underlines such human identity, while contributing to the humanization of the mythic within the poetic discourse. Reality as illusion imposes itself upon the myth of a subconscious, suppressed reality: “A shapeless memory takes shape.”

This same reality as constant illusion or signifier which has just been described is, in terms of artistic metadiscourse, the equivalent of the poet’s having immersed himself in the suffering of the world, while falling from his state of aloofness as prophet and while coming-to-terms with himself as part of an unstable reality. In Geoffrey Hill’s poem “Genesis” (1959), the poetic voice ends by saying: “By blood we live, the hot, the cold, / To ravage and redeem the world: / There is no bloodless myth will hold” (1985, 16). Already in 1946 Dylan Thomas’s “Poem in October” had expressed the fusion of real time and poetic time as an on-going current which is autonomous and yet is also implicated in the historical suffering of the world, again symbolized by “blood,” as in Hill’s poem: “It was my thirtieth / Year to heaven stood there then in the summer noon / Though the town below lay leaved with October blood” (1971, 97). Therefore, although the poet finds himself on the edge of society, as is suggested in Thomas’s “The Hunchback in the Park,” he continues to represent the imaginative strand of culture, while still exercising a certain degree of fascination: “And the wild boys innocent as strawberries / Had followed the hunchback / To his kennel in the dark” (105).

THE 50s

Aloofness from reality in the fifties is replaced by a more direct involvement in that same reality as signifier, thus constituting a survival mechanism for the poet. As Bruce K. Martin says: “The British intellectual or artist generally felt obligated to lower his vision to the immediate and the probable, and perhaps to narrow the assumed gap between himself and the rest of the population” (1985, 49). What might be called the first step in coming to terms with reality-as-signifier is the intellectual-philosophical attitude adopted by the poet, as in those poems from the decade which deal with the loss of men’s capacity for reasoning, such as “The Combat” by Edwin Muir (1979, 179), “Diary Entry in the Fifties” by Roy Fuller (1985, 128-9) and “Nothing” by Edward Lowbury (Press 1969, 269). In “Myxomatosis” by John Wain the poetic voice is saved from having to give explanations concerning men’s lack of reasoning power, given that the trapped rabbit he is observing would not understand him anyway (1980, 100). Other poems with this same theme, which are written from an intellectual standpoint, include: “Night Garden of the Asylum” by Elizabeth Jennings (Lucie-Smith, 129), “At Grass” and “First Sight” by Philip Larkin (1988, 29-30, 112), “Swimming Lizard” and “Ego” by Norman MacCaig (1978, 14, 30), as well as “Death of a Rat” by Anthony Thwaite (1984, 2).

It is precisely the natural world’s lack of reasoning power that highlights Man’s intellectual limitations, an idea which is explored in “If I Could Know” by Edwin Muir (1956, 81), “Ignorance” by Larkin (107) and “Ignorance of Death” by William Empson which, as the ironic references to “blank” indicate, is a satirical composition:

Heaven me, when a man is ready to die about something
Other than himself, and is in fact ready because of that,
Not because of himself, that is something clear about himself.
Otherwise I feel blank upon this topic,
And think that though important, and proper for anyone to bring up,
It is one that most people should be prepared to be blank upon. (1984, 58-9)

As far as our argument with regard to the transformation of the traditional figure of the poet in *signifier* is concerned, Empson’s structures, we would argue, emphasize the inevitability of the consolidation of the paradoxically unstable in contemporary culture, “Legal Fiction” and “Aubade” being cases in point:

Law makes long spokes of the short stakes of men.
Your well fenced out real estate of mind
No high flat of the nomad city
Looks over, or train leaves behind. (25)
But as to risings, I can tell you why,
It is on contradiction that they grow.
It seemed the best thing to be up and go.
Up was the heartening and the strong reply.
The heart of standing is we cannot fly. (49)

What emerges from these extracts is the idea that the survival of poetry depends on its capacity to remain itself, even as it is being dimensionalized spatially, especially since that which lacks reason is given equal status with that which does not within contemporary culture.

The faceting of the concept called ‘poetry’ in the fifties also implies the emergence of a strand which runs contrary to the Empsonian line maintained in poems from that same decade such as Robert Graves' “Patience” (1961, 16), Geoffrey Hill’s “Asmodeus” and “The Re-birth of Venus” (1985, 27), John Wain’s “Eighth Type of Ambiguity” (1980, 174) and Lawrence Durrell’s “A Portrait of Theodora” (Lucie-Smith, 82). The alternative strand is personal and confessional in nature. Charles Tomlinson’s “Against Extremity” is spoken by a voice that is scandalized by the facility with which literature can be made in the fifties, as is suggested by the reference to “heroine” in the following extract:

... ... ... The girl who took

Her life almost, then wrote a book
To exorcise and to exhibit the sin,
Praises a friend there for the end she made
And each of them becomes a heroine.
The time is in love with endings. The time’s
Spoiled children threaten what they will do,
And those they cannot shake by petulance
They'll bribe out of their wits by show. (Bold, 105)

The final stanza, by contrast, presents a vision that emerges out of the traditionally poetic:

Against extremity, let there be
Such treatise as only time itself
Can ratify, a bond and test
Of sequential days, and like the full
Moon slowly given to the night,
A possession that is not to be possessed.

Geoffrey Hill’s “Orpheus and Eurydice” is another poem from the fifties that brings to the fore the oscillation between, on the one hand, the kind of mythic-idealistic stance which the
poet may adopt and, on the other, the personal-sentimental kind he may also take up. Its context is a painting in which the figure of Orpheus appears:

To be judged for his song
Traversing the still-moist dead,
The newly-stung,
Love goes carrying compassion
To the rawly difficult;
His countenance, his hands’ motion,
Serenely even to a fault. (1985, 55)

There are two possible readings of these lines as a result of the lexical ambiguity that characterizes the phrase “even to a fault”. Regarding the first of these, Art is criticised for being too “calm”, for lacking the capacity to express the true dimension of human tragedy, as Orpheus holds out his hand toward his loved one (“his hands’ motion”). In this sense, the compound “rawly-difficult” brings out the ties between the human (“rawly” = the highly emotive ‘of flesh and blood’) and the intellectual (“difficult” = difficult to conceive of) which, thus, leads to the overlapping between the first and the second readings. By means of the latter, Orpheus is identified with the figure of the artist, “his hands’ motion” referring to the art of harp-playing. As emerges out of the link established between “compassion” and “fault,” it is in this same role that the poet-musician tends toward the sentimental. This sense of being somewhere between the intellectual and the sentimental, and between the artistic and the quotidian is the poet’s lot during the fifties within British literature. The voice that will bring this to the fore most clearly is Philip Larkin.

While not embarking upon the exploration of Larkin’s work here, advantage will be taken of the tendency within his compositions of the fifties to fuse the visionary-idealistic and the confessional-quotidian in order to point out one of the ways in which the seeds of poetry of the sixties is already discernible in the earlier decade. The ironic humour of the final stanza of “Toads,” for example, underlines the complacent pleasure felt by the poetic voice, as if a vengeful attitude were being adopted by the solitary, outlawed figure, full of complexes, that emerges in many of the other compositions by Larkin from the same decade. Referring to spiritual independence and material security, the voice states:

I don’t say, one bodies the other
One’s spiritual truth;
But I do say it’s hard to lose either,
When you have both. (90)

The irony is based on the contrast between what might be called man-in-the-street philosophy in the final couplet and pure philosophy in the first. Given the anti-idealistic character of such a synthesis, the poem can be understood as a satire of the kind of culture in which there is no room for the visionary-idealistic.

FROM THE 50S TO THE 60S

The modulation of irony into satire during the transition between these two decades is another of the ways in which poetry comes to be understood in terms of signifier or, in other words, in terms of a process of postmodernization. The poetic voice’s analysis of its own identity in Larkin represents the consolidation of this satirical trend which, in the forties, had included the anti-war satires by Henry Reed entitled “Naming of Parts” and “Judging Distances,” both from 1946 (Allott, 289-90), and “The Death of General Uncebunke” by Lawrence Durrell, published in 1943 (269). All three, by means of humour, personalize the mechanical, disciplined reality of the military system, thus mani-
festing how the poetic voice can still be that of Culture (Warmth)-Bringer in times of adversity. By the fifties, however, the intellectual analysis of how poetry maintains itself becomes more embittered. For example, in the penultimate stanza of the composition written by Roy Fuller in 1957, "At a Warwickshire Mansion," the conclusion is reached that the ephemeral character of Art has always been a consequence of human motivation since primitive times. Paradoxically, the continuity of poetic tradition lies in this discrepancy between its permanence and the specific contributions that go into maintaining it: “But art is never innocent although / It dreams it may be; and the red in caves / Is left by cripples of the happy hunt” (177).

Satire forms part of the general trend of self-exploration that becomes more evident as the fifties become the sixties, as discourse becomes metadiscourse. In this regard, “Tramontana a Lericci” by Charles Tomlinson (1958) points forward since it constitutes the microscopic experience of poetry as medium, a process that implies the elimination of the figure of the poet: “One is ignored / By so much cold suspended in so much night” (Allott, 364). The naturalization of the artistic, or the erosion of its transcendent status, is highlighted in “A Meditation on John Constable,” also written by Tomlinson during the fifties: “Art is itself / Once we accept it” (Allott, 365). Such acceptance is the recognition of failure as far as the satirical-ironic voice of Donald Davie’s “Heigh-ho on a Winter Afternoon” (1957) is concerned: “Yes I have ‘mellowed’, as you said I would, / And that’s a heigh-ho too for any man; / Heigh-ho that means we fall short of alas...” (Allott, 327). The poetry of the fifties that looks forward to the next decade lies somewhere between “heigh-ho” and “alas,” between the ironic stance that puts in doubt its own worth and the grandiloquence of the epic-tragic Tradition in which it is immersed. As is indicated by the penultimate stanza of “Remembering the Thirties” by Davie, “A neutral tone is nowadays preferred” (Allott, 326). However, the ironic and, therefore, anti-elegiac attitude that emerges in the later reference to “dust” in this same poem reveals the importance that is attached to the mere survival of poetic art, even though that depends on self-satire: “And yet it may be better, if we must, / To find the stance impressive and absurd / Than not to see the hero for the dust.” By the sixties, as is suggested by the satirizing of the naturalness of satire itself in Hill’s “Funeral Music: 6” (1968), this trend has become postmodernist doctrine: “I believe in my / Abandonment, since it is what I have” (1985, 75).

What has been suggested up to this point is that the tendency toward satirical poetry in the change-over from the fifties to the sixties coincides with another trend — that of the emergence of poetry as the metadiscourse of itself. Given that such developments are also the result of/are coincidental with the undermining of the prophetic-mythic identity of the poet in the postwar world, implying his being brought down to human size and his becoming recognizable as a human being, satire and metadiscourse also acquire a social dimension.

THE 60S (AND THE VOICE OF WOMEN)

It would not be exaggerated to state that satirical poems abound in the sixties. Quite often, as if to underline the loss of the traditionally transcendent in verse, compositions satirize the emphasis society puts upon sex as opposed to love, thus confirming the rupture between poetic art and love discourse as a traditional metaphor of its processes.¹ This trend

¹ The route to be traced here passes through those compositions by Robert Graves written between the end of the fifties and the beginning of the sixties that explore the ins and outs of the love relationship: “Symptoms of Love,” “Patience” and “The Secret Land” (1961, 5, 18, 22). They, in turn, lead on to the intellectualized explorations of that same relationship in poems already mentioned, by
in the sixties may be exemplified by Douglas Dunn’s “From the Night Window” and “Sunday Morning Among the Houses of Terry Street” (1969, 22, 23), together with many of the urban satires of the human zoo written by C.H. Sisson during the decade, such as “Epitaph,” “Eclogue” and “Beach” (1984, 22, 80-1, 87). One of these compositions, “On The Way Home,” puts the spotlight on the male commuters of London as voyeurs: “Their attentions / Are on the nape of the neck or the cut of a thigh / Almost any woman…” (32).

It is as voyeurism that the metadiscourse of sixties poetry is best understood, as far as we can see. This is the discourse that is self-perpetuating in the undermining of itself. The synthesis of sexual voyeurism and cultural egoism is satirized with mordant wit in “Annunciations I” by Geoffrey Hill (1968). Without going into the multiple meanings that accrue in the language of this piece, the poem highlights, among many other social ills, the disappearance of the natural from the lives of men as manifested in the consolidation of artificial insemination, genetic manipulation, the abuse of abortion, sexology and pornography as forms of voyeurism and the way in which television acts as a substitute for reality:

Now at a distance from the steam of beasts,
The loathly neckings and the fat shooed spawn
(Each specimen jar fed with delicate spawn)
The searchers and the curers sit at meat
And are satisfied. Such precious things put down … (1985, 62)

The reference to the relationship between “searchers” and “curers,” for example, may be understood as a satire of the psychologist-sexologist and his patient, the former obtaining as much pleasure from the sexual fantasies of the latter as the latter himself. The burlesque also seems to be directed at TV personalities and even those literary critics who are more involved with literary criticism than with literature.

As far as the sixties is concerned, this brief study is attempting to raise the question of the extent to which a parallel can be struck between the voyeuristic satires of the decade and the simultaneous tendency to produce compositions which are metapoetic in character. In this sense, reference could be made to compositions such as “A Man In My Position” by Norman MacCaig (1978, 120) or “The Monster” by Thom Gunn (Alvarez 1962, 161-62). Also, while avoiding a detailed analysis of them, poems such as “The Dead Bride,” the third of Hill’s “Three Baroque Meditations,” written in 1968 (91) and Peter Porter’s “John Marston Advises Anger,” from 1961 (1983, 17), reveal how verse based on metapoetics and satire is tantamount to artistic frustration or to the first step in the ensconcing of parody as postmodern impasse within poetry. Hill’s composition belongs to a narrating voice that makes itself heard only after the identity of the traditional figure of the poet has been completely eroded, while satire is defined as “the cage of discontent” for the artist in Porter’s poem. It becomes irrelevant whether poetry is art, social chronicle, history or nonsense: “What’s in a name / If Cheapside and the Marshalsea mean English Lit. / And the Fantasie, Sa Tortuga, Grisbi, Bongo-Bi / Mean life?”

One other question which would take us beyond the scope of this short paper, but which impinges upon its theme directly, is the extent to which this metapoetic-parodic impasse, as a characteristic feature of sixties poetry within British literature, the culminating point of the decline of the figure of the traditional poet, implies that British poetry was ripe for the emergence of female poetic discourse at this moment. Its consolidation in the second half of the seventies and early eighties is a recognized fact, implying, besides, a

sea-change in British poetry. However, as a subject in need of further research, it is still difficult to gauge the collective impact upon male discourse of books of poetry such as Jenny Joseph's *The Unlooked For Season* (1960), Fleur Adcock's *Tigers* (1967), Ruth Fainlight's *Cages* (1966) and *To See the Matter Clearly* (1968), Frances Horovitz's *High Tower* (1970) and Maureen Duffy's *The Venus Touch* (1971), besides the constant presence during the decade of the voices of Kathleen Raine, Elizabeth Jennings, Anne Sexton and Denise Levertov.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

It has been suggested that between the forties and the fifties the (male) poet is brought down to size within a cultural process that implies the undermining of all traditional concepts and the foregrounding of an intellectual-spiritual instability that becomes fertile in terms of self-analysis and self-criticism. The first manifestation of this same process with regard to the figure of the poet is what we have termed his naturalization, although, as we have tried to show, this does not imply the immediate rejection of intellectual postures during the fifties. Both the intellectual-ironic and the personal-confessional strands within that same decade reflect the first turning of the piece called poetry so that it might fit into the cultural puzzle which, by this time, has acquired highly fluid contours. Such fluidity, or instability, we have argued, begins to be discernible through the increasing number of satirical poems that span the period between the forties and the sixties, this kind of verse becoming a significant historical phenomenon by this latter decade. It has also been suggested here that this same satirical trend would also need to be seen in the light of the modulation between poetry as discourse and poetry as metadiscourse that also emerges during the transition between the fifties and the sixties. Besides, this phenomenon of self-analysis is also characterized by its social aspect, especially due to the humanization of the figure of the traditional poet in the period after the Second World War. Following on from the attempt to explain the decration suffered by this same figure, a further question has been raised: whether the gradual emergence of the female poetic voice, above all during the sixties, has contributed to the role of frustrated writer that is played by the male poet at this time. Such a thesis may be borne out by the fact that during the seventies the figure of the male poet is even forced to go underground, although this is not the place to discuss such matters.

Much of what has been written here needs to be chewed over in more detail elsewhere, especially since it is presented as part of an on-going research project. Nevertheless, this paper is an attempt at rewinding the video of the development of British poetry in recent decades in order to be able to replay it frame by frame, thus facilitating an examination of how transitions are made between decades, even though, as usually happens, this kind of study reveals the falsity of such chronological divisions. Meanwhile (what is at the back of it all perhaps), this short study is based on the ever-present desire in our epoch to explain in some way the emergence of postmodernism and the process that leads to its consolidation. Having said that, it is not even clear whether the correct video has been inserted here.

**WORKS CITED**


***