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Staring Inward: Eavan Boland's Archive of Silences in Domestic Violence

Exame interno: Arquivo de silêncios em Domestic Violence, *de Eavan Boland*

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Abstract: *The critical revision of the ways in which literature represents the conflict between voice and silence has traditionally led to the consideration of poetry as a genre in which this contrast acquires a deep resonance. From the distribution of its formal pauses to the gaps in meaning between the explicit and the implicit levels of language, silence and the unsaid can be defined as fundamental components to perceive the literary text. In the case of the Irish poet Eavan Boland, her position in relation to this antagonism has been critically studied according to her desire of giving voice through her poetry to all those Irish women who have been historically silenced. In doing so, the contrast between these two extremes has been frequently connected to her distinctions between history and the past and the public and the domestic poem. This essay will analyse the conducting thread joining these oppositions through a close reading of two poems from her compilation* Domestic Violence *(2007). Additionally, it will explore Boland's silences not only as an act of giving voice to the unvoiced but also as a formal expression of the layers of meaning hidden underneath the poem.*

Keywords: *Eavan Boland; Contemporary Irish Poetry; Irish History; Silence in Literature.*

Resumo: *A revisão crítica das formas como a literatura representa o conflito entre voz e silêncio tem tradicionalmente levado a considerar a poesia como um gênero em que esse contraste adquire uma ressonância profunda. A partir da distribuição de suas pausas formais às lacunas de significado entre os níveis explícito e implícito da linguagem, o silêncio e o não dito podem ser definidos como componentes fundamentais para perceber o texto literário. No caso da poeta irlandesa, Eavan Boland, sua posição em relação a esse antagonismo tem sido criticamente estudada de acordo com seu desejo de, por meio de sua poesia, dar voz a todas aquelas mulheres irlandesas que foram historicamente silenciadas. Ao fazê-lo, o contraste entre esses dois extremos tem sido frequentemente ligado à distinção que ela faz entre história e passado e entre o poema público e o doméstico.*

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Este ensaio analisará o fio condutor que une essas oposições por meio da leitura atenta de dois poemas de sua coletânea, Domestic Violence *(2007). Além disso, serão explorados os silêncios de Boland não apenas como ato de dar voz ao mudo, mas também como uma expressão formal das camadas de significado escondidas sob o poema.*

Palavras-chave: *Eavan Boland; Poesia Irlandesa Contemporânea; História Irlandesa; Silêncio na Literatura.*

Introduction

The mere act of reading these introductory lines creates an inner echo. A voice appears in the back of the mind, breaking the silence of a blank paper. The written text is no other than a visual analogy for the opposition between voice and silence. Every punctuation mark, every pause between segments of speech, every space between words may open a room for a silence to be interpreted, offering a brief hint of the way in which this conflict pervades our everyday life. This apparently inoffensive idea evokes two dimensions of silence. In the first one, physical and explicit, silence could be defined as something tangible: either a "blank presence" or "an abyssal emptiness", in this case, the presence or absence of sound (Gould 3). In the other, silence acquires a broader sense when assuming its condition as that "immeasurable beyond" hidden underneath language (3) or, in other words, all those layers of meaning that can be deduced from any text, either written or oral.

The starting point originated by this idea points to poetry as the literary genre in which both typologies of silence find a fertile landscape to extend their possibilities of expression. Bearing this perspective in mind, the Czech critic Daniela Theinová opens one of the chapters of her volume on the limits of language in contemporary Irish women's poetry by offering a preliminary definition in which she addresses both its physical and its metaphorical dimension:

> Silence in poetry is not to be understood simply as voicelessness (although it may refer to this); the lyric, with its compact forms, formal restrictions and emphasis placed at the end of the line, not only calls for considerable verbal reticence and economy but is favourable to metaphorical expressions of silence. Yet silence, even if it is integral to the poem's structure and subject matter, can never be its sole dimension or the poet's objective intention. (137)

The application of the previous quote to the research field in which Theinová develops her study finds one of its most prominent instances in the works of the Irish poet Eavan

Boland. Yet considering the weight of the assertion, Boland's poetic production has always been particularly associated to a reformulation of one of the typologies offered by Theinová, through what could be defined as "reverse voicelessness", or the act of giving voice to those women who have been historically silenced. A process that can be read in the light of the emergence of new stylistic and thematic standards in modern Irish literature during the twentieth century.

Bearing those standards in mind, the German critic Alessandra Boller reflects on the appearance of a new stream of Irish novelists in the 20th century by accentuating three predominant aspects that can be transversally applied to a wide selection of modern Irish poets, including Boland. In the first place, as Gerry Smyth suggests, there is a concern "to narrate the nation as it has been and is, rather than how it should be or might have been" (qtd. in Boller 122). Secondly, its "wider processing of social and historical issues" entailing the creation of new literary voices. And thirdly, the movement of oppressed collectives and minorities "from the margins to the centre of attention" (122).

Accordingly, these elements converge in Boland's poetry through her treatment of the conflict between voice and silence. A dimension that, following a parallelism with the previous characteristics, has been mainly analysed by examining a sequence of binaries such as her distinction between history and the past (first aspect), the tensions between the public and the private and domestic social spheres (second aspect), and, especially, the historical and social struggle in Ireland between men and women (third aspect).

Consequently, an extensive bulk of critical studies on Boland's poetry has been focused on the way in which she re-reads the past by endorsing all those women who have been "othered" and silenced through the vindication of the domestic poem as a genre. In a revealing passage of the section "Domestic Violence", from *A Journey with Two Maps* (2011), Boland describes the long process of discovering her poetic voice through the domestic poem by underlining its connection to her views on the past:

> This is, after all, a personal piece. I was an Irish woman poet in a bardic culture. The political poem and the public one had been twined together in Ireland since the nineteenth century. There was little dialogue with the domestic. My growing belief—that there was a distance between history and the past in Ireland—was strengthened by this disconnect. History was the official version; the past was an archive of silences. (100)

The intention of recovering this "archive" has gradually placed the emphasis of her critics on reading her silences merely considering its physical dimension. Hence, retaking the

typologies that introduce this section, the aim of this paper will be to call the attention on the unsaid layers of meaning by examining, as indicated by Theinová, the metaphorical space opened by these silences through the individual reading of formal and rhetorical aspects in two significant poems from *Domestic Violence* (2007), namely, "Silenced" and "Indoors". Additionally, this formal analysis will be methodologically based on the considerations on poetic metre made by the linguist Geoffrey Leech and the critic Mary Kinzie.

In a parallel reading of both *Domestic Violence* and the homonymous chapter in *A Journey with Two Maps*, the reason behind the choice of this collection attends not only to the chronological proximity between both publications but also to their resemblance in terms of poetic perspective about the idea of silence. In the light of this reasoning, in the same chapter, Boland defines a poem as "a subtle system of references . . . (that) codifies, suggests, infers . . . (that) gestures outward while staring obdurately inward . . . (and) can reveal a history of evasion" (*A Journey* 117). Thus, the subtlety of these silences seems fundamental to initiate the journey of going inward the poem to decode what it can be inferred from the reading of the linguistic surface.

Joining this primary aim to the dichotomies present in Boland's works and the comments made by Alessandra Boller on the features of new Irish fiction, the paper will additionally deal with the interpretation of these silences as the past obscured by history and as the private and the domestic concealed by the public sphere. To develop this distinction, the analysis will consider the metaphorical premise of *A Journey with Two Maps*:

> I try to explain exactly what these so-called maps meant to me personally: how at various times I looked at conflicting ideas of a poetic self and an inherited craft and was bewildered at how to balance my obligations to a poetic past with my need to write in the present tense, and out of my own life. And how in the end, for all the inherent contradictions I found, I determined to keep both maps; and to learn from both. (xiv)

This conflict between the poetic self and the craft of Irish male poets can be defined as the key idea of this volume, that stands as a detailed narration of how she found her own poetic voice. At the same time, it illustrates how she inverted and balanced the poetic conventions in Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Conventions that relegated women's poetry to otherness and equated her voice to silence. Consequently, the journey to find the balance between these two maps will be the conducting thread lying at the core of the present study.

1. Past and history: recovering the archive of silences from the past

Any detailed reading of Eavan Boland's *Domestic Violence* accentuates the poem "Silenced" as one of the most thoughtful illustrations on the interrelation of the conflict between history and the past, and the contrast between voice and silence. In it, Boland recovers the mythical story of Philomel, the princess of Athens who was brutally raped by Tereus, king of Thrace and married to her sister Procne. After that atrocious crime, Tereus cuts Philomel's tongue to prevent her from telling the truth to Procne, relegating her to a forced silence.

Although the myth has been recurrently explored by several authors, the structure of the story presents some distinctive changes depending on the source. In Book VI of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid continues the story with Philomel weaving a tapestry to reveal the truth to her sister. Once they are aware of the whole account, Procne kills her son Itys and serves him to his husband as a meal. After escaping from Tereus' watch, Procne and Philomel ask the gods to be transformed into birds, who accept their petition (143–152).

The essential narrative lines of this tale are questioned in Robert Graves' *The Greek Myths*. The first noticeable fact when consulting Graves' volume is that Philomel's myth appears as a secondary storyline in the entry titled "Tereus". In this version, it is Tereus who falls in love with Philomel. Later, he conceals Procne in a rustic cabin to fake her death and marry Philomel. The second remarkable difference comes when their roles are interchanged: it is Procne the one who is mutilated by Tereus and the one who weaves the message to his sister (63).

This striking contrast between two versions of the same myth underline some appealing questions of interest for the analysis of Boland's poem. Firstly, they can be distinguished as noteworthy instances about the degree of unreliability of mythical accounts. Secondly, from Ovid's depiction of the rape to the devaluing of Philomel to a minor role in Graves' version, both tales metaphorically resemble the way in which history has displaced women from the focus of attention.

This premise is present in Boland's re-reading of the myth as a subtle symbolic parallelism between Philomel's story and the process of writing Irish history. In an interview with the critic Pilar Villar-Argáiz, Boland quotes "Silenced" to complement this parallelism by adding: ". . . that's what happened in Ireland too: a succession of brutal silencings and restating of the story. The new poems are experimental—and for me this is also a new way of revisiting the domestic poem" ("The Text of It" 61). Accordingly, as she emphasizes her re-reading of the domestic poem from the perspective of "the untold and the untellable" (61), she offers a two-fold reading of the piece by linking a reconstruction

of Philomel's past in Greece to the moment in which Boland conceived the poem from a domestic setting in Ireland.

In the first of these chronological extremes, the speaker sets the tone by resembling the narrative style used in mythical accounts, proposing a deconstruction of historiography as a meta-narrative. This approach is complemented by the stanzaic structure of the poem with two from four-line heterometric stanzas in which both "the threshold of the line . . . in tension with that of the sentence" (Kinzie 49) and the use of enjambments and lineation reinforce the creation of formal silences. A close reading of the first three stanzas accentuates several of these elements:

> In the ancient, gruesome story, Philomel
> was little more than an ordinary girl.
>
> She went away with her sister, Procne. Then
> her sister's husband, Tereus, given to violence,
> raped her once
>
> and said he required her silence.
> forever. When she whispered *but*
> he finished it all and had her tongue cut out. (*Domestic Violence* 16, lines 1-8)

The introductory line of the poem ends with an enjambment that highlights and "tugs" (Kinzie 54), through a first silence (as opposed to Robert Graves' version), the name of the protagonist, Philomel, whose story seems to be suspended before continuing with the reading. This first pause leads the reader to Philomel's ordinariness in the second line, that closes the stanza with a full stop.

After this first section, the speaker introduces the rest of the characters in the second stanza, completing an inversion of the order predisposed by history. The reader witnesses how Tereus is relegated to a minor role (not the king of Thrace, but "her sister's husband"), strengthening the cruelty of his acts. The atrociousness of these acts had been traditionally devalued by reducing the description of the rape to a concise reference (just a brief sentence both in Ovid and in Graves' tale).

It is in this stanza where Boland powerfully underlines another silence. Apart from another enjambment in the third line of the poem that gives prominence to Tereus' belittlement, the fifth line suddenly interrupts the metric pattern used from the beginning of the poem (pentametric lines from eleven to twelve syllables) and it is considerably reduced to a shorter line of three syllables.

The enjambment at the end of the stanza lengthens the previous pauses as it deliberately marks a deeper silence (Kinzie 56) both to process the rape and to fully address its weight and importance. This effect recalls what the linguist Geoffrey Leech coined as "defeated expectancy", or "a disturbance of the pattern which the reader or the listener has been conditioned to expect" (119). Although the verse form in this case is less rigid than a conventional iambic pentameter, the pattern of lineation introduced from the beginning of the poem defines this line as a turning point in the rhythm.

The formal silence stressed by the conclusion of the stanza and the blank line separating both sections through an enjambment gives way to the thematic silence of the sixth line, marking "a tension between the expected pattern and the pattern actually occurring" (Leech 123). The period that ends the seventh line remarks the atypical beginning of the new syntactic unit. The word "forever" constitutes a full sentence without capital letters, focusing the attention on the assumption of Philomel's silence as a fixed and unalterable circumstance.

This abrupt pause leads to the italicization of "but" as Philomel's last act of resistance using audible words. The conclusion of this third stanza suggests a first turning point in the reading of the poem. Despite these formal silences being still present, the reader acquires a wider insight of the unstated layers of meaning hidden underneath the text in the transition from the third to the fourth stanza:

> Afterwards, she determined to tell her story
> another way. She began a tapestry.
> She gathered skeins, colours.
> She started weaving. (*Domestic Violence* 16, lines 9-12)

From a formal perspective, the structure and lineation of the stanza parallel the alternative ways of communication used by Philomel. Lines become shorter as her words give way to tapestry. The first line of this stanza stresses another pause through the use of an enjambment. This silence alludes not to history but to "her story" and the reader ruminates, without being aware of it, Boland's distinction between history and the past (and how to recall it 'another way' through poetry). The pronoun now weaves an interconnected web in which 'she' receives different readings. She is Philomel. She is Eavan Boland's craft as an Irish woman poet. She is every woman othered by Irish history.

The unsaid layers intertwined within the formal silences now address Tereus as a human embodiment of Irish history, illustratively described by Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy as the "narrative account of the doings of men, largely carried out by men, written

by men and taught by men" which has been constructed over the "symbolically central and materially peripheral" silence of women (qtd. in Clutterbuck 99). Accordingly, this perspective leads the reader to reconsider the possible interpretations that can be deduced from formal silences such as "forever" as an isolated sentence in low-case letters and the italicized "*but*". "Forever", as the intention of preserving the status quo associated to history perpetually. "*But*", as every act of resistance perpetrated by women throughout time.

As Philomel's particular act of resistance is forcibly reshaped through tapestry, the speaker finds a second turning point to connect her own story with Philomel's past: "She was weaving alone, in fact, and so intently / she never saw me enter" (*Domestic Violence* 16). The conclusion of this stanza evokes the gesture of entering a room, a scene, a memory stealthily.

From this line onwards, the speaker addresses the stimuli behind the remembrance of Philomel's myth: the wintry colours of the Irish sky and, especially, an old radio that arouses the relation between both stories. The nature of this relation is described by Eavan Boland by stressing the exercise of imagination adhered to it: "Writing about the lost, the voiceless, the silent. And exploring my relation to them . . . feeling my way into the powerlessness of an experience through the power of expressing it. This wasn't an area of artistic experiment. It was an area of ethical imagination" (qtd. in Collins 26).

Her imagination resizes its ethical component through the words coming out the radio "telling its own unregarded story of violation" (*Domestic Violence* 16). On that account, the speaker establishes another parallelism between the aggressiveness and brutality in Philomel's rape and the identification of violence as a "truly Irish" sign of identity (*A Journey* 99). This parallelism stands as the thread connecting the different types of silences as the gaps left by the past deduced from what is not said in the historical version of the events, rather than what is (*A Journey* 53-54).

The ending of the poem reinforces this idea as it concludes with other threads: those weaving her chronological reconstruction of the events with "greenish silks" and tainting both surfaces in crimson. A metaphorical conclusion that unfolds the double reading of the title of the collection. Domestic violence both as the euphemism used to hide violence against women and as that identitarian sign defining Ireland. In relation to this double meaning, Michael McAteer offers an insightful reflection on the historical reasons associated to this idea:

> Violence towards the feminine figure in this instance arises not from the forces of modernization breaking up traditional forms of Irish society. It is, rather, the

> opposite: the oppressive force of patriarchal control of women—underwritten in Ireland by the authority granted to the teachings of the Catholic Church in the Irish Constitution of 1937. (McAteer 9-10)

Thus, this final act of giving prominence to the violent outcome interrelating both stories leads the reader to reconsider the contribution of the formal silences to the understanding of those hidden beneath the content of the poem, and the ways in which these two types emanate from the imaginative reconstruction of the past as the silences concealed behind history.

2. The public and the private: silence as the domestic

In his *Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, the Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau develops one of his multiple allusions to the respective distribution of men and women according to their roles in the public, and the private and domestic social spheres. One of the most appealing passages explaining Rousseau's thoughts on the matter details his views on the duties associated to women:

> Is there a sight in the world so touching, so respectable, as that of a mother surrounded by her children, directing the work of her domestics, procuring a happy life for her husband and prudently governing the home? . . . Whatever she may do, one feels that in public she is not in her place (87–88).

As Rousseau expanded this germinal division in most of his works, the quote can be read both as a sign of its times and as an illustrative example of the way in which the ideas adhered to it have pervaded every political, social, and cultural layer of our globalized world both before and after its publication. In this regard, the hierarchical and patriarchal conception of this gender distinction stands as an insightful starting point for the analysis of Eavan Boland's "Indoors".

The first two lines of the poem constitute a concise and revealing declaration of intentions in the light of the previous idea: "I have always wanted a world that is cured of the outdoors. / A household without gods" (*Domestic Violence* 37). This initial statement endorses a subversion of the previous distinction. Accordingly, it seems to address the implicit presence of an unsaid layer of meaning: the indoor world desired by the speaker is formulated in terms of a world "cured of the outdoors" and what it represents. Her household is not inhabited by (male) gods but "without" them.

These introductory lines not only reformulate the contrast between the public and the private social spheres, but they also underline the expressive value of the silences implied by the linguistic surface, or those suggested by the content of the poem. Additionally, the consequent tension derived from these silences can be read as a continuum that can be joined to the subject matter of the previous section: the public social space of power, reason, history, and voice as notions traditionally related to men and the past, the private, subjectivity, and silence as ideas associated to women (Kennedy 8).

In the light of the re-examination of the boundaries adhered to the previous continuum in the final stages of the twentieth century, Boland's poetry finds her style by discussing "the place women have been traditionally inserted in Ireland, their premeditated absence, their compulsory mutiny and their invisibility in the public world" (García-García 125). To fulfil this enterprise, Boland vindicates the domestic poem as the genre supporting her perspective of the past as a method to explore a "counter-history" (*A Journey* 99). Complementing this idea, she further elaborates on this definition of the domestic poem:

> The domestic poem, traditionally barred from the public world, confined to a set script had been drained of meaning. Yet the meanings were there for the taking. The elements of that poem —intimate, uneasy, charged with a relation which is continuous and unpredictable between bodies and the spaces they inhabit— seemed perfectly set up to register an unwritten past. It was an opportunity for Irish poetry. And yet there was no welcome for it anywhere that I could see (*A Journey* 101).

The articulation of the domestic poem as a "register of the unwritten past" leads to the latent question of determining the way in which this genre fulfils that role by retrieving the spectrum of elements traditionally silenced by history and the public sphere. Elements associated to interiors that, in Boland's words, are felt like "an absence" in the poems of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: ". . . there were cities, bridges, meadows, machines, even skylines. But not interiors. Not, that is, the interiors in which people actually lived" (*A Journey* 105).

To perform this movement from the exterior to the interior, Boland fills "Indoors" with constant references to acts of transition from one place or state to another from the beginning of the poem. Thus, the outdoor world, after being cured of its own inherited condition, gives way to a household with ". . . entrances taking shape, verticals meeting / horizontals: a where fetching a now" (*Domestic Violence* 37).

As a result, the tangibility of the entrance as a symbolic threshold evokes the careful disposition of liminal spaces present in the poem. In relation to the significance of liminality as a factor to conceive the poem, the Spanish critic Marta Miquel-Baldellou adds:

> Many of Eavan Boland's poems appear to be located at transitional or liminal moments. The women that populate her poems often tend to make their appearance at dusk, or during the twilight that is formed when the day gives way to the night. This atmosphere of ambiguity and of blurring of certainties seems to be particularly voiced through her poetry, and in a way, it reflects the uneasy position that the author felt compelled to occupy in relation to the traditionally male-dominated Irish poetry and provided a way to establish her own identity as an Irish woman poet. (129)

This "uneasy position" occupied by Boland's poetry disrupts the antagonistic relation between voice and silence conventionally associated, respectively, to "male-dominated" and female poetry, as it subverts the power relations—in the Foucauldian sense of the term—between men and women by using silence as a form of linguistic violence (Olsson 5). Consequently, the identification of the domestic poem as a genre not only "barred from the public world" but also relegated to the category of minor sub-genre parallels this antithetical connection. It is within that continuity where Boland's liminal spaces acquire their significance as silences in a transition to be voiced. This transition is mirrored in the poem in the third and fourth stanzas:

> There is always a place where a fable starts – where a god
> proves he is a god by adding
> not simply wings and sinews to his shoulders
>
> but the horizon swinging up – rivers, mountains, headlights
> only slowly
> righting themselves as he rises to find
> the first signs of day becoming night. (*Domestic Violence* 37, lines 9–16)

The consolidation of this god as a male entity achieves a component of reaffirmation through the elements located above the horizon. Rivers, mountains, and headlights are carefully ordered establishing a transition from natural to artificial constructions leading to another transition from day to night. The interdependent relation joining the horizon as a perceptive threshold, the gradual enumeration of the natural elements, and the signs of day becoming night can be analysed as liminal moments in which the male god not only

exhibits his power to create and depict the nature of the outdoor world but also his ability to erase the life of the private and domestic sphere. In the light of this idea, the horizon swings up with the intention of hiding what lies underneath its boundaries. Words that, despite being silenced, are still there.

Additionally, the succession of enjambments and the noticeable contraction of the second line of each section denotes a sequence of formal silences highlighting elements of this natural and public landscape. Hence, the reader is compelled to contemplate the fable —a myth, a legend, a fictitious tale— of "a god"—which is not the only one— that must handle over his shoulders the weight of elements that do not belong to his body to claim for his space of power.

Reading these stanzas as a metaphorical allusion to the conflict between the domestic and the public poem, the fable of this god parallels the work of the author that writes about elements he cannot control. As a result, these elements right themselves "only slowly" and the silence adhered to this line points to the composition of the "public" poem as a laborious and time-consuming activity that leads the poet "to find the first signs of day becoming night." The pause created by the full stop concluding the fourth stanza accentuates both this liminal transition and a change from a natural to a suburban setting:

> So it was above our neighbourhood, the world straightening
> under wings, the noise of discord
> clearly audible, the hinterland reaching to the sea,
> its skin a map of wounds, its history a treatise of infections. (37, lines 17–20)

The beginning of the stanza helps the reader to retake the idea of a household without gods. At the same time, it reveals the neighbourhood as a suburban location for this household underneath the horizon that divides the outdoor world straightened under the wings of the gods and the indoor world inhabited by mortals.

Again, the formal silence reinforced by the enjambment in the second line points to a situation of political and social discord as it waits to describe it as "clearly audible." The territory of the gods, the hinterland, expands itself as it reaches the sea while the speaker explores the wounds of the land through a map and describes its history as "a treatise of infections." In relation to these allusions, the line recalls the distinction between history and the past exposed in the previous section as it highlights its contaminating nature and addresses cartography as another inadequate and unbiased science to represent reality.

While the stanza confronts the social and geopolitical division in Ireland in the twentieth century, it foregrounds three crucial factors. Firstly, the climate of violence and

upheaval traditionally associated both to Irish history and its public sphere. Secondly, the reflection upon the constant presence of blind spots, or silenced realities, in theoretically objective and exact sciences such as history and cartography (Thoss 73). And thirdly, the metaphorical presence of the map as one of the two maps in Eavan Boland's journey: the inherited craft of Irish poetry written by men.

In opposition to the climate generated by the gods of the outdoors, the last two stanzas mark a turning point, another transition, in the reading of the poem:

> But I was an indoor nature poet,
> safe in my countryside
> of handles and entrances, my pastoral of inland elements,
>
> holding against my face the lured-in aftermath
> of ocean, atmosphere: the intimate biography of damp
> in the not-dry feel of a child's cardigan. (*Domestic Violence* 37, lines 21–26)

The concluding stanzas settle the resolution of the thematic lines opened in the previous sections by exposing a counterpart for each one of them. The climate of violence of the outdoors is questioned by the safety of the indoor world. The rivers, mountains and headlights created by the outdoor gods are reformulated by an indoor nature poet. Her entrances seem more manageable than a whole horizon. The succession of inland elements at the core of her poetic craft allude to the pastoral not only as a genre that celebrates the virtues of rural, and in this case domestic, life but also as its traditional depiction as an escape from the public sphere (*The Making of a Poem* 207).

As these stanzas condense the audibility of the elements unnoticed by the public poem, their composition still opens a room for the consideration of some silences under its surface. The "lured-in aftermath" of the ocean leaves an intimate trail of dampness in the cardigan of a small child as a representation of what is hidden beneath the horizon and what remains after its path. The cardigan is not wet but "not-dry" and the sensorial perception associated to the object is formulated in terms of an opposition. All the power of her poetry is concentrated on a piece of cloth as a way of questioning the public poem and "the traditional division between home and history" through a household object (García-García 126). In doing so, Boland constructs an analogy of the power of creation of the outdoor poet by reducing its scope as it finds a way of balancing this set of oppositions between history and the past or the public and the domestic. After being asked about these contradictory views, she stated:

> Maybe that's simply because in writing poems generated by those tensions I found some way of balancing them. The poem you mention here, "Indoors", isn't so much a poem seeking to resolve these contradictions. It's more a way of noting them. When I write in the poem that I'm "an indoor nature poet" that really is a way I once thought about my writing. And, for that matter, still do. ("Poetry as a Humane" 115)

Boland's reaffirmation of these contradictions is condensed in the "not-dry" feel of a child's cardigan as a way of noting that she cannot get rid of the rivers and mountains, of the inherited map, but she can subvert the form from within by finding her own map, her own voice, and refreshing "that relation between what goes into the poem and what remains outside it" ("On The Journey" 188–189).

Concluding remarks

The journey with two maps finds its common ground to embrace the alternation between voice and silence. As the official maps of history and the public have traditionally omitted stories and places from the official version, the poetry of Eavan Boland discovers her own map by voicing the alternative version.

The two dimensions of silence explored in this study intertwine themselves with the objective of inverting the conventional relation between voice and silence. However, as it has been suggested in the last section, Boland does not seek to resolve this contradiction but to note it and, in doing so, to build a balance between the two extremes.

As a result, in the process of inverting the relation between the continuing history/public/voice and the past/the domestic/silence both the use of the voicelessness and its reverse and the silences denoted by the poetic form are still symptoms of the fact that Boland does not intend to reject the inherited forms but to subvert them from within ("On the Journey" 188).

Her household inhabited by mere mortals. Her domestic interiors cured of what the outdoors entails. The inner echo of the reading still sounding as the voice in the back of the mind breaks the silence of a blank paper while Philomel rinses the distances with greenish silks and touches the not-dry feel of a child's cardigan.

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