

## *Introduction*

### *Eavan Boland – In Her Many Images*

The passing of Eavan Boland caused us deep sorrow and made us immediately think of the impact her works have had on the way we have been developing Irish Studies in Brazil, in the Lusophone world, particularly in what concerns the writing of Poetry and Translation, and worldwide. At that very moment we felt we needed to pay tribute to one of the most important writers of the twentieth century as we were deeply aware of the influence of her work, her poetics, as much as her attitude as a woman of the second half of the twentieth century, having been born in Ireland and raised in a transatlantic, multicultural, and interartistic atmosphere.

The fact that Boland's writings weave the past, history and myth with contemporary daily life signals the depth of her works. Furthermore, discussions around nationhood, belonging and being a woman writer who departed from a traditionally male-oriented literary environment are at the core of her aesthetics. Transposing such crucial discussions provides us with a lifetime and thought-provoking career.

The dialogues that Boland's writings establish not only with tradition, the past, but also with other geographies and arts have guided the present selection of essays with the aim to render the poet's many images – an allusion to her 1980 collection *In Her Own Image*, but also a reference to the miscellaneous facets of Boland's writing before and after that collection. Boland's plural voices reflect her many selves, her ideas on women's writing, on poetry and poetry's relations with the other arts through time. Her sustained dialogue with other poets, with the past and with myth, as well as her reflections on the condition of women when this was an unwonted claim, have created space for much debate on the theory of women's writing. Themes such as the invisibility of women in the public space and the lack of female voices in the national literary history of Ireland have led many academics from all over the world to examine these same issues, in comparative terms, in their own countries, thereby changing the map, as the cartography of the poem is no longer written by men or away from the domestic space. All too soon, it seemed necessary to bring this universe up as a tribute to all the new horizons Boland's work has laid out for us, allowing us to think beyond the traditional patriarchal structures of literary society. In a double sense, then, poetically and theoretically, we propose looking into other vast

territories, which are those created by our contributors in dialogue with their particular interests, the places from where they speak and the voices with which they have chosen to collaborate here.

This special issue aims to provide readers with a twofold approach: on the one hand, a number of theoretical and critical debates around the most groundbreaking aspects of Boland's work and, on the other, a collection of poems in honour of Boland that other poets have kindly provided to the *ABEI Journal*. To all contributors, academics and poets, we want to express our immense gratitude. To the translators into Galician, Portuguese and English, too. Translating culture has been part of Boland's aesthetics. And we hope to pay homage to that as well.

A writer's reception necessarily changes as time passes, and monographs, collections of essays or journal special issues like the present one attest to the new readings and sensibilities of the present moment. The ecological awareness precipitated by the Anthropocene has raised debates on categories such as the human subject and the nonhuman object, as well as on human and more-than-human nature that inform several articles in this issue.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, aspects like bodily experience continue to stimulate fresh reflections on human identity due to the body's liminal position between culture and nature. On the other hand, a good number of articles in this issue delve into Eavan Boland's engagement with public history and its discrepancies with the intimate past, to the extent that one frequent focus of attention in the analyses to follow is the unspeakable, secrecy and silence. Another centre of attention in these articles is intertextuality and Boland's interrogation of the construction and impact of the literary canon, which has guided contributors to trace connections, agreements and disagreements not only between Eavan Boland and other Irish poets like W.B. Yeats and Patrick Kavanagh, but also international poets like Rhian Gallagher. Finally, this selection of articles is also concerned with the way Boland's writing travels, through translation, to other countries and languages.

Catherine Conan's "Objects Matter: an Object-Oriented Reading of Eavan Boland's *Object Lessons*" explores the tensions between the configuration of a feminine subjectivity and the concomitant objectivization of the remaining beings or entities. By following the methodologies of new materialism and object-oriented ontology, Conan provides new readings of Boland's *Object Lessons* that foster ecological sensibility. Along a similar line, Maureen O'Connor's "'Single Out the Devalued': The Figure of the Nonhuman Animal in Eavan Boland's Poetry" emphasizes Boland's valorization of nature writing, which invites new readings of the poet's recourse to literary animals in her poetry. Indebted to current debates in animal studies and ecocriticism, O'Connor provides a

critique of logocentrism and forefronts the importance of nonverbal communication. Inspired by Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*, Aubry Haine's article titled "Queer Phenomenology and the Things Themselves in Eavan Boland's *In a Time of Violence*" analyses Boland's imagistic attention to the world of objects. The poet's scrutiny of significant, but often overlooked, objects allows Poulin to identify a queering process of both traditional phenomenology and Irish poetic tradition that entails a vindication of the marginal and the feminine.

Pilar Villar-Argáiz's "Past, Secrecy and Absence in Eavan Boland's *The Historians*" has recourse to recent research on secrecy and the unknowable, as in the work by Derek Attridge, and examines Boland's use of formal devices to convey those silences, absences and deferred disclosures that abound in so many narratives of the past. Silence is also the main focus of the article by Marcos Hernández titled "Staring Inward: Eavan Boland's Archive of Silences in Domestic Violence", which delves into the tensions between voice and silence, as well as the public and the domestic poem, through the analysis of stylistic features that encode those tensions and open a chink to new, unexpected readings.

The study of the intertextual relations between Boland's poetry and that by other Irish and non-Irish writers begins in this issue with Hitomi Nakamura's article "An Example of Dissidence': A Reflection on Eavan Boland's Reading of Patrick Kavanagh", which earnestly delves into the paradoxical attraction and resistance that Boland felt with regard to Kavanagh's poetry. Nakamura pays attention to these writers' poetic projects to reconfigure the national literary tradition by introducing their personal experience and perspective. Similarly, Marcel De Lima Santos' "Boland and Yeats: Poetical Irish Dialogues" establishes an imaginative dialogue between these two seemingly antagonistic poets in order to identify Boland's innovations regarding not only configurations of masculinity and femininity but also traditional themes such as love and sexuality.

Attention to the body is a connecting thread in the following two articles. Caitríona Clutterbuck's "Bodily Vulnerability and the Ethics of Representing Woman and Nation in the Poetry of Eavan Boland" puts the main focus on Boland's acknowledgement of vulnerability as an ethical force that contests the damaging legacy of colonialism. Clutterbuck maintains that renewed attention to the vulnerable and marginalized body is bound to heal the fracture between woman and nation. Along a similar line, Emer Lyons' article "Bodies of Water in the Poetry of Eavan Boland (IRE) and Rhian Gallagher (NZ)" applies a comparative perspective to both poets in order to identify those liminal spaces that only tropes of fluid bodies can traverse so as to recuperate lost or alternative bonds.

The American poet and essayist Adrienne Rich was an inspirational figure for Boland, as the next two articles convincingly argue. Virginie Trachsler’s “‘Priestess or sacrifice?’ Domestic tasks and poetic craft in Eavan Boland’s poetry” analyses Boland’s early work in her collections *In Her Own Image* and *Night Feed*, and argues that the domestic realm and its accompanying housework proved to be a fertile and enabling topic in Boland’s poetry. In “Expressing the Source: Eavan Boland and Adrienne Rich” the Irish writer Máighr ad Medbh’s similarly turns to the American poet for the discussion of the poetic, and concomitantly political, configurations of pain and uncompromising observation in the two poets’ renderings of personal experience.

The section of articles in this special issue fittingly ends with attention paid to the dissemination of Boland’s writing in other literary systems by means of translation. In this particular case, Mario Murgia dissects, in “The Space Between the Words: A Brief Mapping of the Translation of Eavan Boland’s Poetry in Mexico”, Spanish-language translations of Boland’s poetry in Mexico, even if his first observation concerns the urgent need of more translations of Eavan Boland’s books or single-author anthologies of her work. Murgia, thereby, provides an insightful commentary of Eva Cruz Y nez’s translations of Boland’s poetry in her *Anthology / Antolog a*.

Our issue also brings three stimulating reviews by Ant a Rom n-Sotelo, Vanesa Rold n Romero, Michelle Alvarenga and Sven Kretzschmar. Also included is a whole session of poems in translation, poems that have been generously sent by contemporary poets who dedicate them to Eavan Boland for this special issue.

To all poets, translators, academics, we want to express our immense gratitude for their inspiring contributions that evince the prolific directions in the contemporary reception of Eavan Boland’s work. Translating cultures has been part of Boland’s aesthetics and we hope to pay homage to that as well.

We hope readers enjoy this journey into Eavan Boland’s many images!

*Gisele Wolkoff and Manuela Palacios*

## Notes

- 1 Manuela Palacios wishes to acknowledge the grant for the project *The Animal Trope: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Contemporary Irish and Galician Culture*, of which her work of co-edition of this special issue is part (PGC2018-093545-B-I00 MCIU / AEI/ ERDF, EU).