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## NOMADIC MEMORY AND REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN EAVAN BOLAND'S *THE HISTORIANS*\*

Okaycan DÜRÜKOĞLU\*\*

### Abstract

This article aims to explore Eavan Boland's *The Historians* (2020) through the lens of Rosi Braidotti's concept of nomadic memory. In this posthumously published poetry collection, Boland brings together the marginalised and mostly forgotten stories of Irish women so as to reject their silenced and monolithic representation in traditional narratives such as history and official documents. While doing so, Boland uses the power of memory and fuses the act of remembering with imaginative recreations. The act of remembering Boland presents in *The Historians* is in line with nomadic remembering in that it provides mobility and fluidity for female subject positions, and eventually problematises the essentialist representations that are supported in the dominant patriarchal discourse of history. Accordingly, this paper argues that read through Braidotti's notion of nomadic memory, Boland, in *The Historians*, uses nomadic memory to develop female nomadic subjects with fluid identities and their own history.

**Keywords:** *Eavan Boland, The Historians, Nomadic memory, History, Past, Irish women, Nomadic subjectivity.*

### EAVAN BOLAND'IN *THE HISTORIANS* ESERİNDE GÖÇEBE HAFIZA VE KADIN TEMSİLİ

#### Öz

Bu makale, Eavan Boland'ın *The Historians* (2020; Tarihçiler) adlı eserini Rosi Braidotti'nin göçebe hafızası kavramı bağlamında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Ölümünden sonra yayınlanan bu şiir koleksiyonunda Boland, İrlandalı kadınların tarih ve resmî belgeler gibi geleneksel anlatılarda susturulmuş ve tekdüzeleştirilmiş temsilini reddetmek amacıyla bu kadınların marjinalleştirilmiş ve çoğunlukla unutulmuş hikâyelerini bir araya getirmektedir. Boland bunu yaparken hafızanın gücünden yararlanmakta ve hatırlama eylemini yaratıcı canlandırmalarla birleştirmektedir. Boland'ın *The Historians* eserinde sunduğu hatırlama eylemi, kadın özne konumlarına hareketlilik ile akışkanlık sağlaması ve sonuçta kadınların hâkim ataerkil tarih söyleminde desteklenen özcü temsillerini sorunsallaştırması bakımından göçebe hatırlamayla uyumludur. Dolayısıyla bu makale, *The Historians* eseri Braidotti'nin göçebe hafızası kavramı üzerinden okunduğunda, Boland'ın değişken kimliklere ve kendi tarihlerine sahip göçebe kadın özneler geliştirmek için göçebe hafızayı kullandığını ileri sürmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** *Eavan Boland, The Historians, Göçebe hafızası, Tarih, Geçmiş, İrlandalı kadınlar, Göçebe öznellik.*

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\*\*Res. Assist., Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, TOKAT.  
e-mail: durukogluokaycan@gmail.com (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6681-6649>)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Eavan Boland (1944-2020) is a prominent literary figure of Irish literature in that she revolutionises the representation of Irish women in Irish poetry. Her poetry is a reaction to male-oriented Irish poetry that limits the representation of women as fixed and stable subjects. As Catriona Clutterbuck puts it, “Boland’s intention as a poet is to investigate and subvert systems of authority implicit in women’s (mis)representation” (1999: 280). In many of her collections, she presents diverse and multiple experiences of Irish women as a reaction to male-oriented Irish poetry. Boland underlines the fact that it is not possible to find complex and in-depth representations of Irish women in poetry. Instead, Irish women are presented as “passive, decorative, raised to emblematic status” (1995: 134). Boland overtly displays her discontent regarding such representation of Irish women by stating that “these passive and simplified women seemed a corruption. [...] For they [Irish women] were not decorations, they were not ornaments. However distorted these images, they had their roots in a suffered truth” (1995: 135). Boland believes that the details of the truth surrounding the lives of women are excluded and erased in the Irish poetic tradition. As Heather Clark suggests, “Boland searched for the undercurrents of suffering that coursed below the official histories” (2024: x). Hence, her poetic strategy is to insert the forgotten voices and experiences of Irish women into poetry. Accordingly, this study aims to analyse Eavan Boland’s *The Historians* (2020) by taking into consideration Rosi Braidotti’s concept of nomadic memory and the act of remembering in the nomadic mode to argue that Boland rejects the traditional representations of Irish women as emblems or icons, and uses nomadic memory to develop female nomadic subjects. Boland’s use of memory in *The Historians* is to be argued as a way of criticising the essentialist representation of Irish women and the official version of history that marginalises minority groups such as women. Hence, the first part of the article examines Braidotti’s figuration of a female nomadic subject and her concept of nomadic memory, and the second part focuses on Boland’s use of memory and the analysis of the selected poems in terms of nomadic remembering.

Braidotti is one of the key philosophers who challenges the traditional patriarchal representations of female subject positions. In her book *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994), Braidotti introduces a new feminist figuration which she calls “a nomadic subject”. Since Braidotti’s primary concern is to develop “new images of female subjectivity” (1994: 158), her nomadic subjectivity mostly consists of the ways to deconstruct what the overarching patriarchal ideology constructed as a traditional image of female subjectivity. It is worth highlighting that the core of Braidotti’s nomadic project “plunges its roots in feminist theory” (2011a: 5). Her primary objective in formulating the figuration of a female nomadic subjectivity is to free women from the established line of thinking which encourages the repetitive and constraining forms of subjectivity for women. Feminist theory, in general, offers a vigorous attempt to change and reshape the essentialist approach to any form of female subject position; thus, feminism provides the necessary context for redesigning female subjectivity by rejecting the old schemes of thought and impositions. Moreover, Braidotti claims that a nomadic subject “is akin to [...] counter-memory [or nomadic memory]. [...] [T]heir memory is activated against the stream; they enact a rebellion of subjugated knowledges” (1994: 25), and they tend to remember in the nomadic mode. The memories of nomadic subjects do not belong to the central memory system of the majority but they remember in the minority mode. That is, the nomadic memories are fluid, and they encourage subjects to change and transform themselves by leaving behind fixed and static representations.

In this context, Boland’s *The Historians* exemplifies the use of fluid, thus nomadic memory. *The Historians* was posthumously published after Boland’s sudden death in 2020 (Doyle, 2020). This final collection of hers can be taken as her last meditation on Irish women’s marginalisation and exclusion from the official history of Ireland. As a woman poet, she is “concerned with what history includes and excludes, with writing herself as a woman poet into history, with recovering from the darkness of exclusion and neglect so many lives that have flared and died outside history” (Dorgan, 2021). While meditating on and criticising the way historical narratives silence Irish women, Boland makes use of memories of Irish women forgotten and marginalised in Irish history and the act of remembering in *The Historians*. As the nomadic mode requires, this act of remembering in Boland’s selected poems follows the essential premise of remembering in the nomadic mode in terms of merging the past with imaginative recreations (Braidotti, 2011b: 236). Nomadic remembering uses imagination or imaginative recreation while narrating the past experiences of minority groups. This type of remembering embellishes the past by adding details which are the product of the imaginative act of nomadic consciousness. Similarly, Boland

in *The Historians* uses the past experiences of Irish women who are subjected to the continuous marginalisation in Irish history and the lack of credibility in their representations. While doing so, Boland enhances Irish women's representation by including imaginative details and accordingly, she develops female nomadic subjects who are remembering in the nomadic mode.

## **2. CONCEPT OF NOMADIC SUBJECTIVITY AND NOMADIC REMEMBERING**

Rosi Braidotti defines the figuration of a female nomadic subject as follows: "The nomad expresses my own figuration of a situated, postmodern, culturally differentiated understanding of the subject in general and of the feminist subject in particular" (2011a: 25). Braidotti's figuration of a female nomad empowers female subjects by taking into consideration every single experience of womanhood without creating hierarchies in/among different representations of female subjectivity. This figuration acknowledges the multiplicity of female experiences and it, as Kathy Davis and Helma Lutz assert, "captures the need within feminism for a bond among women which is fluid, changing and respectful of diversity and complexity. 'Nomadism' is a subjectivity of liberation rather than assimilation" (2000: 376). In her nomadic project, hence, Braidotti is inspired by nomadic communities and traditions. Yet, she underlines the fact that nomads are only used as metaphors: "the nomadism in question here refers to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour. It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of travelling" (1994: 5). Evidently, by building on the metaphor of the nomads, Braidotti aims to expand the conventional and traditional representation of women. Thus, Braidotti's rethinking of the representation of female subjectivity in a nomadic mode includes producing new ways to save women from the established line of representation. Accordingly, the figuration of the female nomadic subject prioritises the differences that exist in female subjectivity by underlining the idea that "woman is not a monolithic essence defined once and for all but rather the site of multiple, complex, and potentially contradictory sets of experiences, defined by overlapping variables such as class, race, age, lifestyle, sexual preference, and others" (Braidotti, 1994: 4). The mindset behind the formation of this female figuration is women's constant marginalisation when compared to men. The dualistic and traditional way of representing female experience and subjectivity confines women to certain definitions, expectations, and roles. The traditional approach to femininity mostly consists of stereotypical and passive roles ascribed to women, and the creation of the iconic and emblematic female figures. Consequently, this established line of thinking creates fixed and limited subject positions for women. Yet, the act of focusing on once-neglected differences frees women from the established ways of representation, and it promotes the notion of fluidity and mobility. In this regard, Tim Cresswell puts forward that the fundamental principle of nomadic subjectivity is "the idea that by focusing on mobility, flux, flow, and dynamism we can emphasize the importance of *becoming* at the expense of the already achieved—the stable and static. [This mobility] is linked to a world of practice, of anti-essentialism, anti-foundationalism, and resistance to established forms of ordering and discipline" (2006: 47). In other words, the female nomadic subjectivity refutes creating another set of definitions and beliefs about women and their experiences. Instead, it provides a new perspective on reading and reevaluating female subjectivity as a fluid and mobile notion.

Nomadic subjectivity can be taken as a resistance not only to the traditional representation of subject position but also to the mindset that promotes the notions of fixity and stability. Thus, nomadic subjectivity also tries to change the traditional line of thought by creating a different kind of consciousness that uses the notions of mobility and fluidity. Nomadic consciousness is an attempt to form a new critical awareness to erase "the dogmatic image of thought" (Brown, 2005: 32). Braidotti highlights the idea that this form of consciousness "combines features that are usually perceived as opposing, namely the possession of a sense of identity that rests not on fixity but on contingency" (1994: 31). By endowing women with these anti-essentialists and anti-foundationalist notions that erase the traditional beliefs regarding their representations, nomadic consciousness contributes to the development of new ways of representing female subjectivity and experience.

Nomadic memories are the product of this new form of consciousness. Nomadic memory or remembering in the minority mode is a reaction to the central memory system of the majority that excludes the voices and experiences of the minorities. Braidotti's notion of nomadic memory can be regarded as an extension of Michel Foucault's concept of counter-memory. Although Braidotti uses nomadic memory and counter-memory

interchangeably, she provides a new outlook for the understanding and reading of memory. Counter-memory belongs to the subjects who lack the mediums of representation in the official narratives, and as Verónica Tello explains its principles,

[c]ounter-memory is a concept (for re-thinking time) and agent of political subjectification that refuses the nationalist-normativity of remembrance – as tied up as it is with monuments and ‘official’, canonised histories – while also attempting to forge temporalities attuned to the social movements and struggles of the vanquished. (2019: 1)

As stated above, these counter or nomadic memories focus on what is forgotten in the experiences of the vanquished and marginalised minorities as opposed to the experiences of the majority in the official narratives. Nomadic memories mainly reject what is glorified and highlighted in the official national narratives, such as history, since they aim to contribute to the continuation of the majority’s discourse by disregarding the voices of the minority. Braidotti also states that nomadic memories “are affirmative, destabilizing forces that propel subjects actively toward change. They are the kind of memories that are linked to ethical and political consciousness and concern events one simply forgot to forget” (2011b: 32-33). These memories are part of the excluded information of the official narratives in which the marginalised groups, such as women, and their experiences are suppressed. Their memories are revealed with the help of nomadic consciousness in that the act of remembering in the nomadic mode shows resistance to the official historical records and narratives. Braidotti describes nomadic subjects as follows: “[Nomadic subjects] are those who have a peripheral consciousness and have forgotten to forget injustice and symbolic poverty: their memory is activated against the stream; they enact a rebellion of subjugated knowledges” (2011a: 60). To put it another way, nomadic subjects refuse to forget the events and experiences that are oppressed by the mainstream and traditional narratives. These memories are the reflections of what is buried or erased by the official ideology and narratives.

Furthermore, the act of remembering in the nomadic mode supports the act of change as opposed to notions of fixity and stability regarding the representation of any subject position since, as Braidotti puts it, “[m]emory is ongoing and forward-looking precisely because it is a singular yet complex subject that is always already in motion and in process. This memory has to do with the capacity to endure, to ‘sustain’ the process of change or transformation” (2011b: 235). This fluid aspect of memory encourages subjects to leave behind the fixed and stable representation of their experiences, and the fluidity of nomadic memory is achieved by the use of imagination because nomadic memories “need the imagination to empower the actualization of virtual possibilities in the subject” (Braidotti, 2011b: 236). Braidotti underlines the fact that it is not possible to reflect the reality or truth of events and occasions if one is writing from memory because writing from memory allows a person to forego comparing their work to the original text during the commentary process. This underscores the idea that the truth of a text is never fully captured in writing. It is not confined to the meanings within the book, nor does it depend on the authority of the names, signatures or established traditions (2011b: 232). Truth or reality cannot be totally recorded in any text including official documents and narratives. The reason behind such a conviction is based on the idea that remembering in the nomadic mode or revealing nomadic memory “open[s] up spaces of movement and of deterritorialization which actualize virtual possibilities which had been frozen in the image of the past. Opening up these virtual spaces is a creative effort” (Braidotti, 2006: 168). This creativity is related to the use of imagination during the process of remembering which eventually leads to the formation of nomadic memories. Nomadic memories and remembering in the nomadic mode are especially significant for female nomadic subjectivity in that they attempt to deconstruct and question official narratives such as history and dominant strategies that limit the representation of the female experience. Their memories provide a new outlook in order to see women’s experiences in a more diverse and inclusive manner than it is traditionally presented by official discourses. Accordingly, the analysis of Boland’s selected poems in *The Historians* shows how nomadic memories of Irish women provide the critique of the official version of history that silences and places them in a minority position. Hence, Boland aims to reveal the way these nomadic memories of Irish women disrupt the flow of official historical accounts that limit the representation of female subjectivity.

### 3. NOMADIC MEMORY IN BOLAND'S *THE HISTORIANS*

Boland's representation of nomadic memory is not limited to her latest collection. In *Outside History* (1990), she explains her technic of writing from memory. Her poem "We Are Always Too Late" epitomises the way memories are shaped by imagination. Boland writes that

Memory

is in two parts.

First, the re-visiting

[...] Then

the re-enactment. Always that. (1990: 47)

The reenactment of remembering the past is the creative process of writing from memory. According to Boland, revisiting the past includes the process of changing what it shows wrong in order to leave behind essentialist beliefs and mindsets. She claims in her second book of prose, *A Journey with Two Maps* that "[t]hen why go there? Why visit the site of our exclusion? We need to go to that past: not to learn from it, but to change it. If we do not change that past, it will change us" (2011: 251). That is, while highlighting the importance of the past, Boland points out the difference between the past and history by stating that "there's a wide and instructive distance between [the past and history]" (2006: 53). She argues that the past and history are binary concepts, and the difference between them should be discussed and explored so as to understand the limited nature of official historical writing with its formation of the essentialist version of history. "In Ireland," Boland puts forward, "I believe history is an official version of events—it is itself a constructed narrative. But the past [...] is a place of silences and losses and disappearances. That gap, that distance between those two narratives [...] has been a powerful motive for me to make certain arguments and to challenge certain concepts" (2006: 53). The constructed narrative of history is not in favour of the oppressed and silenced groups since it is exclusionary and essentialist in nature especially for Irish women. On the other hand, Boland accepts the past as an alterable and flexible notion, and this is only possible via imaginative recreations. Accordingly, as Catherine Kilcoyne argues, Boland's "memory poems both show frustration at the failure that is always behind any reconstruction of the past and at the same time revel in the playfulness of memory's openness to textual creation" (2007: 91). Likewise, Braidotti highlights the fact that remembering in the nomadic mode uses the fusion of memory and imagination (2006: 169) and this fusion is also significant for creating a fluid subjectivity for the female subject positions since "[r]emembering in this nomadic mode is the active reinvention of a self that is joyfully discontinuous, as opposed to being mournfully consistent, as programmed by phallogocentric culture. [...] [Memories] allow the subject to differ from oneself as much as possible" (2006:169). In other words, nomadic remembering is one of the requirements in the formation of female nomadic subjectivity which is fluid and non-essentialist.

Similarly, "The Fire Gilder", the opening poem of *The Historians*, is about Boland's remembrance of one of her memories with her mother. In the poem, Boland underlines the unsteady nature of the act of remembering because Boland's memory related to her mother is interrupted as a result of her forgetting the details of their conversation. The poem starts off describing how her mother explains the process of "gild[ing] any surface" (2020: 3) and this process consists of melding and burning. The first stanza ends with her mother's own voice yet the speaker interrupts it by stating that "*The only thing*, she added---/ but what came after that I forgot" (2020: 3). Clearly, Boland draws attention to the fragility of any memory and in this regard, as Pilar Villar-Argaiz states, "the excluded part of the voice of Boland's mother "is deferred to climactic position to the end of the poem. [...] Instead, Boland deviates our attention as she engages in the ambiguous terrain of memory and the past" (2021: 82). Then, the poem comments on the difference between memory and knowledge:

My subject is the part wishing plays in  
the way villages are made  
to vanish, in the way I learned  
to separate memory from knowledge,  
so one was volatile, one was not (2020: 4)

Evidently, the speaker points out that memory is a volatile concept that is open to change and is unreliable. On the other hand, knowledge documented in official narratives is steady and unchangeable. Boland's understanding of memory shows affinity with Braidotti's concept of nomadic memory in terms of its fluid and unstable nature (2006: 168). Although memory and knowledge are juxtaposed as two contrasting notions, Boland underlines the idea that they are inseparable from each other during the process of imaginative recreation. As Helen Emmitt puts forward, "Boland's memory and knowledge are the poles necessary for creation" (2021: 14). Moreover, Boland builds a connection between writing poetry and the profession of a fire gilder, and she describes her strategy of writing from memory in this context:

and how I started writing,  
burning light,  
building heat until all at once  
I was the fire gilder  
ready to lay radiance down,  
ready to decorate *it happened*  
with *it never did* (2020: 4)

Boland resembles her act of writing poetry to the profession of a fire gilder, and while doing so, she reveals that she shapes the actuality by her use of imagination. In the poem, Boland's phrase "*it happened*" (2020: 4) refers to the actual events and the phrase "*it never did*" (2020: 4) stands for imaginative recreations. Boland's strategy of combining "*it happened*" (memories/related to actuality) and "*it never did*" (acts of imagination) shows that the nomadic memories are "not necessarily or inevitably linked to 'real' experience" (Braidotti, 2006: 168). Evidently, this part of the poem is the demonstration of Boland's use of nomadic memory. As the nomadic theory suggests, the fusion of memory and imagination is a necessary condition to create a virtual possibility for a female nomadic subject and this virtual possibility "entails the active displacement of dominant formations of identity, memory, and identification" (Braidotti, 2011b: 235). Accordingly, the poet reveals a strikingly similar technique in the opening poem of the collection by activating nomadic remembering, and she employs this technique in the following poems "Anonymous" and "Eviction".

"Anonymous" is the first poem which exemplifies Boland's use of the technique of nomadic memory and remembering in the nomadic mode after she demonstrates the steps of nomadic remembering in "The Fire Gilder". As the title suggests, the poem is about an anonymous woman figure and her job. It is revealed in the poem that this woman is "a closed book, / a near relative" (2020: 12) of the speaker and the speaker

once heard  
she carried messages,  
communications, worn-  
out documents, (2020: 12)

Accordingly, it is understood that there is a lack of information regarding this woman and her life. However, Jody Allen Randolph asserts that “[t]he closed book Boland imagines here was her mother’s eldest sister, Margaret Kelly, whom Eavan never met” (2020: 69). Although this woman is perhaps Boland’s aunt, Boland prefers to hide this information. In the light of this, it is seen that Boland’s strategy of obscuring the details of her aunt’s identity can be taken as the essential requirement of nomadic remembering, which is the creation of a virtual possibility for female nomadic subjectivity. Braidotti suggests that remembering in the nomadic mode consists of the steps of the careful composition and selection of information regarding memories since it refuses to finalise the thinking process since “nomadic remembering is like a constant quest for temporary moments when a balance can be sustained, before the forces dissolve again and move on. And on it goes, never equal to itself, but faithful enough to itself to endure, and to pass on” (2006: 168). In other words, nomadic remembering is a constant process of thinking with the aim of creating a fluid representation of a subject position. This fluidity can only be possible with imaginative recreations. In a similar fashion in “Anonymous”, Boland portrays a speaker who has a selective memory. The speaker hence remembers certain facts about the anonymous woman and deliberately forgets others. Then, she uses imaginative recreations of her aunt that activate the nomadic process of thinking in the second stanza:

On cold nights  
when mist rolls in  
from the ocean  
somewhere near Clontarf  
I think I see her strolling,  
holding on  
to a folded message,  
a dispatch order. (2020: 12-13)

Clearly, the speaker imagines seeing her old aunt walking on the street on cold misty nights. Here, the poem offers an imaginative act of nomadic consciousness in refusing to portray this woman as a static female figure. Instead, the poem paves the way for the fluid assertion of female nomadic subjectivity in that this woman’s life defies closure; the poem’s use of blurred memory provides liminality and ambiguity for the female subject. This liminality challenges the fixed and monumentalised representation of this woman’s subjectivity and experience.

A similar act of nomadic remembrance contributes to the portrayal of one of the forgotten Irish women in “Eviction”. The poem is based on Boland’s grandmother’s eviction from her house by the Irish government. Boland, in *Object Lessons*, writes that there is no detail in regard to the eviction of her grandmother and father: “They had been evicted from a smallholding near the river Barrow in Kildare. There were almost no details. [...] But if there were no details, the image of an eviction was a brutal Irish generic. No cartoon, no sentimental drawing can have anything like the force or bitterness of folk memory” (1996: 43). It should be noted that the poem rewrites a real woman, who was treated and defined by the established patriarchal discourse in an essentialist way, through nomadic memory. Accordingly, the poem uses a real eviction case which took place in 1904 in that the speaker of the poem says that “I linger over the page of the *Drogheda/ Argus and Leinster Journal*, 1904” (2020: 15). This information also contributes to the nomadic remembering in that writing from memory or remembering in a nomadic way does not adhere to a linear temporal pattern, and as Braidotti explains, “it constantly reconnects to the virtual totality of a continuously recomposing block of past and present moments” (2006: 171). Braidotti discusses two distinct conceptions of time when describing how nomadic remembering and thinking processes work. The first is *Chronos* (linear) and the other is *Aion* which is the undifferentiated one (2014: 173). She appropriates Gilles Deleuze’s understanding of time. In *The Logic of Sense*, Deleuze makes the case that there exist two kinds of time and he suggests that

one of which [*Chronos*] is always definite, active or passive; the other [*Aion*] is eternally infinitive and eternally neutral. One is cyclical, measures the movement of bodies and depends on the matter which limits and fills it out; the other is a pure straight line at surface, incorporeal, unlimited, an empty form of time, independent of all matter. (1969/1990: 62)

As indicated, the term *Chronos* refers to the ordered, linear time sequence to which all matter is obligated. Conversely, *Aion* is the infinite, disordered cycle of time that is impervious to conventional measurement methods because it is “coextensive with the entirety of time – the memorial past, the lived present, and the undisclosed future” (Luzcky, 2022: 52). Considering that there are no clear distinctions between the various instances of time, *Aion* thus symbolizes the multiplicity of time. Accordingly, Braidotti argues that *Aion*, where present, past, and future are fused, is the repository of nomadic memories and nomadic remembering itself, and she describes the understanding of time in the nomadic process of remembering as “recomposing block of past and present moments” (2006: 171). This conception of time can be observed in “Eviction”. The poem begins with the speaker’s recalling of her grandmother’s past, yet the speaker states at the end that she is in the archives “in a modern Ireland” (2020: 23) to look for details about her grandmother’s eviction. It is clear that the poem alternates between the past and the present. In other words, the poem builds a bridge between the past of the grandmother and the speaker’s present time, and the poem presents the speaker as an interpreter of her grandmother’s buried and suppressed past.

Yet, she fails to find any details about the eviction of her grandmother in the official documents and she expresses her disappointment by asserting that the speaker’s “attention has/ no agency, none at all” (2020: 15). In this respect, the poem “expresses the conviction that the ‘truth’ of a text is somehow never really ‘written’. Neither is it contained within the signifying space of the book, nor is it about the authority of a proper noun, a signature, a tradition, a canon, let alone the prestige of a discipline” (Braidotti, 2006: 171). Because the truth of the woman’s eviction from her house is excluded from the official texts and documents, it is only possible to know about her experiences through nomadic remembering. It seems that the poem uses one of the convictions of nomadic remembering which is “[t]he ‘truth’ of a text resides rather in the kind of outward-bound interconnections or relations that it enables, provokes, engenders and sustains” (Braidotti, 2006: 171). As Randolph argues, Boland “seek[s] silenced voices – erased from the narrative of history, erased by paradigms in a literature that didn’t allow for them, and erased by the fictive interventions of language – to re-imagine a vanished past” (2020: 69). Accordingly, a reimagining of the past takes place at the beginning of the poem:

Now she is in court for rent arrears.

The lawyers are amused.

These are the Petty Sessions,

this is Drogheda, this is the Bank Holiday.

Their comments fill a column in the newspaper. (2020: 14)

Evidently, the speaker imagines the trial of her grandmother since it is not possible for her to gain the exact information. The only reliable source of this trial exists in the memories of the grandmother figure. However, Boland is unable to retrieve these memories from her grandmother since “the different generations may remain mentally and emotionally insulated, the memories of one generation locked irretrievably, as it were, in the brains and bodies of that generation” (Connerton, 1989: 3). The only way to shed light on this excluded part of history regarding this woman’s life is to imagine what is missing. The poet thus visualises the afterwards of the trial:

The case comes to an end, is dismissed.

Leaving behind the autumn evening.

Leaving behind the room she entered.

Leaving behind the reason I have always



resisted history.

A woman leaves a courtroom in tears.

A nation is rising to the light.

History notes the second not the first. (2020: 14)

Accordingly, the grandmother's "history" is not recorded, but the glorious national history is. The poem creates a virtual possibility for the female figure who seems to be treated unfairly. In other words, Boland tries to give credibility to one of the forgotten and unrecognised women of the Irish past. Thanks to the remembering in the nomadic mode, Boland "actualize[s] virtual possibilities that had been frozen in the image of the past" (Braidotti, 2011b: 153). Her grandmother can be accepted as one of the images frozen in the past, but imagining the details of the trial and the grandmother's tears saves this woman from being a silent/silenced figure of history. Boland gives her a history/story that she lacks. In this virtual possibility that is created by the poem, Boland's grandmother gains fluidity and singularity in that "[w]hat emerges from [...] female characters in [Boland's] poems is the singularity of women in the past, women whose difference cannot be appropriated, reified or misrepresented any more, as nationalist, religious and literary texts have often done" (Villar Argáiz, 2021: 74). Evidently, one could argue that Boland creates a female nomadic subjectivity for one of the forgotten women of Irish history by adhering to the two stages of nomadic remembering in that the imaginative act of nomadic consciousness and the moving from the past to the present create the opportunity for the creation of the fluid representation of a grandmother figure. Boland utilizes her imagination to build a virtual possibility for her grandmother's portrayal.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, in *The Historians*, Boland opposes the fixed and monolithic representations of the female experience and subjectivity in the male-oriented Irish literary tradition through the use of nomadic memory. Within the framework of Braidotti's concept of nomadic memory, Boland represents the unrecorded and half-forgotten aspects of women's experiences that are overlooked and suppressed in official narratives. Boland thus provides potential freedom and fluidity for them. As argued above in two poems from *The Historians*, "Anonymous" and "Eviction", Irish women transcend the restrictions imposed by traditional lines of thought in Boland's representations of them through remembering in the nomadic mode. In other words, she activates the process of remembering in the nomadic mode to move beyond the established representation of female subjectivity and experience. It should be noted that the use of nomadic memory in Boland's poems is not conducted to fill the gaps in the past of Irish women. Boland's merge of memories with imagination offers freedom and mobility for female subjects. Boland saves women from becoming iconic and emblematic figures of history. Irish women in her poems gain fluidity, and they move beyond the limitations set for them by the traditional line of thought. The constant flow of nomadic consciousness proves that it is not possible to represent Irish women's subjectivity in a static manner.

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