

SHADES OF A WOMAN'S TIME: THE CHRONOTOPIC REVISION OF HISTORY IN SELECTED POEMS OF EAVAN BOLAND'S *OUTSIDE HISTORY*

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Abstract: Eavan Boland has been acclaimed as the foremost feminist poet of modern Ireland, and, although she has been accused of resorting to a depoliticized escapist poetry, her poetry stands for a convergence of both the political/national and the feminine in her homeland. Defined and credited as a nation with a mythological history, Ireland has always already been represented through a temporally male perspective. Correspondingly, in the established canon of Irish poetry, *time*, mostly as a retrospective concept, is a masculine appropriation of history coupled with the archetypal male and female roles, whose spatio-temporal import are to accommodate to the authorized reductionist historiography. Bakhtin's idea of chronotope is not only an attempt toward the mutual realization of the time/space motif in a literary work, but also the means to the embodiment of a consciousness, an identity. This study attempts to demonstrate how Boland, in a selection of poems from her collection *Outside History* (1990), specifically, *The Achill Woman*, *The Making of an Irish Goddess*, *Daphne Heard with Horror the Addresses of God*, and the eponymous poem *Outside History*, introduces a series of chronotopes which assist her in redefining Irish national history with a feminine hue in the guise of herstory. Furthermore, it will be argued that her poetry may well be seen as a venture to replace the authoritative concept of time as mythology and fiction with a real history.

Keywords: Chronotope; Herstory; Mikhail Bakhtin; Myth; The feminine; Embodiment

Introduction

As incontrovertible prerequisites to understand phenomena, *place* and *time* have always been addressed in every aspect of life. As far as appreciation is concerned, literature may not be an exception in turning to these notions as inexorable constituents of representation. While reading a text, literary or not, a reader allows for the linguistic surface of the work to demand for a spatio-temporal framework in which to better unravel the intricacies of the text. The exigency of a matched set

involving time and space may be analogous to the necessity of setting foot on the terra firma and only then discovering the inland itself with its nuances. Therefore, no proper act of interpretation will ever happen unless the reader comes to terms with the terminology of time and space in the work. In fact, it is this very dynamics which assists the reader in following the already delineated courses of reading a text such as socio-historical analysis. Moreover, the spatio-temporal specifications effect the categorical nuances once the critics intend to classify literary works under a certain genre. Introducing the idea of chronotope in his essay *Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel* (1981), Bakhtin was to serve this genre controversy. Stressing the genre-specifying nature of chronotope, Bakhtin maintains that “the chronotope in literature has an intrinsic generic significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions ...” (98). Aside from this generic cause, chronotope accommodates to a definition of *time*; it is chronotope which grants *time* a proper embodiment. Chronotope is a mediator through which time can be seen in the spatial world. Following a more accurate interpretation, both *time* and *space* play their own part; while time is embodied through being placed and located in spatiality, space, as the other half, finds itself “susceptible to the movement of time (and history)”, maintains Renfrew (114). To further elaborate on this reciprocal relationship, as the spatial designation of a literary work enumerates the places visited or nostalgically revisited, it provides the readers with an implied sense of time wherein they are supposed to opt for either a retrospective or a prospective stance, either critical or supportive of the *now*, either viewing time as a totality or one with irregularities. Standing at the temporal end of this continuum, once particularized in the text, time might as well mark out the spatial boundaries and outline the kinds of spaces to be dealt with in the work. For the purpose of illustration, it may be seen in a work that much as is the history conceived as a past phenomenon long by-gone, the itemized spaces in the text, by summoning the past to be reworked, suggest a reassessment of the aforementioned conventional outlook. As a consequence, this unprecedented juxtaposition of time and space bears the seeds of a concomitant new act of reading in literary domain.

Right neighboring this generic significance, this time-space combination can be traced to the introduction of a certain consciousness, a corresponding subject. “The chronotope as a formally constitutive category”, says Bakhtin, “determines, to a significant degree, the image of man in literature as well” (98). Chronotope bears a further representational significance to the events narrated or

suggested in the literary work. Having characterized the events or encounters, it renders time a perceptible embodiment and translates it into a definite concept. As Bakhtin asserts:

An event can be communicated, it becomes information, one can give precise data on the place and time of its occurrence. But the event does not become a figure [obraz]. It is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing forth, the representability of events. (245)

This chronotopic probe into the dynamics of temporal signification acts like a fulcrum around which both the events and characters are described; for “the story’s particulars only signify in so far as they have always already established, in the most general way, the spatio-temporal worldliness of the world” (Pechey 85). The accordance with the designated world of a literary work, furthermore, gives directions on how to set a text side by side with its contemporary texts and measure the differences therein. By way of explanation, the chronotopic orientation of a text could be better illuminated once contrasted with that of the dominant discourse, and, as a straightforward result of its reworkings of time and space, the act of reading is to be rethought as well. Yet Pechey’s remark about the world of the work might as well be further elaborated considering that the spatio-temporal concern of a work crosses the threshold of a revisionist historiography. Hence a further social implication for chronotope.

It ought to be stated that a text could implicate not as much a monochronotopic, seamless line of reasoning throughout the work as a polychronotopic, asymmetrical image. Regarding the relationship between chronotopes, any single one of them may correlate to the other chronotopes and envelope them. In other words, we may see a hierarchical link between the time-space units. Moreover, “Chronotopes are mutually inclusive, they co-exist, they may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships” (246). Thus, the interrelation viable in a polychronotopic text help the further description of each spatio-temporal logic enlisted therein as one such view outlines its concerns in contrast with the other. Moreover, this multiplicity may occasionally represent the conflict present between the author’s chronotopic view and those of her counterarguments.

As for Ireland, a nation intrinsically concerned with the notion of time, past and history have been put in the forefront of cultural discourse. To advance the cause of Ireland, with no exception to colonial

or postcolonial strands, we are to all but promote a corresponding historiography. The classical idea of Ireland, demarcated in the early years of 19th C., singles out a quite unified image wherein any Irish subject along with its individual consciousness was to utterly overlap with any other from the homeland. Among the ramifications of such Yeatsian perspective toward *the national* is to witness an exclusive view to the differences, and, to promote a sweeping effect on the society, Ireland and its identity were to be lent a hand by mythology. In case of women, this homogenous dynamics was much furthered only to confirm what Spivak's assertion that, "if, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow" (287). Feminine differences have been overshadowed by the more appreciated and also acclaimed idea of *Irish Woman*, an image of woman in which woman is the land, the Motherland, raped by an imperialist-colonialist invasion. This reductionist role of women in Ireland is to be highlighted when it is the Irish men appointed with the task of reclaiming their mother, the old woman Cathleen Ni Houlihan. She is the personification of Ireland, for the sake of whom young Irish men become martyrs. This reduced and frozen image of woman was espoused in the works of such prominent cultural figures as Yeats, O'Casey, and also early Joyce.

Time, in the context of Irish poetry, has been, to a certain extent, coupled with a mythological cause which also suggests masculinity. To challenge such a monolithic historiography, Irish women had to venture on no less than a revisionist approach toward the established history as reflected from the masculine gaze. This view has been gradually established, by male poetic canon, through a reading of Irish history and past as a *fiction*, where the definitive nuances of *now-time* were neglected. Aside from this remissness toward present-ness, the idea of woman as a distinct subject remained unheeded; her consciousness and body failed to assist in accentuating the Irish woman. Since around mid-20th C., Irish woman poets have attempted both to narrate such suppression and rethink the workings of history. In their work, however, there is a tension within their work: should they follow the classic argumentation of essentialist readings of identity to resist imperialism or should they "attempt to subvert the limits of gendered and national identity" (Fulford 127). Writings of Boland spare no efforts to problematize the feasibility of a cogent feminist and nationalist identity, and, as a result, appreciate the causes of feminism and nationalism as well. This paper seeks to exemplify how Boland attempts to realize such a compromise by rethinking the established historiography in Ireland and its history.

“The Achill Woman”

The title itself locates the subject of the poem in an Irish place, a real spatiality. This sense can be reasoned referring to the word *Achill*, an island on the west coast. Therefore, Boland aims at spotting the poem in a well-known and historically significant place where a woman enters and defines herself. To further its spatial repercussion, the poem stages a scene of encounter, an encounter at the place between two women the account of which is to be narrated by the speaker. Implied in such a *chronotope of the encounter*, the poem sets forth its revisionist concern whence the female consciousness realizes and embodies her story. The poem starts with motion, a motion involving daily real chores of a real subject:

She came up the hill carrying water.
She wore a half-buttoned, wool cardigan,
a tea-towel round her waist. (1-3)

One can quite clearly see how Boland’s *Achill Woman* penetrates into the place to live and be; that is, the woman is not already frozen and reduced to some abstract suggestions attributed to *Irish Woman* but bears a normal appearance in a normal activity. As the poem reads on, the woman’s being real is more and more confirmed like as she “pushes her hair” (Outside History 4) or we know about “the cold rosiness of her hands” (Outside History 10). This female representation is marked with an earthly and palpable existence as opposed to the statute-like and fixed nature of national Irish woman. This implied mark of stability and untimeliness may be traced back to a preference for embodiment of the nature, where a national/natural object is associated with a woman. An instance of such reductionist attitude toward feminine experience could be evidenced in Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* (1939) where the female character Anna Livia Plurabelle personifies the River Liffey in Dublin. As Fulford maintains, “Anna Liffey the river woman has been monumentalized: she is stylized as a conventional, allegorical figure functioning to erase the untidy realities of fleshy women” (142). Reduced to a national image, Joyce’s character epitomizes the eternal and universal female discharged of its bodily differences and feminine nuances.

The poem draws a parallel between the narrator or the described circumstances and what we read about Boland herself in her essay *Outside History*. The essay begins with narrating her personal experience as a student of literature while she spends some time in Achill and the fact how she encountered an old caretaker, the other woman in the poem. What is missing in the poem, although directly

mentioned in the essay, is that the caretaker talked to Boland about the history of the place, about the death of “the people in the famine. *Great Men*” (83). Known as the Great Famine or the Great Hunger, 1848 Irish famine witnessed about a million perish and another million emigrate, an event inscribed at the heart of Irish history; yet the established historiography, under a feminist scrutiny, has failed to make allowances for the feminine accounts of the event. Boland asserts that this encounter triggered a question in her mind, a question quite crucial to her poetic ideology – as the woman was pointing to the shore and the reminiscence of a desperate people, what exactly she had in mind: “A history? A nation? Her memories or mine?” (84). Thus, the old woman’s tale-telling amounts to a narrative of an event, blurry enough to substantiate its being fact or fiction. Given a list of worldly objects, the poem grants itself the authority to surpass such a mere his-torical reading of *the national* and verge on a far personalized narrative, a memory, which is real and gendered.

What we see in the poem is that Boland refrains from showing us an emblematic woman who “changes minute by minute” but “in the midst of all” stays grounded (Yeats 181). Instead, she depicts a female subject who is mainly associated with the living force rather than the monumental gravity, with the real time than mythological history. Having depicted the Achill woman, Boland introduces herself as another living subject:

And I was all talk, raw from college—
weekending at a friend’s cottage
with one suitcase and the set text
of the Court poets of the Silver Age. (15-18)

The narrator/Boland may be seen just as vigorous and lively as the old woman and eludes being bound within clear-cut definitions. Although she is marked with a consciousness about past through court poets and the caretaker’s talk, she maintains a more energetic relationship with time. This is exactly where the discussion between the narrator and the old woman takes value in the guise of *the chronotope of encounter*. This encounter is what contributes to Boland’s idea of a woman’s time, a reading of history according to a female consciousness where “the eventness of being” is facilitated, “the representation of a living image, as opposed to one that might variously be described as ‘abstract’, ‘fixed’ or ‘monological’” (Renfrew 114). As Renfrew comments on the dynamics of chronotope, once could see the correlation between space and time in the poem where the real

spatiality of the hill indisputably accommodates to the foregrounded presentness of the poem.

Addressed in its entirety, the poem borders more on one with the poet as its subject; that is, the established national poetry alongside its temporal understanding towards past supports the poet/subject at the sake of the object, no matter a horse or a national crisis. In other words, Boland believes that Irish poetry is constrained within a series of conventionalities about subject matter, where a poet and the poem enjoy the least possibility to concern themselves with a more immediate and untouched object. "It has given me an insight into the flawed permissions which surround the inherited Irish poem", says Boland, "in which you could have a political murder, but not a baby, and a line of hills, but not the suburbs under them" (132). However, the alternative inclination in Boland's work toward national events and past authorizes the introduction of a new Irish female subject engendering different shades of significance for agency. This is where the chronotope differentiates the representation of the human subject in a text, as body occupying both space and time; for an attempt toward this chronotopic definition results in a corresponding framework in which the poem may outline its subjects and their dominant mode of being.

Regarding *The Achill Woman*, this chronotopic treatment of experience in time pertains to a preference for real history over myth, a reality in which the female body specifies the excess of the feminine and reclaims the neglected body hallmarked by the passage of time as well. While the myth of the Irish woman, as a stable image of the feminine, represents a personified equivalent of the nation, Boland opts for a real story, herstory, in which an encounter between two women located in a historically important place leads to a juxtaposition of the feminine and the national. Coupled side by side, the historical charge of this place gives way to a revision by its feminine shade which, aided by the mentioned *chronotope of the encounter*, displaces the retrospective view in the place and introduces a real event. Accordingly, Boland gives preference to the *now time* of this encounter, a secularized temporal correlative of a real spatial experience.

"The Making of an Irish Goddess"

While Boland, in *the Achill Woman*, grapples with the idea of history directed through a personal experience, *the Making of an Irish Goddess* sets forth a venture to create a new historical paradigm, a goddess, an attempt toward the fusion of the feminine and the national. Ceres, Roman goddess of agriculture and crops, typifies fertility and also

motherly relationships. The image of woman designated by Roman mythology, however, consolidates an eternal femininity much dispossessed of its differences. As regards the concept of time, such an explanation of female subject follows the authoritative and masculine pattern of history as her name has always already been solidified with certain unfaltering images of past as myth. Nonetheless, there is not to be found any female consciousness of it: Ceres went to hell/with no sense of time (1-2). Deprived of a temporal responsiveness, the woman may not enjoy a spatial consciousness either, and, as a direct consequence, one loses its touch with the real.

Boland's Ceres has been transmuted into a monumental and static object of history. Female subjectivity of the poem dissociates itself from a masculine time, *his story*: "time as project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; time as departure, progression, and arrival - in other words, the time of history" (Kristeva 17). Henceforth, the goddess looks back, at past as the child of time, and her observations are all but in accordance with a linear temporality which is translated into images charged with connotations of advance and progress but only to end in the seasonlessness of mythological temporality. Thus, although she could also look at the rocks and see "the arteries of silver" in them, this female disposition toward nature-body synthesis is to be overwhelmed. That being so, "all that he could see" was:

the diligence of rivers always at one level,
wheat at one height,
leaves of a single color,
the same distance in the usual light;
a seasonless, unscarred earth. (6-10)

Quite contrary to Ceres's position, the speaker of the poem acknowledges the necessity of a temporal gridline according to which to outline her feminine reality. Hence, her assertion "But I need time" (11). The speaker could be Boland herself who, as the representative of female Irish poets, has taken a new role in making the nation: to write as a woman. As Boland asserts, "women have moved from being the objects of Irish poems to being the authors of them" (84). The prerequisites for such a transition is a real history calling for a sense of decay and change contrasted with the undeniably eternal depictions of past. To avoid simplification, the speaker has to opt for an appropriate chronotope, one which pays tribute to both the feminine and the national; so Boland empowers the feminine gradation of the time as she embodies the changes caused by it, invested in what can be termed as the *chronotope of the embodied change*. This may lead the speaker to

pave the same way as Ceres did – the national cause – but, moreover, tends to underline the *feminine difference*. Thus, the speaker maintains:

But I need time—
 my flesh and that history—
 to make the same descent.
 In my body,
 neither young now nor fertile,
 and with the marks of childbirth
 still on it ... (11-17)

What distinguishes her outlook from that of Ceres is her stress on woman's experience, namely, birthmarks and aging body. As the woman poet's assets are her bodily experiences, the time-space correlative for her story summons the very reality inherent in them. This poetic strain and its concomitant chronotopic representation provides the reader with an alternative to the mainstream tendency "to assimilate citizens into its own idea of itself, risks undermining difference" (Fulford 143). As in *the Achill Woman*, we may evidently see how Boland's prose account of another personal experience, in her *Object Lessons*, relates to and, consequently, reinforces the historical viewpoint promoted in the discussed poem. *The Woman, the Place, the Poet* is an account of Boland and her husband's relocation from Dublin to the suburbs, an intelligible treatment of a journey to the place and time which, if a poem, "the journey would become a descent" (104). We see that the speaker/Boland sets underway the same descent as there is this common idea that "we yield to our present, but we choose our past. In a defeated country like Ireland we choose it over and over again, relentlessly, obsessively" (107). She, however, sees the marked difference between the masculine and feminine temporal experience. Hence her preference for "a woman like" herself, "with two small children" over her "ancestor, with his shock of nut brown hair" (107). Expressly discussed in her prose, the concern to "choose our past" has been treated in the poem as the speaker takes interest in her body and child. Put simply, the fleshly woman yields to her present marked by scars but proposes to rethink his-tory as she paves the same descending path, as Ceres once did, but puts forth quite distinct concerns. Had she been Ceres, the body would have been voiced.

This predilection underscores a local event approached both in the poem and the essay: the 1838 famine. Following the feminine turn toward the body, the speaker presents an account of "that agony":

the failed harvests,
 the fields rotting to the horizon,

the children devoured by their mothers
 whose souls, they would have said,
 went straight to hell,
 followed by their own. (24-29)

Boland aims at a more materialist and differential version of history or herstory where femininity is not associated with Virgin Mother or a Roman goddess but, instead, with the flesh and body of real mothers. Bodies gain scars and decay as they replace the sacred myth with the history of “the corpses of female victims of the famine in favor of the immortalized Dark Rosaleen and Erin, the Aisling poems or as Smyth outlines” (Fulford 146). As the account of the famine is narrated to this point, there appears an interruption in the linear story, breaking the smooth and undisturbed narrativity. Connected with this linear approach to history, Ireland has been traditionally identified with a fully united place, where irregularities are erased. Thus, this established temporal mindset holds on to a corresponding chronotope, one that could be named *the chronotope of homogenous nation*. The speaker accentuates an alternative presence, that of an Irish woman poet, which aims at the displacement of this place-time relationship at the heart of historical national myths. She begins with an uncertainty, a hesitation toward the possibility of any unorthodox historiography:

There is no other way:
 Myth is the wound we leave
 in the time we have ... (30-32)

That being said, Boland represents an encounter between two sides of a critical controversy on revisionist historiography. The lack of certainty mentioned implicates the extent to which the speaker /Boland finds herself quite impotent inasmuch as she cannot help but resorting to the old national gridline, in which a woman may be reckoned as an Irish subject but not an Irish woman. Maley believes that At the other end of the continuum stand critics who are mindful of the fact that this historicist “piety and purity depend upon deep-rooted violent exclusions and brutal simplifications” (19). Thus, the speaker continues to shed some light on the wound that myth has left, but this is a womanly/motherly one:

which in my case is this
 March evening
 at the foothills of the Dublin mountains,
 across which the lights have changed all day,
 holding up my hand

sickle-shaped, to my eyes
 to pick out
 my own daughter from
 all the other children in the distance;
 her back turned to me. (33-42)

As the established Irish approach, the mythological reading of history leans more towards an archetypal representation of the Irish subject or consciousness, where the complexities of human experience are to be disregarded. Thus the history as myth turns no less than a blind eye on the differences and promotes an image of Ireland as a homogenous nation cleared of its irregularities. Here the speaker, however, refuses to surrender to myth and its rhetoric of unscathed femininity and, in doing so, invokes a pronounced individuality issued from the mother's scars and her daughter. What is more, this ending moment abounds in a sense of progress and change when, in a "March evening", "the lights have changed all day" – when a woman is not only, in Ailbhe Smyth's words, "Woman Ireland Banba Foladh Eiriú Red Rose Róisín Dubh. Caitlín Ní Houlihán" but a mother identifying her daughter (18). Interestingly enough, Boland spares no effort to realize such a female *now time* which has blasted straightaway out of the continuum of mythical history itself; that is, she first narrates an event (a journey) familiar in the framework of mythological womanhood and only then tries to revise the same event set in a more fleshly manner. It is the chronotope of the embodied change which accommodates to such a temporal turn from a mythical past to a real present since "it is precisely the chronotope that provides the ground essential for the showing forth, the representability of events" (245). Once the woman speaks about her most immediate properties as her body and also motherly experience, her story designates itself as one secularized and liberated from the mythological timelessness. Likely to decay, Boland's speaker proudly boasts about her timed spatiality; that is, as she looks at her body with its scars, it is confirmed that her feminine identity calls for a perception of time quite different from the mythological bodiless womanhood.

"Daphne heard with horror the addresses of the God"

As with the former two poems, Boland begins the poem with a typical image of woman, Daphne, who is associated with being static and timeless. Although her father's contrivance helped Daphne escape Apollo, she was transformed into a laurel tree and, thus, epitomized as the untouchable femininity. The chronotopic conflict of the poem is to unfold right out of this conception of woman. In other words, what is

problematized in the poem is a dilemma to choose between a timeless place and an embodied time – where the former viewpoint represents the conventional woman-time relationship, and the latter characterizes an alternative consciousness of feminine time. Expressed in a different way, the poem seeks to show how the nationalistic and unchangeable woman placed in Ireland may transcend the constraints and pass into the realm of a time-conscious female subject who projects her difference into the surrounding place. One can find the same problematic in Kristeva when she maintains that “when evoking the name and destiny of women, one thinks more of the space generating and forming the human species than of time, becoming, or history” (15). Having provided with place, woman has been disposed of proper temporal consciousness and, that being the case, deprived of any possibility to historicize their past and present.

In the poem, the recipient place is garden where a memory of a dialogue is narrated. In other words, it is the chronotope of the growing garden which supplies the female speaker (or Boland) with a spatiality on whose present-ness to project her understanding of a past event. The poem sets about with the description of a place:

It was early summer. Already
the conservatory was all steam and greenness.
I would have known the stephanotis by
its cutthroat sweetness anywhere. (1-4)

Such descriptions of the natural surrounding evokes a sense of present-ness for the speaker. Although the reader may reach a premature inference that such a reference to nature bears the same statue-like characteristic in Daphne, he will soon find out that this is not the dominant temporality of the poem. The garden here acts as a place through which the speaker may voice and embody her understanding of past or history in its entirety. Through this chronotope of the growing garden, Boland highlights her standpoint as to how to narrate a woman’s experience, garden as a space where its greenness and stephanotis accommodate to a sense of real present instead of a reduced past. As we continue reading, the poem calls attention to an encounter at the mentioned place. In the wake of this event, the speaker allows for the intervention of a secondary story-teller whose memories are mediated through the main agent. As the poem intends to tell the reader about the conversation, we pass into the second speaker’s contribution, a story: “about the wedding of a local girl, / long ago, and a merchant from Argyll” (7-8).

As they are sitting in the garden, it seems as if the second speaker stands for a certain historical outlook: a retrospective approach. What is more, she has only heard the story about the wedding, an event which gives the impression of verging on the mythological story-telling. As a consequence, it is likely that her story inclines toward a reductionist treatment of woman and her life-experiences. As regards the differences of the femininity, states Fulford, "representation of the self is always made in the context of misrepresentation or erasure" (164). Yet this is the very surface reading of the event. Put simply, what Boland aims at is the substitution of a positive myth with a negative one in the guise of the chronotope of the growing garden. What has been valued negative myth is the typical narrative address to an event, where the main action in the plot overshadows the subtleties. The positive myth developed by the chronotopic policy of the poem, however, favors a different kind of narrative whereby an event, as the dialogue in the garden, includes as much spatial and temporal detail as possible. Thus, the main speaker's interruptions indicate an attempt to replace her guest's reduced account of a marriage.

This project of myth-making is exactly, according to Boland herself, where poetry sets foot into being, "here, as in so many other instances, it enters at the point where myth touches history" (109). Whenever the second speaker's story seems to favor the established reductionist approach, the act of storytelling is interrupted as the speaker of the poem turns both her own and readers' mind back toward the immediate environment with its minute present-ness. She talks about the garden, where the speaker/Boland's *now-time* or *herstory* embody themselves; the poem gives an account of the roses and laurel hedges but hesitates to impregnate them with any mythological sense far from real, seeing the rose not as Dark Rosaleen but as:

... nothing but itself
and all of it so free of any need
for nymphs, goddesses, wounded presences ... (11-13)

As in *The Achill Woman*, the poem settles a scene of encounter through which stories of a woman and her wedding, once accompanied by references to present, are reworked in favor of an alternative attitude toward women in time. As Sarah Broom asserts, considered as a poetic feature, "it is this positive version of myth that Boland seeks to recover in poems exploring oral narratives shared by women" (118). Centered on a chronotopic conflict, the poem maintains two narrative lines: while the main speaker, who might be identified as Boland herself, endeavors to let spatiality have a word in describing the now-happening

experience, her companion recounts a story quite smoothed out of its subtleties and irregularities; that is, one seeks to represent a reality, and the other opts for a reductionist history.

The dominant temporality of the second narrative lies in a corresponding chronotope of marriage, where marriage acts as a place for exclusion of feminine experiences. As the main speaker/Boland retreats from the surrounding nature, she notices that her companion is still narrating her own story of marriage: "You were still speaking. By the time / I paid attention they were well married" (17-18). Although this pair of lines still stays faithful to the reductionist ideology of "History as a continuum that is outside *now time* as it attempts to create a homogenous narrative of tradition and progress, the remaining part of marriage account undergoes a shift in the extent to which the story includes some difference" (Fulford 145). Hence the introduction of the meaningful and palpable image of *roses* into place. In other words, it could be claimed that the chronotope of the garden has intruded into the realm of the chronotope of marriage to replace its rhetoric of absolute coherence; that is, the main speaker's inclination to insert the detailed characteristics of the garden affects the homogenizing narration of the marriage story. This assimilation to the historiographic dynamics of the garden story bears witness to how the chronotope of garden overwhelms that of marriage. Thus, the poem carries on with a different tone:

The bridegroom had his bride on the ship.
The sails were ready to be set. You said
small craft went with her to the ship, and
as it sailed out, well-wishers
took in armfuls, handfuls, from the boats
white roses and threw them on the water. (19-24)

Narrated to the intended ending, the marriage story has already met with an alteration and, thus, more and more inclines toward the discourse of garden and its temporality. This surrender to *now-time* agrees with the dynamics of the last stanza where it is only the garden which dominated the spatiality of this reminiscence. Furthermore, it is in this last stanza that, for the first time, we see both speakers being conscious of their real presence in the garden, the place where time distinctly moves forward and forces the agents to leave it and live it:

We cleared up then, saying how
the greenfly needed spraying, the azaleas
were over; and you went inside... (25-27)

But the main speaker/Boland prefers to remain in the place, where she can embody the changes that the feminine consciousness had always already been deprived of and, by doing so, disapproves of the permanence and eternity ingrained in the heart of the authoritative discourse. Boland indicates this notion of fluidity and change when the speaker exposes her body to the sunlight as well as the garden signifies the passing of time, “freshening and stirring ...” (30). The end of the poem turns into place of shadows and suggestions:

... A suggestion,
 behind it all, of darkness: in the shadow,
 beside the laurel hedge, its gesture. (30-32)

The gesture could be the gesture of change, a positive and productive decay. This could also designate the transition through which Boland herself progresses from the audience/addressee of a story to the narrator of one. To perfect the scene, she provides the growing shadows with a voice, and this could be the voice of hestroy. As Boland affirms, “what the woman experiences is beyond the reach of those who chart noise or the metric-makers and music makers” (159). Yet the poetic speaker attempts to say the unsayable within the poetic representation; she attempts, according to Fulford, “to represent the unrepresentability and the silences of sorrow” (159). And the poem could be in memorial of such an experience.

“Outside History”

As the last poem in the collection *Outside History*, the eponymous poem could be considered as Boland’s most direct treatment of women’s *history*. In other words, the poem stands for a belated epilogue signing off her modest proposal on the much neglected women’s identity, not as *national* subjects, but as heterogeneous shades of Ireland. She has been attempting to demonstrate how inevitable such an engagement may be when the woman poet “sits down to work, when she moves away from her work, when she tries to be what she is struggling to express, at all these moments the dilemma is present, waiting and inescapable” (154). At the heart of the poem lies this dilemma: how to attend to the established simplification of womanhood and poetry. What is more, as in the preceding poems, Boland’s main concern revolves around a revised version of history (herstory rather than History) which substitutes the reality with the myth. To properly address such a temporality, the poem introduces a corresponding chronotope, that of *land*. While the beginning part resorts to *the sky* and its *stars* associated with distantness and being hard-to-realize, the

following section puts in place *the land* alongside its hills, roads, and fields.

The speaker begins with an inference from history, “there are outsiders, always” (1). These outsiders enjoy some differences all but unacknowledged by the linear and reductive national history. Shortly, the poem addresses an eventful word, January, which is brimming with national significance – when, in 1800, the Act of Union with the Great Britain comes into effect, and also the initiation of Irish War of Independence following the killing of members of Royal Irish Constabulary in 1919. The unattended experiences of such national events are compared to shining:

These stars—
 these iron inklings of an Irish January,
 whose light happened
 thousands of years before
 our pain did: they are, they have always been
 outside history. (1-6)

The presence of stars, even before the occurrence of pains as the real, indicates the dynamics of myth-making according to which, to use a theatrical analogy, the dramatic piece precedes the performance. To propose the argument of the traditional historiography, the chronotope of stars tallies with the established perspective toward history and time in the poem, where the renditions of an event (stars) seem to have already been delineated even if the reality has not occurred yet. Thus, the myth (or established history) tends to replace the real with the fictional. Although Irish poets may grow restless under the demand to include the nationalistic nuance of events, Boland supposes that “the truths of womanhood and the defeats of a nation” have developed more effective results with their “improbable intersection” (132). However, this intersection concerns itself with the unsaid; that is, the stars outside history are to get a voice for their irregularities under the aegis, as says Fulford, “of a heterogeneous herstorical materialism where herstory is not mythologized in terms of History or the singular” (145). As for the *outsiders* or received images of Irish woman:

They keep their distance. Under them remains
 a place where you found
 you were human, and
 a landscape in which you know you are mortal.
 And a time to choose between them. (7-11)

It is exactly beneath these stars, this debris of the excluded, that the Irish woman/poet traces the possibilities of making a choice. In fact, Boland here provides both the Irish woman and Irish poetry with possible courses of action: myth or real history. The chronotopic significance of *land* and the spatiality related thereto are to be realized once following the poem henceforth. Setting foot on the road, the speaker repositions herself in a real place, one quite distinct from the starry sky in that the *pains* are retold through the nuanced approach of an alternative narration, that of history not myth. As the speaker finds herself left with a place impregnated with a correspondingly alternative temporality, she sets out to speak as *I*:

I have chosen:
 Out of myth into history I move to be
 part of that ordeal
 whose darkness is
 only now reaching me from those fields,
 those rivers, those roads clotted as
 firmaments with the dead. (12-18)

This *ordeal* is nothing less than a revision of time and history allowing Irish woman poets to disentangle themselves from the confinements of the homogenized and singular historiography. Unlike the beginning of the poem, in which the public overpowers the private, “the difficult ‘I’ of perception” displaces “the easier ‘we’ of a subtle claim” (115). In other words, the poem echoes the main concern of Boland’s prose that Irish women have come to left their former position as objects of poetry and history to be their subject. Once dominated by the male poets, political poetry has already witnessed women becoming a part of its authorship where feminine *reality* drawn into poems meets a barrier of rhetoric or language inextricably convoluted with a corresponding notion of time. However, Boland pinpointed the solution in revising the temporality of a poem. Thus, although we are told about *roads clotted with ... the dead* alluding to the Famine, the speaker endeavors to appropriate the event in favor of the inclusion of the long excluded silences. This requires a challenge to the authority of poetic persona in male and bardic tradition of political poetry, a challenge culminating in “the multiplicity of female expressions and preoccupations” (Kristeva 18). It seems as if only this terra firma and its non-narrated history can provide Irish woman poets, as neglected subjects, with an opportunity to rework the already told history. Set side by side with the stars, the road and its chronotopic function characterize a fertile and at-hand sphere in relation to which to fill the historical gaps.

The last three lines of the poem still grapple with the national aspect of the poem, *the dead*. Having moved from myth into history, the speaker/Boland sees herself at the heart of a public scene:

How slowly they die
as we kneel beside them, whisper in their ear.
And we are too late. We are always too late. (19-21)

The *I* of the poem is posited among the *we*, the nation, voicing her differentiated agency with its own specific reading of a political issue. Although it may be argued, as Campbell did, that “with whom is she to identify if there is ... no clear model at the level of the individual psyche for how she might desire and then dominate that female body which will then represent unity?”, this belatedness occasions a shade of *now time* in the guise of a whisper (173). Expressed in a different way, in *Outside History*, a national event is to be revisited at the present and real time not against an authoritative retrospective outlook but in the eyes of a woman poet.

Conclusion

This paper has been an attempt to analyze a selection of Boland’s poems in her collection *Outside History* in association with Bakhtin’s idea of *chronotope*. The study examines the poet’s attempts in each one of the selected poems to replace the established historiography in Ireland with a more inclusive and real approach toward past appropriated for a female subject. It also focuses on the development of a demythologized space-time interaction in the collection whereby the characters are allowed to express the nuances of their existence. The feminine consciousness present in the poems witness a venture toward an embodied representation of Irish woman. It also brings out new chronotopic strategies employed by Boland so as to put an end to the reductionist image of Irish woman.

While history as myth attempts to consolidate the *Irish woman* into an eternal entity with an unfaltering national significance, the alternative her-story represented in Boland’s selected poems amount to an image of woman and feminine experience which includes a more nuanced characterization of female presence, namely the woman’s body and motherly experience. What highlights this alternative definition of Irish woman is that Boland sets her female characters in a real and spatially traceable places where the speaking subjects relate their idea of an in-process femininity to the natural spaces in change. The aging body best utters itself in the looking-glass of a growing nature.

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NIJANSE ŽENSKOG VREMENA: HRONOTOPSKA REVIZIJA HISTORIJE U ODABRANIM PJESMAMA IZVAN ISTORIJE EVAN BOLAND

Evan Boland hvaljena je kao najistaknutija feministička pjesnikinja moderne Irske, pa iako je optuživana da pribjegava depolitizovanoj eskapističkoj poeziji, njena poezija je drugo ime za konvergenciju političkog/nacionalnog i ženskog u njenoj domovini. Definisana i priznata kao nacija s mitološkom istorijom, Irska je ranije uvijek bila predstavljena kroz mušku perspektivu viđenja vremena. Shodno tome, u ustaljenom kanonu irske poezije, vrijeme je, uglavnom kao retrospektivan koncept, maskulina apropijacija istorije nedovojivo od arhetipskih muških i ženskih uloga, čiji prostorno-vremenski značaj treba prilagoditi autorizovanoj redukcionističkoj historiografiji. Bahtinova ideja hronotopa nije samo pokušaj uzajamnog ostvarenja motiva vremena/prostora u književnom djelu, već i sredstvo za utjelovljenje svijesti, identiteta. Ova studija pokušava da pokaže kako Bolandova, u izabranim pjesmama iz zbirke *Izvan istorije* (1990), konkretno u pjesmama *Ahil-žena* (*Achill Woman*), *Stvaranje irske boginje* (*The Making of an Irish Goddess*), *Dafne je sa užasom čula božije obraćanje* (*Daphne Heard with Horror the Addresses of God*), i naslovne pjesme

Izvan istorije (Outside History), uvodi seriju hronotopa koji joj pomažu u redefinisaju irske nacionalne istorije ispričane na ženski način. Dodatno, u članku tvrdimo da se njena poezija može smatrati poduhvatom da se autoritativni koncept vremena kao mitologije i fikcije zamijeni stvarnom istorijom.

Ključne riječi: hronotop; herstory; Mihail Bahtin; mit; feminističko; otelovljenje