Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Margaret (Maggie) Connolly April 13, 2021

From Anna Liffey to Ann Lovett:
The Search for Female Embodiment in Contemporary Irish Poetry

by

Maggie Connolly

Geraldine Higgins
Adviser

English Department

Geraldine Higgins
Adviser

Nathan Suhr-Sytsma
Committee Member

Hazel Gold
Committee Member

2021

From Anna Liffey to Ann Lovett:
The Search for Female Embodiment in Contemporary Irish Poetry

by

Maggie Connolly

Geraldine Higgins
Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

English Department

2021

Abstract

From Anna Liffey to Ann Lovett:
The Search for Female Embodiment in Contemporary Irish Poetry
By Maggie Connolly

This thesis analyzes the spectrum of ways in which women portray themselves and are portrayed in contemporary Irish poetry. In the first chapter of this thesis, I argue that Eavan Boland's critique of the passive woman in canonical poetry was a necessary and powerful mode of entering the patriarchal Irish poetic tradition, as Boland's poetic subjects serve as new symbols for who women are and what their role in Irish literature is. Boland's poems portray women who are representations of the shift in the Mother Ireland tradition, shifts toward women who are more realistic but are nonetheless symbols for Ireland and generalizations of Irish women. In the second chapter, I argue that some of Boland's poems do not engage with this particular portrayal of womanhood as her work begins looking towards a closer representation of embodied women through the depictions of artifactual women. I argue in Chapter 2 that Seamus Heaney also establishes an artifactual positioning of the women in his bog body poems, noting the fact that the bog bodies, by virtue of their preservation, are already artifacts and thus not capable of being embodied. In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I explore various Boland poems that depict real women and real bodies but do not find any examples of a more holistic and truer embodiment in her poetry. For more embodied subjects, I turn to the poetry of Sinéad Morrissey and Caitríona O'Reilly, two contemporary Irish female writers who come close to the realm of embodiment by describing and understanding their own experiences and their own bodies in their poems. I trace the spectrum of ways in which contemporary Irish writers portray women, from Boland's new Irish symbol to the artifactual poems which permeate her work as well as that of Heaney to the nearly embodied women that Morrissey and O'Reilly write. However, I conclude that full embodiment is not possible through language, but language is one means through which subjects might approach and understand their own bodies.

From Anna Liffey to Ann Lovett:
The Search for Female Embodiment in Contemporary Irish Poetry

By

Maggie Connolly

Geraldine Higgins
Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

English

2021

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my advisor Geraldine Higgins, without whom this project would not have only been less successful but a less enthusiastic and enjoyable endeavor. I would also like to express my thanks to my other committee members, Nathan Suhr-Sytsma and Hazel Gold, who provided wonderful discussion and feedback for this thesis that will continue to impact my future lines of inquiry. Thank you especially to my family and my parents in particular. You all have formed me into a curious person with a love of books and a passion for learning. Dad, thanks for listening to The Waterboys's renditions of Yeats's poems and for being so invested in our Irish ancestry; if you hadn't done so, I might never have become so interested in Irish literature and taken Dr. Higgins's class on Yeats and Heaney during my Junior Year. And thanks for pushing me to come to Emory University, where I've striven to become the best literary scholar I can be.

Additionally, I am grateful for the fellow students in my life who were beyond supportive throughout this entire project: Jacob Chagoya, Donna Kim, Patrycja Kepa, and Paige Safchik.

Finally, I would like to thank all of my English professors and teachers who have inspired me up to this point. You all have made me into the writer and thinker I am today, and for that, I cannot thank you enough.

Table of Contents

Preface ……...……. 1

Introduction …… 4

Chapter 1: Eavan Boland's Critique of Mother Ireland ……...…… 14

Chapter 2: Women's Bodies as Artifacts in the Poetry of Eavan Boland and Seamus Heaney....35

Chapter 3: Writing the Body in Contemporary Irish Poetry ……..……...62

Conclusion……...…..81

Works Cited ……..……86

That woman's days were spent

In ignorant good-will,

Her nights in argument

Until her voice grew shrill.

W. B. Yeats, “Easter, 1916”

Preface

This thesis originally stemmed from a reading of Seamus Heaney's 1975 poem "Act of Union" in an Irish literature class during my junior year of undergraduate studies. I was first introduced to the idea of Ireland as a woman through this poem and immediately became interested in the concept of Mother Ireland as a figure juxtaposed with figures of a masculine and powerful Britain. This conception became evident in Jonathan Swift's first image of Ireland as woman in an eighteenth-century pamphlet *The Story of the Injured Lady* published in 1746. Its contents, "written in the form of a letter from the lady (Ireland) to a male friend, complains of her betrayal and ill-usage by a gentleman (England)," serve as a foundation for the passive portrayal of Irish women for centuries to come (Innes 10). This idea of Ireland gendered as a female stems from an eighteenth-century "racist pseudo-science of ethnography" which "characterized the Irish as a feminine people" associated with the "passivity, excitability, and inefficiency manifested by […] conquered people as evidence if their need for a firm 'masculine' ruler" (Cullingford 61). The conception of the feminine Ireland in need of the masculine savior Britain resulted in conceptions of Irish hyper-masculinity, particularly in Irish literature; the hyper-masculine Irish man "naturally demands that his woman be hyper-feminine," leading to "social stereotypes of the Irish woman as pure virgin or equally son-obsessed mother" that pervade Irish literature to this day (61). The Mother Ireland trope reveals itself across various mediums from Swift's initial pamphlet, to cartoons in the 19th-century magazine *Punch,*[1] to the 1994 documentary *Mother Ireland* directed by Anne Crilly, and, most significantly for my thesis, to the poetry of Eavan Boland. It is through an analysis of Boland's poetry that this thesis, "From Anna Liffey to Ann Lovett: The Search for Female Embodiment in Contemporary Irish Poetry,"

finds grounding, searching for where the Mother Ireland stereotype continues, falters, inverts itself, and, in some cases in contemporary Irish women's poetry, finally disappears.

Notes

1. For examples of *Punch* cartoons, see https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/art-and-design/apes-psychos-alcos-how-british-cartoonists-depict-the-irish-1.3149409

Introduction

Kathaleen ni Houlihan! Why
Must a country, like a ship or a car, be always female,
Mother or sweetheart?
Louis MacNeice, Autumn Journal, "XVI"

In 2018, Cambridge University Press published *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Poets*, edited by Gerald Dawe. The anthology claims to encapsulate how the "world of Irish poets has altered greatly" as it responds "to the much-changed and still-changing sense of mobility and place and of representation of self and gender, of global concerns and conditions substantially different from those which played out in 'the deeps of the minds'" of earlier poets (Dawe 6). Yet, as Dawe sets out to understand the changes that have occurred in Irish poetry in recent decades, he hardly accounts for them in his selection of poets and contributors— only four of the thirty included poets and four of the thirty contributors are women. As we shall see, 2018 is only the most recent example of exclusion of women from not just anthologies of Irish literature but the canon itself. This thesis, "From Anna Liffey to Ann Lovett: The Search for Female Embodiment in Contemporary Irish Poetry," traces a trajectory of responses to this exclusion, from Eavan Boland's challenge to the silent figure of 'Mother Ireland' through artifactual representations of women in her poetry and that of Seamus Heaney to examples of embodiment in contemporary Irish women's poetry. I examine a spectrum of the ways in which contemporary Irish poets portray women, with particular emphasis on the ways in which Irish women poets portray themselves, ranging from the symbolic to the artifactual to "real" or embodied women.

Anthology Wars:

In 1991, Seamus Deane and a team of editors published *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* in three volumes. This expansive anthology, meant to include all the prominent and important figures in Irish literature, "incited outrage and a debate about what was viewed as the alleged, deliberate marginalisation of Irish women writers" (Battersby "Stalked by an Agenda"). The 1991 controversy resulted in the publication of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing Volumes IV-V: Irish Women's Writing and Traditions* in 2002, through which Angela Bourke and other Irish editors opened up the tradition of Irish writing to women, or so it seemed. The editors of *The Field Day Vols. IV-V* argued that "the presentation of Irish literature, history and culture in print, 'has usually been conditioned by ways of thinking and writing developed through generations of scholarship…', in which the underlying assumption was often, 'that both reader and writer are male;'" the new "volumes set out to challenge the existing canons in Irish writing," and they did so by incorporating women's writing from all genres and time periods, without ever purporting that certain works were "insufficiently Irish" (Higgins 1-2). Nearly twenty years after the publication of *The Field Day Vols. IV-V,* it seemed incredible that *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Poets* could still be so blind to gender in its virtual exclusion of women from the narrative of Irish poetry. Such an imbalance and underrepresentation of gender implies "that women are a minority in Irish poetry and literary criticism" (Murray). Of course, they are not. In truth, Dawe and the *Cambridge Companion* editing team would have had a significant amount of work to do if they wished to include all the contributions by women to Irish literature throughout the history of Irish writing (Murray). Recent discourse asserts that women have gained rights and that the fight for gender equality is not as necessary as it was in previous decades (and centuries). *The Cambridge Companion* reveals however that the exclusion

of women and "non-canonical" writers from academic and intellectual spheres is still pervasive, and suggests that this exclusion may also be indicative of deeper societal gender inequalities.

The Irish Canon:

The exclusion of women from Irish literary anthologies requires consideration of both what the canon and what Irish poetry *are*; according to Adrian Frazier, "All of the most obvious, clear-cut definitions of Irish poetry will not work because they exclude writers commonly regarded as among the best Irish poets" (Frazier 190). The canon itself consists of a "set of embodied criteria of 'Irishness,' and as a sort of secular sainthood, those few elected and reverenced spirits. [...] The canon is that small set of works experts agree everyone should know. This is the treasury of the nation's values, the cradle of its future mores" (Frazier 200). With this definition of canonicity and literary validity in mind, the argument of Deane and the other editors of *The Field Day Anthology Vols. I-III* makes sense— the canon of Irish literature is exclusive in that it only contains the "best" and most relevant writers. But even conceptions of relevance and exclusivity are themselves indicative of larger misogynistic ideals (as well as classism and racism, which I will not be directly engaging with in this paper).

Toni Morrison, one of the most well-known and well-respected Black American authors rightly asks, "What use is it to go on about 'quality' being the only criterion for greatness knowing that the definition of quality is itself the subject of much rage and is seldom universally agreed upon by everyone at all times?" (Morrison 124-25). Such ideas about quality are not only arbitrary in Morrison's view but often lead to intense Othering, which we can see manifested in female underrepresentation in the Irish literary canon. While Morrison speaks most explicitly about the concept of racial exclusion in the American literary canon— she states, "There is

something called American literature that, according to conventional wisdom, is certainly not Chicano literature, or Afro-American literature, or Asian-American, or Native American [...] It is somehow separate from them and they from it"— her position as a racial minority in the American literary canon continues to parallel gender exclusion in both the Irish and American canons (1). At the same time, however, authors such as Morrison invest in canon formation, a tool that has been used to exclude, oppress, and Other, because the canon continues to impact who is read in academic institutions and beyond; by excluding certain figures, minorities, and identities from canonical status, as Chris Murray asks in "Fired! Irish Women Poets and the Canon," "What message" are we sending "to our young scholars?" (Murray). How will equality between all races, classes, and genders be achieved? How will students learn about other works and people beyond the white male author?

Morrison and Frazier both raise questions about why the canon exists, who it is for, and why inclusion within it is important. Because the entry of minority and excluded writers is essential to wider academic and educational diversity, knowing who is already included in the canon and what their work entails becomes a necessity in order to understand who and what are missing. In the Irish literary canon, with male writers such as W. B. Yeats and Seamus Heaney at the forefront of the Irish poetic tradition, it is difficult to consider the work of lesser-known Irish writers without analyzing that of the Nobel poets. As the introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Poets* claims, "Yeats, along with other writers and artists, was the catalyst for a national movement of reconstruction," so, too, does this introduction in a thesis about Irish women's poetry begin with a discussion of Yeats. In his poem "A Prayer for My Daughter," Yeats argues, "An intellectual hatred is the worst," so he prays that his daughter "think opinions are accursed" (*Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose* 78). Yeats's unrequited love, Maud Gonne—

"the loveliest woman born / out of the mouth of Plenty's horn"— betrayed her own beauty, according to Yeats, "because of her opinionated mind" (78). Women, to Yeats, best fulfill the roles of their gender when they keep quiet and do not engage in political matters (although Yeats ironically never failed to fall in love with "opinionated" and intellectual women, including his wife George Hyde-Lees). Even as he collaborated with Lady Gregory, one of his dearest friends, on his most successful play, Yeats did not give her full credit for her contribution. As James Pethica proved, through an analysis of the manuscripts of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, Lady Gregory wrote major segments of the play— a play which became one of the most successful of his career (Pethica).

The exclusion of women from Irish literature is ingrained in the canon, with Yeats serving as only one example of a larger problem which continues to exist almost a century after his death. *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry* by Elizabeth Butler Cullingford is recognized as the first full-length feminist treatment of Yeats and serves as a major influence in this thesis; the book traces portrayals of gender in Yeats's poetry, exploring various themes from general conceptions of Irish masculinity to erotic desire. Moreover, Cullingford's essay "Thinking of Her as Ireland," which examines the portrayal of Mother Ireland in Yeats's poetry, along with that of Patrick Pearse and Seamus Heaney, provides the primary foundation of my research in this project. My thesis starts at the point where Cullingford's essay ends— as she traces conceptions of Mother Ireland from the end of the nineteenth century into the middle of the twentieth century, this thesis picks up the continuation and alteration of the trope, starting in the latter half of the twentieth century with Eavan Boland. Boland's understanding of and struggle against masculine portrayals of women in the 1980s and 1990s thus informs the first

chapter of this thesis, which examines how Boland's voice became one of the most prominent in the Irish feminist conversation.

Methodology:

Boland's own work is not only a critique of Mother Ireland; it is an insertion of self into a canon which tries to exclude her. Eavan Boland writes herself into the literary canon of Irish poetry, which she claims "is Irish poetry" ("Irishwoman's Diary"). She herself criticizes the *Field Day Anthology Vols. I-III*, stating "not only has [it] not taken the chance, it has performed a series of exclusions which are more directly challenging and more deliberately silencing of women writers, poets, scholars in this country that I can remember" ("Irishwoman's Diary"). Indeed, Boland at times invited as much criticism as she administered in her criticism of misogyny. For example, her contemporary and friend Derek Mahon wrote, "On reflection, I now realise that she was struggling to assert herself in what she correctly perceived to be a male-dominated literary culture. Was it, for her, a necessary struggle?" (Mahon 24). The obvious answer is yes. While Mahon believed that Boland "only had to look at a door, and it flew open," Boland's own writing and even the *Cambridge Companion* reveal a different story (24).

Informed by the theoretical frameworks of third-wave feminism and theories of embodiment, this thesis explores, through a reading of Irish contemporary poetry, what it means to include women, to portray women, and to have a body, particularly as understood through literature. This thesis also engages in questions of what it means to be an observer, an onlooker with a Lacanian male gaze, to Other a person with one's eyes. Through an investigation of the ethics of looking, this thesis attempts to understand how and if respectful exhibition and

observation is possible, and if embodiment is possible both for an observed object and for a literary subject.

In Chapter 1 of this essay, "Eavan Boland's Critique of Mother Ireland," I portray the ways in which Boland navigates the male tradition, working most explicitly with Boland's own criticism but also engaging with feminist theories more generally. I depict how Boland both works herself into a patriarchal tradition and pushes back against it, as I consider the questions: When, where, and how did women come into view in the Irish poetic canon? Does *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Poets* suggest women's "contribution[s] to Irish literature or literary criticism [are] deemed less valuable because they are women?" (Murray).

Another one of Boland's contemporaries, post-structuralist feminist Hélène Cixous, argues that men's valuation of and writings about women only result in "antinarcissism" and "antilove" in women themselves ("Laugh of the Medusa" 878). In order to replace these outdated, incorrect, and undervalued male perceptions of women, woman "must write her self, because this is an invention of a *new insurgent* writing which, when the moment of her liberation has come, will allow her to carry out the indispensable ruptures and transformations in her history" (880). Boland, in her reframing of Irish traditional women, responds to Cixous's imperative, simultaneously calling out to other women: "Write! Writing is for you, you are for you; your body is yours, take it" (876). Cixous also calls upon women to advance past what she deems to be the "immense majority" of women's writing "whose workmanship is no way different from male writing, and which either obscures women or reproduces the classic representations of women" (878).

In the first chapter of this thesis, I focus particularly on Boland's poetry in the eighties and nineties, as Boland's work during this period presents a direct response to Mother Ireland

with such poems explicitly titled “Mise Eire” and “Mother Ireland.” In close readings of these poems, I trace the ways in which Boland both departs from and feeds into the male tradition against which she writes. When Boland does “feed into” the tradition, she does so in an attempt to depart from it; in criticizing the trope of Mother Ireland as a silent symbol (woman as poem, not poet), Boland establishes new symbols of Irish womanhood. At times, as critic Edna Longley claims in her essay “From Cathleen to Anorexia,” Boland perpetuates the representation of women as symbols of the nation: “her alternative Muse turns out to be the twin sister of Dark Rosaleen,” yet another national symbol (Longley 188). I expand Longley’s argument by depicting how Boland creates not merely a new or inverted symbol for nationhood but one for womanhood and femininity.

In Chapter 2, “Women’s Bodies as Artifacts in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland,” I evaluate the ways in which each author moves past symbolic representations of women toward what I have termed the “artifactual positioning” of female bodies. I explore especially the bog bodies in Seamus Heaney’s collection *North*, drawing on the most well-known feminist critique of Heaney’s bog poems, Patricia Coughlan’s “‘Bog Queens’: The Representation of Women in the Poetry of John Montague and Seamus Heaney.” Extrapolating from Coughlan’s argument about the “representation of femininity” in Heaney’s work, I raise the essential questions of what it means for a woman to have a body and to be embodied (Coughlan 41). I draw most prominently on the work of gender theorist Judith Butler, whose conception of embodiment hinges on an individual’s vulnerability, both emotionally and spiritually. As I consider what it means for a woman to be positioned as an artifact by both Heaney and Boland, I delve into the ethics of looking, what it means to be an observed object versus an observing subject by contrasting artifactual positioning of observed object with conceptions of embodied

women, who serve as poetic subjects. In the twentieth century, various sources which focus on feminist conceptions of the body have found prominence in conversations regarding embodiment. Collections of critical essays such *Belief, Bodies, and Being: Feminist Reflections on Embodiment*, edited by Deborah Orr et al. (2006), and *New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment*, edited by Luna Dolezal and Clara Fischer (2018), explore the ideals of embodiment by major critics such as Butler and Irigaray, as well as delving into theories of the feminine in ontological, philosophical, historical, literary, and real, current spaces. In Chapter 2, I expand on these existing conceptions of embodiment through literary analysis of contemporary Irish poets Heaney and Boland by coining my own understanding of a specific type of juxtaposition to embodied women that exists within these poets' work: the *artifactual positioning* of women.

Noting where conceptions of embodiment do not exist in my first two chapters, Chapter 3 "Writing the Body in Contemporary Irish Poetry" explores the possibility of and search for embodiment in contemporary Irish poetry. I locate the potential for embodiment in poetry written in the twenty-first century by a new generation of Irish poets, analyzing the poetry of Sinéad Morrissey and, to a lesser extent, Caitríona O'Reilly. The conversation surrounding the body in Irish poetry has been ongoing for decades, and Chapter 3 expands upon current research. *The Body and Desire in Contemporary Irish Poetry*, edited by Irene Gilsenan Nordin, includes critical essays on the poetry of Heaney, Kinsella, McGuckian, and even Boland, but no critical research focuses specifically on the vulnerable body as a physical and emotional place for embodiment in recent Irish poetry. Chapter 3 does, however, consider the conceptions of the body, sexuality, and maternity as outlined in *The Body and Desire*. Other critical collections, such as *Irish Literature: Feminist Perspectives* edited by Patricia Coughlan and Tina O'Toole,

Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland edited by Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, and *A History of Modern Irish Women's Literature* edited by Heather Ingman and Clíona Ó Gallchoir, are all foundational to feminist thought in contemporary Irish poetry, and through a consideration of these theoretical, critical, and literary readings, I answer what it means to be an embodied subject and if such embodiment is possible in poetry.

The ultimate goal of this thesis is to track the ways Irish women portray themselves (at times comparing and contrasting with men's portrayals). Irish women were excluded from the canon for centuries, and when they finally enter it, a spectrum of poetic depictions originates. Though patriarchal repression continues to push women out of the Irish story, as it always has done, women persevere; they write themselves, about themselves, and for themselves, proving, despite what the 2018 *Cambridge Companion* might suggest, that "a feminine text cannot fail to be more than subversive" ("Laugh of the Medusa" 888). Through determination and resistance, Boland and other female writers established their own presence so that "over a relatively short time— certainly no more than a generation or so— women [moved] from being the objects of Irish poems to being the authors of them. It is a momentous transit" (*Object Lessons* 126).

Chapter 1: Eavan Boland's Critique of "Mother Ireland"

Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies— for the same reason, by the same law, for the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text— as into the world and into history— by her own movement.

Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa" 875

It has taken me
All my strength to do this.
Becoming a figure in a poem.
Usurping a name and a theme.

Eavan Boland, *Object Lessons* 231

In the BBC documentary *Mother Ireland*,[1] IRA volunteer Mairead Farrell discusses her feelings toward Mother Ireland, stating that the figure "didn't reflect what we [Irish women] believe in, and it just doesn't reflect Ireland. […] We've moved away from that, and we're not going to move back, we're moving onwards" (*Mother Ireland* 49:56-50:06*)*. The Gibraltar Special Air Services killed Mairead Farrell later in 1988, shortly before the documentary was set to air, resulting in the silencing of her voice and the censorship of her words; when *Mother Ireland* finally aired on the BBC in 1991, Farrell's voice was dubbed. In the end, although Farrell's critique of Mother Ireland was expressed, British anti-terror laws and Thatcher's administration make it so that her voice cannot be heard; Farrell thus becomes a symbol for the continued misrepresentation and silencing of women in Irish culture, mirroring the silent and unvoiced Cathleen ni Houlihan figure which Farrell herself condemned. However, Farrell was not the only one who wanted to move past the figure of Mother Ireland; she was not the only one to speak out against her; she was not the only woman who refused to remain silent. Many voices

have critiqued and continue to critique Mother Ireland and the portrayal of Irish women in popular culture, and one of the most powerful voices was that of Eavan Boland.

In 1995 Irish poet Eavan Boland (1944-2020) published a collection of essays entitled *Object Lessons: The Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time*. These essays include Boland's perspective on her life thus far, from her childhood as the daughter of a diplomat to her adulthood and work as a poet. In *Object Lessons*, Boland reveals her critique of the popular portrayal of Ireland in which the country is "allegorized as a woman, and the allegories are ones in which family or gender relationships are metaphors for political and economic relationships with a male England" (Innes 10). Boland laments this representation because it results in an Irish heroine who is "utterly passive. She was Ireland or Hibernia. She was stamped, as a rubbed-away mark, on silver or gold; a compromised regal figure on a throne. Or she was a nineteenth-century image of girlhood, on a frontispiece or in a book of engravings. [...] Her identity was as an image. Or was it a fiction?" (*Object Lessons* 66). The woman in the male-dominated field of poetry throughout Ireland's history is not merely a symbol for Ireland; she *is* Ireland, a poetic move which Boland problematizes for its silencing of women:

> Once the idea of a nation influences the perception of a woman, then that woman is suddenly and inevitably simplified. She can no longer have complex feeling and aspirations. She becomes the passive projection of a national idea. Irish poems simplified women most at the point of intersection between womanhood and Irishness. … The idea of the defeated nation's being reborn as a triumphant woman was central to the kind of Irish poem. Dark Rosaleen. Cathleen ni Houlihan. The nation as woman; the woman as national muse. (136)

Eavan Boland worked throughout her career in the eighties and nineties to undo and alter the image of women in the Irish tradition, to create a symbol which contrasts and refutes Mother Ireland. She finds ways to discuss femininity and womanhood in Ireland in ways beyond that of an overarching, passive, centuries old symbol, including modern themes of suburban life, motherhood, and belonging in her poetry. But as Boland does so, she creates a new symbol for

Ireland and womanhood, as opposed to doing away completely with the need for a national symbol. In the words of Edna Longley, Boland's "alternative Muse[s]," the female symbols which replace Mother Ireland in many of Boland's poems, "[turn] out to be the twin sister of Dark Rosaleen" and "[look] remarkably like the Sean Bhean Bhocht,"[2] the symbol which Boland supposedly wants to remedy and alter (Longley 188). Through an analysis of "Mise Eire," "The Achill Woman," "Anna Liffey," and "Mother Ireland," poems chronologically ordered by year of publication from the middle of Boland's career which all explore the role of women within Ireland and within poetry in various ways, I expand upon Longley's perception of Boland's new Muse. In these poems, Boland transforms Irish national symbol into an active one, as opposed to the "passive projection of a national idea" which permeated the Irish literary canon prior to Boland in the works of various male authors, such as Pearse and Yeats (*Object Lessons 136*).

In order to grasp Boland's critique of Mother Ireland, it is necessary to understand in what ways the figure permeated the tradition prior to and during Boland's career. Patrick Pearse and W. B. Yeats serve as two major examples of early twentieth-century poetic tradition in Ireland. At the forefront of the Irish nationalist movement, Patrick Pearse, teacher, writer, and leader of the Easter Rising of 1916,[3] wrote poems in which the nation explicitly "influences the perception" of women, perpetuating the tropes of Ireland as mother and woman as symbol (*Object Lessons* 136). His poem "The Mother," for example, simplifies its speaker, a mother whose two sons have died for the nationalist cause. The speaker grieves for her sons but believes they have died in "bloody protest for a glorious thing," "grudg[ing] them not" but "hav[ing] her joy" because her "sons were faithful, and they fought" ("The Mother" 4, 14-16). In this poem, Pearse "appropriat[es] … the maternal voice" to suggest that "women are venerated only to be marginalized as producers of sons for slaughter, ungrudgingly offering men to death for the

cause" of nationalism (Cullingford 69). Similarly, in his poem "Mise Éire," which translates from the Irish as "I Am Ireland," Pearse "evokes the maternal figure" of Ireland, gendering the land as a woman and a mother (68). She is an "old woman," "older" and "lonelier than the old woman of Beare,"[4] mother to "Cuchulainn the valiant,"[5] and victim to "the irreconcilable enemy" of Britain ("Mise Éire"). Ireland's importance is not within herself but in her purity and in the sons she bears who fight for her. Ireland is a mother, a virgin, and a symbol without a voice, but due to the obvious fact that Irish women are people, not symbols, they can never live up to the expectations which Mother Ireland sets forth for them in poems such as "The Mother" and "Mise Éire." Without regard for any type of feminist argument or women's rights— Yeats, after all, felt that opinionated women only cause destruction, questioning if "there was another Troy" for his unrequited love, strong-willed and politically active Maud Gonne, "to burn"— the idyllic and misogynistic symbols of what Irish women should be persist in the work of Pearse and Yeats (*Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose* 37).

W. B. Yeats, Irish poet, Nobel prize winner, and one of the most widely known writers of English-language poetry, also contributes to the creation of women as symbols through his own portrayals of Mother Ireland. Yeats, too, associates women with the land but differs from Pearse in the fact that "sexuality is conflated with violent death" in Yeats's writing (Cullingford 57). This trope subsists in Yeats's and Lady Gregory's play *Cathleen ni Houlihan,*[6] in which the titular character appears as an old woman who, representing Ireland as a whole, requires that young men follow her and die for her sake; at the end of the play, the old woman transforms into a beautiful "young girl" with the "walk of a queen" (*Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose* 140). Such a transformation combined with Cathleen's call for martyrdom, heard by the character of Michael, a young man who was set to marry in the near future, "endorses patriotic sacrifice as

the highest sublimation of sexual love" as the sacrifice of his body to Cathleen replaces the devotion of his body to his betrothed (Cullingford 68). Cathleen entices Michael not only with her beauty but also with her refrain, which guarantees glory in exchange for the blood of young Irish men: "They shall be remembered forever, / They shall be alive for ever, / They shall be speaking for ever, / The people shall hear them for ever" (*Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose* 139). Through the character of Cathleen ni Houlihan, Yeats thus confuses sex with death, womanhood with nationhood, and nationalism with sacrifice. Because of Yeats's literary push for martyrdom in works such as *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, Conor Cruise O'Brien refers to Yeats as "the great propagandist," claiming that his works render history "as a series of blood sacrifices" by the sons of Mother Ireland; Edna Longley writes that *Cathleen ni Houlihan* "helped to propagate the feminine mystique of Irish nationalism" (Cullingford 57, Longley 188). With W. B. Yeats as one of the Irish literary canon's foundational poets, women poets, including Eavan Boland, face a poetic precedent set in which they are either passive metaphors or violent goddesses; in both cases, poetic women are symbols without individual voices or unique perspectives. Boland, throughout her career, takes it upon herself to rework and redefine this poetic definition of womanhood and to transform the symbol that men have created.

Because canonical Irish poems before the twentieth century displayed women in such a passive manner, Boland felt that a disconnect existed between womanhood and poetry: "the word woman and the word poet inhabited two separate kingdoms of experience and expression" (*Object Lessons* 114). Boland expresses the need for women poets, especially herself, to overcome the symbolization to which male poets subjected women for centuries, to find and listen to the voice that "had been silenced, ironically enough, by the very powers of language [Boland] aspired to and honored" (114). Because "history had in fact excluded her, [...] she

confronted it and in doing so was a poet setting out to clear away that blocked view in the proscribed narrative" (Smyth 272). It thus became "part of [Boland's] life's work to open up that literary culture, sifting it with feminist ideas as well as with her revision of the 'proper' subjects of the poem and consequently rendering it less enclosed and more aware of its own contingencies" (Campbell and O'Mahoney 17). At the same time, Boland admires and cherishes the poets and poems which preceded her: "her admiration for W.B. Yeats and other Irish male poets persisted," but "she could not help noticing the gap between the idealisations of women described in poems such as W. B. Yeats's 'Red Hanrahan's Song About Ireland'[7] […] and her own personal reality" (Miquel-Baldellou 129). Boland's goal was to refute and critique the depictions of Mother Ireland that came before her while not shying away from the previous poetic tropes, resulting in a new depiction of women that fosters a new type of Irish symbol. Such an attempt is perhaps most explicit in her poem "Mise Eire," a direct response to Pearse's poem of the same title.

Boland begins her poem "Mise Eire," published in her 1987 collection *The Journey*, with a blunt statement: "I won't go back to it — // my nation displaced / into old dactyls" (*New Collected Poems* 118). The speaker, from the first line, combats the tradition of minimizing the country into a poetic form as opposed to a place inhabited by living people. Previous poetry and "songs / [...] bandage up the history, / the words / [...] make a rhythm of the crime / where time is time past," glorifying Ireland and ignoring its history (118). The speaker thus calls for a revisionist historical perspective, one which includes and apologizes for all of Ireland's faults, "to challenge the rigid, handed-down concepts of nationhood, to seek newer dispensations of that condition that would widen its boundaries, extend its definitions" (118, Smyth 284). The poem then presents two different women as Ireland, overthrowing the old symbol of Mother Ireland in

favor of a more inclusive, modern representation of women. The first woman is "a sloven's mix / of silk at the wrists, / a sort of dove strut / in the precincts of the garrison — // who practises / the quick frictions, / the rictus of delight / and gets cambric for it;" she is not a passive virgin but a prostitute (*New Collected Poems* 118). Through this figure, the speaker argues that a woman with this non-traditional, non-conforming, and even criminalized profession can represent Ireland, can *be* Ireland. So, too, can "the woman / in the gansy-coat / on board the Mary Belle, / in the huddling cold / holding her half-dead baby to her / as the wind shifts east / and north over the dirty / water on the wharf" (118). Though she has to leave Ireland, this woman can represent Ireland. This mother reveals the flaws of Ireland— the country's failure to protect her and provide for her needs. She "neither / knows nor cares that / a new language / is a kind of scar," one which makes her as flawed as the country she leaves behind (118). She cannot know the impact her emigration will have on her, but she does what she must do to survive. This act of survival and strength, though it could end in death, is the new Ireland toward which Boland works, combining her love for the tradition of Ireland's resilience with the idea that Ireland is not one person, one woman. She is many different women who make decisions for themselves and work towards a better life in the same way that Boland works towards a poetic tradition that is more reflective of the wants and needs of Irish women. At the same time, however, by not naming these women or giving them individual voices, Boland reduces them to symbols; Edna Longley notes this problematic in how the poem "destabilises Mise but not Eire — 'my nation displaced / into old dactyls.' There is some reluctance, partly for fear of further division, to re-open the ever-problematic, ever-central issue of 'Nationalism and feminism'" (Longley 173). Because Boland does not fully move away from the idea of a national symbol of Ireland but merely reframes who or what it should be, figures such as the prostitute and the mother in "Mise

Eire" interrogate the idea of Mother Ireland without abolishing it entirely. These are not real women but are representations of and symbols for Irish women.

Boland works toward a new Irish poetry which critiqued the image of women as passive beings, personifications of the nation who had no worth in and of themselves. Yet, in this effort to establish a new type of woman in poetry, Boland does not fully overcome the symbolization of woman or even the woman as the nation. But, as some critics argue, it was not her intention to do so; rather, she chooses "to make the figure of the woman more representative, and in a complexly human rather than a demeaningly emblematic way" (Clutterbuck 290). Boland "assert[s] her position as a non-separatist," feeling it unnecessary to completely break free from the work of the male poets that had come before her; "she found herself unable and unwilling to become totally disengaged from a tradition which she had imbibed, even though she could not entirely identify with it" (Miquel-Baldellou 130). This attempt to shift the national symbol— as opposed to destroying or eliminating it— is most apparent in Boland's description of "the Achill woman," who appears first in Boland's 1989 essay "A Kind of Scar," then in her 1990 collection of poems, in which "The Achill Woman" poem is the first part of "Outside History: A sequence." The Achill woman appears a third time in a reprinting of the essay "A Kind of Scar" under the title "Outside History" in *Object Lessons* in 1995. In all of the Achill woman's appearances, she is an incomplete, flawed attempt by Boland to invent a new Irish symbol only a few years after the creation of the representative women in "Mise Eire." Boland admits to knowing and seeing the Achill woman for "less than a week" when she stayed in a cottage in Achill, an island off the west of Ireland ("A Kind of Scar" 5). This woman, like the Sean Bhean Bhocht, is an "old woman," who "would carry water up to" Boland during her stay (5). Boland writes about the woman, "I can see her still. She has a tea-towel round her waist — perhaps this

is one image that has become all the images I have of her," confessing that she remembers less about the woman herself and more about the idea of her existence (5). The two women talked to each other, and Boland was surprised at the woman's earnestness, her ability to speak "with any force about the terrible parish of survival and death which the [famine] had been in those days" of the Achill woman's ancestors (5). Boland "sensed a power in the encounter," one which later allowed her to understand "this woman as an emblem" for Ireland and for the nation (5). Boland recognizes and welcomes her own symbolization of this woman; she writes:

> When she pointed out Keel to me that evening when the wind was brisk and cold and the light was going; when she gestured towards that shore which had stones as outlines and monuments of a desperate people, what was she pointing at? A history? A nation? Her memories or mine? (6)

As Boland allows the woman to point to a history, to a nation, to a memory, the woman transforms into the history, the nation, the memories. She is no longer an individual but an alternative symbol in Boland's mind for something greater than herself which might come to represent all that Mother Ireland previously had.

Boland's essay "A Kind of Scar" and her poem "The Achill Woman" share remarkable similarities in Boland's description of and hopes for the woman. In the poem, the woman comes "up the hill carrying water" and wears "a half-buttoned, wool cardigan, a tea-towel round her waist" (*New Collected Poems* 176). She does her work against the backdrop of "fluid sunset; and then, stars" (176). The speaker notes the "cold rosiness" of the woman's hands, perhaps drawing more parallels to Dark Rosaleen (176). The speaker reveals herself as "all talk, raw from college— / week-ending at a friend's cottage," a young woman out of place in the countryside, a place which she does not call her home (176). Yet, because she talks to this woman, "putting down time until / the evening turned cold without warning," she feels she has the authority to put her in a poem, to allow her to become a national symbol (176). The speaker "went / indoors …

took down [her] book / and opened it and failed to comprehend // the harmonies of servitude" which she associates with both the woman and Ireland (177). She falls "asleep / oblivious to // the planets clouding over in the skies, / the slow decline of the spring moon, / the songs crying out their ironies" (177). The speaker of the poem could not have known, at the time, that this Achill woman would become an icon to her, a remembrance of the countryside, a memory that propels her career forward. But the woman becomes exactly that— a memory and then a symbol, without a voice or response.

Boland justifies her symbolization of the Achill woman by contrasting it with previous tradition. Previous male poets "had continued to trade in the exhausted fictions of the nation; had allowed these fictions to edit ideas of womanhood and modes of remembrance;" such portrayals lacked meaning "at the deepest, most ethical level" because they did not include "the suggestion of any complicated human suffering" ("A Kind of Scar" 13). Thus, Boland warrants her portrayal of the Achill woman through the inclusion of her suffering. Boland's writing about her is not full of "hollow victories, the passive images, the rhyming queens" but recounts the woman's work, her strife, her familial oral history of the famine (13). She feels that she includes this Achill woman's story of defeat, writing, "I knew that the women of the Irish past were defeated. I knew it instinctively long before the Achill woman pointed down the hill to the Keel shoreline. What I objected to was that Irish poetry should defeat them twice" by not including their histories, pains, or stories (13). Yet, the Achill woman herself does not speak in the poem; the poem does not mention the famine or the Achill woman's specific sufferings, though the prose piece centralizes these stories, but merely suggests that she must work to survive. Further, Boland's attempt to portray womanly suffering is not so far from the tradition as she might have intended it to be. Pearse, in his play *The Singer,*[8] claims that "to be a woman and to suffer as

women do is to be the highest thing," a claim which "ensures that women keep on serving and suffering" (Cullingford 69). The Achill woman becomes, through Boland's essay and poem, not a woman in a poem but a metaphor for suffering, for the difficult lives of the previous generation who lived through the famine and survived. In "The Achill Woman" "the 'real women of the actual past,'" represented by the likes of this unnamed woman from Achill, "are subsumed into a single emblematic victim-figure: 'the women of a long struggle and a terrible survival', 'the wrath and grief of Irish history'" (Longley 188). According to Longley, "by not questioning the nation, Boland recycles the literary cliché from which she attempts to escape," creating a new symbol for the Irish woman who looks eerily similar to the representations of the past (Longley 188).

While Boland's new national symbol mirrors Mother Ireland in various ways, her work does subvert the tradition in various other ways. The poem does not suggest that the Achill woman is a mythical type of woman, nor a passive one, as might have been suggested were this poem part of the larger patriarchal Irish canon. Boland critiques past poets for "availing themselves of the old convention […] using and re-using women as icons and figments […] evading the real women of an actual past: women whose silence their poetry should have broken" ("A Kind of Scar" 24). Still, the Achill woman remains a silent figure, a woman who is written about as opposed to doing the writing, one who does not have a deep relationship with the speaker. Boland requires that the poem and the speaker of the poem do not exoticize or mythologize the Achill woman, the new national symbol, yet the poem somehow moves from the concrete images of the natural world, buckets, and casual conversations to questions of "planets," "the spring moon," and "songs crying out ironies," as if the purpose of the Achill woman's

existence and work is to create a space for Boland to find meaning, a life about which Boland can write (*New Collected Poems* 177).

Whether she fully achieves her goal or not, Boland seeks to subvert the poetic construction of women and the relationship between womanhood and the land that has come before her. As Cullingford claims:

> This tradition reflects the patriarchal opposition between male Culture and female Nature, which defines women as the passive and silent embodiments of matter. Politically, the land is seen as an object to be possessed, or repossessed: to gender it as female is to confirm and reproduce the social arrangements that construct women as material objects, not as speaking subjects. (Cullingford 56)

Yet, Boland's work oscillates between a critique of the association between the woman with land and a preservation of it; "in many of her poems Ireland is what Eavan Boland *thinks with*, but more particularly Dublin is what she thinks with and does so with striking feeling for the particulars of place" (Smyth 275). She plays into the traditional and archetypal use of the land as metaphor, displaying her own personal connection to the place in which she lives. The land is a relevant subject in many of Boland's poems, and her own take on the gendering of the land arises in the poem "Anna Liffey," from her 1994 poetry collection *In a Time of Violence*, her next published collection after *Outside History* (1990), which includes "The Achill Woman." The poem personifies the River Liffey, the river which runs through Dublin, as a woman, as is done by James Joyce through the character Anna Livia in *Finnegans Wake*.[9] Boland writes, "The river took its name from the land. / The land took its name from a woman" (*New Collected Poems* 230). When discussing the poem, Boland finds it necessary to write the River Liffey's feminine perspective not only because she herself "had known for a long time about Anna Liffey, and of course for a very much longer time, had loved the Liffey as a river as most Dubliners do," but also because the River Liffey "is one of the very few feminine incarnations of a river. Most

rivers … are male. Only very few [...] are thought of as female, feminine, incarnated-by-the-feminine in place" ("Eavan Boland talks about 'Anna Liffey'"). Boland does not feminize the land herself but works within the perspective that the river already possesses a gender; she speaks as if the river declared itself to be female.

Boland refers to the poem as a "long, almost structureless, conversation" ("Eavan Boland talks about 'Anna Liffey'"), as it "serves multiple purposes. It is a poem about becoming a poet, a poem about the cycle of motherhood, and a poem about a divided Irish nation. It pays tribute to Joyce" and "presents a starkly different heroine, one unfettered by myth and the nationalized conflation of woman as nation-builder" (Dinsman 182-83). Once again reimagining a canonical trope proposed by an important Irish male figure, Boland writes "Anna Liffey" with the female poet in mind. The poet-speaker sees the Liffey out of her window, a "source" of both water and inspiration (*New Collected Poems* 230). She "praise[s] / the gifts of the river," how it moves as "One body. One spirit. / One place. One name" (230). The speaker reflects upon her own life, how she "came [to Dublin] in a cold winter" and had children (230-31). Gazing upon the river, she questions what it means to be a nation— "Make of a nation what you will / Make of the past / What you can–"— and acknowledges her own role as a woman within the poem: "It has taken me / All my strength to do this. // Becoming a figure in a poem. // Usurping a name and a theme" (231). This moment of self-reflection fully encapsulates Boland's mission as a female poet to continue the tradition of Irish poetics while critiquing the tradition, to make a place for herself inside a tradition which has previously excluded her. In "Anna Liffey," the poet-speaker proclaims that "a river is not a woman" in the same way that Ireland is not a mother; still, "a woman is a river," with "patience" and "powerlessness," embodying the same traits which the passive woman in the Irish poetic tradition always possesses (231-32). In previous poetry,

women could "assume the roles of" only "mothers, nurses, and mourners of dead male heroes;" in Boland's "Anna Liffey," women can also be poets (Cullingford 68). Yet, by equating herself with the River Liffey, the speaker remains a projection of the land. The Achill woman and the River Liffey merge as similar attempts to subvert the idea of Mother Ireland— when the speaker, referring to herself, states, "the body of an ageing woman / is a memory," she calls back to the Achill woman, and her purpose within Boland's poetry (*New Collected Poems* 233). She, too, is a memory which Boland capitalizes on to discuss the ideas of womanhood and nationhood.

In "Anna Liffey," Boland implies that the women and the land should still be equated, that they are inseparable as before, but that this comparison serves a different purpose than it did in previous generations. Now, when the woman and the land become one, the woman is not a fragile being but a powerful force and a poet. By equating not merely the woman herself to the land as she did in "The Achill Woman" but to the *female poet*, Boland inserts herself as poet into the national tradition, the national symbol. Yet, when the speaker proclaims, "In the end / it will not matter / that I was a woman … The body is a source / Nothing more," she contradicts her own femininity; instead, what is important is that she is a poet whose lines will be remembered and whose symbolic women will be understood as the national symbol for generations to come, mirroring the refrain of Yeats's Cathleen: "They shall be remembered forever" (235-6, *Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose* 139). Thus, Boland, the poet whose goal is to establish a poetic tradition which includes women, their histories, their stories, and their voices, becomes an inconsistent advocate for women in poetry. It is not the speaker's womanhood but her roles as poet and symbol which triumph. At a young age, Boland had found herself disappointed when she realized that in order to "weep or sing or recite in the cause of Ireland," she would "have to give up the body and spirit of a woman" (*Object Lessons* 66-7). Though the speaker in "Anna

Liffey" remains female, she is not an "embodied woman." Indeed, by proclaiming that her womanhood "will not matter," the speaker appears to commit the very action which Boland feared in her youth: like a river in Ireland "en route to / [its] own nothingness," she allows "everything that burdened and distinguished" her, including her womanhood, to "be lost in this: [she] was a voice" (236).

In her subsequent collection, *The Lost Land* (1998), Boland continues to explore similar themes of the connection between the land and nation, between women and symbol. Her most glaring poem on this topic in the collection is "Mother Ireland," another direct response to the feminization of the land. The poem gives voice to the land, with the speaker being the country itself: "I was land" (*New Collected Poems* 261). From this first moment, Boland's "Mother Ireland" speaks to Seamus Heaney's poem "Act of Union," published in his 1975 collection *North*, which portrays the colonial relationship between Ireland and Britain through Britain's predatory perspective. Heaney's poem feminizes Ireland, whose "back is a firm line of eastern coast / and arms and legs are thrown / beyond your gradual hills" (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 204). Boland's Ireland, similarly describing the anatomy of the country, "lay on [her] back to be fields / and when [she] turned / on [her] side / [she] was a hill" (*New Collected Poems* 261). In the past, Boland's speaker "did not see" but "was seen," a passive mass upon which "words fell," referring to the poems which were written about Ireland by men, such as "Act of Union," in which she herself did not speak (261). In Heaney's poem, Britain is "imperially / male," "the battering ram" which "caress[es] / the heaving province" of Ireland in an act of rape, leaving Ireland "with the pain … like opened ground" (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 204-5). Ireland is a passive symbol for Britain's colonialism, left without a response, a victim of an act of violence. Heaney perpetuates the Mother Ireland tradition in his 1975 poem, and Boland's poem, though it

continues to perpetuate women as a symbol for the land and the nation, opposes the way in which men have written about her in the past.

Mother Ireland remains the traditional symbol of passivity at the beginning of Boland's "Mother Ireland." A transformation begins, however, in Boland's poem; Ireland is no longer merely the mother of a baby with "parasitical / and ignorant little fists" which "beat at [her] borders" when "Seeds. Raindrops. / Chips of frost." fall upon her (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 205, *New Collected Poems* 261). She overcomes her past of forced silence and "learn[s] her name," allowing her to "tell [her] story," her own story (*New Collected Poems* 261). When she begins to speak for herself, the story "was different / from the story told about [her],"— different from the rape narrative imposed upon her by Heaney— mirroring Boland's own poetic vision in which she begins to write and speak for herself within a tradition which previously allowed men to speak for her (261). Mother Ireland distances herself from the land, separating woman from the earth, from the world which previously left "her raw," so that she is able to see, think, and feel for herself (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 205, *New Collected Poems* 261). She "look[s]" at her land "with so much love / at every field" knowing that "they / misunderstood [her]," that they cannot speak for her or force her return to the old narrative (262). When "they" say, "*Come back to us*," Mother Ireland refuses to surrender her own freedom; she opposes the call in Heaney's poem for a restoration to pre-colonial days, something to "salve completely [Ireland's] tracked / and stretchmarked body" (*New Collected Poems* 262, *Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 205). She, on a more general level, refutes "the *aisling* poems of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in which Ireland is personified as a *spéirbhhean*, a visionary young woman who having been 'ravished by the aggressive masculine invader' prophetically calls for her restoration to her pre-colonial condition" (Auge). She, like the speaker in *Mise Eire* who "won't go back to it," refuses

to return to the past and traditions which hurt her. Instead, the speaker-Ireland whispers, "*Trust me*," with the knowledge that all will be better once she— and all of her "daughters"— has the freedom to speak for herself (*New Collected Poems* 128, 262).

"Mother Ireland," published eleven years after "Mise Eire," reveals Boland's continued obsession with and fascination for the trope of Mother Ireland, coupled with her critique of its flaws. These flaws do not outweigh the national value of the symbol for Ireland, however, as Boland continues the tradition while also criticizing it. "Mother Ireland," more blatantly than Boland's previous poems, admires Mother Ireland and her strength, finding fault not in her but in those who "misunderstand her" (*New Collected Poems* 262). Boland does not reject Mother Ireland as a whole but wishes to represent her accurately. In doing so, Boland imposes "her own personal reality" upon Mother Ireland, her perspective on the symbol which Boland felt, whether fair or not, "could also be extended to all other Irish women of her time" (Miquel-Baldellou 129). Throughout the late eighties and into the early nineties, Boland explored where and how she fit into the Irish poetic tradition, focusing in multiple cases throughout multiple poetry collections on the idea of women as new symbols for Ireland and the symbol of Mother Ireland herself.

In her collection of critical essays published in 2011 *A Journey with Two Maps*, Boland ends her book with a section entitled "Letter to a Young Woman Poet." In this letter, she presents a call to action to young female poets, entreating them to understand that "the past needs" women poets (*A Journey with Two Maps* 254). She continues her letter:

> The very past in poetry which simplified us as women and excluded us as poets now needs us to change it. […] And we need to do it. After all, stored in the past is a template of poetic identity which still affects us as women. When we are young poets it has the power to make us feel subtly less official, less welcome in the tradition than our male contemporaries. If we are not careful, it is that template we will aspire to, alter ourselves

> for, warp our self-esteem as poets to fit. Therefore, we need to change the past. Not by intellectualizing it. But by eroticizing it. (254)

More than fifteen years after the publication of *Object Lessons*, Boland echoes her own call to action for women poets, but this time with more confidence and clear direction. She remembers the discomfort she felt in attempting to enter the male-dominated world of Irish poetry in her youth and becomes a voice, even an inspiration, for those wishing to do the same. She acknowledges the barriers that the tradition has put before young women and calls upon them to *change* the tradition, to alter the past. Boland clearly does so through her poetry in her work to establish a new— or, at the very least, different— national symbol and representation of women. Boland does not desire to erase the past or the male writers who have come before her because she acknowledges the beauty of the poetic tradition, though she recognizes how harmful it can be. Her desire throughout her career was to "[plot] those correlatives between maleness and strength, between imagination and power which allowed [her] not only to enter the story, but to change it" (257). Her goal was to find a place for herself in the tradition, altering it to her story, her history, and her experiences as a woman, without ignoring the symbols which allowed men like Yeats and Heaney to become great Irish poets. Near the end of her career, Boland finds the words to articulate the complexity of the role of Irish women in poetry, the way which female poets might find a place in the tradition while still finding their own female poetic voice, in a metaphor: "We can, and should draw two maps for the right and difficult art of poetry. […] We can and should entertain even conflicted ideas to find a path through contradiction" (26). Boland thus justifies her own contradictions, how her work as a women poet allows her to gender the Liffey or symbolize the Achill woman— she acknowledges the inconsistencies and reveals their necessity for entering into a tradition which excludes her, doing so by creating new symbols which parallel Mother Ireland in many ways but push back against her in others.

Boland's poems which include symbolic women are responses to the male Irish poets of the past, oftentimes keeping various elements of their archetypes of women while altering large portions of the female portrayals. Because she loves her country and her country's poetry, Boland criticizes the poetic tradition while still loving it and advises that others do the same: "If women go to the poetic past as I believe they should, if they engage responsibly with it and struggle to change it […] then they will have the right to influence what is handed on in poetry, as well as the way it is handed on" (*A Journey with Two Maps* 265). It is women poets' responsibility to change the past, to break from tradition, to struggle. Through this struggle, according to Boland, women will be able to influence the poetic canon and establish themselves within it. At the same time though, Boland "believe[s] words such as *canon* and *tradition* and *inheritance* will change even more" as women continue to write, to modify the boundaries and break down the barriers which men have placed upon them (265). Boland was one of the most influential Irish female writers in this effort, this struggle, and she arguably helped create a path for other women to follow. Yet, she calls for women not to directly follow in her footsteps or those of the famous male writers but to find their own path within the poetic past. Women's poetry in Ireland continues to require new representations of women, new truths, new symbols, and new women writers; as discussed later in this paper, many of the women poets who come after Boland choose to do away with the idea of creating representative women and national symbols entirely. Boland was one of the first to grapple with these efforts, but she was not and will not be the last, as feminism and women continue to evolve— through reading, criticism, and love for their predecessors— the canon will continue to expand and progress, including and embracing more female voices as it does so.

Notes

1. For more information on the BBC's 1988 banning of the *Mother Ireland* documentary directed by Anne Crilly, see Anne Crilly "Banning History" (*History Workshop Journal,* vol. 31, no. 1, 1991).
2. "Rosaleen" is a symbol for Ireland meaning "little rose." "Dark Rosaleen" appears in a poem of the same name by James Clarence Mangan (1803-1949). "Sean Bhean Bhocht," Irish for "poor old woman," appears in a traditional Irish ballad from the Irish Rebellion of 1798. See *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935* (The University of Georgia Press, 1994) by C. L. Innes for more information on the origin of these terms.
3. Republican rebellion against British rule in Dublin in 1916. Led to the deaths of the Rising's prominent leaders, including Pearse himself. Inspired Yeats's poem "Easter, 1916."
4. Mythic Irish goddess also known as the Hag of Beara.
5. Legendary heroic figure in Medieval Ireland whose story appears in the Ulster cycle.
6. *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (written 1901) is often credited to Yeats alone and published under his name. See "'Our Kathleen': Yeats' Collaboration with Lady Gregory in the Writing of Cathleen ni Houlihan" by James Pethica (*Yeats Annual*, Vol. 6, Pg. 3, 1988) for more information on the collaborative relationship between Yeats and Augusta Gregory.
7. W. B. Yeats, "Red Hanrahan's Song About Ireland" from his 1903 collection *In the Seven Woods*. The poem includes the lines "But purer than a tall candle before the Holy Rood / is Cathleen, the daughter of Houlihan" (*Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose* 33).

8. Patrick Pearse, *The Singer*, first performed in 1917. See *Patrick Pearse - Collected Plays / Dramai an Phiarsaigh*, edited by Roisin Ghairbhi and Eugene McNulty (Irish Academic Press 2013).
9. James Joyce, *Finnegans Wake*, Faber and Faber, 1939.

Chapter 2: Women's Bodies as Artifacts in the Poetry of Eavan Boland and Seamus Heaney

Write us out of the poem. Make us human
in cadences of change and mortal pain
and words we can grow old and die in.
Eavan Boland, "What Language Did," *In a Time of Violence*

Seamus Heaney is regarded as one of the most important and influential figures in Irish poetry, regardless of his gender; Eavan Boland, on the other hand, is often viewed as one of the most influential *women* in Irish poetry, with her gender referenced and her early work most often found in anthologies of Irish *women's* poetry. Close in age, these two figures also share a connection in their contributions to the Irish literary tradition and the evolution of Irish poetry, with Heaney at the forefront of the canon and Boland attempting to find her place within it. As stated in the previous chapter, "Boland laments her displacement from the predominantly male tradition that Heaney comfortably finds a place in" and works to alter the position of women within the tradition (Conboy 193). As she does so, however, her poetry conveys various similarities with her male predecessors, especially Seamus Heaney. Katie Conboy argues in her essay "Revisionist Cartography: The Politics of Place in Boland and Heaney" that "if Boland and Heaney have any common ground, it may be their shared interest in the idea of exile, a concept that both writers turn into a positive force" (194). Conboy locates this exile in Heaney's work through the tension that exists for a Catholic raised in Northern Ireland[1] and writing in the Irish tradition; in Boland's work, Conboy notes Boland's exile from the Irish poetic tradition entirely, an exclusion, as I discussed in Chapter 1, that she has to work hard to rectify (195).

While this chapter does not focus on the political exile that Heaney experiences, it does discuss the ways in which Boland creates a place for herself within the male tradition, finding similarities in her work and that of Heaney. I push back in this chapter against Conboy's idea

that Heaney's poems "do not, in general, make political stereotypes of female figures" (195) while also delving into a similarity in Heaney's and Boland's work which Conboy does not touch upon: a specific type of portrayal of women's bodies that results in an artifactual positioning of those bodies. I argue in this chapter that both authors, specifically in the bog poems of Heaney's *North* and in various poems of Boland's collection *In a Time of Violence*, portray women's bodies as and through artifacts, objects to be admired and beheld— and sometimes even touched— by the speaker, who doubles as observer of the artifacts. The male observer of female bodies in Heaney's poems often reveals the complexity of the male gaze despite the fact that this male gaze often leads to a partial or total disembodiment of the women about which he writes. Heaney also complicates the male gaze by acknowledging the ethics of looking and what it means to be an observer. Boland's female gaze is often less problematic than Heaney's male gaze, allowing Boland to (re)embody or partially embody the women described in her poems. Nevertheless, as I argue here, the artifactual positioning of women's bodies in these poems inevitably eclipses the potential for true and total embodiment.

Heaney's poetry collection *North* was published in 1975. In the years surrounding the publication of the collection, Heaney made various explicit statements about his understanding of the relationship between gender and poetry. One such statement in a passage from Heaney's 1972 essay "Belfast" reads:

> I have always listened for poems, they come sometimes like bodies out of a bog, almost complete, seeming to have been laid down a long time ago, surfacing with a touch of mystery. They certainly involve craft and determination, but chance and instinct have a role in the thing too. I think the process is a kind of somnambulist encounter between masculine will and intelligence and feminine clusters of image and emotion. I suppose the feminine element for me involves the matter of Ireland, and the masculine strain is drawn from the involvement with English literature. ("Belfast" 34)

Here, Heaney alludes to Mother Ireland and the connection between women and the "matter of Ireland". This connection and gendering is deeply ingrained in *North*, in which the "bog body

poems" appear. The bog poems arise through Heaney's fascination with the photographs of bodies preserved in bogs in Northern Europe included in P. V. Glob's 1965 book *The Bog People*; Glob theorized that these bodies were sacrificed by their societies to a fertility goddess (Alexander 220). Heaney studied and viewed the photographs of the bog bodies in Glob's book, alongside Glob's research and speculation as to who the bodies might have been, and wrote poems about them, some as an observer of the bodies and others from the perspective of the bodies themselves. When describing the earliest bog poems in his collection *Wintering Out*, Heaney associated this gendering of the land and the ideals of modern Irish republicanism in a 1972 interview in *The Listener*:

> The early Iron Age in Northern Europe is a period that offers very satisfactory imaginative parallels to the history of Ireland at the moment … You have a society where girls' heads were shaved for adultery, you have a religion centering on the territory [sic], on a goddess of the ground and of the land, and associated with sacrifice. Now in many ways the fury of the Irish Republicanism is associated with a religion like this, with a female goddess who has appeared in various guises. She appears as Cathleen ni Houlihan in Yeats's plays; she appears as Mother Ireland. I think that Republican ethos is a feminine religion, in a way. It seems to me that there are satisfactory imaginative parallels between this religion and time and our own time. ("Mother Ireland" 790)

Heaney establishes a personal and national connection between the bog bodies and present-day Ireland. The deaths of these bodies by ritual sacrifice created "an imaginative association between these victims and those of 'the tradition of Irish political martyrdom': just as the bog people were sacrificed to Nerthus,[2] so have Irish people been sacrificed in the struggle for Ireland, iconographically conceived as a kind of female divinity, as Mother Ireland or Cathleen ni Houlihan or the poor old woman" (Foley 63). Thus, Mother Ireland and the passive portrayal of women pervade Heaney's bog poems from the outset, a passivity that is furthered by Heaney's actual depiction of the female bodies.

Heaney views the bog bodies as artifacts, especially the female ones, as if he is an observer of them in a museum and their deaths find meaning in his observation. The best-known

essay on Heaney's gendered depiction of the bog bodies is Patricia Coughlan's "'Bog Queens': The Representation of Women in the Poetry of John Montague and Seamus Heaney." Coughlan argues that Heaney "tends to two opposing and possibly complementary representations of gender interaction. One constructs an unequivocally dominant masculine figure, who explores, describes, brings to pleasure and compassionate a passive female one;" this argument is especially relevant to "Punishment" and "Bog Queen" (Coughlan 51). The other mode of gendered representation "proposes a woman who dooms, destroys, puzzles and encompasses the man, but also assists him to his self-discovery: the mother stereotype" (51). This latter tendency encompasses the argument of my previous chapter, which explores Boland's movement away from and conversation with the Mother Ireland stereotype. For the purposes of this chapter, I want to focus on Coughlan's description of Heaney's representation of gender roles, as it is particularly relevant to the construction of the female body in the bog poems. Moreover, I expand upon her argument that the women of the bog poems are not only passive women explored by a male observer; they are in fact artifacts, in the eyes of the speaker, meant to be observed by the "dominant masculine figure" (51).

In her influential essay "For This Sex Which is Not One" Luce Irigaray states that female sexuality "has always been conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters" (Irigaray 23). Heaney perpetuates such a conceptualization of female sexuality in his poem "Bog Queen," the first of the bog poems which explicitly explores a female bog body. The poem is in the first-person, explicitly written from the perspective of the preserved Bog Queen herself. The poem begins, "I lay waiting," commencing with a statement of readiness, possibly for sexual acts but at the very least for the eyes of the masculine observer (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 187). The second stanza begins with another statement by the female speaker: "My body was braille / for

the creeping influences" (187). This line explicitly calls out to "creeping influences" as the woman is exposed, her body is something to be touched, to be defined by masculine parameters and the male observer (187). The line "invokes a sensuality" which Coughlan argues is typical of Heaney's bog poems, while the later line in the poem "'stitchwork / retted on my breasts' nods to the dissolving of clothing to reveal the flesh underneath. […] Literary critic Ian Gregson writes of the 'sadomasochistic linking of sexuality with violence'" prevalent in Heaney's poems, and as referenced in the previous chapter, allows for sexuality to be blamed as the source of political and even nationalist violence (Walsh 3-4). Cathleen ni Houlihan calls for young men to die for her cause in Yeats's *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, perpetuating nationalist violence; through the Bog Queen, though she does not call for martyrs as Cathleen ni Houlihan does, Heaney parallels Yeats's association of death and violence with sensuality. I argue that this ability to equate such violence with sexual description arises from not mere objectification and sexualization of the female body but on the more explicit formulation of the female body as an artifact. When the female body reduces to "the crock of the pelvis," "breasts," a "wet nest of … hair … a slimy birth-cord / of bog" contrasted with a "diadem," "gemstones," a "sash … wrinkling," and a "swaddle of hides," Heaney invokes not only the sexual but also the artifactual (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 188-89). This body is not merely female and not merely an object; it is historical and preserved, something which can be placed in a museum so that observers can claim to gain a semblance of understanding of the past, simultaneously admiring her womanly features and her sensuality. As Julia Kristeva notes, the corpse is somewhere between life and death "and therefore no longer symbolizes anything;" even more immediately, the corpse is "death infecting life" ("Approaching Abjection" 69). The result of viewing a corpse is pure abjection, an ultimate horror that leads to a separation from self, an Othering,[3] a "real threat" that "beckons to us and

engulfs us" (69). But as the bog bodies have been preserved thousands of years, they lose the immediacy of abjection that a corpse requires. The body of the Bog Queen:

> remains unnamed in an unmarked grave while her physical body slowly disappears to nothing … The woman's body, the site of possible reproduction of future generations, is disintegrating out of existence. The result of this is that women are removed from historical and literary narratives, and as such, this undermines the telling of counter-narratives. (Walsh 3)

The Bog Queen cannot speak for herself but is spoken for by her observers, her studiers, the curators of her artifactual existence. The body of the woman is a preserved artifact through which the speaker might claim to come to learn about ancient sacrificial rituals; simultaneously, her status as an artifact silences the woman who once lived and her history. By presenting the Bog Queen as the speaker, Heaney silences the woman who once lived by purporting to know or understand her experience.

In one of his earlier collections, *Door Into the Dark,* Heaney similarly takes on the position of a female speaker in his poem "Undine;" this speaker is a goddess who, as an alternate to the male gaze, observes a human man. "Undine" and "Bog Queen" complicate the idea of a man speaking for or through women because both poems' speakers are not fully human—Heaney does not have to answer for writing through a woman's perspective when, in reality, he is speaking as a mythical creature and a body, respectively. Further, the "silencing" of the Bog Queen is somewhat inevitable, as a woman who lived thousands of years in the past can no longer tell her story. However, her status as artifact further renders her "imagistically static," and through his insertion of himself and his speaker into the Bog Queen's memory, Heaney doubles the woman's artifactual positioning; she is no longer merely a body, one type of artifact, nor a photograph of a body, another type of artifact (Gregson 131). She is a figure in a poem, and it is through Heaney's male gaze that she will be remembered.

The next poem in *North* which portrays a female bog body is "Punishment." This poem also creates an artifact out of a female body but does so in a more explicitly politically contentious way. Through an exploration of Heaney's drafts of "Punishment,"[4] I argue that Heaney nuances his positioning of female bodies as artifacts, positing himself as the "artful voyeur" (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 193). The earliest drafts of the poem, like "Bog Queen," detail the physicality of the bog body under scrutiny, including the "nape / of her neck," her "naked front," and her "nipples" which resemble "amber beads" (NLI, MS 49, 493/36). As Alexander argues, this action of "meticulously" detailing the "corpse's physicality, giving careful weight to each descriptor" even from the first draft of the poem "never [lets] the audience forget for a moment that the bodies being pulled from the bog are just that: physical bodies, with all the folibles and delicate vulnerabilities that such embodiment details" (Alexander 222). The speaker of the poem is aware of his position as outsider yet complicates this awareness by proposing a connection with the body, empathizing with her through the phrase "I can feel" from the beginning of the earliest drafts (NLI, MS 49, 493/36). The most notable change that Heaney makes to this early draft is the change of title: he originally wrote the word "Shame," which significantly implies a fault on the part of the dead woman, who is in reality of victim of the cruelest, most inhumane and misogynistic violence; at the same time, this title implies shame on the part of the speaker, indicating the shame he feels as a viewer of the results of this dead woman's punishment (NLI, MS 49, 493/36). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, American critical theorist and specialist on affect theory, notes "one of the strangest features of shame," the second-hand shame of an observer:

> the way bad treatment of someone else, bad treatment *by* someone else, someone else's embarrassment, stigma, debility, bad smell or strange behavior, seemingly have nothing to do with me, can so readily flood me— assuming I'm a shame-prone person— with this

> sensation whose very suffusiveness seems to delineate my precise, individual outlines in the most isolating way imaginable. (Sedgwick 36-37)

Not only does the title "Shame" reflect the shame that the young woman imposes on her society with her sexual promiscuity, but it also implies the shame that the speaker, as onlooker, experiences as he posits his gaze on a body which has been embarrassed and Othered in the most violent way by her society. The speaker cannot change the shame which the body experienced but instead empathetically posits the experience onto himself. Heaney crosses out this title, however, changing it to that of the final form, "Punishment," and the implications of the speaker's nuanced empathy are lost (NLI, MS 49, 493/36).

In another draft, Heaney writes the poem as a sonnet. In this version, Heaney amplifies his insertion of self into the poem by speaking directly to the body— "I almost love you," – and then proceeds to ask, "Whose righteousness / is preferable? The groomed proconsul's / civilized disdain for you and yours / or the tribe's exact and intimate revenge?" Heaney, by including "the groomed proconsul," who does not appear in the final poem, subtly relates the poem to the present day (NLI, MS 49, 493/38). He questions if the modern judgment of this ancient action is any better than the judgment of this girl's tribe for her sexual crimes. This comparison is even more glaring in yet another draft, in which Heaney states, "Senate and althing / would both condemn you" (NLI, MS 49, 493/35). In this moment, Heaney is both an observer of the artifactual body and an actor in creating an artifact out of the body as his male gaze and role as a poet complicate his ability to view the body in unbiased manner. Heaney not only "is attempting to speak for the subaltern bog queens he writes into existence" but also relates them to himself and politicizes their lives lived thousands of years in the past; "in this uneasy balance hangs the possibility or either subversion or oppression—often both" (Alexander 219-20). As he begins to involve his country's own political circumstances more explicitly in this version— "We all

might cast / the stones of silence"— he equates the ancient women whose bodies the bog has preserved to the women of his own time period, referencing explicitly the tensions between Northern Ireland republicans and unionists (NLI, MS 49, 493/35). In the final draft of "Punishment," Heaney compares the bog girl's punishment to the punishment of Northern Irish women who dated British soldiers, who were tarred and feathered[5] for their sexual acts. By comparing bog bodies to modern women, Heaney creates artifactual positioning for both, as if the bog women are something to be understood through modern allegory and the modern women are soon to undergo a similar fate— to become victims, shameful political sacrifices, and artifacts preserved by tarring and feathering.

Heaney complicates the matter in the drafts by providing a moment of understanding of his own oppression and complicity. In the handwritten notes on the side of a draft, the speaker's pity for the girl comes across more strongly. Heaney writes in messy handwriting with a black pen, "Your atonement / the long oppression"—oppression replaces the crossed out "humiliation"— "of your loins / your weak gaze / little collaborator" (NLI, MS 49, 493/35). Merely recognizing complicity does not necessarily absolve Heaney of his own complicity. Even in this moment that might be understood as an apology or a concession, he further sexualizes the body, observing and noting her genitalia and convicting her for the "crime" which led to her death. The speaker's complicity in the woman's punishment becomes more explicit as Heaney nears the final form of the poem. In one of the later drafts, Heaney refers to the speaker as a "cowardly spy," acknowledging that he plays a role in the girl's punishment by observing and admiring her without doing anything to stop it (NLI, MS 49,493/37). In yet another draft, Heaney explicitly refers to his role as poet observer, saying he "would [have] connived / in civilized outrage" (NLI, MS 49,493/37). These words, handwritten once again in black pen on

the side of a draft, appear in the final form of the poem. In the final version Heaney refers to the speaker not as a "cowardly spy" but as an "artful voyeur" – "I am the artful voyeur // of your brain's exposed / and darkened combs, your muscles' webbing / and all your numbered bones" (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 193). This change alters the tone of the poem and shifts the speaker's potential for culpability from an unknown observer to a poet who will write down this woman's history, create a poem out of it, and compare it to his contemporary time period. Although Coughlan argues, "the speaker … does to certain degree interrogate his own position," particularly apparent in the decisions that Heaney makes in his earlier drafts, she argues that the use of the words "artful voyeur" apply not to the speaker's position as observer but to "his sense of political ambiguity: he would 'connive / in civilized outrage', but understand the 'tribal, intimate revenge' being exacted" (Coughlan 55). The poem is thus, at times, less about complicating the Lacanian concept of the gaze— in which Lacan states that "in the initial relationship to the world, something is given-to-be-seen to the seer," a narcissistic desire to know one's self through the conception of the Other— and more about his own role and the role of his readers in the contemporary political moment (Quinet 139). Though the speaker is aware of the gaze, he participates within it and allows the bog body to become a projection of himself. This projection is what the speaker complicates, placing his own historical moment within his conception of the Other, naming himself as a "*subject* forced to be covert" by the greater oppressor: Britain (Coughlan 55).

In the eyes of the speaker of "Punishment," who lives during the Troubles in Northern Ireland,[6] Britain is the ultimate enemy, the ultimate symbol of oppression of the passive and feminine Ireland, as in Heaney's "Act of Union," discussed in Chapter 1. When Northern Irish women had sexual relations with British soldiers during this period, they were traitors to their

country, to the Irish republican cause. “Punishment” “details the barbaric attack of tying a woman to a lamp-post, pouring liquid tar (or black paint to give the visual effect of tar) over her head, and covering her body in feathers,” serving as “a form of humiliation and intimidation, but further the act is a didactic spectacle aimed to control” (Walsh 4). As an observer of such acts, the speaker summons a partial sense of responsibility, as he has “stood dumb” at the punishment of these women (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 193). Even still, this guilt is fleeting, for the speaker refers to these Irish women as “betraying sisters,” ultimately deciding to place the blame upon the victims (193). Throughout the drafts of “Punishment,” the speaker enacts the male gaze upon a female body as he describes the body in detail. Heaney attempts to complicate this male gaze, however, by showing that the speaker understands that he is an observer and debates his role in the violence inflicted upon not only this bog body but also the women within his own society. Nathan Suhr-Sytsma further complicates the speaker’s complicity, arguing that the poem might “be less about condoning ‘intimate revenge’ than about the speaker’s discomfort with assuming a position of journalistic impersonality from which to condemn such revenge,” a discomfort with the “cowardly spy” who reports on the death of those tarred and feathered during the Troubles as opposed to the “artful voyeur” who attempts to understand that he himself is an observer of this predicament (Suhr-Sytsma 193).

As readers of “Punishment,” we all become “voyeurs of— or eavesdroppers on— its own exposure of victims,” complicit in not only the death of the girl but also in the acts of violence against Northern Irish women who, too, become immortalized as artifacts in Heaney’s poem (194). Further, the fact that the speaker “almost love[s]” the girl “unsettles the cool detachment of the [male] gaze,” implying that he cares for the body and memory of this girl in a way that an unbiased observer could not (Gregson 131). The speaker is, on the one hand, complicit in the

girl's punishment, an observer of an artifact, an Other, the "Night to his Day," as the preserved body is "the repressed that ensures the system's functioning," the patriarchal system in which woman are the ones who are gazed upon and men the ones doing the gazing ("Sorties" 67). On the other hand, the speaker ensures that the systems of looking and observation are functioning, that the artifacts are the ones observed and readers, as artful voyeurs, are the ones who do the observing. Heaney thus requires that readers question their own complicity in the violence surrounding them, creating an artifact out of a preserved body.

The parallels that Heaney creates through this artifact, this dead body, this corpse, allow for the same sense of abjection to apply to ancient, "tribal" societies and to his modern moment. In her book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler discusses the societal establishment of "boundaries" that serve "the purpose of instating and naturalizing certain taboos regarding the appropriate limits, postures, and modes of exchange that define what constitutes bodies" (Butler 497). These boundaries that "govern various bodily orifices presuppose a heterosexual construction of gendered exchange, positions, and erotic possibilities," and anything which falls outside of this heterosexual construction is perceived as the Other (498). Because the boundaries of Ireland's national character at the time of Heaney's publication of "Punishment" establish women as passive, virgin mother figures, and more specifically Northern Ireland's role in the Troubles placed a firm boundary between Northern Irish women who stray from Republican ideals and their communities, any stray from this societal boundary not only allows the women to become the Other but also to be deserving of punishment. Furthermore, these tarred and feathered "criminals" are to be held up as examples, in the same manner as the bog woman, to become artifactual evidence of this historical period and the political atrocities that the people, specifically the women, of nationalist communities in Northern Ireland faced. The speaker

suggests that just as he observes the body of the "murdered corpse and presents it like it as a natural phenomenon" which can and should be at once commemorated, shamed, and memorialized, so, too, will the punished women of Northern Ireland become observable artifacts to be viewed by future "artful voyeurs" (Coughlan 56, *Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 193).

The final bog poem in *North* that analyzes a woman's preserved remains is "Strange Fruit," which draws from Glob's image of a woman's severed head, as opposed to a woman's entire body. The poem even from its title is contentious, referencing the Billie Holiday song[7] which, in turn, "is indebted to a poem by Abel Meeropol, a Jewish man who had been 'haunted ... for days' on seeing a photograph of a lynching in which the bodies of two black men hang from trees above a crowd of spectators" (McConnell 432). In Heaney's context, however, the "strange fruit" has less to do with racialized violence and more to do with sexual violence and retribution for the breaking of social standards, and while Holliday's "Strange Fruit" refers to a photograph of identifiable lynched bodies, Heaney's "Strange Fruit" refers to a singular ancient head. Through an analysis of the drafts of "Strange Fruit" housed in Emory University's Rose Library, Gail McConnell discovers another layer to this sexualized bog body: the head, to the speaker, is also a religious symbol. The first evidence for such a reading is in the original title of the poem "My reverence," which then changes to "RELIQUARY" and "TETE COUPEE" before Heaney finally settles on "Strange Fruit" (434). One of the earlier drafts compares the head to "an after-image// Of Veronica's napkin," referencing the woman who wiped the face of Jesus as he carried the cross (434). Even more explicitly referring to the Catholic Mass, "the beheaded girl appears as Christ … 'This was her body / This was her blood'" (438).[8] This draft also includes the lines:

> 'the spongy fleece/ of the lamb had stained/ and we unswaddled its heavy kernel'. The line was first 'The swaddling fleece', with the adjective subsequently exchanged for

> 'spongy'. That Heaney imagines the sheepskin as a lamb's fleece demonstrates the initial endeavour to represent the beheaded girl using Christ-like imagery. In the proclamation of John the Baptist, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (437)

The final, published draft of the poem does away with this explicit comparison to Christ, only referencing the head as a "murdered, forgotten, nameless, terrible / beheaded girl, outstaring axe / and beatification, outstaring / what had begun to feel like reference" (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 194). As Heaney describes the artifact of the head, as understood through the photograph in Glob's book, he acknowledges that the embodiment of this object was never possible— "Here is the girl's head" (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 194). While time and distance and the unknown history of the Bog Queen and the girl in Punishment made an artifact out of their bodies, the head of the girl in "Strange Fruit" is an artifact for the same reasons but even more so because she is not a full person but a severed head— an object, a part of a whole, unable to be understood as a whole person. Though Heaney forgoes much of the draft's Christian imagery in the final version of "Strange Fruit," an analysis of the drafts and a comparison to what becomes the finalized version of the poem is necessary to understand Heaney's portrayal of the head in "Strange Fruit" and his perspective on the role of women's bodies in poetry more generally.

Through both the final selection of the title "Strange Fruit" and Heaney's comparison of the beheaded woman to Christ, Heaney immortalizes an artifact in the same way that the Catholic Church immortalizes a saint. To understand the implications of Heaney's poem, I turn to Judith Butler's theory of embodiment, which purports an understanding of one's own body through "a shared susceptibility to and dependence on others and attempts to construct an ethics on the basis of 'primary human vulnerability'" (Petherbridge 57).[9] Butler acknowledges, however, the dangers of this necessity: "as she also notes, our interdependence makes us vulnerable to the unpredictability of others and the risk that a form of ethical responsiveness in the face of suffering might be withheld" (57). Such a vulnerability that leads to understanding of

self cannot be fulfilled if those who view the vulnerable body are unable to recognize its humanity; "in Butler's terms, one has to recognize the other as 'a life' before they can be recognized" (61). The final version of "Strange Fruit," like "Punishment," compares one tragedy to another, minimizing the humanity of the victims of the racial hate crimes of American by creating a parallel, through the poem's title, to an ancient head. However, the severed head's humanity was never in question, was never possible; Heaney and viewers can never recognize this head as "a life" because it, in its preserved form, is not a life but a head. Still, the drafts of "Strange Fruit," particularly the one entitled "My reverence," reveal a line of Othering by Heaney— the beheaded artifact becomes not a symbol for the life that once was but is a symbol for religious reverence, a sacred relic, a Christ-like body of a saint to be revered. Heaney's earlier poem from *Wintering Out* "Limbo"[10] explores similar themes of sainthood and veneration of the dead; in the poem, the speaker contemplates the possibility for the salvation of an unbaptized, dead infant who was left to drown: "now limbo will be // a cold glitter of souls / through some far briny zone. / Even Christ's palms, unhealed, / smart and cannot fish there" (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 148). The dead child, like the head in "Strange Fruit," is venerated and understood through a Catholic lens; however, because of the child's recent and immediate death, the speaker does not view the child as a body, a relic, as he does the head in "Strange Fruit."

In the Catholic tradition, in which Heaney grew up, a relic, ranging from "the body or fragment of the body of a deceased person" to "articles of clothing … or pieces of personal property," "is not a mere symbol or indicator of divine presence, it is an actual physical embodiment of it, each particle encapsulating the essence of the departed person, *pars pro toto*, in its entirety" (Walsham 11-12). The preserved state of the relic itself increases its value and

holiness: “durability and resistance to decay are frequently defining features of the relic: in medieval Europe the incorruptibility of a corpse was regarded as a certain sign of sanctity and a seal of divine approbation” (11). In the speaker’s view, the preserved state of the head qualifies it as a relic, a holy object which might be placed in a church or museum for viewers to not only revere but to pray to, asking for the head’s intercession in prayers to God. In “Strange Fruit,” the speaker is able to transform the severed head, which is unable to be embodied because of its pure lack of body, from a simple artifact into a sacred relic. The head, in the most vulnerable position, as it possesses no autonomy after the woman’s death and had no choice in its preservation, in the photographs taken of it, or in the poem written about it, does not possess the agency or the body to be an embodied subject. The woman lost agency and potential for embodiment thousands of years ago in the original beheading, the original disembodiment. Though in the published version of “Strange Fruit,” the beheaded girl is no longer the Lamb of God or the saintly Veronica, she remains a holy relic, “outstaring beatification” and necessitating “reverence” in the heart of the speaker (*Selected Poems: 1965-1975* 194). The head is a relic to be beheld, to be revered, to be viewed and Othered, even as the speaker acknowledges her power to “outstare” him, to catch him in his gaze and require that he view himself as an Other through a Lacanian mirror phase in which the speaker figuratively views his reflection in the head’s eyes (194). Heaney capitalizes on the head’s role as full artifact in “Strange Fruit”; since this head cannot possess uniqueness, individuality, and sense of womanhood, Heaney transforms it into a relic, something greater and holier than a mere artifact. She, in the eyes of the speaker, paradoxically requires a reverence that the other women’s bog bodies do not, as if her lack of body necessitates purity, sainthood, and inability to perform sexual sins.

While Heaney's bog bodies precipitate questions about embodiment in the lens of modern literary criticism, theories of embodiment have pervaded critical thinking since the beginnings of literature and critical thought. While some theorists favor the soul over the body, such as Plato, modern criticism often focuses on representations of the body. The body, in this sense, might become

> a powerful site for the re-writing of old myths, or as Nietzsche calls them, 'worn-out metaphors', which in the Irish context is a means of coming to terms with a traumatic historical memory. From the point of view of gender, re-writing the landscape of the body is an important force in questioning the representation of the body as gendered territory, thus questioning one of the oldest tropes inscribed in the Irish national psyche (Nordin 2).

Heaney himself respected and favored this representation of the territory as gendered, but as discussed in the previous chapter, it was Eavan Boland's life's work to respond to and critique this representation of the land and republicanism itself as gendered. Her poems throughout the eighties and nineties alter, twist, play with, and refute the idea of Mother Ireland. Her poems explore this gendered concept of the land, and many of them "deconstruct the seemingly stable meanings inscribed by patriarchal culture and destabilize … gender ascriptions by asserting the signifying, self-creating power of the corporeal" (Nordin 6). Though Boland, like Heaney, views certain representations of women's bodies as artifacts, she complicates and inverts the position of observer-speaker by establishing a potential female embodiment throughout her consideration of such artifacts in ways that Heaney does not. In part, this potential for embodiment arises out of Boland's mere position as a female observer of other women and representations of women; Kristeva writes that feminists in Boland's contemporary period in the eighties and into the nineties "are primarily interested in the specificity of feminine psychology and its symbolic manifestations" as they "seek a language for their corporeal and intersubjective experiences, which have been silenced by the cultures of the past" (*New Maladies* 208). One way Boland

explores this corporeal experience is through the artifactual position of women in various poems, allowing her and her speakers to "[return] to an archaic (mythic) memory" in which she explores temporality and what it means to have or to have once had a body (208).

Boland's deconstruction of gendered Ireland, in poems such as "Mother Ireland" and "Mise Eire," often praised for their clear feminist themes, are accompanied by other poems that explore womanhood and gender in different ways. As discussed in the previous chapter, "The Achill Woman" considers womanhood through the strife an individual old woman, and "Anna Liffey" creates a symbol for womanhood out of a river. Some of Boland's later poems, however, explore themes of womanhood as expressed not through symbols or real people but through artifacts: representations of women which have the appearance of women and are based in the reality of what a woman is but are not real women. In her 1994 collection *In a Time of Violence*, "The Dolls Museum in Dublin," the fifth poem in "Writing in a Time of Violence: A sequence," Boland explores the explicit representation of women's bodies as artifacts. Boland, like Heaney, becomes a viewer of artifactual women, but her representation of these artifacts is very different than that of Heaney's bog bodies. In the poem, the speaker observes old, tattered dolls that sit in a museum in Dublin, considering the time period in which they were made and in which their owners lived. The dolls represent explicit, standard-definition artifacts, which are not only placed in a museum but also possess and retell a history through their physicality. Boland's dolls imply "another silenced event in Irish History;" their "terrible" wounds and the "cracks along their lips" suggest both a silencing of women and their role in Ireland's nationalist strife as the dolls "recreate Easter in Dublin" (Rashke 137, *New Collected Poems* 208). The dolls are a symbol for something greater, for the nationalist cause, drawing similarities to Mother Ireland. The poem itself is a reference to Yeats's poem "The Dolls," in which the dolls in a doll-maker's house

complain that an imperfect child, "a noisy and filthy thing," has arrived to replace the perfect objects "being kept for a show" (*Yeats's Poetry, Drama, and Prose* 52). By nodding to the author who is well-known for his poem "Easter, 1916,"[11] "The Dolls Museum in Dublin" requires further association with the events and the violence of that Easter (Raschke 137). Boland uses a version or model of the female body that is removed from an actual female body in order to reflect upon a past historical moment. She does not compare the history witnessed by these dolls to the current moment in Ireland but allows for the dolls' creation, history, and decaying state— these dolls had existed for three quarters of a century before Boland published her poem about them in 1994— to speak for themselves, to represent the "children walking with governesses, / looking down, cossetting their dolls," as Boland imagines their owners once did (*New Collected Poems* 208). Boland refers to these dolls as what they are— artifacts in a museum, which thus represent the historical moment in which they once belonged to children. The dolls remind Boland of the silencing of women and the violence in 1916, but she does not turn the bodies of women themselves into artifacts to represent history, instead focusing on artifacts which themselves possess a history.

Though not actually women, the dolls do resemble the characteristics and clothing of femininity. Referring to these dolls as representations of womanhood calls for recognition of "the way the female body is represented, and how these representations are influenced by and produced within normatively gendered institutions (e.g., the media)" which require that "we address the body as a material, visible thing" (Jansen and Wehrle 38). In these manifestations of womanhood, Boland is an observer of the female body presented in artifactual form. The poem provides a description of the dolls' physicality: "Shadows / remain on the parchment-coloured waists, / are bruises on the stitched cotton clothes, / are hidden in the dimples on the wrists"

(*New Collected Poems* 209). In no way does Boland sexualize these dolls— these children's toys that take the form of women's bodies— as Heaney did when he described the female bog bodies twenty years earlier; she does, however, project a historical past onto them, implying that the shadows cast over the faces and clothing parallel the darkness of the Easter Rising in 1916. This projection explores a poetic memory as considered through a museum exhibit. Though Boland is an observer of female-like bodies, her womanly gaze considers not the female body itself but the historical challenges through which the owners of these dolls lived. Their owners are long dead, but these dolls "have survived" and, for a moment, take upon human qualities as they "infer the difference" between present and past "with a terrible stare" (*New Collected Poems* 209). The dolls straddle the boundary in the final lines of the poem between living and never having been alive, between embodiment and disembodiment. But "human embodiment is characterized by an internal differentiation: I must *be my body* and, at the same time, *have this body*," and though the dolls stare and appear to possess the ability of discernment, they ultimately do "not feel it. And [do] not know it" (Jansen and Wehrle 38, *New Collected Poems* 209). Boland thus differentiates between human and doll, between woman and object, between past and present. These dolls, like the bog bodies in Heaney's poems, are not alive, and though they possess something of the history in which they were made, they are not the women themselves who lived the history.

In the same collection of poems, Boland's speaker finds herself analyzing another artifact, another physical representation of a woman's body that is not, in fact, a woman's body. The speaker in "The Art of Grief" views a statue of "a veiled woman … up on a pedestal" which brings her to a memory of her grieving mother. In an essay written under the same title, "The Art of Grief," Boland explores the ways in which twentieth century literature separate art and artist:

> Whereas in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" [T. S.] Eliot had argued, "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and

> the mind which creates," Boland points out that the separation of the suffering self from the creating self had "too often led to the denial of the first by the second." (Randolph 93)

In "The Art of Grief" poem, Boland explores how the speaker "saw [her] mother weep once" and realized that weeping is "unrhythmical" and "unpredictable" before her mother "dried her tears" (*New Collected Poems* 240-41). In this expression of an experience of grief, Boland ensures that her role as an artist does not require that she deny herself personal experience, the experience of suffering. In this manner, Boland explores vulnerability as expressed through her mother's human body. Such a replication of her mother as human and as having a body which can cry, which can allow her to "put one hand up to her throat and [pull], / between her thumb and forefinger, / the rope / of light there" replicates the one sense of human embodiment which requires that humans "be material, visible, and subject to the physical laws that govern causality" (241, Jansen and Wehrle 37). As the speaker's mother cries in front of her daughter, she reveals that "having a body" further means being "finite, exposed, and dependent on others and external forces, and thus vulnerable, as Butler emphasizes;" as "living (human) being[s]," the speaker and her mother "live, feel (and suffer through) [their bodies], in virtue of which [they are] not only vulnerable, but also open to the world" (Jansen and Wehrle 37). Grief is thus an expression of vulnerability, and in the theory of Judith Butler, directly related to being embodied— to being a human who has a body. Boland explores this concept, this "art," of grief and thus the art of embodiment in "The Art of Grief."

But the speaker and her mother are not the only subjects of the poem, and thus do not possess the only bodies which warrant exploring. The poem opens with the description of a statue, an artifact, which, like the dolls in "The Dolls in a Museum in Dublin," is an artistic representation of a woman. Unlike "The Dolls in a Museum in Dublin," however, the speaker does not compare the womanly artifact to a historical moment; instead, she compares the statue

to herself: “I stood there, caught by surprise … both of us women in our middle years, / but hers were fixed, set and finished in / a mutton-fat creaminess” (*New Collected Poems* 239). The statue is an artifact before the arrival of the speaker and is an artifact after the departure of the speaker. She observes the statue for what it is— a depiction of a woman— and seeks meaning from the statue, noticing herself within its features. The speaker further investigates her role as a viewer of artifacts; the speaker “could not ask her, [the statue] could not tell [the speaker] / why something had once made her weep. / Had made her cover up her mouth and eyes” (241). Though the statue is in a vulnerable position and appears woman-like, she is a mere representation of a woman— a grieving, vulnerable woman— and is not an embodied woman herself. The speaker can thus compare herself to this object without the possibility of objectifying a woman; this “woman” is already an object. Still, the speaker contemplates the position which the statue is in, the woman who the statue represents; she notes that what the woman-turned-statue “knew was gone and what [the speaker] / wanted to know she had never known: / the moment her sorrow entered marble—” (241). The woman’s knowledge and memory are gone; she is now merely an artifact for passerby to view and contemplate, as the speaker does. The speaker, in a way, uses the statue and the woman behind the statue to find meaning as she imposes the memory of her own mother crying on the crying statue. At the same time, however, she contemplates the ethics of the statue itself, “the act of definition / which had silenced her” (240). Unlike Heaney who speaks for the deceased woman in “Bog Queen,” writing a poem from her point of view and telling her history, Boland acknowledges in “The Art of Grief” that this woman cannot tell her own story, and neither can Boland. She can merely contemplate how an embodied woman can become a mere representation that makes “no sound. Not one” (240).

Boland contemplates an artifactual representation of a woman in yet another poem— the final poem of the collection *In a Time of Violence* "A Woman Painted on a Leaf." The speaker reveals that she "found [the leaf] among curios and silver, / in the pureness of wintry light" (*New Collected Poems*). The speaker knows she is gazing upon a face which is not her own, and "neither did [she] draw it" (241). As she describes the physicality of the woman painted on the leaf, she names merely "cheekbones" and "eyes," providing no value judgment about the looks of the woman represented on the leaf, nor does she sexualize or demean the woman (242). Instead, as the speaker of "The Art of Grief," she inscribes a meaning upon the artifactual woman. She labels the inscription of the woman as "not death. It is the terrible / suspension of life" (242). The speaker knows that this face, contrasting the statue in "The Art of Grief," will not live forever; it is a "dried-out face" that will soon come to an end (242). The speaker yearns for the same destiny, "a poem / she can grow old in. [She wants] a poem [she] can die in," as Boland "enunciat[es] the desire that poetry allow women to grow old and die" instead of remaining static tropes of youth (242, House 111).

Through this external representation of a woman, Boland contemplates her own physicality, her own age, her own role as a poet, her own legacy and timebound existence. In this manner, Boland once again embodies not the artifactual woman represented in the leaf but *herself*, the speaker. In an embodied state:

> The lived body is not only actively performing its body schema, but is at the same time under the influence of external norms and structures, and thus a target for power, practices of discipline, and normalization. At the same time, the body as object is not merely passively, externally constructed, but also *enables us to distance ourselves from ourselves and to critically evaluate our experiences.* (Jansen and Wehrle 39, emphasis added)

The speaker of this poem is an observer who bestows her gaze upon the face of a woman. Yet, this face is not an actual woman but a representation of one, one which the speaker sees herself

in and is thus able to contemplate herself. Unlike Heaney, whose bog poems observe artifacts which were once bodies, Boland views artifacts which are wholly that and always have been. Further, Boland, as a woman, is able to relate to the silencing, the vulnerability exposed to violence which leads to disembodiment, of these represented women. Boland, like Heaney, tries to understand these artifactual women; Boland particularly seeks not to speak for the women but to speak for herself, refusing to be silenced as the artifacts are silent. Though the artifacts might not be alive or human, Boland's speakers are able to understand something about themselves, their own physicalities, vulnerabilities, minds, histories, and bodies.

In this chapter, I have explored the ways in which the poetry of both Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland presents women as artifacts, particularly in Heaney's feminine bog bodies in *North* and in multiple poems in Boland's *In a Time of Violence*. Heaney's representations of the feminine body historicize, politicize, and sexualize women in various ways, raising questions about the male gaze and the ethics of looking. Boland's poetry similarly questions what it means to be an observer as she observes artifacts which represent women's bodies. Boland's poetry reaches towards embodiment through expressions of vulnerability, but inevitably artifacts cannot fully embodied, since they cannot be vulnerable. The female speakers of these poems, however, are vulnerable, contemplative women. Yet the implications of embodiment and disembodiment range far beyond the realm of artifacts, symbols, and speakers in poetry; a disembodied person is perceived as Other and thus marginalized. When women's vulnerability in the search for embodiment, for example, is taken advantage of, it allows vulnerability to be "associated with women's allegedly deficient bodies" and invulnerability with "men's allegedly divine faculty of reason. Given this sexist (and racist) history, one might legitimately ask whether the affirmation of vulnerability as a universal human condition will be sufficient to move us beyond the binary"

which allows Ireland to be gendered a passive feminine land, and thus all Irish women to be held to the standards of virginity and subordinance (Weiss 29). But a body, a person, a woman is not "reducible to its vulnerability, but rather constitutes a positive experience of corporeal agency in response to vulnerability" (30). Agency and vulnerability are interconnected; a person reduced to an artifact does not possess agency or vulnerability; thus, in the case of Seamus Heaney's poems "Bog Queen," "Punishment," and "Strange Fruit," the bog bodies are explored not as embodied women but as artifacts who were once women but no longer are. Though the artifacts in Boland's poems do not possess agency, she allows them— and the speaker— in some ways to be vulnerable and emotional; even still, representations of women are not women, and only the women in Boland's poems— not the artifacts— might be embodied. Through the observation of artifacts alongside the representations of both symbolic and real women, Boland works to integrate herself into the Irish national poetic tradition so that women are not merely artifacts to be observed or symbols to be written about but are contributors and writers of their own histories.

Notes

1. During Heaney's lifetime (and today), Northern Ireland was majority Protestant.
2. Nerthus is a pagan goddess associated with prosperity and fertility in Germanic regions.
3. The Other, as understood through Lacan's "The Mirror Stage," is the conception of something that is outside of and different from oneself. For postcolonial contextualization of the Other and how the Western World Others non-white, non-male peoples, see "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives" by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (*History and Theory*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1985).
4. I viewed digitized versions of the "Punishment" drafts from the Seamus Heaney Literary Papers in the archives of the National Library of Ireland. Seamus Heaney Literary Papers, MS 49, 493/34-39, National Library of Ireland.
5. See *New York Times* article November 11, 1971: https://www.nytimes.com/1971/11/11/archives/ulster-women-tar-2-girls-for-dating-british-soldiers-two-girls.html
6. A period of sectarian conflict (loyalists to Britain versus republicans, in the most simplified terms) in Northern Ireland that began in the late 1960s and ended with the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.
7. Billie Holiday's 1939 "Strange Fruit," written by Abel Meeropol and recorded with Commodore Records.
8. Reference to the Liturgy of the Eucharist in Catholic Mass during which bread and wine become the body and blood of Christ through transubstantiation.

9. From Judith Butler's *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (Verso 2004) as cited in "How Do We Respond? Embodied Vulnerability and Forms of Responsiveness" by Danielle Petherbridge (2018).
10. In Catholic tradition, limbo refers to the place where unbaptized souls who are not condemned to hell go.
11. W. B. Yeats, "Easter, 1916" published in *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921). Commemorates the Easter Rising of 1916.

Chapter 3: Writing the Body in Contemporary Irish Poetry

Old Gummy Granny in sugarloaf hat appears seated on a toadstool, the death flower of the potato blight on her breast.
James Joyce, *Ulysses*

From blood and the body's
inconsolable hunger I have been my own kaleidoscope—
five winter-bleached girls on a diving board, ready to jump.
Sinéad Morrissey, "Found Architecture," *Wake Forest* 581

Eavan Boland represents a turning point in the Irish literary canon; she was one of the first women to successfully overcome the barriers of the patriarchal tradition, and she did so through an artful combination of participating in and criticizing the tradition established by her Irish male predecessors. Boland's poetry explores what it means to be a woman in Ireland and a woman in Irish poetry, but does Boland's poetry embody the women it portrays? Writing about the body, as Lucy Collins explains, is "both 'an important way for Irish women poets to initiate new forms of self-representation' and 'a way of investigating the link between actual experience and metaphorical understanding'" (Haberstroh 296).[1] Boland herself writes about the body at various points throughout her career, but she focuses more on "metaphorical understanding" of womanhood than on the "actual experience" of living as a woman with a body. In this chapter, I argue that while it is not necessarily the job of poetry, a multi-faceted and expansive literary genre, to embody its subjects, nor is it possible to fully embody a woman in a poem because of the constraints of language, some Irish poems and poets center not the symbolic or artifactual woman but the embodied woman, the woman who has a voice, thoughts, and a physical

presence. While many of Boland's poems gesture towards embodiment through various means, even her poems which focus on the body itself become emblematic of the women they describe. Through a comparison of the poetry of Boland's generation to that of poets of a later generation such as Sinéad Morrissey and Caitríona O'Reilly, I argue that these poets come closer to embodiment by focusing less on the traditions and symbols which attempt to silence them and more on their connection to their own bodies and personal experiences of womanhood.

In her 1995 book of personal essays *Object Lessons*, Eavan Boland writes about her grandmother in a chapter entitled "Lava Cameo." She recounts how her grandmother died in the National Maternity Hospital decades before; Boland did not know her grandmother and it is important to her to tell the story as it has been passed down through family memory. Boland, in her signature style, does not content herself with the stories presented to her as they are. She extrapolates from the memory, adding her own thoughts, her own presumptions and guesses about who her grandmother was and what she might have been thinking: "she may also have noticed a trick of light peculiar to that time of year [...] she may not have come that way" (*Object Lessons* 4). In this way, Boland partially embodies her grandmother by putting herself in the grandmother's position, wondering who she was and how she might have felt, differentiating between the "fits and starts of oral recollection and memory" that exist as her grandmother's history and the past itself, which Boland can place herself into and attempt to exist within (*Object Lessons* 13-14). Aware of this distinction, Boland knows that she cannot fully embody this woman she has never met. Such moments are mere projections and estimations. Butler's theory of embodiment requires vulnerability and exposure of an individual's body, but Boland cannot assign vulnerability to her grandmother, to a memory. She only can be vulnerable in herself, in her own thoughts and emotions. Boland admits that she has "pieces" of her

grandmother, but "they are few enough" (9). Boland can only wonder, "How much did she care?", unable to answer the question herself (7). But Boland can write down her memory, can inscribe it and require that readers know her grandmother's name— "three names, in fact. Mary Ann Sheils" (9). "Lava Cameo," Boland's poem of the same name, also memorializes her grandmother: "She will die at thirty-one in a fever ward" (*New Collected Poems* 228). As Boland reflects upon an event that has already happened, she presents the historical moment in the present tense, reinventing the past within her own imagination though her grandmother's fate is set, a static moment in history. The speaker laments the fact that her grandparents "will never even be / sepia," will not be remembered; she herself must "put down / the gangplank now between the ship and the ground" to immortalize these two forgotten people (228). In this poem, as in the book chapter, Boland does not embody her grandparents; she alters and solidifies the memory of them, inserting herself into their remembrance, depositing projections and metaphors (as is arguably the nature of poetry) in the space once occupied by these two living people. Though she does not embody her grandparents in this poem, Boland's poetry itself serves as a type of "gangplank" between real women and embodiment, as Boland continues to lay the groundwork for other female poets to enter the poetic space, constructing a necessary bridge which later poets might choose to cross over.

"Lava Cameo" is a representation of a real woman, of real people who once lived and had bodies, but as it is impossible, as discussed in Chapter 2, to create a vulnerable space for artifacts, so, too, is it impossible to posit true vulnerability upon memories. In many of Boland's other poems about women, she creates other projections of women, other generalized representations of who suburban women are and what they do. In "The Women," the women of the poem, like the Achill woman, are visions, lines of poetry (*New Collected Poems* 141).

Boland describes them as "women of work, of leisure, of the night / in stove-coloured silks, in lace, in nothing, / with crewel needles, with books, with wide open legs" (141). These women have no individuality, no bodies, and no capacity for vulnerability. They have physical descriptions, and they are imagined. In an interview with *The Sunday Independent* in 1995, Boland expresses the need to portray suburban women in poetry: "When I was young, the idea that a woman in a suburban kitchen, or a woman outside in a garden with a child could be a mainstream Irish poet was a very alien idea" (*Sunday Independent*). Thus, Boland continues to search for a place for herself in her poetry, to embody herself within it. But since she does not discuss her own experience or her own body in "The Women," as she does in some of her other poems, she distances herself from her subjects in this poem, merging suburban women into a single unit instead of individualizing them. At the same time, in "The Women" Boland talks about herself, her own position as poet, and her own mind in relation to her body, when she recounts her "time of sixth sense and second sight" (*New Collected Poems* 141). Boland thus finds moments of self-embodiment and self-vulnerability in her poem which generalizes the other women it portrays. Similarly, in the poem "IX. In Exile" Boland depicts emblematic women who become a symbol for something outside of themselves. This poem, unlike "The Women," includes specific women: German girls who came to live in Boland's house when she was a child; they were "sisters from a ruined city and they spoke rapidly / in their own tongue [...] to [Boland] they were the sounds / of evening only, of the cold, of the Irish dark" (185). Though these girls actually existed, they become symbols of cultural and linguistic difference in Boland's poem. Their language and the idea of their language takes priority over their actual existence when Boland writes, "My speech will not heal. I do not want it to heal" (185). Boland does not embody the German girls but asks questions about who they are and what their

existence means for her as a poet. Thus, Boland's poem and much of her poetry in general focuses more on memory and history than on physicality, the body, and the present.

Though Boland's poetry approaches embodiment but does not necessarily embody its subjects, many contemporary women poets have continued to inch closer to the possibility of embodied women in poetry. In women's poetry since 1970, "representations of women in poetry lead to further considerations of images of the female body;" not only do contemporary Irish poets represent women in poetry but consider *how* they represent such women (Haberstroh 294). Boland establishes a precedent for Irish women to take part in poetry, and poets after her continue to find new ways of writing about and for women. Boland herself writes about the body in some of her works, and it is these poems about the body which became a "gangplank" for future writers to find a space of inspiration and embodiment.

In her early poem "Anorexic" (1980), Boland's speaker discusses the body as she experiences an eating disorder. She proclaims, "flesh is heretic. / My body is a witch. / I am burning it [...] I vomited / her hungers. / Now the bitch is burning. [...] Caged so / I will grow / angular and holy" (*New Collected Poems* 75-6). In "Eating Disorders as Disorders of Embodiment and Identity," Stanghellini et al. discuss the role of the search for embodiment in patients with eating disorders:

> Patients with EDs overvalue their body shape and weight. The concept of "lived body" may help to better understand these anomalies. [...] The lived body is the coenesthetic apprehension of one's own body, the primitive experience of oneself [...] The physical body refers to the body that can be manipulated, e.g. by surgery. The lived body turns into a physical, objective body whenever we become aware of it in a disturbing way. [...] When I become aware that I am, or better my own body is, looked at by another person, I realize that my body can be an object for that person. […] The upshot of this is a feeling of having my being outside, the feeling of being an object (Stanghellini, 2017). Thus, one's identity becomes reified by the Other's gaze and reduced to the external appearance of one's own body. (Stanghellini et al. 128-32)

Boland's speaker discusses her "physical body" and her perception of it as "heretic" and "a witch" (*New Collected Poems* 75). While the speaker is not actually "burning," her conception of self is separate from the reality of her physical body, since people with eating disorders "have difficulties in feeling their own body in the first-person perspective and to have a stable and continuous sense of themselves as embodied agents" (Stanghellini et al. 132). This perspective results in a fragmented understanding of self in which the speaker "conceives of herself not as one integral being, but differentiates between 'I' (the mind) and 'she' (the body)" (Schrage-Früh 127). Boland's speaker engages with the "starved and curveless" body of a speaker who cannot perceive herself as an "embodied agent," and while embodiment eludes subjects with eating disorders, Boland further decentralizes the embodiment of her speaker by transforming the speaker's body into an emblem of the patriarchal society which the speaker intends to escape at the end of the poem. The speaker yearns to move "past pain" so that she can "[keep] his heart / such company" and thus lives and perceives herself through the male gaze (76). Through a depiction of anorexia, Boland critiques patriarchal beauty standards; as she does so, she focuses once again on moving past the male tradition in Irish poetry, and the speaker's body becomes a symbol for this struggle.

Only three years after the publication of "Anorexic," Paul Muldoon published "Aisling," a poem about the 1981 hunger strikes in Northern Ireland which further entrenches ideas of the female body in symbolic language. Though anorexia is often a psychological disorder, particularly in the case of anorexia nervosa, Muldoon equates the voluntary republican hunger strikes "with a form of physical and psychic breakdown. 'Anorexia' is thus Cathleen Ni Houlihan in a terminal condition. […] Feminists question any exploitation of the female body for symbolic or abstract purposes," and though Boland herself arguably creates a symbol out of a

body in “Anorexia,” she does so to push back against the exploitative male perspective of the patriarchal tradition (Longley 173). Muldoon’s poem exists in conversation with Boland’s “Anorexic,” as he continues the Cathleen Ni Houlihan trope, though Boland’s poem criticizes the male gaze and its effect on female bodies. As discussed in Chapter 1, Boland reverts and refutes this patriarchal tradition, attempting to create new symbols for womanhood, and she does so again in “Anorexic.” A poem like “Anorexic” was thus subversive and essential for its contemporary moment. Still, the speaker is not embodied, not only because she remains unable to perceive her own “lived body,” but more importantly because her body becomes a metaphor for the male gaze in modern society and contemporary poetry.

While Boland’s poem “Anorexic” focuses less on the speaker’s perception of herself as a person with a body and more on refuting the male gaze through which her body is perceived by others, Caitríona O’Reilly’s poem of a similar theme “Thin” centers the speaker’s physicality and personal experience. Born in 1973, Caitríona O’Reilly is part of a newer generation of Irish female poets; the clear variations between “Thin” and “Anorexic” are illustrative of the shift in generation. In “Thin” the speaker’s skin “goose-pimples in front of the cloudy glass though there was scalding tea for dinner / with an apple. [She is] cold to the bone” (*Wake Forest* 595). The poem portrays the negative impact of not eating on the speaker: “I don’t sleep well either. My hip-bones / stick in the foam mattress, and the room’s / so empty” (595). O’Reilly’s speaker reflects upon her body’s deterioration as she “watch[es] the stars bloom heavily through glass / and think[s], *how shatterproof is my skin?*” (595). Like Boland’s speaker, this speaker, too, considers others’ perception (or lack of perception) of her body: “My sister seems not to notice the skin around / my mouth or my ankle-bones” (595). The speaker does not lament the fact that her “ribs rise like the roof / of a house that’s fashioned from glass” because “no dinner / for six

weeks has made this skin / more habitable, more like a room—" (595). O'Reilly's speaker also struggles to discern between her lived body and her physical body and serves as a singular case of what the experience of an eating disorder can be. But it is merely that— one speaker's experience, focused on her own physicality, her own thoughts, an individual. She does not explicitly question patriarchal standards but portrays one woman struggling with an eating disorder.

With "Anorexic," as in many of Boland's poems, the speaker is an individual, but the metaphors and symbols of patriarchal oppression throughout the poem turn the speaker into a representation of the experience of all women, and a woman who is a symbol for something outside of herself cannot be an embodied woman, contrasting O'Reilly singular speaker with an individualized experience. Analyzed in this way, a differentiation between Boland's generation of women poets, who began writing in the sixties and seventies, and the next generation, who launched their careers in the nineties, becomes apparent, even as the two generations write and publish simultaneously. Boland and her contemporaries, most notably Seamus Heaney, "[entwine] autobiography and history" in many of their poems so that their speakers, their lyric-I, "[refashion] the particulars of their own lives so that the resulting amalgam appears (whether intentionally or not) to be exemplary or representative" (Falci 27). For example, in "The Scar," a poem from Boland's 1998 collection *The Lost Land* and published only three years prior to O'Reilly's "Thin" but eighteen years after "Anorexic," Boland begins with a portrayal of her own individual body, but by the end of the poem, her body becomes a universal symbol. In the poem, the speaker relates the story of how she received a scar on her body: "I was five / when a piece of glass / cut my head and left a scar. / Afterwards my skin felt different" (*New Collected Poems* 249). Yet, the speaker goes beyond this singular painful experience, making the scar

emblematic of her relationship to Ireland by relating it to something else completely: “And [her skin] still does [feel different] on these autumn days when / the mist hides the city / from the Liffey. // The Liffey hides / the long ships, the muskets and the burning domes” (250). Even when Boland writes about her own daughter, her daughter is less of an embodied figure and more a symbol for change and growth, as she writes in “The Blossom,” “How much longer / will I see girlhood in my daughter?” (*New Collected Poems* 262). She describes the daughter’s physical self as the daughter “turns to [the speaker] / with blonde hair and [the speaker’s] eyebrows [...] then holds out a dawn-soaked hand to [the speaker], / whose fingers [she] counted at birth / years ago” (263). This poem is about motherhood and about a small moment between mother and daughter, two people who exist and breathe, but as the speaker considers that her daughter is touching her hand “for the last time. // And falls to the earth,” the daughter becomes a symbol from the inevitability of the passage of time. In one of the final drafts of “The Blossom,” which I discovered in the Joan McBreen Papers in Emory University’s Rose Library, the poem ends with the words “for the last time” (Drafts of “The Blossom”). The words “and falls to the earth” were an addition in one of the final drafts which appears in the published version of the poem; this added line greatly alters the relationship between the speaker and the daughter in only a few words. With this line, the poem is no longer purely about the daughter and washing dishes with her but is about a type of intangible shift from girlhood to womanhood (263).

Boland’s poem “The Scar” discusses the speaker’s body but turns her wound into an “emblem of this old, / torn and traded city,” and “The Blossom” portrays the body of Boland’s daughter which then becomes a symbol for adolescence and growth. But, as Eric Falci argues, the later generation— particularly through Caitríona O’Reilly, as displayed in “Thin,” and Sinéad Morrissey— do not create emblematic figures. Instead, they center on individuals as they

"undertake substantive and complex investigations into the delineation of subjectivity within poetic texts [...] Their work allows us to articulate a much more capacious notion of what lyric subjectivity might involve" (Falci 28). The work of this later generation engages in conversation about what it means to be an "I" and to have a body. Sinéad Morrissey particularly centers the individualized subject throughout her career, with the speakers of her poems being unique and flawed individuals. One such poem with a subjective and complicated lyric speaker is Morrissey's "Sea Stones," which explores the experience of physical pain being inflicted on the speaker's body and provides space for vulnerability and embodiment (*New Collected Poems* 250). The poem begins, "It is exactly a year today since you slapped me in public. / I took it standing up" (*Wake Forest* 566). The speaker "rolled with a migraine" for "all the next day," moving beyond the initial experience of pain into the lasting effects: "I couldn't stop the cup of my hurt / flowing over and over until I saw there was no end of it / and only an end to me" (566). She proclaims, "How promiscuous pain can be" as she realizes that she "suddenly want[ed] to be struck again, to keep the fire of anger lit" (567). The speaker, in an abusive relationship, reflects upon the singular experience of undergoing pain and how she continues to cherish her lover despite the pain he inflicts; she desires his attention, desires to feel anything he will give her, even if he will only give her pain. Yet, Morrissey does not, in this poem, create a speaker who represents all women in abusive relationships, all women who experience pain. The speaker is an individual woman with emotions and feelings that may or may not reflect those of other women. She is not an emblem for the lives of women, she is not an artifact to be observed, and she is not a symbol for all of Ireland.

Similarly, in the poem "Juist" Morrissey provides another instance of a speaker describing her own body, her own situation, without need for creating an emblematic experience.

The speaker understands how others perceive her, similarly to the speaker of Boland's "Anorexic": "they thought me too thin. I'd vomited all morning on the ship from Norddeich / and felt more fragile than I looked" (*Wake Forest* 571). The speaker of this poem is yet another lyric "I" as Morrissey constructs the poem from first person point of view, and the experiences of "Juist" are Morrissey's own. In an interview with *Carcanet*, Morrissey describes the situation:

> In 1991, during the summer of the Gorbachev coup. I was nineteen. In order to improve my German, which I was studying at university, I had taken a job as a waitress on a German-speaking island in the North Sea, and was having a gruelling time with the fourteen-hour working day, the customers, the language, the money, the menu and the boss, and missing my boyfriend. ("Found Architecture: Sinéad Morrissey)

Thus, when Morrissey writes, "My face, rigid in panic as though the wind had changed, followed my body, / dislodged and desolate, for a week. To some I was merely bait," she is writing about herself. "Juist" is a poem in Morrissey's third poetry collection *The State of the Prisons*, in which Morrissey constructs poems about prisoners in different time periods and different locations throughout the world, but this poem she writes from personal experience (*Wake Forest* 571). The speaker has a body which others mistreat: "A customer photographed me (*du als Kellnerin*) and I pinned the image / above my bed as a witness to the unthinkable;" the nineteen-year-old speaker grows "raw and tremulous and impressionable / in the space between changing shape," and Morrissey exposes her own past self to vulnerability as she presents her body, through language, to the eyes of her readers (571-73). As Morrissey relates her experiences and the threats they impose on her body, she recalls the moments in which others took advantage of her vulnerability. She knows that "the body implies mortality, vulnerability, agency: the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of other but also to touch, to violence," and she chooses to put them in writing anyway (*Undoing Gender* 21). Morrissey's relationship with vulnerability and her own body allows her poetry to approach the parameters of embodiment.

In “Juist” Morrissey creates a poem with a first-person speaker, a version of herself and her young adult body; in her poems about her own pregnancy, too, Morrissey nears the realm of embodiment. While Eavan Boland often explores motherhood in her poetry, such as her poem “Night Feed,” in which the speaker holds her baby daughter as she “suckle[s]” a bottle, she most often writes about pregnancy itself in metaphorical and mythical terms: “the only legend I have ever loved is / the story of a daughter lost in hell;” “I have two daughters. / They are all I ever wanted from the earth;” and “my first child / was conceived in this season” (*New Collected Poems* 92, 215, 260, 263). Morrissey similarly discusses motherhood in her poetry, but her poems specifically about pregnancy, focusing less on metaphor and more on descriptions of her own physical state, reveal its difficulties and effects on her body. In “Found Architecture,” from her collection *Through the Square Window*, Morrissey writes, “These days are all about waiting,” waiting to give birth to her child (*Through the Square Window* 19). The speaker attempts to describe the feeling of the end of her pregnancy— “What would you say / if I tried to explain how my single true activity / this wet and shivery May is ‘found architecture’?” (19). She provides a metaphor for current state of waiting, a “found architecture,” in place of a full description of her body itself. Still, the phrase serves as a metaphor for her *own* body, her own experience of pregnancy, that does not attempt to encapsulate the realm of *all* pregnancy. At the end the poem, the speaker describes how she has “been [her] own kaleidoscope,” her own escape “from blood and the body’s / inconsolable hunger” (19). As the pregnancy carries on, Morrissey is “acutely conscious of human beings’ inability to rid ourselves of the bodies which frame our subjective views” but still describes the speaker as “five winter-bleached girls on a diving board, ready to jump—” (Toraiwa 63, *Through the Square Window* 19). The speaker questions her body’s role in her own existence and the shaping of her identity; as she searches for a

comfortable embodiment— or, at least, a body which in which she feels comfortable— she allows for a vulnerability which expresses the body's needs. In this need for escape, the speaker does not dismiss her body but experiences it in a period of limbo. As Julia Kristeva describes it, "Pregnancy is a dramatic ordeal: a splitting of the body, the division of coexistence of self and other, of nature and awareness, of physiology and speech;" pregnancy is, in many ways, a difficulty, which Morrissey, in vulnerable poetic form, depicts in "Found Architecture" (*New Maladies of the Soul* 219).

Kristeva, alongside her description of pregnancy, describes "the arrival of the child" as an experience which "guides the mother through a labyrinth of a rare experience: the love for another person, as opposed to love for herself, for a mirror image, or especially for another person with which the 'I' becomes merged. It is rather a slow, difficult, and delightful process of becoming tender and self-effacing" (*New Maladies of the Soul* 219-20). Such growth of maternal instinct is present in Morrissey's poetry, specifically in "'Love, the nightwatch…'" in which the speaker gives birth. She depicts the speaker's body as a "haystack the children / climbed and ruined [...] in a flood-plain of infinite stains" in this moment of ultimate vulnerability (*Through the Square Window* 28). She describes the "rare experience" of giving birth, the moment she "cav[ed] in spectacularly as [her child] stuttered and came" into the world; she experiences the state of being exposed not only physically, her blood-stained body open for doctors and her husband to see, but also emotionally, as she immediately expresses "love for another person" which is completely separate from the love of herself (*Through the Square Window* 28, *New Maladies of the Soul* 219). In this poem, this moment of vulnerability, Morrissey both speaks to and against the previous generation of Irish woman poets. On the one hand, poems from the previous generation have similar themes of motherhood and womanhood; on the other, they tend

to be representative or emblematic in their descriptions. Paula Meehan's 1991 poem "Child Burial" expresses a similar vulnerability to "'Love, the nightwatch…'", and arguably a deeper one, as it describes the loss of a young child. She describes her body's connection to the child—"my womb, your amniotic lair"— but then turns to biblical language in her moment of grief, as she desires to "further spin [her child] back // through nine waxing months / to the split seeding moment / [the child] chose to be made flesh, / word within [the speaker]" (*Wake Forest* 441-42). In this moment, Meehan becomes the Virgin Mary and her child, the word made flesh, is Jesus Christ. Further, Meehan "exploits […] the traditional convention [...] of nature imagery to carry emotion" in "Child Burial;" she "addresses the dead child, poignantly giving him warm, tiny life again, as 'my lamb, my calf, my eaglet, / my cub, my kid, my nestling'" (*Wake Forest* xliv). Even as Meehan describes her grief, pregnancy, and short-lived motherhood, thus expressing her deepest vulnerability, she continues to lean on traditional religious and animal imagery, separating herself and her child from embodiment as she creates an emblematic poem.

"Child Burial" is not Meehan's only poem about pregnancy, death, and a relationship to the Virgin Mary; her 1991 poem "The Statue of the Virgin at Granard Speaks" recounts the story of Ann Lovett, a pregnant teenage girl who dies after giving birth alone in a grotto dedicated to the Virgin Mary in 1984, from the perspective not of the pregnant girl but of the statue in the grotto. Julia Kristeva describes the significant role the Virgin Mary plays in the Church as a "humanization of Christianity through the cult of the mother," a human mother with a body; yet "the humanity of the Virgin mother is not always obvious" because "in her being cleared of sin, for instance, Mary distinguishes herself from mankind" (*The Kristeva Reader* 172). In Meehan's poem, the Virgin Mary is not the perfect heavenly figure the Catholic Church purports her to be; she complains of being "stuck up here in this grotto, without as much as / star or planet to ease

my vigil" ("The Statue of the Virgin"). Going a step further than Boland's poem "The Art of Grief," in which Boland imagines who the woman which the statue represents once was, in "The Statue of the Virgin at Granard Speaks," "the silent icon of the Catholic Church" the Virgin Mary "is now to be given a voice" (Schrage-Früh 132). In this way, Meehan again pushes back, like Boland, against the tradition of the passive, silent woman in male-dominated Irish poetry:

> In the course of the Statue's melancholy soliloquy, traditional expectations and representations surrounding the image of the Virgin Mary are subverted. Throughout the poem, the statue is endowed with profoundly human feelings. [...] corporeality and voice are intimately connected; the Virgin '*cries out* to be *incarnate*, incarnate, / maculate' [Schrage-Früh's emphasis] and thus effectively contradicts her traditional representation as perfectly spiritual (Schrage-Früh 132).

Meehan re-writes the tradition from the woman's perspective, but as she does so, completely leaves Ann Lovett out of the story. The Virgin Mary, a mere representation of a woman who lived two thousand years ago, speaks, but she is a statue; Ann Lovett, a real girl who dies in 1984, has no voice at all. Instead, the Virgin disregards her, "the child / who came with fifteen summers to her name, / and she lay down alone at my feet / without midwife or doctor or friend to hold her hand;" like the speaker of "Punishment" who questions his own complicity in the tarring and feathering of women in Northern Ireland, the statue of the Virgin, "though [Ann Lovett] cried out to [her] in extremis / [did] not move, / [didn't] lift a finger to help her, / [didn't] intercede with heaven, / nor whisper the charmed word in God's ear" ("The Statue of the Virgin"). Meehan's speaker has the power to do something, to take action, but she chooses not to; in this way, the Virgin does express some agency, but she is not an embodied figure, and neither is the young Ann Lovett. In a moment of vulnerability, a fatal experience of shame and derision, Lovett, as in the true story of the Irish girl, is cast to the side and left to die.

"Ninety Eighty-Four," a 2001 poem by Caitríona O'Reilly, retells the story of Ann Lovett from a different perspective— that of a young girl living in contemporary Ireland who knows

about Lovett's death. In a society "'which supposedly venerates motherhood within marriage, yet denigrates it outside marriage,'" Ann Lovett, "led by shame and fear to conceal her pregnancy from her social and familial surroundings" gives birth in front of a statue of Mary, hoping "for protection and aid from the Virgin Mary, who represents maternal love and who functions as 'intercessor on behalf of sinful humanity'" (Schrage-Früh 131-32). But the speaker of the "Ninety Eighty-Four," calling back to the refusal of Mary to intercede on behalf of Lovett in "The Statue of the Virgin at Granard Speaks," does not present such an optimistic vision of Mary as intercessor for sinners. Instead, she "[knows] or guessed why — / the worst thing a schoolgirl could do / was to give birth alone and die // under Mary's hapless supervision. / No apparitions in grottoes / or wingéd babies with cradle-cap / for the likes of those" (*Field Day Vol. V* 1385). The speaker of this poem, a girl who considers the societal pressures during her childhood to imitate the Virgin Mary, criticizes the society which leads to the death of Ann Lovett. But "Ninety Eighty-Four" is less about embodying its speaker or the pregnant Lovett about whom it speaks; instead, the poem mimics the representative nature of Boland and Meehan's generation, and its speaker becomes an emblem for such a critique, with the unnamed Ann Lovett serving as yet another recognizable symbol of patriarchal oppression.

Can a woman who is a representation of a critique be herself an embodied woman? While I argue that the answer is more complex than a simple yes or no, Boland's generation of Irish women poets made clear efforts in this direction. Yet, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill in her 1992 poem "Cathleen," translated from the original Irish by Paul Muldoon, hints that it might be time to move past the poetic fixation on the tradition. The poem, an obvious refutation of the Mother Ireland tradition which was made popular by male poetic predecessors, castigates the fact that Cathleen never stops talking about herself and the "good old days of yore" "just because she was

a lily grave / in nineteen sixteen"[2] (*Wake Forest*). Cathleen constantly reflects on her youth; "she who is now a widowed old woman" was once "a modest maiden, meek and mild, but with enough gumption / at least to keep her own / side of the ghostly demarcation, the eternal buffer zone" (315). Now the speaker of the poem simply wishes "Old Gummy Granny"[3] would learn the graces of "discretion" so she no longer has to hear about her, once and for all (315-16). Cathleen ni Houlihan is outdated and overdone. Ní Dhomhnaill, in her work, notes that "[Irish] ancestors were severely cut off from […] the 'language of the body,'" and like many of her contemporaries, her "entire oeuvre, with its celebrations of nature and focus on the body, can be seen as one artist's struggle to counterbalance such limiting binary oppositions and damaging exclusivity" that exist in the Mother Ireland tradition (Sewell 398). Figures such as Ní Dhomhnaill, Meehan, and Boland were integral in criticizing the passivity of the Irish woman in poetry and work to move past and rework this tradition; yet, as they did so, in many instances they replace Cathleen with different symbols or emblematic women. Though embodiment is not the goal of all poetry, and all attempts to create a space for women in poetry are necessary and valid, with authors such as O'Reilly and, even more so, Morrissey, Cathleen ni Houlihan finally shuts up, and real woman have the space to speak, to have bodies.

As Irish woman poets write about more embodied subjects, it is worth questioning whether anyone can truly find embodiment in a poem. Regarding the possibility of linguistic embodiment, Judith Butler writes in her 2001 essay "How Can I Deny That These Hands and This Body Are Mine?":

> I think it must be possible to claim that the body is not known or identifiable apart from the linguistic coordinates that establish the boundaries of the body— without thereby claiming that the body is nothing other than the language by which it is known. [...] Although the body depends on language to be known, the body also exceeds every possible linguistic effort of capture. It would be tempting to conclude that this means that the body exists outside of language, that it has an ontology separable from any linguistic

> one, and that we might be able to describe this separable ontology. But this is where I would hesitate, perhaps permanently, for as we begin that description of what is outside of language, the chiasm reappears: we have already contaminated, though not contained, the very body we seek to establish in its ontological purity. The body escapes its linguistic grasp, but so, too, does it escape the subsequent effort to determine ontologically that very escape. ("How Can I Deny" 20-21)

While embodiment is not possible through pure linguistic means, language is an essential aspect in the human understanding and articulation of the body. Because all poems about bodies are intrinsically representations of bodies through words on a page, embodiment cannot be fully achieved in poetry. And because embodiment cannot be fully achieved in poetry, this chapter has sought to find which moments in contemporary Irish women's poetry resemble embodiment. When Morrissey and O'Reilly move past the emblematic and representational to the personal, lived experience of self-reflection and vulnerability, they prioritize embodying women in their poetry in ways that the previous generation of poets did not. When women write about their own experiences and their own bodies, they are able to achieve the utmost linguistic vulnerability and explore the knowability of the body through their poetic language.

Notes

1. From Lucy Collins's *Contemporary Irish Women Poets: Memory and Estrangement* (Liverpool University Press, 2015) as cited in Patricia Boyle Haberstroh "Poetry, 1970—Present," *A History of Modern Irish Women's Literature*, edited by Heather Ingman and Clíona Ó Gallchoir, Cambridge University Press, 2018.
2. Reference to the Easter Rising of 1916 in Dublin.
3. Term used to personify Ireland in James Joyce's *Ulysses* (Shakespeare and Company, 1922).

Conclusion

In the first chapter of this thesis, I argued that Boland's critique of the passive woman in poetry was a necessary and powerful mode of entering the tradition. Yet, the poems discussed in Chapter 1, such as "The Achill Woman" and "Mother Ireland," do not allow for the vulnerability and individuality of their subjects in a manner which embodies the women about which they were written. Instead, these women serve as new symbols for who women are and what their role in Irish literature is. The poems portray women, but the women are not *real*; they are merely representations of the shift in the Mother Ireland tradition, shifts toward women who are more realistic but are nonetheless symbols for Ireland and generalizations of Irish women. In the second chapter, I argued that some of Boland's poems do not engage with this particular portrayal of womanhood; in fact, Boland critiques certain aspects of her own earlier work, noting that at near the beginning of her career, "Poetry was still an ideal to [her]: a hoped-for symbiosis of old worlds and new possibilities" (*A Journey With Two Maps* 58). As Boland's poetry evolved and changed past her original idealism, which culminated in the search for a new national symbol, her work began looking towards a closer representation of embodied women through the depictions of artifactual women; even so, artifacts remain representations of women, not renditions of women themselves with physical bodies and active participation in their representations. I argued in Chapter 2 that Seamus Heaney also establishes an artifactual positioning of the women in his bog body poems, noting the fact that the bog bodies, by virtue of their preservation, are already artifacts and thus not capable of being embodied. In Chapter 3, the final chapter of this thesis, I explored various Boland poems that depicted real women and real bodies but did not find any examples of a more holistic and truer embodiment in her poetry. For more embodied subjects, I turned to the poetry of Sinéad Morrissey and Caitríona O'Reilly, two

contemporary Irish female writers who come close to the realm of embodiment by describing and understanding their own experiences and their own bodies in their poems. I traced the spectrum of ways in which contemporary Irish writers portray women, from Boland's new Irish symbol to the artifactual poems which permeate her work as well as that of Heaney to the nearly embodied women that Morrissey and O'Reilly write. However, through an analysis of Judith Butler's "'How Can I Deny That These Hands and This Body Are Mine?'" I concluded that full embodiment is not possible through language, but language is one means through which subjects might approach and understand their own bodies.

I discussed throughout this thesis that Irish women's literature has made great strides since and through the work of Eavan Boland, who worked as a major advocate for Irish women writers until her recent death in 2020. As Boland's poetry and essays portray, women were and continue to be excluded from the Irish literary canon, indicating that pushback is and continues to be necessary. In her 1994 poem "What Language Did," Boland explores the harm which the male patriarchal tradition has done to and against Irish women, depicting a "shepherdess, her smile cracked, / her arm injured from the mantelpieces / and pastorals where she posed with her crook" (*In a Time of Violence* 63). Women, weighed down by repeated and repressive tropes, cannot survive in this manner. They cannot even "sweat here. Our skin is icy. / We cannot breed here. Our wombs are empty. / Help us to escape youth and beauty," the cycle in which Cathleen ni Houlihan traps all her daughters (63). Boland's career establishes a refusal to live within this medium. Her speaker declares: "Write us out of the poem. Make us human / in cadences of change and mortal pain / and words we can grow old and die in" (63). As Boland writes Cathleen out of the poem, she simultaneously transforms her and adores her, creating poetry which is unfalteringly Irish and unfailingly female.

Boland's love for the tradition even as she pushes back against it remains vital to her work (and is arguably the reason why she never completely approaches embodiment in her poetry; her motive was to remain in the tradition while inverting it, not to rid of it completely). Boland works in response to her male predecessors, such as W. B. Yeats, who she saw as "mapping [...] the relation between a durable lyric form and a vulnerable human experience" which "remains one of the great formal achievements of poetry. And it still seems to [her] one of the most moving parts of Yeats's legacy that this poet, who had such a complex and troubled relation to democracy, in the end left his great invention there open and available, for anyone to find" ("Saving Grace"). Boland found a place for female intervention through Yeats's poetry, a gap which she was prepared to fill. She was, at heart, a commemorator, a champion of history and tradition. In 2018 at the centenary celebration of Irish women's suffrage, Boland read a new poem which refuses to forget both the hurts and the triumphs of the past. The speaker of the poem, titled "Our Future Will Become the Past of Other Women," instructs the women of the past, "Show me your hand. I see our past, / Your palm roughened by heat, by frost" (Shashkevich). Boland continues to write within a time which has already gone, within a memory which she does not have, but she does so to commemorate the female suffragists, to let the women of the present know not to forget these historical women so that they, too, will not be forgotten. As is the legacy of Boland and her contemporaries, she establishes the notion that one voice and one movement can change a history: "Remind us now again that history / Changes in one moment with one mind" (Shashkevich). Just as Boland does not forget the Achill woman, her grandmother, or the children of the Easter Rising, so, too, does she not forget the suffragists. And we, as her readers, her listeners, cannot forget the strides that Boland and her generation have made for Irish and women writers. "As we mark these hundred years," Boland "will not

leave [the suffragists] behind," and we, readers of Irish literature and the ever-expanding and evolving literary canon, will not leave Boland or her legacy behind (Shashkevich).

Eavan Boland inevitably became the thread which I strung through this entire thesis. Through an analysis of her poetry, it became clear what hardships and challenges Irish women writers face, what work there still was and is to be done. As I considered what it means to be an embodied woman in poetry, I turned to Boland as a starting point. She laid the groundwork for future generations of Irish women, and, through her poetry, a new tradition forms and the barriers of patriarchal oppression begin to come down. Boland's poetry requires her readers to take this continued struggle into their hands. Just as Boland speaks to the suffragists in 2018, the feminists who have come before her, so, too, does she speak to the women who will succeed her:

> I wish I knew you. I wish I could stand for a moment in that corridor of craft and doubt where you will spend so much of your time. But I don't and I can't. And given the fact, in poetic terms, that you are the future and I am the past, I never will. [...] My first habitat as a poet is part of your history as a poet. [...] My present is your past, [...] my past is already fixed as part of your tradition. (*A Journey with Two Maps* 249-250)

Boland writes this "Letter to a Young Woman Poet" when she is past middle age, when her experiences and knowledge can be passed on so that her successors are already one step ahead of where she began. Throughout this thesis, I displayed the spectrum of ways in which women portray themselves in poetry; Boland, in many ways, serves as the foundation for that spectrum and allows for the possibility of various and diverse depictions of women to exist. When Boland did the work of writing herself into the tradition early on in her career, leaning on the work of Yeats and Heaney, she opened the space for other women, such as Morrissey and O'Reilly, to portray women and their experiences of womanhood in the ways that they found most comfortable and most true.

The goal from the outset of this thesis, "From Anna Liffey to Ann Lovett: The Search for Embodiment in Contemporary Irish Poetry," was to find the places where women are depicted most accurately and vividly in poetry. But the research that this project has required opened up new ideas about what it means to be a woman, to have a body, and to struggle for equality. With Boland's death occurring right as I began considering the topic for this thesis, the work that needed to be done to understand her legacy and her impact on Irish women's poetry became more urgent. And while I try not to think too superstitiously or interpret meaning from coincidences, when my copy of *Object Lessons* arrived in the mail on the day Eavan Boland passed away, I immediately knew that my analysis of Boland's work would impact my research in momentous ways. And, in the same way that her work has impacted Irish literature for generations of women to come, it has.

Works Cited

Alexander, Stephanie. “Femme Fatale: The Violent Feminine Pastoral of Seamus Heaney’s North.” *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, vol. 39, no. 2, Jan. 2016, pp. 218–235. *EBSCOhost*.

Battersby, Eileen. “An Irishwoman’s Diary” July 15, 1992. Box 21, Folder 8, Joan McBreen Papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Battersby, Eileen. “Stalked by an Agenda.” *The Irish Times*, The Irish Times, 5 Oct. 2002, www.irishtimes.com/news/stalked-by-an-agenda-1.1097780.

Boland, Eavan. *A Journey with Two Maps: Becoming a Woman Poet*. W.W. Norton & Co., 2011.

Boland, Eavan. *A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition*. Attic Press, 1989.

Boland, Eavan. Drafts of “The Blossom.” Box 14, Folder 5, Joan McBreen Papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Boland, Eavan. “Eavan Boland Talks about ‘Anna Liffey’.” *SoundCloud*, 2014, soundcloud.com/illuminations-gallery/eavan-boland-talks-about-anna-liffey.

Boland, Eavan. *In a Time of Violence*. 1st ed., Norton, 1994.

Boland, Eavan. *New Collected Poems*. Carcanet, 2005.

Boland, Eavan. *Object Lessons: the Life of the Woman and the Poet in Our Time*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1996.

Boland, Eavan. “Saving Grace: How WB Yeats Helped Eavan Boland to Become a Poet.” *The Irish Times*, The Irish Times, 10 June 2015, www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/saving-grace-how-wb-yeats-helped-eavan-boland-to-become-a-poet-1.2241523.

Bourke, Angela, editor. *Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. V, Cork University Press in Association with Field Day Publications, 2002.

Brearton, Fran. "Heaney and the Feminine." *The Cambridge Companion to Seamus Heaney*, edited by Bernard O'Donoghue, *Cambridge University Press*, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 73–91. Cambridge Companions to Literature.

Butler, Judith. "From 'Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions' from *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*." *Feminist Theory: a Reader*, by Wendy K. Kolmar and Frances Bartkowski, McGraw-Hill, 2013, pp. 496–504.

Butler, Judith. "'How Can I Deny That These Hands and This Body Are Mine?'." *Senses of the Subject*, Fordham University Press, 2015, pp. 17-35. JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org.proxy.library.emory.edu/stable/j.ctt130h9pt.5.

Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2004. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=183001.

Campbell, Siobhan, and Nessa O'Mahoney. "Introduction." *Eavan Boland: Inside History*, edited by Siobhan Campbell and Nessa O'Mahony, Arlen House, 2017, pp. 15–22.

Cixous, Hélène. "Sorties," *The Newly Born Woman*, by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément, translated by Betsy Wing, *Theory and History of Literature*, Vol. 24, 1986.

Cixous, Hélène. "The Laugh of the Medusa," translated by Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Signs*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1976, pp. 875–893. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3173239.

Clutterbuck, Catriona. "'Mise Eire', Eavan Boland." *Irish University Review*, vol. 39, no. 2, 2009, pp. 289–300. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20720408. Accessed 18 Dec. 2020.

Conboy, Katie. “Revisionist Cartography: The Politics of Place in Boland and Heaney.” *Border Crossings: Irish Women Writers and National Identities*, by Kathryn Kirkpatrick, Univ. of Alabama Press, 2000, pp. 190–203.

Coughlan, Patricia. “'Bog Queens': The Representation of Women in the Poetry of John Montague and Seamus Heaney.” *Theorizing Ireland*, edited by Claire Connolly, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp. 41–60.

Crilly, Anne, director. *Mother Ireland. Aired on Channel Four 1991. YouTube*, Derry Film and Video Workshop for BBC Channel Four, 1991, youtu.be/3glM5PYoB7s.

Crilly, Anne. “Banning History.” *History Workshop Journal*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1991, pp. 163-165, doi:10.1093/hwj/31.1.163.

Cullingford, Elizabeth Butler. “Thinking of Her as Ireland.” *Gender and History in Yeats's Love Poetry*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, pp. 55–72.

Dawe, Gerald. “Introduction.” *The Cambridge Companion to Irish Poets*, edited by Gerald Dawe, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 1–7.

Deevy, Patricia. *Sunday Independent* September 19, 1995 interview with Boland. Box 21, Folder 8, Joan McBreen Papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Dinsman, Melissa. “‘A River is not a Woman’: Re-visioning *Finnegans Wake* in Eavan Boland’s ‘Anna Liffey.’” *Contemporary Women's Writing*, vol. 7, no. 2, July 2013, pp. 172–189, https://doi-org.proxy.library.emory.edu/10.1093/cww/vps002.

Everett, Rosie and Benjamin Gearey. “Heaney’s Hauntings: Archaeology, Poetry and the ‘Gendered Bog’.” *Journal of Wetland Archaeology*, vol. 19, no. 1-2, 2019, pp. 9-20, doi:10.1080/14732971.2020.1823148.

Falci, Eric. “Contemporary Irish Poetry and the Problem of the Subject.” *Post-Ireland? Essays on Contemporary Irish Poetry*, edited by Jefferson Holdridge and Brian Ó Conchubhair Wake Forest University Press, 2017. *EBSCOhost*.

Foley, Andrew. “‘Befitting Emblems of Adversity’: The Bog Poems of Seamus Heaney.” *English Studies in Africa*, vol. 41, no. 1, 1998, pp. 61. *ProQuest*, https://login.proxy.library.emory.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.proxy.library.emory.edu/scholarly-journals/befitting-emblems-adversity-bog-poems-seamus/docview/89067135/se-2?accountid=10747.

Frazier, Adrian. “Canon Fodder: Anthologies of Contemporary Irish Poetry,” *Colby Quarterly*: Vol. 28 : Iss. 4 , Article 3, 1992.

Gregson, Ian. “Sons of Mother Ireland: Seamus Heaney and Paul Muldoon.” *The Male Image: Representations of Masculinity in Postwar Poetry*, Macmillan Press, 1999, pp. 120–139.

Haberstroh, Patricia Boyle. “Poetry, 1970—Present.” *A History of Modern Irish Women's Literature*, edited by Heather Ingman and Clíona Ó Gallchoir, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 294–311.

Heaney, Seamus. “Belfast.” *Preoccupations: Selected Prose 1968-1978*, Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1996, pp. 28–37.

Heaney, Seamus. “Mother Ireland.” *The Listener*, 7 Dec. 1972, pp. 790–790.

Heaney, Seamus. “Punishment” Drafts. Seamus Heaney Literary Papers, MS 49, 493/34-39, National Library of Ireland.

Heaney, Seamus. *Selected Poems: 1965-1975*. Faber and Faber, 1988.

Higgins, Roisin. “Review Essay: ‘A Drift of Chosen Females?’: *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, Vols. 4 and 5.” *Irish University Review*, vol. 33, no. 2, 2003, pp. 400–406. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25504938.

House, Veronica. “‘Words We Can Grow Old and Die in’: Earth Mother and Ageing Mother in Eavan Boland’s Poetry.” *The Body and Desire in Contemporary Irish Poetry*, edited by Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Irish Academic Press, 2006, pp. 103–122.

Innes, C. L. *Woman and Nation in Irish Literature and Society, 1880-1935*. The University of Georgia Press, 1994.

Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One*, translated by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke, Cornell University Press, 1985, pp. 23–33.

Jansen, Julia and Maren Wehrle. “The Normal Body: Female Bodies in Changing Contexts of Normalization and Optimization.” *New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment*, by Luna Dolezal and Clara Fischer, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2018, pp. 37–55.

Kristeva, Julia. “‘Approaching Abjection,’ from Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection.” *Classic Readings on Monster Theory : Demonstrare, Volume One*, edited by Asa Simon Mittman, and Marcus Hensel, Arc Humanities Press, 2018. *ProQuest Ebook Central*.

Kristeva, Julia. *New Maladies of the Soul*. Translated by Ross Guberman, Columbia University Press, 1995.

Kristeva, Julia. *The Kristeva Reader.* New York : Columbia University Press, 1987. Toril Moi.

Longley, Edna. “From Cathleen to Anorexia: The Breakdown of Irelands.” *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland*, Bloodaxe Books, 1994, pp. 173–195.

Mahon, Derek. “Young Eavan and Early Boland.” *Irish University Review*, vol. 23, no. 1, 1993, pp. 23–28. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25484529.

McConnell, Gail. “Heaney and the Photograph: ‘Strange Fruit’ in Manuscript and Published Form.” *Irish University Review*, vol. 47, 2017, pp. 432-449, doi:10.3366/iur.2017.0302.

Meehan, Paula. “The Statue of the Virgin at Granard Speaks.” *RTÉ – Poem for Ireland*, apoemforireland.rte.ie/shortlist/the-statue-of-the-virgin-at-granard/.

Miquel-Baldellou, Marta. “Women in the twilight and identity in the making: the concept of transition in Eavan Boland’s poetry.” *Estudios Irlandeses - Journal of Irish Studies*, no. 2, 2007. *Gale Literature Resource Center*.

Morrison, Toni. “Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature.” *Michigan Quarterly Review*, Michigan Publishing, 1988.

Morrissey, Sinéad. “Found Architecture: Sinéad Morrissey.” *The Carcanet Blog*, Carcanet Press, 15 Apr. 2020, carcanetblog.blogspot.com/2020/04/found-architecture-sinead-morrissey.html.

Morrissey, Sinéad. *Through the Square Window*. Carcanet, 2009.

Murray, Chris. “Fired! Irish Women Poets and the Canon: Preamble To The Pledge.” *Poethead*, 16 Dec. 2017, poethead.wordpress.com/2017/12/16/fired-irish-women-poets-and-the-canon-preamble-to-the-pledge/.

Nordin, Irene Gilsenan. “Re-Mapping the Landscape: The Body as Agent of Political, Social and Spiritual Empowerment in Contemporary Irish Poetry.” *The Body and Desire in Contemporary Irish Poetry*, edited by Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Irish Academic Press, 2006, pp. 1–18.

O'Brien, Peggy, editor. *The Wake Forest Book of Irish Women's Poetry*. Wake Forest University Press, 2011.

Pearse, Padraic. “Mise Éire.” *Ireland Calling*, ireland-calling.com/mise-eire/.

Pearse, Patrick and Lucy Collins. “Rising Poems: ‘The Mother’ by Patrick Pearse.” *Independent*, Independent.ie, 20 Jan. 2016, www.independent.ie/irish-news/1916/rising-poems-the-mother-by-patrick-pearse-34382053.html.

Petherbridge, Danielle. “How Do We Respond? Embodied Vulnerability and Forms of Responsiveness.” *New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment*, by Luna Dolezal and Clara Fischer, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2018, pp. 57–79.

Pethica, James. “‘Our Kathleen’: Yeats’ Collaboration with Lady Gregory in the Writing of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*.” *Yeats Annual*, Vol. 6, Pg. 3, 1988.

Quinet, Antonio. “The Gaze as an Object.” *Reading Seminar XI : Lacan’s Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Paris Seminars in English,* by Feldstein, Richard, et al, SUNY Press, 1995. *EBSCOhost*.

Randolph, Jody Allen. *Eavan Boland*, Bucknell University Press, 2013. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emory/detail.action?docID=1913305.

Raschke, Debrah. “Eavan Boland's Outside History and In a Time of Violence: Rescuing Women, the Concrete, and Other Things Physical from the Dung Heap,” *Colby Quarterly*, Vol. 32, no. 2 , 1996, pp. 135-142.

Schrage-Früh, Michaela. “‘My Being Cries Out to Be Incarnate’: The Virgin Mary and Female Sexuality in Contemporary Irish Women’s Poetry.” *The Body and Desire in Contemporary Irish Poetry*, edited by Irene Gilsenan Nordin, Irish Academic Press, 2006, pp. 123–143.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*, Duke University Press, 2003.

Sewell, Frank. “Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and the ‘Continuously Contemporary’.” *A Companion to Irish Literature*, edited by Julia M. Wright. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, pp. 390-409. doi:10.1002/9781444328066.ch54.

Shashkevich, Alex. “Poet Eavan Boland Recites New Poem at UN Event Honoring Irish Women's Suffrage.” *The Dish*, Stanford University, 6 Dec. 2018, news.stanford.edu/thedish/2018/12/06/poet-eavan-boland-recites-new-poem-at-un-event-honoring-irish-womens-suffrage/.

Smyth, Gerard. “Subversive Identities: History, Place and Culture in the Work of Eavan Boland.” *Eavan Boland: Inside History*, by Siobhan Campbell and Nessa O'Mahony, Arlen House, 2017, pp. 269–287.

Stanghellini, Giovanni et al. “Eating Disorders as Disorders of Embodiment and Identity.” *Embodiment and Eating Disorders: Theory, Research, Prevention and Treatment*, edited by Hillary L. McBride. First edition.. edition, Boca Raton, FL : Routledge, an imprint of Taylor and Francis, 2018.

Suhr-Sytsma, Nathan. “Publishing the Troubles.” *Poetry, Print, and the Making of Postcolonial Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2017, pp. 162–209.

Walsh, Aimée. “‘Curiosity with Corpses’: Poetry, Nationalism and Gender in Seamus Heaney’s *North* (1975) and Medbh McGuckian’s *The Flower Master* (1982).” *Journal of Gender Studies*, 2020, pp. 1-12, doi:10.1080/09589236.2020.1848534.

Walsham, Alexandra. “Introduction: Relics and Remains.” *Past & Present*, vol. 206, no. suppl_5, 2010, pp. 9-36, doi:10.1093/pastj/gtq026.

Weiss, Gail. “A Genealogy of Women’s (Un)Ethical Bodies.” *New Feminist Perspectives on Embodiment*, by Luna Dolezal and Clara Fischer, Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2018, pp. 17–35.

Yeats, W. B. *Yeats’s Poetry, Drama, and Prose*, edited by James Pethica, W. W. Norton and Company, 2000.