

“An Example of Dissidence”: A Reflection on Eavan Boland’s Reading of Patrick Kavanagh

“Um exemplo de dissidência”: Uma reflexão sobre a leitura de Patrick Kavanagh por Eavan Boland

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Abstract: *This article provides insight into the creative and intellectual nexus between Eavan Boland and Patrick Kavanagh, one of the many Irish poets referred to in Boland’s critical and autobiographical prose. While acknowledging that her intellectual relationship with the older poet, in some respects, is “an example of dissidence,” Boland found that it was her earlier intimacy with him that made her an object-becoming-author. Additionally, in terms of poetry composition, this article sheds light on Boland’s interest in Kavanagh’s use of the sonnet form in “Epic” and discusses her updated version of the historical form. Their encounter, examined in the article, reveals that both poets sought to redefine the “tradition” from within and rearticulate it in their own circumstances.*

Keywords: *Eavan Boland; Patrick Kavanagh; A matter of tradition; Sonnet form.*

Resumo: *Este artigo fornece uma visão sobre o nexó criativo e intelectual entre Eavan Boland e Patrick Kavanagh, um dos muitos poetas irlandeses referidos na prosa crítica e autobiográfica de Boland. Embora reconhecendo que sua relação intelectual com o poeta mais velho seja, em alguns aspectos, “um exemplo de dissidência”, Boland descobriu que foi sua antiga intimidade com ele que fez dela um objeto-tornando-se-autor. Além disso, em termos de composição poética, este artigo lança luz sobre o interesse de Boland no uso que Kavanagh faz da forma do soneto em “Epic” e discute sua versão atualizada da forma histórica. Esse encontro é examinado no artigo, e revela que ambos os poetas buscaram redefinir a “tradição”, partindo de dentro, e rearticulá-la em suas próprias circunstâncias.*

Palavras-chave: *Eavan Boland; Patrick Kavanagh; uma questão de tradição; forma do soneto.*

Introduction

Eavan Boland's poetry is part of various contemporary critical contexts that transcend nationality, language and place. Many critics and literary scholars have unravelled potential influences, both technical and intellectual, on her poetry, based on her broad references to other poets. Jody Allen Randolph names a few; not only William Butler Yeats, but American women poets such as Sylvia Plath and Adrienne Rich also find mention in her writing. Boland's progress indeed transcended "the unconfined horizons of the transnational, the diasporic, the Anglophone, and the international" (168). Yet, as the present article does, her encounters with earlier Irish poets, especially Patrick Kavanagh, are worth exploration.

Elizabeth Jennings, in her much-accessible book for aspiring poets, wrote that the most important and influential poets belong to either one's own or the previous generation, maintaining that "[e]very age has its own poetic speech, or poetic diction as it is sometimes called" (44). This might have been true for poets like Boland and Kavanagh, who met in Dublin in the mid-sixties. As Boland recalls, Kavanagh was then a poet whose presence was somewhat intelligible and "an enormous number of people claimed to be intimate with him" ("Memories of Kavanagh" 10). However, there are few comparisons between Kavanagh and women poets of the next generation, with the exception of Eithne Strong.¹ Boland's repeated references to Kavanagh are equally noteworthy and, moreover, quite discernible throughout her career, as noticed by Heather Clark (330). Till the year before her death, Boland was as an editor for the *Poetry Ireland Review*, to which she also contributed an essay to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Kavanagh's death in 2017.

This article recaptures Boland's occasional reflections on Kavanagh, to explore how she found both common and uncommon ground with his life and work. She first found him "an example of dissidence" (*Object Lessons* 99), which could be attributed to the literary conventions permeating the earlier generation's male-oriented Irish poetry. However, she identified herself with him as a marginalised, object-becoming-author in the early phases, as revealed in some of her autobiographical writings. Her fascination with his use of a sonnet in "Epic," Kavanagh's most oft-quoted poem in Boland's writings, attracts attention, since she too had continuously explored the form's possibilities. Highlighting a particular moment in late twentieth-century Irish poetry, this article discusses the creative and intellectual nexus between Boland and the older poet.

"An example of dissidence"

The first encounter between Boland and Kavanagh occurred in the mid-sixties, when they met at Roberts on Grafton Street, Dublin, as written by Boland in retrospect ("Memories

of Kavanagh” 10). Thereafter, her references to Kavanagh were continuous, yet dispersed, such as in “The Irish Woman Poet: Her Place in Irish Literature,” “Gods Make Their Own Importance: The Authority of the Poet in Our Time,” two collections of prose, that is, *Object Lessons* and *A Journey with Two Maps*, an essay in tribute to Kavanagh in the *Poetry Ireland Review*, as well as small citations in her interviews and writings elsewhere (such as in the *Irish Literary Supplement*, 1988).

Boland remarked that she sensed “dissidence” after they finished lunch that day— “. . . I had touched something which would return to me later: an example of dissidence. Kavanagh was a countryman; I was a woman” (*Object Lessons* 99). This sense of “dissidence” might have been revisited two decades later, when she embarked on a critical reading of the works of male poets of the earlier generation. In “The Woman Poet in a National Tradition,” her autobiographical essay in *Studies* in 1987, she writes:

Most Irish poets depended on women as motifs in their poetry. Most used women to explore their own ideas about Irishness. The fusion of the national and the feminine, the interpretation of one by the other, was common practice in Irish poetry. Cathleen Ni Houlihan and Dark Rosaleen come quickly to mind. (152)

Boland then quotes “Pygmalion,” one of Kavanagh’s earliest poems, and Francis Ledwidge’s “The Blackbirds,” as older examples. While declaring that “although necessarily my discussion of them is shorthand” (154), she singles out the woman depicted in “Pygmalion” as “the degraded pastoral, an inversion of the myth of Romantic Ireland” (154). The poem, composed in Shakespearean sonnet structure, illustrates “a stone-proud woman” (1), “a stone Pygmalion” (11) found in a field:

Her lips were frozen in the signature
Of Lust, her hair was set eternally,
No Grecian goddess, for her face was poor,
A twisted face, like Hardship’s face, to me. (5-8)²

Although Kavanagh, in his usual manner of addressing Ireland’s small farm milieu, succeeds in assimilating a mythical figure into the localised realism, the poem portrays an objectified, one-dimensional entity. Boland claims that “[t]he problem is that the woman, who should have been the subject of the poem, is reduced to being its object; a mere projection,” “Kavanagh, after all, showed over and over again in his work... that he could realize women with warmth and rapport” (“The Woman Poet in a National Tradition”

153). Consequently, the stone Pygmalion convened in the pastoral setting, turns out to be a “degraded pastoral”³ woman who is only used as a metaphor.

As real women were the inspiration for Kavanagh’s love poems, consequently, poetic inspiration and creativity are mostly represented as “female” in his poetry. The speaker in the sonnet “God in Woman,” first published along with “Epic,” in *The Bell* in 1951, acknowledges that “[s]urely my God is feminine” (9), expecting its spirit to caress a poet’s soul (14). It was in *Collected Prose* published in 1967 that Kavanagh noted an idea of the Comic Muse: “There is only one Muse, the Comic Muse . . . Great poetry is always comic in the profound sense. Comedy is abundance of life” (“Signposts” 25).

With respect to the figure of the “muse,” Boland’s poetic defiance of the traditional image was an important practice in her early work. As Randolph suggests, Boland’s “bitter attack on the traditional female muse” is seen in “Tirade for the Mimic Muse” in *In Her Own Image* (72). *Night Feed*, the following volume, describes the muse as “The Muse Mother,” a domestic woman dandling her child. The speaker expects “she might teach” her “a new language” (28-29)⁴, to enable her to speak her “mother tongue” (36). By not creating an alternative, the poet chose to counter the old mythic image primarily because “. . . the invention of a male muse would have been a separatist initiative. The holding to a female one would be a subversive one,” as stated in her interview with Deborah Tall (39). For the sake of reconciling her “early love for the tradition of poetry” with her “later anger at it” (39), Boland uses the female image to, in turn, destabilise it. The speaker in “Envoi” declares:

My muse must be better than those of men
who made theirs in the image of their myth.
The work is half-finished and I have nothing
but the crudest measures to complete it with. (5-8)

Imagining the muse who “must know” (12) about everyday scenes in the suburb, the speaker claims: “I need her to remain with me until / the day is over and the song is proven” (15–16). In the last few lines of the poem, the muse is expected to “bless the ordinary” and “sanctify the common” (25–26), in order to lend voice to the ones silenced in history.

For Kavanagh, in many cases, receiving a poetic vision from a woman or mother figure was necessary. Referring to the poet’s prose, such as “Parish and the Universe” and “The Irish Tradition,” Edward Larrissy writes:

Kavanagh certainly believes in distilling truth from fact, and the fact and the truth must be one’s own and nobody else’s. But distillation is not possible

without the assistance of Woman, and the Mother is essential to the early nurturing of ‘the poetic mind.’ (98)

Even in Kavanagh’s poem “Auditors In,” the figure of Mother Earth is superimposed as a phenomenal being and depicted as a caregiver. Inspired by Stephen Dedalus’s diary entry, the end of the second sonnet in part II reads as⁵:

Away, away on wings like Joyce’s,
Mother Earth is putting my brand new clothes in order,
Praying, she says, that I no more ignore her;
Yellow buttons she found in fields at bargain prices, (II, 15–18)

Kavanagh thus employs the archetypal personification, casting the speaker in a supporting role, in a kind of mother-and-child relationship. In sheer contrast, Boland’s first-person speaker in “Mother Ireland” speaks:

I rose up. I remembered it.
Now I could tell my story.
It was different
from the story told about me. (16–19)

The poem’s irregularly indented lines instil a sense of Mother Ireland’s breath and enlivened presence while telling her story.⁶ It is thus possible to discern the “dissidence” between Kavanagh and Boland, in their handling of certain subjects and imageries.

However, in her interview with Tall, Boland recounted that “Kavanagh in a sense was the key poet for my generation of poets. Both men and women can take different things from his work” (39). According to her, the mention of Kavanagh was common, and necessarily positive, in literary conversations in the mid-sixties: “References to him [Kavanagh] were always familiar and sometimes...exasperated” (*Object Lessons* 91). Her following remark on Yeats and Kavanagh hints at their different directions of influence on her: “Yeats had made a literature. Kavanagh had made the single, daring act of protest which pointed the way forward” (91). It is necessary then, to extend this discussion, for rearticulating her reflections on Kavanagh’s attempt in Ireland’s post-Revival literary scene.

Kavanagh as a “deeply serious man”

“Memories of Kavanagh,” published in the *Irish Times* on 20 November 1981, is an autobiographical record of Boland’s meetings with Kavanagh in his last years. She recollects

the older poet's comments on his contemporaries, such as Louis MacNeice, whom he called a "king," while being "scornful" of other poets (10). Another time, at the unveiling of Henry Moore's sculpture at St. Stephen's Green, she remembers Kavanagh stating, "in a wheezy, roaring [and] perfectly audible voice," that "The Fiddler of Dooney" is Yeats's best poem (10). In fact, some of his poems, such as "If Ever You Go to Dublin Town" and "Lines Written on a Seat on the Grand Canal, Dublin," convey that Kavanagh was often conscious of how he wanted to be remembered or commemorated publicly.

In her memoir, Boland highlights Kavanagh as an object-becoming-author, a circumstance which also applies to the outset of her literary career as a woman poet in the sixties. Gregory A. Schirmer, who discusses Boland, as well as Seamus Heaney, as poets indebted to Kavanagh, sums this up as: ". . . for Boland, who was seeking to establish her own specifically feminine voice in a tradition with a history of excluding, marginalizing, or co-opting women poets, Kavanagh represented an inspiring model" (306).

In her last essay dedicated to Kavanagh, published in the *Poetry Ireland Review*, Boland conclusively discusses him as "a deeply serious man," borrowing from Anthony Cronin's *Dead as Doornails*. Cronin had met Kavanagh through Envoy, and described him as a man "with an intellect which was humorous and agile, as well as being profound and apparently incorruptible" (Cronin 69). Following this manner of description, Boland remarks:

It is that 'deeply serious man' this half-century anniversary allows us to consider. It is that Kavanagh I want to remember here. He has seemed to me not only a signature writer of the Irish twentieth century, but something more as well: a figure creating a revelatory momentum within Irish poetry, and—wider than that—the history of poetry. But the context for all this requires a small detour ... ("Patrick Kavanagh: Fifty Years On" 40)

She then takes up Chinua Achebe's article, based on his 1977 lecture, in which he condemned "the misrepresentations of Africa" in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (40–41). To draw a parallel with Kavanagh's case, she asserts that "the meaning of Achebe's argument goes beyond a single fiction" and begets the question: "What happens when a person once objectified in that literature walks out of those tropes and becomes an author, able to shift and change what once held them in stasis? What, in summary, happens when the objects of a literature become the authors of it?" (41). She then embarks upon revisiting Kavanagh's "Epic," to "track" his journey (41).

In “Self-Portrait,” as is well-remembered, Kavanagh describes himself as a poet who was once “installed as the authentic peasant” (312). He moved to Dublin in 1939, and as illustrated by Quinn, “[f]or nearly thirty years he [Kavanagh] was Dublin’s best-known *flâneur* and, partly because of his countryman image, he soon acquired the status of a local ‘character’” (Introduction x). His 1954 essay, “Return in Harvest,” records his disdain of “[m]ediocrities” and warns, perhaps acknowledging his public image described above: “Beware of anyone who sees you as picturesque, as a character” (104). “Not caring” (“Self-Portrait” 313) was an attitude he developed in response to not being culturally consumed the way he wished to.

In “The Irish Woman Poet: Her Place in Irish Literature,” Boland had recalled Kavanagh as someone who would refuse such a rendering: “But in my time, as a young poet in Dublin, I saw and was moved—and I think was also influenced—by the way in which other poets refused different but similar simplifications. I am especially thinking of Patrick Kavanagh” (33-34). In Boland’s eyes, Irish poetry in the forties and fifties was “emerging from a bruising struggle with the aftermath of Yeats” (40), who thought “the Irish poem” existed, whereas “for the poets who followed him, the poem they inherited as a model was an out-of-focus snapshot” (41). Referring to Padraic Fallon, Austin Clarke and Kavanagh as “lost figures in the unfocused background” (41), she summarises: “The dark side of all this was that Irish poets after Yeats were regularly screen-tested for their supporting roles in this pastoral” (42). The word “screen-tested” is re-used for Kavanagh in *Object Lessons* (198), to imply the assessment of a person’s suitability for a particular role in the established “tradition.”

Kavanagh’s “deeply serious” side is apparent in his incisive writing during the *Envoy* period, when he increasingly became preoccupied with socio-cultural criticism. Considering the pitiful state of post-Independence Ireland’s cultural scene for its “decline in vitality” (“Victory of Mediocrity” 1), he later wrote in *Kavanagh’s Weekly* that “there is practically no literary public in this country and there has never been a literary tradition” (“Literature” 7). His sporadic criticism continued through the fifties and he specifically wrote of poetry in “From Monaghan to the Grand Canal”: “I cannot help saying that as far as I can see and as far as I have experienced, there has never been a tradition of poetry in Ireland” (275). If this manner of speaking appears exaggerated, one must note that, for Kavanagh, the afore-mentioned “tradition” in a country emerges from the collective vision of those who support artists. In “Portrait of the Artist Among Barbarians,” published in the *Weekly*, Kavanagh discusses Yeats and Joyce as the “two men of high talent and perhaps genius in this country” in the past half-century, while mentioning “the barbarism of Irish

society” as a “negative merit” that worked in their favour (7). He continues, “[i]n the long run the negative attitude will not do. We require a positive tradition . . . Up to the present there has been no such tradition, and during recent years the movement has been in the opposite direction.” (7)

This challenging attitude later found several followers, including Seamus Heaney, who perceived him as a tide changer in a period of conflicting traditions. He wrote: “he [Kavanagh] had contributed originally and significantly to the Irish literary tradition, not only in his poetry and his novel, *Tarry Flynn* (1948), but also in his attempts to redefine the idea of that tradition” (115).

Boland remained a quiet witness to the “living stream of talk” (*Object Lessons* 95) in the sixties and, as Randolph observes, “the confusions and contradictions she experienced at this time would become a rich source of debate and argument for her later work” (51). Moreover, in the period between Kavanagh and Boland’s time, Irish poets’ practice of poetry became transnational, including that of Boland herself. Her encounters with several poets and poems on both coasts of the Atlantic made her intermittently seek to re-position herself in the context of Irish literary tradition, by taking a retrospective critical look once in a while. Here, one could recall her deliberate redefinition of “the Irish Poem” in the nineties, as “a changing interior space,” comprised of “[t]he poetry being written by women in Ireland today” (“The Irish Woman Poet” 45–46). As a woman poet, she felt it was important to speak this out, which she did. In this, she was much like Kavanagh, who was an object himself, before becoming an author who challenged the idea of “tradition” in his time.

A dialogue on the sonnet form

In the context of poetry composition, Boland is distinguishable from other poets who commemorated Kavanagh, by her illuminating account of his use of the sonnet form in “Epic.” In “Discovering the Sonnet,” an essay in *The Making of a Sonnet: A Norton Anthology*, Boland dedicates a few pages to “Epic,” suggesting to readers that the essay’s title could be indicative of Kavanagh’s sonnet itself.

“Epic” is, as Boland states, a sonnet that successfully eliminates the cultural discrepancy between Irish and Anglophone poetry. For seventeen-year-old Boland, who thought, “I wanted to belong to Irish poetry; I wanted Irish poetry to belong to me” (“Discovering the Sonnet” 43), the sonnet form was not integral to writing poetry: “I was sure that it was un-Irish, un-local, too courtly for a new republic, too finished to

ever find a new beginning in the literature I was trying to understand” (44). As Tara Guissin-Stubb observes, Boland’s language of “struggle” and “resistance” deserves special attention (9). In “Discovering the Sonnet,” she acknowledged that the following fact regarding “Epic” moved her: “. . . when a marginal—in historical terms, at least—and powerless Irish poet looked for expression, what came to his aid was the swift-footed, fourteen-line strategy that had bent to empires and loitered in courts” (45). Boland’s encounter with “Epic” had convinced her “that a great form can discover a poet just as much and as often as a poet discovers a form” (45). Her discovery of the sonnet as “a form of true power—malleable, nomadic, humane” (48) is noteworthy, especially when considering her several uses of the form.

In his article on Kavanagh’s last poems, John Goodby refers to the fact that Kavanagh “had often used the sonnet, and taken liberties with it,” and it was relatively “preponderant” at that stage of his career (145). Kavanagh’s unique intimacy with the forebearers of the sonnet shows, for instance, in the titling of “On Looking into E. V. Rieu’s Homer” as an allusion to John Keats’ “On First Looking into Chapman’s Homer.”⁷ Even before “Epic,” he had published several sonnets in literary magazines and attempted such sonnet sequences as “Temptation in Harvest” and “The Defeated.”⁸ He once attributed his fondness for the form chiefly to its rules, which are strict yet liberating.

I am very fond of the sonnet form, and not merely because it has been the most popular vehicle for the expression of love but because its strict rules, which like other rules Shakespeare broke so wonderfully, forces [sic] the mind to moral activity but is not itself forced. (“Extracts from Ten Lectures” 65)

Among his sonnets, “Epic” is not the only one that carries a transcendent, liberating potential outside of its historical context. Dillon Johnston commends “Canal Bank Walk” as “worth thousands of Kavanagh’s prosaic summons to forget Irishness and to celebrate one’s place and moment in appropriate poetic forms” (137). “The Hospital,” a sonnet first published in 1956, is no exception. Terence Brown writes: “That the poet should have chosen the sonnet, that European and English form, to write a poem that transcends the conditions of his own bitter, difficult Irish experience is a cultural fact of intriguing significance” (220).

However, it cannot be ignored that England—the country from which the form was transferred to Ireland—is referred to by Kavanagh as “parochial.” In his paradigm-shifting passage on the contrast between parochialism and provincialism, published a year after “Epic,” the English are listed as a “parochial” civilisation, along with the Greek and

Israelite. It is even underscored, that “[t]he most parochial of modern civilisations is the English” (“Mao Tse-Tung Unrolls His Mat” 2). Such a regard of the English mentality —“never in any doubt about the social and artistic validity of his parish” (2)—lead him to contrast it with Irish literature and its lack of the “parish myth” (“Nationalism and Literature” 248). Although “Epic” was written earlier, the somewhat “parochial” overtone lies at its heart, with its final epiphanic lines much admired by Boland (“Discovering the Sonnet” 47–48). As she informs, “Epic” is a sonnet which transplants the form in an Irish local setting, dissociating it from its generic origin and according it both a transpiring and meditative capacity.

In tracing Boland’s creative trajectory of the sonnet form, one must note that her early poetic style seemed to reflect that of Yeats. Stephen Regan, in *The Sonnet*, comprehends that she “both registers the formidable influence of Yeats and shows her determination to move beyond it” and examines her “Yeats in Civil War” in *New Territory* (215–216). “Heroic” in *The Lost Land* and “On Renoir’s The Grape Pickers” in *Night Feed* are also part of his discussion, where Regan remarks: “Boland . . . has helped to refashion the political sonnet by dissolving and defusing images of violence” (217). Similarly, in the sonnet titled “Ready for Flight” in *The War Horse*, Boland expresses a reconciliatory moment in a desolate land, through the speaker’s meditation with an unspecified other:

Then I would come at once my love with love
Bringing to wasted areas the sight
Of butterfly and swan and turtle dove
Their wings ruffled like sails ready for flight.

In such surroundings, after the decease
Of devils, you and I would live in peace. (9–14)

In contrast to her earlier sonnets discussed above, Boland’s tone became more personal and reflective after the 2000s. An example is “Is It Still the Same” in *Code*, published in 2001, where the object “she” is embraced by the subject-speaker, overlooking the past: “I wrote like that once. / But this is different. / This time, when she looks up, I will be there.” (12–14)

Published in 2007, a year before *The Making of a Sonnet*, “Atlantis – A Lost Sonnet” in *Domestic Violence* inaugurated a new dimension in her process of creating sonnets. It opens with a question cast by the speaker:

How on earth did it happen, I used to wonder
that a whole city – arches, pillars, colonnades,
not to mention vehicles and animals – had all
one fine day gone under? (1-4)

While attempting to provide a sense of the past, that is, Plato's time, the poem shifts its focus to the modern cityscape that the speaker is missing: "white pepper, white pudding, you and I meeting / under fanlights and low skies to go home in it" ("Atlantis – A Lost Sonnet" 8–9). With regard to the myth, the poem ends with a speculation, that "the old fable-makers" (11) might have rephrased "their sorrow" (14) as Atlantis:

...Maybe
what really happened is

this: the old fable-makers searched hard for a word
to convey that what is gone is gone forever and
never found it. And so, in the best traditions of

where we come from, they gave their sorrow a name
and drowned it. (9-15)

Unlike Kavanagh's "Epic," this poem does not convey a strong linkage between the speaker's present and ancient times. Moreover, it neither affirms nor validates any specific locality, by means of imageries of the mythic past. Rather, it meditates upon the fragile relationship between the past and present, the individual and world and the human memory and faculty of imagination. This is achieved by employing the historical form subtly yet unconventionally, as the end result is a tailed sonnet which retains little of the traditional stanza structure or rhyme scheme. Boland was innovative, in that she opened up the sonnet as a form that allows contestation, as well as engagement with the past. The result was a body of work that further expands the possibilities of the sonnet form.

Conclusion

This article explores Eavan Boland's critical and intimate reading of Patrick Kavanagh's poetry, from among other Irish poets of the preceding generation. The "dissidence" that she sensed in her first meeting with him—"Kavanagh was a countryman; I was a woman" (*Object Lessons* 99)—is partly attributable to certain imageries of the earlier generation

which can be observed in his poetry. While retaining the female representation of the muse and the country, Boland bestows them with subjectivities that subvert the older formula.

However, both poets felt somewhat marginalised by the established mainstream, thus enabling their identification as object-becoming-authors. Her loose association with the older poet would lead Boland to comment on his poetry as an inspiring model, and on him as “a deeply serious man.” Her reading of Kavanagh’s “Epic” as a sonnet reminded her of the possibilities of the poetic form. In tracking Boland’s sonnet creation, “Atlantis—A Lost Sonnet,” deserves particular attention as an innovative example of her late sonnets. It is posited as an interaction with the past, a meditation upon the past and present and the individual and world, to explore the mechanisms of human imagination and mythmaking.

While this article could only highlight limited points, there are many more thematic concerns that require further exploration and comparison, such as the sense of “place” or exploration of “return,” in the later poems of both poets. Irish poetry in the late twentieth century was blessed by a number of creative individuals, and reflections on the past could give rise to a liberating momentum, as was the case with Kavanagh and Boland.

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Notes

1. See Haberstroch 49–52.
2. Patrick Kavanagh, “Pygmalion,” in *Collected Poems*. Ed. Antoinette Quinn. London: Penguin, 2005. p. 28. All subsequent references to Kavanagh’s poems in this article are cited from the collection and are given parenthetically in the text.
3. For Boland’s continued discussion on the representation of the feminine and the national in Irish poetry, see *A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition* (pamphlet) and *Object Lessons* 123-153. These references are also mentioned in Randolph 19.
4. Eavan Boland, “The Muse Mother,” in *New Collected Poems*. Manchester: Carcanet, 2005. p. 103. All subsequent references to Boland’s poems published before 2001 are cited from the collection and are given parenthetically in the text.
5. See Quinn’s notes in *Selected Poems* 176.
6. For further discussions on Boland’s use of the trope of Mother Ireland, see Clark 335–339.
7. See Quinn’s notes in *Selected Poems* 177.
8. The sonnets in “Temptation in Harvest” were published separately in different venues. See Quinn’s notes in *Collected Poems* 273. “The Defeated” was first published as “A Sonnet Sequence for the Defeated” early in the same year as “Epic.” See *Collected Poems* 278.

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