

Representations of Violence Crosscutting Gender in the Works of Eavan Boland

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Abstract

Eavan Boland (1944-2020), a prominent voice in contemporary Irish poetry, paved the way for a new era for the next generations of poets through her treatment of the concept of violence. While looking retrospectively at the turning points in Irish history and making her own private space visible to her readers, Boland addresses the concept of violence on a gendered basis. Boland's intellectual radar captures the period of Irish nation-building and the political and ethnic conflict in Northern Ireland from the late 1960s to 1998. Boland juxtaposes the socially experienced violence in these decades with everyday life experiences. Thus, the boundary between public and private spheres disappears in her poetry. According to Boland, from a gender perspective, the heroic ideal created in the face of violence excludes "the heroine" in Irish history. Accordingly, this paper problematizes how Boland handles violence on grounds of gender. To address this question, this paper examines the following four poems in turn: "The War Horse", "Suburban Woman", "In Her Own Image", and "Domestic Violence". In these poems, Boland identifies violence as a social experience which cannot be excluded from the private sphere and portrays it as an intertwined material with everyday experiences of the feminine subject.

Keywords: Eavan Boland, Anglo-Irish Poetry, Gender, Violence, Nationhood.

Eavan Boland'ın Şiirlerinde Toplumsal Cinsiyet ile Kesişen Şiddet Temsilleri

Öz

Modern İrlanda Edebiyatı'nın önemli şairlerinden Eavan Boland (1944-2020), şiirinde şiddet kavramını ele alma biçimiyle genç İrlandalı yazarlar için yeni bir kapı aralamıştır. Boland, İrlanda tarihindeki dönüm noktalarına retrospektif bir biçimde bakar, aynı zamanda gündeliğin içinde bir 'özel alan' tarif eder, bunları yaparken şiddet kavramını toplumsal cinsiyet bağlamında ele alır. Boland'ın entelektüel radarına İrlanda'nın uluslaşma dönemi ve 1960'ların sonlarından 1998'e kadar Kuzey İrlanda'da yaşanan siyasi ve etnik temelli çatışma dönemi girer. Boland bu dönemlerdeki toplumsal olarak deneyimlenen şiddeti gündelik birey yaşantısı ile yan yana koyar. Dolayısıyla Boland şiirinde kamusal alan ile özel alan kesintisiz bir diyalog içindedir. Hatta, kamusal ile özel alan arasındaki sınır Boland şiirinde zaman zaman ortadan kalkmıştır. Ayrıca, Boland'a göre toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden bakıldığında, şiddet karşısında yaratılmış olan kahraman ideali İrlanda tarihinde kadın kahramanı dışlamaktadır. Bu kavramsal çerçeveden hareketle bu yazı, Boland'ın kendi şiirlerinde şiddeti toplumsal cinsiyet temelinde nasıl ele aldığını sorunsallaştırır. Bu yazıda, belirtilen sorunsala sırasıyla Boland'ın şu şiirleri üzerinden yanıt verilir: "Savaş Atı" (The War Horse), "Banliyö Kadını" (Suburban Woman), "Kendi Suretinde" (In Her Own Image), ve "Ev İçi Şiddet" (Domestic Violence). Bu şiirlerde şiddet özel alanın dışında bırakılamayan bir toplumsal deneyimdir ve feminen öznenin 'özel alan' deneyimleri ile iç içe geçmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Eavan Boland, Anglo-İrlanda Şiiri, Toplumsal Cinsiyet, Şiddet, Ulus.

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Introduction

The truth is there is a subtle, mysterious and sometimes corrupt way in which people survive a time of violence – by thinking it can't touch their lives. (Boland, as cited in Villar, 2020, p. 62)

Violence, disintegrating the idea of collective existence² and annihilating individual human existence, is an overarching theme in Eavan Boland's poetry. Merely taking the titles of some of her collections into account such as *The War Horse* (1975), *In a Time of Violence* (1994), and *Domestic Violence* (2007), it is possible to identify her constant preoccupation with the theme of violence, be it in the context of an individual's immediate surroundings or public domain. In Boland's exploration of the public and private spheres, her representation of violence is both historical and personal simultaneously; in other words, the private and public realms continually shape each other. This paper draws on Boland's poetry to examine how violence is addressed from a gender perspective in both public and private spheres and how these spheres inform each other in Boland's portrayal of violence. Four of Boland's poems from her different poetry collections are the main focus of exploration in this paper: "The War Horse", "Suburban Woman", "In Her Own Image", and "Domestic Violence". The content of the chosen poems primarily concerns the theme of violence.

Boland's Critique of Irish National Struggle from a Gendered Perspective

To contextualize Boland's work, it is essential to consider her critique of Irish national history and its legacy for younger generations of poets. This allows us to see how she challenges representations of violence in her poetry through a gendered perspective. During the late colonial and early post-colonial periods in Ireland, the figure of the woman became symbolically intertwined with the concept of the nation (Walter, 2013, p. 313-315), a parallel that inevitably found expression in the arts, particularly within Irish poetry. Representation of women in traditional Irish poetry was symbolically central; however, in terms of the possession of power this representation was quite peripheral and secondary. This basically meant the equation of the land to the female, which derived from the conceptual equation of the colonizer to the violator – akin to a rapist (Walter, 2013). This idea rested upon the idealization of both the nation and the feminine, drawing on a long-established cultural tendency to idealize Ireland

² In an article she wrote in 1974 titled "The Weasel's Tooth", Boland states "let us be rid at last of any longing for cultural unity in a country whose most precious contribution may be precisely its insight into the anguish of disunity" (Allen-Randolph, 1993, p. 8). Boland's incisive critique of the pursuit of "an Irish cultural unity" invites careful consideration in this context..

as a maternal or virginal figure who was pure, passive, and self-sacrificing. Accordingly, the portrayal of the nation as a symbolic woman in need of protection was prevalent in both political and literary discourse especially in the early years of the Irish Republic. For instance, *Cathleen ni Houlihan* was one of the early examples of the metaphor of the feminized nation in Irish drama (Dean, 2014, p.71). Ireland's colonial past and the 1937 constitution of the nascent republic relegated women to a subordinate position. As Ingman puts it "Irish nationalism particularly embodied in Eamon de Valera's 1937 Constitution, positioned Irish women as bearers of children and keepers of the home, excluded from political and public life (Ingman, 2007, p. 5-6). In fact, during the formative years of the Irish Free State whether to prioritize nationalism over the struggle for women's rights was a significant subject of debate among pioneering members of women's movement (Ingman, 2007, p. 5).

Inheriting such a legacy and starting off her career with her collection *The New Territory* in 1967, Boland impacted the development and the evolution of Irish poetry substantially. Within the context of Irish poetry, Boland was a pioneering figure in gendering Irish poetry and leading the way to a more liberating field of work for the younger generations. She emphasized the need for breaking away from the fossilized tradition of Irish poetry which idealized, pacified and thus oppressed the female as it moulded the "virtuous" feminine identity, drawing a parallel with the "sacred" nation. In an interview, Boland succinctly puts light on the strategy young generation of female poets should adopt to gender Irish poetic voice by stating that "for a woman to explore and write her own poems in Ireland, sooner or later she will have to dismantle some pre-existing definitions. Not just of the poem, but of being and becoming a poet. Otherwise, she'll become part of them" (Allen-Randolph, 1999, p. 303). Boland refers to the poets who reproduced the poetic Irish literary tradition when she says "becoming a part of them" at the end of her remark. Here she opens the "pre-existing definitions" to negotiation and invites the young generation of female poets to question and negotiate them.

Boland received criticism from literary figures for her alleged mythologizing of domesticity and reproduction of the stock image of the feminine. For instance, Clutterbuck draws attention to Logan's criticism on Boland that "poems of quiet desperation in the kitchen do not form an original aesthetic" (Clutterbuck, 2005, p. 75). In addition, Jennifer Fitzgerald criticizes Boland severely for her portrayal of woman's powerlessness: "[Boland's] identification throughout of women with suffering, and therefore with passivity, does nothing to nurture their power." (Fitzgerald, as cited in Clutterbuck, 1999, p. 278). However, for the

majority of critics, her work breaks away from the tradition through her instrumentalization of the everyday encounters of women. Boland instrumentalizes stock images to upturn the conventions and find a new medium to express “new realities”:

By redeploying stock images of women from literary conventions like the epic or pastoral, then juxtaposing them with struggles of contemporary women, Boland reveals the ornamentalising and distorting tendencies within the old conventions. At the same time she subverts them to express new realities. (Allen-Randolph, 1993, p. 15)

Subverting the stock images of woman which emerged within a context of a colonial history and a nation building process, and envisioning a new perspective from which women’s perception of the reality could be understood were Boland’s assertions into the realm of Irish poetry. In doing so, among the many themes Boland deals with, violence is given a special place, which she addresses from a gender perspective in her corpus. Overall, poetic representations of violence in Boland’s verse challenge and disrupt the male-dominated Irish literary tradition.

Nationhood, Civil War, and Violence through Boland’s Perspective

Basically, the category of the public sphere embraces concepts such as territorial violence, nationhood, and cultural conflicts (e.g., urban vs. rural) which were inevitably open to negotiation and subject to hot debates in the history of Ireland. Thus, they became central to Boland’s verse as well. In *Object Lessons*, Boland gives an insightful account of her individual experience in her quest to define the national cause and surrounding issues as a woman and a poet. One of the most remarkable articles she wrote in this autobiographical work is “In Search of a Nation”. In this work, she describes her initial perception of Irishness first as an outsider—as she spent her childhood years abroad—and as an insider—when she comes back to Dublin from the United States. As she attempts to make sense of notions like “nation”, “citizenship”, “patriotism”, “national hero”, Boland’s intellectual journey culminates in a critical reconfiguration of such notions, examined through the framework of gender discourse. She discovers the impossibility of the “heroine” in the construction of the national realm:

And yet if you took the hero out of the story, what was left? What female figure was there to identify with? There were no women in those back streets. None, at least, who were not lowly auxiliaries of the action. The heroine, as such, was utterly passive. She was Ireland or Hibernia... She was a mother or a virgin... If her harvests were spoiled,

her mother tongue wiped out, her children killed, then it was for someone else to mark the reality. Her identity was as an image. Or was it a fiction? (Boland, 2006, p. 66).

Boland faces the impossibility of a feminine existence within the realm of national struggle and discovers the traditional constraints imposed upon women. Within this paradigm of struggle, womanhood is circumscribed by archetypal roles– the mother and the virgin– both persistently inscribed with violence and made vulnerable to the incursions of external hegemonic forces. Boland’s early perceptions of the national struggle and its negative impact on women in political as well as the artistic arena remain unchanged during the periods of upheaval and unrest at a later time. As Allen-Randolph points out she belongs to a generation of poets “whose sensibilities were radically shaken by the escalating political violence and the disillusion which followed it. North and South, the crisis raised painful questions about the relation of the poet to his or her community, and the function of art in a time of violence” (Allen-Randolph, 1993, p. 7–8). The threat posed by the violent atmosphere re-emerging in the 1970s in Ireland was an ordeal for everyone including the poets; however, in Boland’s case there was also the matter of gender, located within the surroundings of crisis and violence, which made it more complicated for her to intervene in political tensions of the time. Exclusion of women from the nationalist ideology (or put differently, the impossibility of “the heroine”), and the impact of violence on both public and individual, particularly the woman, seem to be the main drives for her creation of the poems embracing the theme of violence from a gender perspective.

Violence Extending from Public to Private Sphere in “The War Horse”

Boland’s distinct approach to violence as a female poet materializes in her collection *The War Horse* which was published in 1975, at a time of unrest in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The poems which appeared in *The War Horse* “suggest disruption, invasion, even violation” (Brown, 1993, p. 36). In her collection, one of the sources Boland draws her material from is unavoidably a public at war and she recurrently engages with the external manifestations of violence and threat as core subjects of her poetry. In poems such as “Child of Our Time”, “A Soldier’s Son”, and “The Hanging Judge” she addresses the violence Irish public faces with bleak and shocking images of the civil war.

One of the most remarkable poems in the collection where Boland critically reflects on the phenomenon of violence is “The War Horse”, which gave the collection its name. “The War Horse” is simply the narration of a short moment when the poetic persona watches a war horse approaching her garden and straying from it without giving any harm to her. The poem initiates

with an imagery of the war horse, which symbolizes the conflicts and tensions of the time, as a threat outside the secure and protected home. The poetic persona, in her safe home, watches and narrates the horse's arrival at and departure from her garden. Boland draws the imagery of the war horse vividly with the onomatopoeic words she puts into use such as "clip, crop", "his breath hissing", and "his snuffling head". The presence of the war horse strikes fright into the poetic persona's home:

He stumbles on like a rumour of war, huge,
Threatening; neighbours use the subterfuge
Of curtains; he stumbles down our short street
Thankfully passing us. I pause, wait, (Boland, 2005, p. 40)

The poetic persona's observation of the war horse, the way in which onomatopoeic sounds instill fear in her and its effect on her subjectivity—as she says "my blood is still"—reveals her sense of powerlessness against this animal which is turned into a "vehicle" to be put into use in a man-made phenomenon: war. The poetic persona and her companions remain unharmed and safe at the end of this unexpected visit. However, Boland articulates a sense of regret in her concluding line by adding "A cause ruined before, a world betrayed."

In "The War Horse", the experience of the poetic persona, who is the first-person singular in the poem, i.e. "I" articulates the experience of a nation. As Clutterbuck points out:

Boland takes to task criticism which reduces the 'I' of the text to a combination of biographical detail and 'psycho-revelation', signposting the practice whereby the 'I' in her own poems rarely designates the primary experiencing individual, the 'other' themselves, even when that other is herself. Instead, the 'I' in her texts functions as a means of access—a self-consciously limited vehicle of entry—to the experience of that other... Only through the realization of this limitation of the understanding self does the 'I' of the text become capable of (re)speaking the experience of the other. (Clutterbuck, 2005, p. 73)

Through the experience of "I" in "The War Horse" Boland points out the experience of the public with violence during the time of the Troubles³ in Ireland. Unlike the poetic voice in "Suburban Woman," Boland does not gender the "I" in "The War Horse". "I" is the voice of

³ In the history of Ireland, the Troubles (1968–1998) was a tumultuous period marked by "violent sectarian conflict... in Northern Ireland between the overwhelmingly Protestant unionists (loyalists), who desired the province to remain part of the United Kingdom, and the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic nationalists (republicans), who wanted Northern Ireland to become part of the Republic of Ireland" (Wallenfeldt, 2025).

the poetic persona standing for all individuals making up the Irish republic and exposed to the threat present in the public arena. As she does in most of her poems, here as well Boland bands together the public and the private, addressing the violence as a threat to the existence of the community, and thus of individual. As it is also apparent in “Suburban Woman”, Boland extends the zone of influence of violence from external space into the most secure and vulnerable place, “home” in “The War Horse”. Therefore, the boundaries separating the public and the private, the outside and the inside are blurred in her treatment of violence. As Gelpi puts it, the voice in this poem is both personal and historical:

This poem introduces what will become Boland’s characteristic way of setting up a poem: a domestic or familial incident is localized by a speaker, almost always the poet herself, and by time, year or season or hour, and by place, most often her house and garden, and the reflection on the incident reveals its “secret things” and invests it with figurative significance, at once personal and historic. (Gelpi, 1999, p. 212)

In “The War Horse” instead of going out to the realm of the masculinity, first of all Boland embraces the domestic—in patriarchal terms the feminine—but always preserves the link between the outside and the inside, also taking it one step further and informing the outside—in patriarchal terms the masculine—by describing the inside, seemingly conforming to this already gendered perspective. However, Boland overcomes the strict boundary between the public and the private to register the ways in which the so-called feminine, or the domestic is constitutive of the public, or the outside.

Violence, Gender, Public and Private Spheres in “Suburban Woman”

“Suburban Woman” is one of the final poems in the collection *The War Horse* which offers a gendered perspective and reading of the violence present both within the public and the private spheres. Starting from the title of the poem, Boland implies the fusion of the urban and the rural with the word “suburban” and signals the several binaries namely urban-rural, outside-inside, and public-private that the poem rests upon. The first ten couplets address violence with a governing imagery of fight and unrest with the phrases such as “rape”, “smiling killing”, “armed with blades”, “dying”, “cross-fire”, “wounds”, “wars”, and “haemorrhaging”.

In “Suburban Woman”, as in “The War Horse”, the poetic persona refers to the Troubles between the Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, which was on the rise in the late 1960s

and the early 1970s when Boland wrote the poem. In the first section, she is described as the victim of the violence surrounding her:

caught in cross-fire, her past lay, bleeding
from wounds each meant for each, which needing
each other for other wars they could not inflict
one on another... (Boland, 2005, p. 63)

The setting shifts from public space to the private as the poem progresses. The female poetic persona is portrayed within her domestic surroundings, notwithstanding the threat she is subject to in public sphere extending into this private realm. She is environed by the everyday practices at home and the ordinariness of everyday life is “courtesan to the lethal rapine of routine” (Boland, 2005, p. 64). Boland likens the preoccupations of the female persona in the morning to the acts on a battleground and the “day’s assault [on her is] over” when the sun sets.

In this poem, Boland once again fuses public and private worlds in her description of the violence stretching into the private world of the female persona. The poem ends with the assertion of the poetic persona and the person of the poet, who are vulnerable to the effects of “violence” in both historical and everyday sense: “Defeated we survive, we two, housed together in my compromise” (Boland, 2005, p. 65). The poet draws a parallel between the female persona’s domestic life and her own life. At the end, however, the poetic persona manages to remain the “sole survivor” of this terror. Boland both victimizes and heroizes the feminine against the assault of outside realities and domestic every day responsibilities.

“In Suburban Woman”, Boland pictures the issues of nation and femininity as two co-existing battles, eschewing the equation of the national cause to the ideal female engraved in the traditional Irish poetry. This portrayal seems to be the outcome of her search for a new language to articulate femininity within the context of both private and public realms enmeshed in violence and violation. The symbolic significance of what is narrated is complex in terms of the interconnectedness of the binaries Boland employs in “Suburban Woman”. Without attributing a hierarchical priority to the violence outside and the one inside, she envisions them as two reciprocally informing spheres. The mere unchanging imagery from the beginning to the end is the exposition of both the female and the poetic personae to the violence within public sphere as well as the private one.

Representations of the Female Body and Violence in “In Her Own Image”

Boland’s 1980 collection *In Her Own Image* comprises poems which mainly deal with the female body in its exposition to external suppression and violence as well as natural processes female body goes through (such as menses, which is the subject-matter of the poem “Menses”). In this collection, Boland boldly establishes a gendered perspective to explore the female body in several contexts. She describes how the suppression of the female body by the lyric Irish poem was a focal point for her in this collection as follows:

There are twelve poems. Each of them plucks at a dark side of the body—violence, self-suppression, mutilation... But it was still a book of the body. A book of physical metaphors perhaps. I also thought of it as a book of anti-lyrics... But that book allowed me to look at the fact that a certain kind of Irish lyric poem had suppressed a woman’s body. (Allen-Randolph, 1999, p. 298)

Boland’s metaphors vary from menses, anorexia to mastectomy in her portrayal of the different states and experiences of the female body. The poem “In Her Own Image” stands out among the others in its killing-related content as the poetic persona narrates the strangulation and the death of a female persona. The delirium of the poetic persona in the act of killing comes through the first three stanzas and both personae are transposed to a different state of being:

She is not myself
anymore she is not
even in my sky
anymore and I
am not myself. (Boland, 2005, p. 73)

The beginning of the poem, which is quite similar to the opening lines of “Suburban Woman” where Boland says “Town and country at each other’s throat”, narrates the act of strangulation performed by the poetic persona on another female. In the final stanzas the poetic persona alludes to the act of growth with several references such as “lettuce seeds”, “jasmine springs”, she will bloom there” while she narrates the burial of the female persona. Therefore, the act of killing in this poem certainly can also be read as an imagery representing the re-birth and irreversible transmutation of the poetic persona.

“In Her Own Image” differs from the other poems scrutinized in this paper in that Boland draws the act of violence to female body rather than describing it in a peripheral setting (see

Clutterbuck, 2021). Thus, violence invades the private sphere. In this poem, the perpetrator of violence and the victim of the violence are both female figures. Here, Boland draws attention to the necessity of subversion for transformation and innovation. Therefore, once again, although violence is pictured within the realm of private, it informs the public realm as well in “In Her Own Image”.

A Retrospective Look on Violence in Irish History: Boland’s “Domestic Violence”

In her 2007 collection *Domestic Violence* Boland “revisits the same issue that has propelled and defined her poetry for several decades: the relationship between woman, the nation, and history” (Clark, 2007, p. 180). The title of the collection implies Boland’s reconsideration of the theme of violence once again. The poem “Domestic Violence” concentrates some of the key concerns of this paper, as it portrays how Boland brings together the public and private spheres in her preoccupation with the theme of violence.

Following her marriage, Boland’s relocation from the city centre to the suburbs marks a threshold in her poetic evolution—one that aligns with a feminist reorientation toward the domestic sphere, allowing her to reclaim traditionally marginalized female experiences as valid poetic material. After she moves to the suburbs, Boland puts domestic imagery into use and she reasons this shift in her poetry as follows:

After a while, I came to think of myself as an indoor nature poet. And my lexicon was the kettle and the steam... Not to write about them would have been artificial. Those objects were visible to me. (Allen-Randolph, 1993, p. 124)

Although the beginning of this move marks an earlier period in her career, the sequence “Domestic Violence” bears the stamp of it. If not the content and the themes, the imagery and metaphors alter radically in most of Boland’s poems with this change in her personal life. Boland’s indoor life experiences such as housework becomes part and parcel of her poems (see Trachsler, 2021).

“Domestic Violence”, which has a retrospective look back on historical events in Ireland, opens up with a biographical description of Boland’s move to the suburbs. In the first and the second stanzas the poetic persona introduces her arrival to the suburbs and narrates how she perceives the past, looking back on the times they left behind and with a regretful tone admits their ignorance in their self-centered world. The poetic persona’s regret manifests itself along these lines: “How young we were, how ignorant, how ready/ To think the only history was our own.” (Boland, 2007, p. 13)

In the third stanza the attention turns from the poetic persona's surroundings to the neighbor couple's quarrel with their voices "high, sharp". Without elaboration, the domestic violence in the neighboring house is addressed in these lines. As the poem progresses, the setting shifts from outside to inside, and vice versa while the poetic persona remembers the time of "old sores", "killings", "grayed tears", "moon-light coloured funerals" in the second part with an implication of the Troubles in Ireland, and in the third part while she still questions an alternative solution to stop the violence in public sphere, that could not have been figured out at the time.

Boland juxtaposes the personal and the historic in the final part of "Domestic Violence" in her address of her own grown children and the nation's grown children who are gone:

We lived our lives, were happy, stayed as one.

Children were born and raised here

And are gone,

Including ours. (Boland, 2007, p. 15)

Here, the feminine poetic voice, adopting a mournful register, extends its address to all the children of the republic, invoking a collective sense of loss and vulnerability. Therefore, children who are "gone" are both the nuclear family's children and the children of the nation. The story narrated by her becomes both historic and personal in this address. As it is in "The War Horse", "I" in "Domestic Violence" stands for all women who suffered through the unsettling times of civil war which resulted in the death of many young people, who were subject to violence both in private and public spheres. Boland constantly reminds of the intertwined nature of the public and private, outside and inside with an implication of the inevitable consequences of the violence in both public and individual life.

Conclusion

Boland's struggle against the prevailing perceptions of the feminine in political and artistic arena paved her way to subversive, and at the same time innovative ways of expression in her corpus. Exploration of her poems, "The War Horse", "Suburban Woman", "In Her Own Image", and "Domestic Violence", demonstrate her distinct approach to the portrayal of violence, territorial invasion and violation. An attentive analysis of these poems shows Boland's nuanced negotiation of the public and private spheres, revealing their mutual imbrication and the porousness of boundaries which are traditionally upheld by patriarchal

discourse. The way she portrays violence in the public sphere gives an insight to her preoccupation with this theme in private sphere as well. There is always an undercurrent informing the reader about the other realm (either the public or the personal one) although the literal meaning might seem to be directly and merely related to one of these spheres. To put it another way, in Boland's poetry the public and the private are internally and dialectically related. Violence becomes an imperious subject always present in these intertwined spheres. In all poems examined in this paper violence is addressed within the dialectical fusion of the private and public territories.

In her attempt to situate the female within the intersecting spheres of history, nation, and poetry, Boland creates a new dimension within which the historical and the personal can be rehashed. Absence of the feminine in history as the heroine or the agent is the main drive for Boland to open pre-existing definitions to negotiation and to experiment an alternative existence for the feminine in her poems. While doing so, Boland portrays the feminine as the victim, perpetrator, functionary and observer of violence. In Boland's poems the territory of the feminine is under a constant attack as the zone of violence extends from the public domain to the personal.

Ethical Declaration

During the writing process of the study titled "Representations of Violence Crosscutting Gender in the Works of Eavan Boland", scientific rules, ethical and citation rules were followed; no falsification was made on the collected data and this study was not sent to any other academic publication environment for evaluation.

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GENİŞ ÖZET

İrlanda’nın geç sömürgecilik ve erken sömürge sonrası dönemde kadın, ulusal düşünceyle bütünleşmişti ve bu paralelliğin sanat alanında, özellikle İrlanda şiirinde yankılanması kaçınılmazdı. Geleneksel İrlanda şiirinde kadınların temsili sembolik olarak merkezi bir öneme sahipti; ancak öznellik imkanları açısından bakıldığında bu temsil oldukça ikincil ve önemsizdi. Sömürgeci mirasın somutlaştığı kavram 19. yüzyıl İrlanda şiirinde “egemenlik tanrıçası” motifidir. Bu fikir, ulusun ve feminen figürün idealleştirilmesine dayanıyordu. İrlanda’nın sömürge geçmişi ve yeni kurulan cumhuriyetin 1937 anayasası, kadınları ikincil bir konuma düşürmüştü. Böyle bir mirası devralan ve kariyerine 1967’de *Yeni Alan* (The New Territory) adlı şiir koleksiyonu ile başlayan Eavan Boland (1944-2020), genç nesiller için özgürleştirici bir çalışma alanının oluşmasına öncülük etti. Boland

şiiirlerinde şiddet kavramını ele alma biçimiyle de İrlanda edebiyatının genç kuşak yazarları için yeni bir kapı araladı.

Kolektif varoluş fikrini parçalayan ve bireysel varoluşu yok eden şiddet, Eavan Boland'ın şiirinin kapsayıcı bir temasıdır. Savaş Atı (The War Horse, 1975), Şiddet Zamanlarında (In a Time of Violence, 1994) ve Ev İçi Şiddet (Domestic Violence, 2007) gibi koleksiyonlarının yalnızca başlıklarına bakıldığında dahi, Boland'ın, bireyin özel alanında ya da kamusal alanda mevcut olan şiddet temasıyla sürekli meşgul olduğunu tespit etmek mümkündür. Şiddetin temsili bu eserlerde aynı anda hem tarihsel hem de kişiseldir. Bu makale, Boland'ın şiirinden yararlanarak şiddetin hem kamusal hem de özel alanda toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden nasıl ele alındığını ve bu alanların Boland'ın şiddet tasvirinde birbirini nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Bu makalede Boland'ın yukarıda adı geçen şiir koleksiyonlarından dört şiir incelenmektedir. Bunlar sırasıyla “Savaş Atı” (The War Horse), “Banliyö Kadını” (Suburban Woman), “Kendi Suretinde” (In Her Own Image) ve “Aile İçi Şiddet” (Domestic Violence) şiirleridir. Seçilen şiirlerin içeriği öncelikli olarak şiddet temasını ele almaktadır. Makalenin genel amacı şiirlerde şiddet ve toplumsal cinsiyet kavramlarının nasıl kesiştiğini incelemektir.

Eavan Boland, eserlerinde İrlanda tarihindeki dönüm noktalarına retrospektif bir biçimde bakar. 20. Yüzyılın ilk çeyreğinde gerçekleşen İrlanda'da ulus inşasının yanı sıra 1960'ların sonlarından 1998'e kadar Kuzey İrlanda'da yaşanan siyasi ve etnik temelli çatışma dönemi Boland'ın entelektüel radarına girer. Boland'ın eleştirel bir mesafeye baktığı bu tarihi dönüm noktalarında toplumsal olarak deneyimlenen şiddet beraberinde “ideal kahraman” kavramını ortaya çıkarmıştır. Boland'a göre şiddet karşısında ortaya atılmış olan kahraman figürü “kadın kahraman” kavramını, başka bir deyişle feminen özneyi dışarıda bırakır. Boland, kavramsallaştırırken ve şiirlerine konu edinirken şiddete toplumsal cinsiyet temelli bir perspektifle yaklaşır.

Örneğin, "Savaş Atı" şiirinde şiirsel benlik, bahçesine yaklaşan ve ona zarar vermeden uzaklaşan bir savaş atını izler. Bu şiir kısa bir anın; şiirsel benlik ve savaş atının karşılaşmasının anlatımıdır. Şiir, dönemin çatışmalarını ve toplumsal gerilimlerini sembolize eden savaş atının, güvenli ve korunaklı bir evin dışında tehdit olarak tasvir edilmesiyle başlar. “Savaş Atı”nda olduğu gibi “Banliyö Kadını”nda da şiirsel benlik, Boland'ın şiiri yazdığı 1960'ların sonu ve 1970'lerin başında yükselişte olan Kuzey İrlanda ile İrlanda Cumhuriyeti arasındaki sorunlara (the Troubles) atıfta bulunur. Şiirin ilk bölümde, kadın onu çevreleyen şiddetin kurbanı olarak tarif edilir; ancak bu dehşetin ‘tek kurtulanı’ olmayı başarır. Boland, feminen olanı hem dış gerçekliklerin hem de günlük ev sorumluluklarının saldırısına karşı kurban eder; aynı zamanda onu kahramanlaştırır. “Ev İçi Şiddet” şiirinde konuşan kişi, cumhuriyetin tüm çocuklarına hitap eder; kolektif bir kayıp ve kırılmalık duygusunu çağırıştırır. Bu nedenle, bu şiirde Boland'ın 'giden' çocuklar olarak adlandırdığı genç kuşak hem çekirdek ailenin hem de ulusun çocuklarıdır.

Görüldüğü gibi bu şiirlerde Boland sıklıkla gündelik bir özel alan tasvir eder; sıradan ev içi yaşantının detayları şiirlerinin ayrılmaz bir parçasıdır. Aynı zamanda, bu şiirlerde toplumsal olarak deneyimlenen şiddet bireyin gündelik ve özellikle ev içindeki yaşantısının kaçınılmaz bir parçasıdır. En sıradan nesneler ve özel alan içindeki eylemler kamusal alandaki şiddet ile özünde yan yana ve sürekli bir diyalog içindedir. Hatta kamusal ile özel alan arasındaki sınır Boland şiirinde zaman zaman ortadan kalkmıştır. Ele alınan şiirlerde şiddet özel alanın dışında bırakılamayan bir toplumsal deneyimdir ve feminen öznenin özel alan deneyimleri ile iç içe geçmiştir. Bu çalışmada ele alınan şiirlere bakıldığında sömürgeci bir tarih ve ulus inşa süreci bağlamında ortaya çıkan alışlageldik kadın imgesinin altüst olduğunu görürüz. Bu şiirler feminen öznenin kendi gerçeklik algısını ortaya serer. Bunlar İrlanda şiirinde Boland'ın daha fazla alan açmak istediği meselelerdir. Böylece Boland şiirindeki şiddetin şiirsel temsilleri, erkek egemen İrlanda edebiyat geleneğine meydan okur. Boland, kadını tarih, ulus ve şiirin kesişen kümeleri içinde konumlandırma çabasıyla tarihsel ve kişisel olanın yeniden harmanlanabileceği yeni bir boyut yaratır. Boland şiirlerinde feminen özneye dair önceden var olan tanımları müzakereye açar. Bunu yaparken Boland, kadınsı olanı şiddetin kurbanı, faili, öznesi ve gözlemcisi olarak tasvir eder.